

University of Florida, Fall 2007

Israeli Society

JST 4905 / SYA 4930/ SYA 7933/ POS 4931

Professor Tamir Sorek

Time and place: Tuesdays 8:30 – 10:25, Turlington 2319

Thursdays, 9:35 – 10:25, Florida Gym 0220

Office hours: 3356 Turlington Hall; Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:00 or by appointment.

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Description

The course introduces students to major themes in dynamics of contemporary Israeli society. It juxtaposes the different subjective points of view and motivations of the various actors involved, and focuses on the following: the tension between the definition of Israel as a Jewish state and democratic aspirations, the place of religion in defining national identity and in politics, the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fragile status of the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel, intra-Jewish ethnic divides, gender identities, struggles over collective memory, and the implication of globalization on Israeli society and culture. The course does not require any previous knowledge about Israel.



Reading

The course's reading assignments are based mainly on the following required items:

1. Ben-Rafael, Eliezer and Yochanan Peres, 2005. *Is Israel One? Religion, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism Confounded*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.
2. Kimmerling, Baruch. 2001. *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: Society, Cultures, and Military in the Israeli State*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: California University Press, 2001.
3. Course list on e-reserve.

Grading

1. Class participation + web participation	20 %
2. Three quizzes	3x8 = 24 %
3. A movie review	6 %
2. A mid-term paper	20 %
3. Final paper	30 %

Graduate Students are exempted from mid-term and final papers and should submit a research paper, based on the instructor's personal guidelines, instead.

Assignments:

Participation

Attendance and active participation in all course meetings is an integral part of the course and is mandatory. The meetings will include frontal lectures, movies, and class discussions. Students are expected to have read the reading assignments closely and critically before each meeting. Your participation grade is worth 20% of the final grade. For those who do not feel comfortable speaking in class, the website forum can make up for poor class participation. The web forum cannot substitute for attendance.

Quizzes

Throughout the semester you will be required to take three quizzes. Each quiz will take 15 minutes and its weight in the final grade is 8%.

Mid term and final Papers

By 10/11 you will be required to submit an essay according to instructions that will be given later. The essay's length should be approximately 1000 words and it is worth 20% of your final grade. **Final Paper** will be submitted by 12/10, its length will be approximately 2000 words and it is worth 30% of the final grade.

A movie review

Throughout the semester we will watch three documentary movies about Israeli society. You are required to submit a review of one of them, no later than 7 days after the screening. A review is not a summary - you are expected to write your thoughts about the movie as a student in the course 'Israeli Society'. The length should be approximately 300 words.

Class schedule and reading assignments

Section 1: Dilemmas of boundaries and definitions

In the first week we will discuss the different perspectives on Zionism, both from its sympathizers and critics. In the second week we will discuss the Israeli public sphere as a battleground of competing definitions of collective identity and discourses of citizenship.

8/23 – introduction

8/28-8/30

Dowty, Alan. *The Jewish State: A Century Later*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 34-84

9/4 – 9/6

The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: Introduction + Ch. 1, 3, and 4. (1-55, 89-129)
36

Section 2: Religion and Nationalism

A major feature of the political and social order in the State of Israel is its definition as a “Jewish State”, a definition that creates blurred boundaries between religion, nation, and state. In this section we will discuss the various aspects of this complexity and identify the variety of conceptions among Jewish Israelis regarding the desired relationship between the two.

9/11

“The Ultra Orthodox in the City”, Ch. 3, pp. 61-85 in *Is Israel one?*

9/18

“The Cultural Code of Jewishness: Religion and Nationalism”: *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, Ch. 6, pp. 173 – 207.

9/20

“Settlers as Cleavage”: Ch. 4, 86-103 in “*Is Israel one?*”

Section 3: Mizrahim and Ashkenazim

A major socio-political tension within Jewish Israeli society stems from the overlapping of socio-economic gaps and the continent of origin, where Jews with origins in the Middle East or North Africa suffer from inferiority in housing, education and occupation compared to Jews whose origins are in Western countries. In this week we will analyze the reasons behind this inequality, as well as its political and cultural aspects.

9/25 (1st quiz)

“Mizrahim and Ashkenazim”, Ch. 5, pp. 107-127 in “*Is Israel one?*”

10/2

Oren Yiftachel, “Social Control, Urban Planning and Ethno-class Relations: Mizrahi Jews in Israel's ‘Development Towns’”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24 (2), 2000: 418-438.

10/4

"Sephardim in Israel: Zionism From the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text*, 19/20, (Fall 1988).

Section 4: The Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel

Approximately 16 percent of Israeli citizens are Arab-Palestinians. This population consists of Palestinians who were not uprooted during the 1948 war, and received Israeli citizenship. They face diverse forms of discrimination and they hold a marginal status both among Israelis and Palestinians. In this section we will discuss the implications of the existence of a national minority in an ethnic nation state, and the diverse strategies the Arab citizens have developed to cope with their predicament.

