

“Israeli Society and Politics”
HIST 385 – junior/senior lecture
Spring 2012 Semester - Yaron Ayalon
[View Syllabus](#)

The State of Israel was founded in 1948. For Jews, it was the fulfillment of a 2000-year long dream to return to their ancestral homeland of Eretz Yisrael. For others, notably the Arab inhabitants known as the Palestinians (named after their land, Palestine), the establishment of a Jewish state was a tragedy. This course, however, will deal very briefly with the dispute between the two parties, also known as the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Although the conflict has undoubtedly shaped Israeli society and its political system, this course will mostly have an inward focus on Israel itself: its political system, international relations, how it functions as a society of immigrants, relationships between secular and religious Jews and between Jews of various ethnic backgrounds, and the role the military plays in Israeli society. We will also look at Israeli culture through music and film.

Previous knowledge about the history of Judaism, Israel, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, or the Middle East is helpful, but not required. Historical and other background will be provided in class, as well as in the readings for most weeks.

Grading:

The maximum number of points you may earn for this course is 1000. Grading will be distributed in the following manner:

Attendance and participation – 100pts

First essay – 200pts

Second essay – 200pts

Final essay – 500pts

Your final grade will be determined by your points balance as of 12/12/11, according to the following key: above 940 points: A; 900-939: A-; 860-899: B+; 820-459: B; 785-819: B-; 760-784: C+; 710-759: C; 690-709: C-; 660-689: D+; 600-659: D; less than 600: F.

You will not receive a final grade lower than what your total number of points is worth according to the key above, but I may decide to give you a higher grade.

Course Schedule:

There is one necessary text you will need to purchase for this course. It is available from the university bookstore or from amazon.com and other similar online stores:

Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel: The Second Republic* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005).

In the schedule below, assignments from this books appear as Arian + the relevant page numbers.

Readings from other sources will be available via the course’s page on Blackboard (under “Content”) in a scanned PDF copy available for view online or download and print. Most of the books mentioned here are available at the library (just look them up in the catalog). If you prefer to read from the books themselves instead of the PDFs, please do so in the library and do not check out the books, so others may have access to them as well.

Reading assignments that appear for each week should be read *in preparation for* that week, with specific per-class instructions given the week before. This includes looking up information about the author of each text, and any other places, organizations, or people mentioned in the text that you have not heard of before. You may use the internet or any other credible source you like to dig out that information. This knowledge will be naturally assumed when readings are discussed in class.

Week 1-2 (1/19-24-26-31, 2/2): Introduction; a different perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict

(to be read not before 1/26) Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader: a Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 4-9, 11-18, 30-36, 65-77, 81-87, 89-91, 105-116, 135-39, 171-82, 207-15, 222-28, 354-58, 385-400, 413-428, 442-459.

Weeks 3-5 (2/7-9-14-16-21-23): The political and electoral system

Arian, 83-312 (specific pages from that range will be assigned for each class).

Weeks 6 (2/28-3/1): Israel as a society of immigrants

Arian, 19-47.

David Lehmann and Batia Siebzehner, *Remaking of Israeli Judaism: The Challenge of Shas* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2006), pp. 169-202.

Tanya Schwarz, *Ethiopian Jewish Immigrants in Israel: the Homeland Postponed* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2001), pp. 41-71, 98-113.

*** 2/28: first essay due by the beginning of class ***

Week 7 (3/6-8): religious-secular contentions

Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak (eds.), *Militarism and Israeli Society* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 14-41, 120-144.

Steven Mazie, *Israel's Higher Law: Religion and Liberal Democracy in the Jewish State* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 189-209.

Week 8 (3/20-22): Israeli Music

Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 137-190.

Week 9 (3/27-29): Education in Israel

Yossi Shavit et. al. "Israel: diversification, expansion, and inequality in higher education" in: *Stratification in Higher Education: A Comparative Study* ed. Yossi Shavit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 39-62.

A collection of articles on education from Haaretz.

Week 10 (4/3-5): Working and living in Israel: healthcare, social security, and labor unions

Shifra Shvarts, *The Workers' Health Fund in Eretz Israel: Kupat Holim* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 1-6, 93-112.

Yinon Cohen et al., "The state of organized labor in Israel," *Journal of Labor Research* 28 (2007), 2: 255-273.

A collection of articles on elective abortions from Israeli media

Week 11-12 (4/10-12-17-19): Israel's international relations

A collection of essays from Foreign Policy (and possibly other magazines/journals). We will also watch a few short videos in class and at home.

*** 4/10: second essay due by the beginning of class ***

4/10: deadline to approve your own research question for final papers (if you want to set your own question)

Week 13-14 (4/24-26, 5/1): Israeli comedy and satire

We will watch and discuss videos in class

*** 5/7: final essay due ***