

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
Washington, D.C. Fall 2008

SIS 406/696; Gov 396/696

Israeli Politics

Israeli Democracy at 60: Achievements and Challenges

Professor Yoram Peri

Class meetings: Tues 5:30-8:00 p.m. Ward 201

Office hours: Battelle-Tompkins T13 on Tues. and Thursday 4:00- 5:00 p.m.

and by appointment

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Course objectives

In May, 2008 Israel celebrated its 60th anniversary. Since 1948 it has had enormous developments in many fields and has gained many achievements. Yet it is still facing many challenges. First and foremost, Israelis have not yet reached peace with their neighbors. In addition, they have not agreed upon basic questions like the borders of the state, their political institutions (Israel does not yet have a written constitution), or the definition of their collective identity. Indeed, there is a widespread consensus that Israeli politics is at a crossroads.

This course aims to give students familiarity with the nature of the Israeli democracy. It will incorporate both historical and contemporary elements, starting with the premises of the Zionist beliefs of the founding fathers and mothers of the state, the ramifications of the Six Days War in 1967 and the changes in the composition and culture of Israeli society.

The focus of the course will be on the main features of the contemporary Israeli polity. We will explore the nature of the political system – the political parties and the multi-party system, the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), leadership, electoral behavior, as well as the role of the military and the media in the public sphere. We will also study the changes in political culture - values, ethics and ideological controversies and conflicts. Special attention will be given to Israel's three major dilemmas: (1) the role of religion in this nation state; (2) Jewish - Arab relations; (3) cultural tension caused by forces of globalization.

Methods of Instruction:

The course will be taught through lectures, discussions, students' presentations, guest speakers and films. I encourage you to ask questions and raise issues. We have flexibility in our schedule and can take time to discuss issues you may raise.

Course requirements:

1. Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to actively participate in class.
2. You should read the material assigned for a date before that class.
3. At each meeting a group of 2-3 students will present a review of a book they have chosen and which has been approved by Professor Peri. The written book review must be submitted by October 14 (please see details below).

4. The final exam (on Wednesday December 9, at 5:30 p.m.) will be a written comprehensive exam covering the course material.

Evaluation Criteria and Percentage of Grade

Class participation 20%

Presentation in the class 15%

Book Review 20%

Final Exam 45%

Stay informed!

We will begin each one of our meetings, time permitting, with a discussion of current events in Israel. Therefore students are required to stay informed of the latest event and issues. I will gladly receive emails from you before our meetings with requests to deal with any particular topic.

Sources for extensive coverage include: the *New York Times*; Israeli dailies: *Ha'aretz* (leans left) (www.haaretz.com) and the *Jerusalem Post* (leans right) (www.jpost.com); *Jerusalem Report* (Internet) (www.jrep.com); Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (www.jmcc.org). Knowledge of current developments, especially events relating to material covered in the course, will influence the participation grade.

Book Report

Please select a book from the list of Suggested Books. If you choose a book that is not on this list, it must be approved by Professor Peri before using it for this assignment. **Final approval of the title: September 3.**

Read the book and, keeping the course's purpose in mind, write a three-four page paper, up to 1,200 words, that offers the following analysis: Summarize the book in fewer than 250 words; spend no more than 50 words describing the author's background; describe the issue/problem/dilemma raised in the book, and how it is related to our course. Express your opinion about it, in terms of what you learned from the book, and how how is it related to your own life and experience.

The reports must be typewritten or computer printed in a font size no 12 pt. There should be a paper title, the title of the book, your name and the date of submission. This information should be at the top of the first page, or on a separate title page. Either form is acceptable. Each page, (except the first), needs to be numbered. References to authors must be cited using a standard citation method.

Suggested books for the book report:

- Laurence J. Silberstein, (1999), *Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israel Culture*. New York, Routledge,
- Bernard Avishai (2008) *The Hebrew Republic*, Orlando, Hardcourt.
- Barak, Aharon (2008) *The Judge in a Democracy*, Princeton University Press.
- Tom Segev (2007) *1967 : Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East*, Hardcover.
- Yoram Hazony, (2000), *The Jewish State: Struggle for Israel's Soul*, New York: Basic Books.
- Gideon Shimoni (1995) *The Zionist Ideology*. Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press.