10/9 – 10/11

Smootha, Sammy. 2004. "Arab-Jewish Relations in a Deeply Divided Society." Pp. 31-68 in *Israeli Identity in Transition*, edited by A. Shapira. Westport, CT and London: Praeger. (p)

10/16

1. Bishara, Azmi. "Israeli- Arabs: reading a fragmented political discourse." in *Al-Ahram* 5-11.2.1998.
2. Shavit, Ari, "Citizen Azmi", Interview with Azmi Bishara, *Ha'aretz* 29.5.1998

* Movie: "Citizen Bishara", Simone Bitton, 2001

10/18

Sorek, Tamir "Between Football and Martyrdom - the Bi-Focal Localism of a Palestinian Town in Israel," *British Journal of Sociology*, 56 (4) 2005, 635-661.

Section 5: Israel's 'non-citizens' in the 1967 occupied territories

The 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip created a political reality in which a large part of the Palestinian people live under an Israeli system of control as non-citizens. In this week we will analyze the process of colonization of these territories, and the implications on Israeli society following this process.

10/23

"Steering a path under occupation": Ch. 9 in *The Palestinian People: A History* by Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

10/25

"Oslo, What Went Wrong": Ch. 11 in *The Palestinian People: A History* by Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Section 6: Democracy in Israel?

This meeting will be devoted to a major academic and political controversy. In American media, Israel is frequently referred to as 'the only democracy in the Middle East', but this definition is not universally accepted. The reading in this discusses the following: in light of the systematic discrimination of its Arab citizens and the enduring occupation of the West Bank, to what extent is it legitimate to consider Israel a democracy?

10/30 (2nd quiz)

1. Smooha, Sammy. 2002. "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State." *Nations and Nationalism* 8(4):475-503.
2. Yiftachel, Oren. 1999. "Ethnocracy: the politics of Judaizing Israel/Palestine." *Constellations* 6(3):364-390.

Section 6: The newcomers of the 1990's and the guest workers

The massive immigration to Israel during the 1990's, mainly from the former USSR, but also from Ethiopia, is the sharpest expression of Israel still being an active immigrant settler society. This immigration has forced the local Jewish population to face basic questions regarding several aspects of their collective identity, including the Jewish identity of the state and the status of the Israeli-Hebraic culture. During the same time, Israeli economy absorbed a significant number of guest workers, who numbered 190,000 in 2004. They came from many countries, mainly from Romania, Thailand and the Philippines. Despite a highly restrictive and exclusionary policy, small communities of migrant workers have grown, including families with children, adding another question mark to the definition of Israel as a Jewish state.

1/11

"Russian Immigrants", Ch. 6, pp. 129-150 in "*Is Israel one?*"

11/6

1. "Ethiopian Jews", Ch. 7, pp. 151-164 in "*Is Israel one?*"
2. Kemp, Adriana and Rebeca Rajjman. 2003. "Christian Zionists in the Holy Land: Evangelical Churches, Labor Migrants, and the Jewish State." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10:295-318

11/8

* Movie: "Do they Catch Children Too?" Hedva Galili Smolinsky, 2003.

Section 7: Memory and Identity

Collective memory is the pillar of any collective identity, and controversies over the past are often related to contemporary disagreements about the boundaries and character of a certain collective identity. In this week we will discuss some aspects of this phenomenon in the Israeli context.

11/13

Benvenisti, Meiron. 2002. "The Hebrew Map." Pp. 11-54 in *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

11/15

Schuman, Howard, Vinitzky-Seroussi, Vered, Amiram D. Vinokur. 2003. "Keeping the Past Alive: Memories of Israeli Jews at the Turn of the Millennium", *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2003.

Section 8: Gender and nation

In this section we will discuss and analyze gender identities and gender inequality in Israeli society, and their relation to the way Israeli national identity is has been shaped.

11/20

Izraeli, Dafna, "Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defense Forces" *Israel Social Science Research*, 1997, 2 (1): 129-167

* Movie: Ramleh (Michal Aviad)

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11/22

Kanaaneh, Rhoda, *Birthing the Nation: Negotiating Babies and Boundaries in the Galilee*. UC Press 2001, pp. 23-80

Section 9: Globalization in Israel

Israel is part of a globalizing world. Like in other countries, homogenization tendencies in patterns of consumption have provoked local reactions. The article we will read refers to the particular tension and even the synthesis between falafel and McDonald's in Israel, and their significance to the issue of national identity in Israel.

11/29 (3rd quiz)

Ram, Uri. 2004. "Glocommodification: How the Global Consumes the Local – McDonald's in Israel." *Current Sociology*, January, Vol. 52(1): 11–31.

Conclusion

12/4 - *The invention and decline of Israeliness*, pp. 229 -237