

Exploring Israeli Politics: From Zionism to Contemporary Political Realities

Dr. Asaf Shamis

Email: ashamis@staff.haifa.ac.il

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This undergraduate course offers students an opportunity to explore Israeli politics from a scholarly perspective. Beginning with an overview of key paradigms in Israel Studies, the course delves into the historical evolution of Zionism as both an ideology and a national movement. Students will examine the diverse strands of Zionist thought, considering varying perspectives on Jewish historical consciousness and the establishment of a Jewish state. The course will further examine the foundational framework of the State of Israel, with a focus on its democratic institutions. Through comparative analysis, students will assess Israeli democracy within the broader context of democratic theory, gaining insight into its functioning and challenges. Additionally, the course will explore significant themes within Israeli politics, encompassing viewpoints from across the ideological spectrum. Students will also learn about Israeli regional and foreign policy. By the end of the course, students will acquire the historical knowledge and the analytical tools to engage critically with past and present Israeli politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade will reflect your performance on the following:

A. Attendance and participation.....	30 points
B. Class Presentation	20 points
C. Final Exam	50 points

Total possible points: 100 points

THEMES & TOPICS

- Methodological Challenges to the Study of Israel
- The Origins and Evolution of Zionism
- Varieties of Zionism: Labor Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, Religious Zionism
- The Establishment of the State of Israel
- Israel's Democratic Institutions: Parliament, Judiciary, Executive
- Israeli Political Parties and Electoral Systems
- Israel's Foreign Relations: Regional Dynamics and International Alliances
- Israel's Economy: Challenges and Opportunities
- Social and Cultural Cleavages in Israeli Society
- Religion and State in Israel
- Contemporary Challenges to Israeli Democracy

A SELECTION OF READINGS FOR THE COURSE

Derek Penslar, *Israel in History*, Routledge, 2007.

The Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Israel, Routledge, 2022 (e-book in the library).

A. Shapira, *Israel: A History*, The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies, 2014.

G. Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*, Brandeis University Press, 1995.

E. Kaplan, "Post-Post Zionism: A Paradigm Shift in Israel Studies?" *Israel Studies Review*, 28/1, 2013, 142-155.

S. Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, 1970, 3-13.

A. Arian, *The Second Republic: Politics in Israel*, 1998, 103-140, 237-278.

A. Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later*, 1998, 3-18.

S. Smoocha, "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State", *Nations and Nationalism*, 8/4, 2002, 475-503.

B. Kimmerling, "Religion, Nationalism and Democracy in Israel," *Democratic Theory*, 6/3, September 1999, 339-363.

A. Yakobson, "Jewish Peoplehood and the Jewish State, How Unique? A Comparative Study," *Israel Studies*, 13/2, 2008, 1-27.

Y. Yonah, "Fifty Years Later: The Scope and Limits of Liberal Democracy in Israel," *An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory*, 6/3, 1999, 411-428.