- Amos Oz (1993) *In the Land of Israel*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co.
- Yaron Ezrahi (1998) *Rubber Bullets*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Amos Elon (1983) *The Israelis: Founders And Sons*, New York: Penguin.
- David Grossman (1989) *The Yellow Wind*. New York: Delta.
- Sami Michael, (2007) *Trumpet in the Wadi*, N.Y., Simon & Schuster.
- Yael Zurabavel (1997) *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and Making of Israeli National Traditions*.
- Nachman Ben-Yehuda (1995) *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. University of Wisconsin Press

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to abide by the *Academic Integrity Code of American University* (available online at www.american.edu/american/registrar/text/t_aic.html).

Changes to the syllabus The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Required readings

Alan Dowty (1998) *The Jewish State A Century Later*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Asher Arian (1998) *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*. New Jersey: Chatham House.

Recommended:

Gregory S. Mahler (2004) *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State*. Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield.

Howard M. Sachar (2000) *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*. second edition. New York: Knopf. (Also 2003 second edition in paperback).

Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak (1989) *Trouble in Utopia: the Overburdened Polity of Israel*. Albany, SUNY Press.

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military*. Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press,

Gershon Shafir, and Yoav Peled (2002) *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Calendar, Course Topics and Readings

[Please note: The dates and topics are approximate: some topics may be discussed at greater length, and others may be concentrated. The student is responsible for keeping tabs with the pace of the lectures and readings]

Week 1: August 26, Introduction to Israeli Democracy

Required Reading:

Thomas S. Axworthy, & Mathew Johnson (May 2008) *New State to Sustained Democracy: The Case of Israel*, The center for the study of Democracy, Queens University, Kingston, Canada. pp. 1-80.

http://www.queensu.ca/csd/documents/Asper_research_final.08.6.13.pdf

Recommended reading:

Gregory S. Mahler (2004) *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield. pp.13-52.

Week 2. September 2, The Characteristics of Israeli Democracy**Required Reading:**

Thomas S. Axworthy, & Mathew Johnson (May 2008) *New State to Sustained Democracy: The Case of Israel*, The center for the study of Democracy, Queens University, Kingston, Canada. pp. 1-80.

http://www.queensu.ca/csd/documents/Asper_research_final.08.6.13.pdf

Recommended reading:

Guy Ben-Porat (2008) In Guy Ben-Porat, Shlomo Mizrahi, Arye Naor & Erez Tzfadia *Israel Since 1980*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press. pp. 9-41.

Michael Barnett (1996) The Politics of Uniqueness: The status of the Israeli Case, in Barnett, M. (ed.) *Israel in a Comparative Perspective*, Albany, Sunny Press. pp. 3-25.

Week 3. September 9, 1967: The Constitutional Structure**Required Reading:**

Alan Dowty (1998) pp. 3-18; 61-84.

Asher Arian (1998) pp. 237-265.

Recommended reading:

Gregory S. Mahler (2004) *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield. pp. 117-139; 141- 169.

Arye Naor, (2008) in Guy Ben-Porat, Shlomo Mizrahi, Arye Naor & Erez Tzfadia *Israel Since 1980*, Cambridge, Cambridge University press. pp. 69-90.

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, Berkeley, University of California Press. pp. 1-14; 56-88, 89-111.

Aharon Barak (Fall 1998) The Role of the Supreme Court in a Democracy, *Israel Studies*, 3 (2) pp. 6-28.

Asher Arian (1998) pp. 1-18.

Week 4. September 16, The Watershed of Israeli Politics

Final approval of the book assigned for book review.

Required Reading:

Alan Dowty (1998) pp. 19-60; 216-248.

Jonathan Adelman (2008) *The Rise of Israel*, London, Routledge. pp. 3-14.

Recommended reading:

Gregory S. Mahler (2004) *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield. pp.13-52.

Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord*, New York: CFR, 1988, Introduction and chapters 1-2, pp. 1-71.

