Becoming Israel: War, Peace, and the Politics of Israel's Identity

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Israelis probably are among the few peoples in the world who, even after several generations of independent existence, still ask: "who were we?," "who are we?," "who is we?," "what are we?, "where are we?," and "who will we become?" Attempting to show why this is so, this course introduces students to Israeli politics, society, institutions and political practice from the distinctive perspective of the development of Israeli identity (identities). Special attention will be given to the sources of Israeli identity, the main players involved in its politics, and the role of regional war and the peace process in its development and inner conflicts. In particular, the course will trace the construction of Israeli identity, starting from the early times of Zionism and ending with the contemporary identity conflicts over the Oslo peace process with the Palestinians. I will try to show that there is a direct connection between Zionist constituting ideologies, the nature of Israel's institutions and society, and the split soul of Israeli identity.

Course requirements: A mid-term paper (40%), which is due on October 16, 2002 and a final exam (60%). Other than due to medical emergencies, no late assignments will be accepted.

Required Bibliography


(These books are available at U of T bookstore, Koffler Center) Copies of required and recommended readings are available on two hours short-term loan in the reserve stacks of Robarts library. Some items can also be found at Robarts as non-circulating periodicals. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (AAPSS) and the American Political Science Review can be accessed on line.
from the library website. A few items can also be found at the "Trinity College" library located at the Munk Center for International Studies.

Course Topics and Readings

I- Introduction

Week 1: "Under Construction": Israeli Identity/Identities

Garfinkle, chapter 1 and 2.

Recommended:


II- Who Were We?

Week 2: Zionism and the Intellectual Origins of Israeli Identity


Week 3: Myths and Reality in the Construction of the Modern State of Israel

Garfinkle, chapter 3.

Zerubavel, 13-36, 39-47, 147-167

Recommended:


Zerubavel, 60-76, 192-213.


III- Who Are We?

**Week 4: The Israeli State, Institutions, and Identity**

Garfinkle, chapter 5.


Recommended:


**Week 5: The Israeli People, Society, Economy, and Identity**

Garfinkle, chapter 4.


Recommended:


IV- Who Is "We?"

**Week 6: "Jerusalem" and "Tel-Aviv:" The Split Soul of Israeli Identity**

Ezrahi, chapters, 5, 7, and 10.

Recommended:

Ezrahi, chapter 1.

**Week 7: "Kulturkampf:" The Secular Religious Divide**


Recommended:


**Week 8: "Post-Zionism," the "New Historians," and Israeli Identity**

Silberstein, chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Recommended:


Yoram Hazony, The Jewish State: Struggle for Israel's Soul (New York: Basic, 2000), chapters 1 and 2.

Silberstein, chapter 5.

Some examples of the "new historians" writings:


Week 9: The Israeli Palestinians: "Us" or "Them?"


Recommended:


**V- What Are We?**

**Week 10: Israeli Democracy as Identity**


Recommended:


**Week 11: War, Peace and Israeli Identity**

Garfinkle, 199-228, 245-278, 289-296.

Ezrahi, chapter 9.

Michael Barnett, "Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo," *European Journal of International Relations* 5/1 (March 1999), 5-36.

Recommended:
Ezrahi, chapters 6 and 8.


VI- Where Are We?

Week 12: The Politics of Israel's Regional Identity


David Ohana, "Israel Towards a Mediterranean Identity, " in Shlomo Avineri and Werner Weidenfeld, eds., Integration and Identity: Challenges to Europe and Israel (Bonn: Europa Union Verlag, 1999), 81-99.

Recommended:


VII- Who Will We Become?

Week 13: The Alternative Paths of Israeli Identity/Identities

Ezrahi, chapter 11.

Recommended:


Additional Bibliography

Books


Hermann, Tamar and Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar (eds.) (1997) *Israeli Society and the Challenge of Transition to Co-existence*. Tel Aviv: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University.


**Most Relevant Journals**

*Ethnic and Racial Studies*

*History and Memory*
International Journal of Middle East Studies

Israel Affairs

Israel Studies

The Jerusalem Quarterly

Middle East Journal

Philosophy and Social Criticism

Newspapers and Magazines

Haaretz (English Edition, Internet) www.haaretzdaily.com

Jerusalem Post (Internet) www.jpost.com

Jerusalem Report (Internet) www.jrep.com