Israel: Politics and Society

Dr. Reuven Y. Hazan

Course Objectives:

This course presents an analysis, couched within theoretical frameworks from other Western democracies, of politics and society in Israel. The emphasis will be on classification, typological mappings and model-derived explanations of how the social cleavages of Israeli society function and behave in the Israeli political process, particularly in light of the reforms that have transformed the arena of Israeli politics.

The goal of this course is to expose you to some of the contemporary socio-political issues in Israel, particularly the highly contentious problem of religion and politics.

Lectures proceed from the assumption that all students have read the assignments, and class will often include open discussion. Class participation will be factored into the final grade, and attendance is compulsory. There will be a final exam.

There is only one text, which is assigned almost in its entirety:
(This book also appeared as a special issue of the journal Israel Affairs, Vol. 6, #2, Winter 1999.)

There is an additional text, a majority of which is assigned:

Both books are available for purchase at the Akademon bookstore. The remaining items come from several books and journals, all of which are on reserve at the library, along with the main and the recommended texts.
1. Introduction: Are Israeli Politics and Society Comparable or Unique?

In Michael Barnett (ed.) Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the

Yehezkel Dror, “On the Uniqueness of Israel: Multiple Readings.”
In Michael Barnett (ed.) Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the

Ira Sharkansky, “The Promised Land of the Chosen People is not all that Distinctive:
On the Value of Comparison.”
In David Levi-Faur, Gabriel Sheffer and David Vogel (eds.) Israel: Dynamics of

Gregory S. Mahler. Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern

2. Social Cleavages in Israel

Judith Shuval, “The Structure and Dilemmas of Israeli Pluralism.”
In Baruch Kimmerling (ed.) The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and

Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak. Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of
Ch. 2: “Israel as a Multi-Cleavage Society”, pp. 32-97.

Ch. 7: “The Communal Split”, pp. 143-158.

Gregory S. Mahler. Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern
3. The Development and Consequences of Israeli Politics

Ch. 5: “The Prime Minister and the Knesset”, 141-169.
Ch. 6: “Political Parties and Interest Groups”, pp. 171-191.

Itzhak Galnoor. “The Israeli Political System: A Profile.”
In Keith Kyle and Joel Peters (eds.) Whither Israel? The Domestic Challenges. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1993, pp. 87-102.

Emanuel Gutmann. “Israel: Democracy Without a Constitution.”


4. Politics and Society in Israel #1: Religion and Politics

Benyamin Neuberger. “Religion and State in Europe and Israel.”

Ch. 8: Religion and Politics, pp. 159-183.


Suggested additional reading:
5. Politics and Society in Israel #2: Israeli Arabs


Alan Dowty. “Consociationalism and Ethnic Democracy: Israeli Arabs in Comparative Perspective.”

6. The Reshaping of Israeli Politics in the 1990s

Arend Lijphart. “Israeli Democracy and Democratic Reform in Comparative Perspective.”


Reuven Y. Hazan, “Presidential-Parliamentarism: Direct Popular Election of the Prime Minister, Israel’s New Electoral and Political System.”


Michal Shamir and Asher Arian. “Collective Identity and Electoral Competition in Israel.”


Baruch Kimmerling. “Elections as a Battleground over Collective Identity.”
In Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.) The Elections in Israel 1996.

David Nachmias and Itai Sened. “The Bias of Pluralism: The Redistributive Effects of
the New Electoral Law.”
In Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.) The Elections in Israel 1996.

Reuven Y. Hazan. “Yes, Institutions Matter: The Impact of Institutional Reform
on Parliamentary Members and Leaders in Israel.”
In Lawrence D. Longley and Reuven Y. Hazan (eds.) The Uneasy
Relationship Between Parliamentary Members and Leaders. London: Frank
Cass, 1999, pp. 303-326

Reuven Y. Hazan and Gideon Rahat. “Representation, Electoral Reform, and
Democracy: Theoretical and Empirical Lessons from the 1996 Elections in
Israel.”
Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 33, #10, December 2000, pp. 1310-1336.

Reuven Y. Hazan. “The Israeli Mixed Electoral System: Unexpected Reciprocal and
Cumulative Consequences.”
In Matthew Shugart and Martin Wattenberg (eds.) Mixed-Member Electoral
pp. 351-379.

Israel.”

8. Political Change and Social Transformation in Israel

Gabriel Sheffer. “Political Change and Party System Transformation.”
In Reuven Y. Hazan and Moshe Maor (eds.) Parties, Elections and
Cleavages: Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective. London:

In Reuven Y. Hazan and Moshe Maor (eds.) Parties, Elections and
Cleavages: Israel in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective. London:
9. Politics and Society: Israel in Comparative Perspective


10. Wither Israeli Politics and Society? The 2003 Elections