Kimmerling, Baruch (ed.) (1989) *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers*. Albany, New York: Suny. pp 89-172.

Week 5. September 23, War and the Military in Israeli Politics

Required Reading:

Alan Dowty (1998) pp. 85-102.

Yoram Peri (2006) *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, Introduction.

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, Berkeley, University of California Press. pp. 208-228.

Recommended reading:

Yagil Levy (June 2008) Militarizing peace: why did the Israeli military spearhead the Oslo Accords? *Contemporary Politics*, 14 (2), pp.45–159.

Kobi Michael (2007) "The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority: An Intellectual Challenge in the Reality of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 30,(3) pp. 421 – 446

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390701343417>

Week 6. September 30, Politics of Identity and Recognition: Israel's Six Tribes

Required Reading:

Alan Dowty, (1998) pp. 159-183.

Asher Arian (1998) pp. 19-25.

Recommended reading:

Zvi Gitelman (2000) The Russian Revolution in Israel, pp 95-108 in Dowty Alan (ed.) (2004) *Critical Issues in Israeli Politics*, Westport Connecticut And London: Praeger,

Baruch Kimmerling (1999) Elections as a Battleground over Collective Identity. pp. 27-44 in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.) *The Elections in Israel 1996*. Albany: SUNY Press.

**Week 7. October 7, The Meaning of "Jewish and Democratic":
Between *Ha'Knesset* and *Beit-Haknesset***

Required Reading:

Alan Dowty (Fall 1999), Is Israel Democratic? Substance and Semantics in the Ethnic Democracy Debate, *Israel Studies* 4(2) pp. 1-15.

Ruth Gavison, (Spring 1999), Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the 'Ethnic Democracy' Debate, *Israel Studies* 4/1 44-72.

Recommended reading:

Reuven Y. Hazan (2000) Religion and Politics in Israel: The Rise and Fall of the Consociational Model, pp. 109-137 in Reuven Hazan, Y. and Moshe Maor (eds.) *Parties, Elections and Cleavages: Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*. London: Frank Cass.

Asher Cohen, (2004) Changes in the Orthodox Camp and their Influence on the Deepening Religious-Secular Schism at the Outset of the 21 Century, pp. 72-94 in Dowty, Alan (ed.) *Critical Issues in Israeli Politics*, Westport Connecticut and London, Praeger,

Yoram Hazony, (2001) *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul*, New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-38.

Bernard Avishai (2008) pp. 1-21.

Asher Cohen and Bernard Susser (2000), *Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 8. October 14, Israeli Palestinians: "Us" or "Them?"

Final date for submitting the Book report

Required Reading:

Alan Dowty (1998) pp. 184-215.

The Arab Minority in Israel: An Analysis of the "Future Vision" Documents:

(<http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42d75369-d582-4380-8395-d25925b85eaf%7D/ARAB%20MINORITY%20IN%20ISRAEL.PDF>)

Recommended reading:

Ian Lustick (Summer 1999) Israel as a Non-Arab State: The Political Implications of Mass Immigration of Non-Jews, *Middle East Journal*, 53 (3) pp. 101-117.

Sammy Smootha (Fall 1997), Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype, *Israel Studies* 2 (2) pp. 198-241.

As'ad Ghanem, Nadim Rouhana and Oren Yiftachel, "Questioning 'Ethnic Democracy': A Response to Sammy Smootha," *Israel Studies*, vol. 3, 1998, 2.

Alan Dowty, "Is Israel Democratic? Substance and Semantics in the Ethnic Democracy Debate", in *Israel Studies*, Volume 4, 1999, Number 2.

Majid Al Haj (2004) The Status of The Palestinians in Israel: A Double Periphery in an Ethnic National State, pp. 107-126 in Dowty, Alan (Ed.) *Critical Issues in Israeli Politics*, Westport Connecticut And :London, Praeger.

Yoav Peled (June 1992) Ethnic Democracy and the Legal Construction of Citizenship: Arab Citizens of the Jewish State, *American Political Science Review* 86 (2) pp. 432- 443.

Week 9. October 21, Meet an Author

A discussion with Bernard Avishai on his new book *The Hebrew Republic*.

