This course examines some of the issues currently facing Israeli society and the ongoing debates in Israeli politics. The course is organized into three parts. Part one will establish the historical and political background against which the divisions and debates to be examined play out. Part two will then focus on the major cleavages in Israeli society—along ethnic, religious and national lines. Finally, part three will explore the debates over Zionism and post-Zionism, the Jewish and democratic nature of the state, the future of the West Bank and Gaza and the peace process, and the definition of Israeli national identity. Although this course is not about the Arab-Israeli or Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, the influence of these conflicts upon Israeli society and political culture will be addressed. The course assumes no prior knowledge of Israel.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce students to contemporary Israeli politics and society. It aims to acquaint students with the major issues and debates in Israeli politics and society, and to provide them with a knowledge of Israel’s history and political system.

Course Texts (available for purchase in the textbook annex):


Requirements:

**Attendance:** You must attend all classes and if for a valid reason (such as a documented medical problem or other emergency) you cannot do so you must inform me ahead of time during my office hours, by telephone, or by e-mail. Class attendance is recorded, and students with more than four unexcused absences will have their final grade lowered.

**Participation:** You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings as well as current events concerning Israel. Questions, discussion and debate during class are strongly encouraged.

**Keeping Informed:** You are expected to keep informed of current events in Israel. *Ha’aretz*, Israel’s leading daily newspaper, has an English edition available for free on the internet (www.haaretzdaily.com). You can also register for free access to *The Jerusalem Post*, Israel’s oldest English-language daily newspaper (www.jpost.com).

**Midterm Exam:** The in-class mid-term exam will consist of short-answer questions (multiple choice, true/false, identification) and essay questions based upon the topics we have covered up to that point.

**Research Paper:** You choose a subject to research and write about, making sure that you formulate an appropriate question and/or issue to address in your paper. You will need to clear the subject with me in advance by providing me with a written paragraph about the subject of your paper and a list of at least five potential scholarly sources (i.e., scholarly books and articles in academic journals). The paper should be approximately 15 double-spaced pages with appropriate citation. It will be due on the last day of class (Wednesday, December 10th). Late papers will receive a grade penalty.

**Grading:**
- Participation: 10%
- Class Debate: 10%
- Midterm Exam: 30%
- Research Paper: 50%

**Letter Grading System:**
- 90-100% = A
- 85-89% = A-
- 80-84% = B+
- 75-79% = B
- 70-74% = B-
- 65-69% = C+
- 60-64% = C
- 55-59% = C-
- 50-54% = D
- 0-49% = F
I reserve the right to make adjustments to this system, especially to take into account the overall performance of the class or individual cases where a student has demonstrated substantial improvement across the semester.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Week 1 (Sept 8, 10)  Course Overview and Introduction
- Garfinkle, ch.1

**Part I. Historical and Political Background**

Week 2 (Sept 15, 17)  Jewish History: From Ancient Israel to the State of Israel
- Garfinkle, ch.2
- Peretz and Doron, ch.1, pp. 11-45
- Dowty, chs.2, 3

Film screening: “Is Jerusalem Burning?”

Week 3 (Sept 22, 24)  Society and State Formation
- Garfinkle, ch.3
- Dowty, ch.4

Week 4 (Sept 29, Oct 1)  Parties, the Electoral System and State Institutions
- Garfinkle, ch.5
- Peretz and Doron, chs.3, 4, 6

Week 5 (Oct 6, 8)  Defense and Foreign Policy
- Garfinkle, ch.6
- Dowty, ch.5
• Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, “A place among the nations,” in *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy and the State* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 91-122

Film screening: “Kippur”

Week 6 (Oct 13) Political Processes and Changes
• Peretz and Doron, ch.8
• Dowty, ch.6

**************MIDTERM EXAM (Wed, Oct 15)***************

**Part II. Social Divisions**

Week 7 (Oct 22) The Ethnic Divide: Ashkenazim and Mizrahim
• Dowty, ch.7

Week 8 (Oct 27, 29) The Religious Divide: Secular and Religious Jews
• Dowty, ch.8


**Film Screening: “Time of Favor”** (Monday, October 27, 7.00-9.00pm)

**Week 9 (Nov 3, 5)  The National Divide: Jews and Arabs**

- Guest Speaker: Forsan Hussein (The Abraham Fund)

**Week 10 (Nov 10, 12)  The Ideological Divide: Zionists and Post-Zionists**


**Week 11 (Nov 17, 19)  The Political Divide: Hawks and Doves**

- Garfinkle, ch.7
- Dowty, ch.10

**Week 12 (Friday Nov 21, 24)  The Future of the Peace Process**

Guest Speaker: Ilan Peleg (Department of Government, Lafayette College)

Guest Speaker: Scott Lasensky (Department of Politics, Mount Holyoke College)

**Week 13 (Dec 1, 3)  The Identity Divide: Jews and Israelis**


**Week 14 (Dec 8, 10)  Conclusion: The Future of Israel**