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 it is 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:**
- Tom Segev (2007)1967 : Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East, Hardcover.

**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**


**Recommended:**


**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**
Week 2. September 2, The Characteristics of Israeli Democracy

Required Reading:

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

Recommended reading:


Required Reading:


Recommended reading:


Week 4. September 16, The Watershed of Israeli Politics

Final approval of the book assigned for book review.

Required Reading:


Recommended reading:


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

Required Reading:


Recommended reading:


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

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

Required Reading:


**Recommended reading:**


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

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


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

**Final date for submitting the Book report**

**Required Reading:**

The Arab Minority in Israel: An Analysis of the "Future Vision" Documents:
(http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42d75369-d582-4380-8395-d25925b85ea1%7D/ARAB%20MINORITY%20IN%20ISRAEL.PDF)

Recommended reading:


**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:


**Recommended reading:**


**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


**Recommended reading:**


**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:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 13. November 18, The Post-Zionism Debate **

**Required Reading:**

Recommended reading:

Three examples of the "new historians’" writings:


Required Reading:


Recommended reading:


Week 15. Dec 9 Final Exam

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