**Week 10. October 28, From Party-State to Media-Politics:
The Media in Israeli Politics**

Required Reading:

Yoram Peri (2004) *Telepopulism: Media and Politics in Israel*. Stanford University Press. pp. 52-72.

Gabriel Sheffer (2000) Political change and Party System Transformation, pp. 148-171 in Reuven Y. Hazan and Moshe Maor (eds.) *Parties, Elections and Cleavages: Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*. London: Frank Cass.

Recommended reading:

Peter Meding (2000) From Government by party to Government despite Parties, pp. 172-208 in Reuven Y. Hazan and Moshe Maor (eds.) *Parties, Elections and Cleavages: Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*. London: Frank Cass.

Week 11. November 4, Continuity and Change of Israeli Culture

Required Reading:

Yael Zerubavel "The "Mythological Sabra" and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities", *Israel Studies* 7(2), 2002, pp. 115-120. 115-144

Michael Feige (2002) Introduction: Rethinking Israeli Memory and Identity, *Israeli Studies* Vol 7 (2) I-XIV.

Recommended reading:

Yaron Ezrahi (1997) *Rubber Bullets*, pp. 77-116.

Lilly Weissbrod, *Israeli Identity—In Search of a Successor to the Pioneer, Tsabar and Settler*, Frank Cass 2002, pp. 71-105.

Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. by Haim Watzman (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000),

Myron J. Aronoff (1993) The Origins of Israeli Political Culture, in Ehud Sprinzak and Larry Diamond, eds., *Israeli Democracy Under Stress*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner. pp. 47-63.

Yoram Peri (Fall 1996) Is Israel Militaristic? The Radical Social Scientists and Israeli Militarism, *Israel studies*, 1 (2) pp. 230-266.

**Week 12. November 11, The Cultural war:
"Jerusalem" V. "Tel-Aviv:"**

Change of plan: A guest speaker Avi Beker, author of *The Chosen People*.

Required Reading:

Yoram Peri (2005) *The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*, Stanford University Press, Introduction and chapter 1.

Ehud Sprinzak (1999), *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination*, New York: The Free Press. pp. 145-178.

Recommended reading:

Charles S. Liebman (1997) "Reconceptualizing the Cultural Conflict among Israeli Jews", *Israel Studies*, Vol. 2 (2) 172-189.

Ian Lustick (1988) *From the Land of the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.

Week 13. November 18, The Post-Zionism Debate

Required Reading:

Silberstein, Laurence J.(1999) *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture*. New York and London: Routledge. pp.1-14, 89-126.

Recommended reading:**Three examples of the "new historians'" writings:**

1) Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881-1999* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

2) Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1947-1951* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1992).

3) Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

Shlomo Avineri, "Israel-A Normative Value of Jewish Existence," in Carol Diamant, ed., *Zionism: The Sequel* (New York: Hadassah, 1998), 85-88.

Efraim Karsh, ed., *From Rabin to Netanyahu: Israel's Troubled Agenda* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 280-295.

Menachem Brinker, "The End of Zionism? Thoughts on the Wages of Success," in Carol Diamant, ed., *Zionism: The Sequel* (New York: Hadassah, 1998), 293-299.

Week 14. December 2, Topic: The Crisis of Leadership**Required Reading:**

Gabriel Sheffer, (1999) Structural change in Leadership Transformation, pp. 55-72 in David Levi-Faur, Gabriel Sheffer and David Vogel (eds.) (1999) *Israel: The Dynamics of Change and Continuity*. London: Frank Cass.

Recommended reading:

Michael Bar-Zohar (1986) *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*. New York: Adama Books.

Anita Shapira (1984) *Berl: The Biography of a Socialist Zionist, Berl Katznelson, 1887-1944*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Eric Silver (1984) *Begin: The Haunted Prophet*, New York: Random House.

Yitzhak Rabin (1996) *The Rabin Memoirs*, Berkeley Calif. Stanford University Press.

Elinor Burkett (2008) *Golda Meir: The Iron Lady of the Middle East*, London.

Week 15. Dec 9 Final Exam
