

Michigan State University  
James Madison College  
Spring 2007

Professor Yael Aronoff  
Office: 317 South Case Hall  
Class Meeting: MW 12:40-2:00  
Class Location: 339 Case Hall  
Office Hours: MW 10:10-11:10,  
2:10-3:10, by appointment, and open  
door  
Email: aronoffy@msu.edu

### **ISRAELI POLITICS AND SOCIETY: MC390**

#### Course overview and objectives:

This course focuses on Israeli politics and society and investigates the relationship between society and social and ethnic cleavages, culture and politics, political institutions and parties, and democracy and the Jewish nature of the state. We will also be assessing the influence of these on Israel's foreign policy. The course aims to give students an understanding of the historic political and cultural transformations Israel has undergone over the past 59 years of its dynamic existence as an independent state and their consequences.

Founded in 1948, the state of Israel has developed as a democracy, absorbed waves of migration from all over the globe, and engaged in frequent regional wars. In MC 390, we examine the major transformations of the political system over this era – the legacy of the lengthy dominant party system under the Labor Party, the period of a competitive system dominated by the two major parties (Labor and the Likud), then, following electoral reform the decline of support for the major parties and the rise of parties based on identity, and the new realignment currently taking place. The transition from a predominantly collectivistic to an increasingly individualistic political culture (Americanization or globalization) will also be discussed. Particular attention will be paid to the major challenges to the dominant Zionist discourse. The relation between identity politics and controversial issues like the role of religion in the state, ethnic politics, and the status of Palestinian citizens of Israel will be analyzed. Although Israel has ethnic and religious diversity, it for long was conceived by many Israelis as a melting pot with a homogeneous core. Instead, this course examines how diverse parts of Israeli society interact and how Israelis have adapted to the realization that diversity has trumped homogeneity.

Finally, the impact of war and peace on elections and the implication of election results for the revival of the peace process will also be discussed. Israeli Prime Ministers will be analyzed as reflective of different interpretations of political culture and as having significant impact on Israel's foreign and domestic policies. Israel's political borders have been contested since the beginnings of the state. Israeli occupation of the Sinai, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank as a result of the 1967 war reopened old issues and brought new ones. The impact of border changes on the crisis of identity which Israel is currently undergoing and related issues will be analyzed. We will discuss the domestic influences on Israeli foreign policy generally, conflict

and cooperation with the Palestinians in particular, and the recent war with Hezbollah.

Evaluation:

1) Class Participation (20%)

Students are expected to come to class on time having closely read the assigned readings and prepared to actively discuss basic assumptions, major themes of the readings, and how these arguments relate to the prior readings and lectures. Students must bring a one page summary and assessment of the reading to each class which will be checked. Weekly participation in web discussions is also required. Participation in web forums will enable you to come to class prepared for discussion, and will give you an opportunity to discuss the material outside of class. I will be checking, and at times participating in, these discussions. In these discussions, both in and outside of class, you will have the opportunity to engage the viewpoints of other students, make connections among the readings, and ask clarifying questions.

2) Short essay (6%), due Wednesday, March 21 at the beginning of class.

This two page, double spaced, essay will be based on one of the films shown in the Israeli Film Festival. You will contextualize the film with the class readings concerning that particular ethnic group's experiences in Israel. Analyze how the film dealt with the issues concerning the contestation over Israeli identity, social cleavages, and Israeli democracy that we are analyzing. Footnote class readings in correct citation format.

2) Paper assignment (20%), due Monday, April 16 at the beginning of class.

Collaborative group work in which groups pick an Israeli political party (only one group to each party) and then write a 10 page paper together highlighting the party's interests and political platform for the next election, we will be having a mock election in class. Some of the parties will be Kadimah, Likud, Labor, Meretz, National Religious Party, Shas, Shinui, Judaism of the Torah, Hadash, United Arab List, and Yisrael Beiteinu. The group is responsible for how they decide to write the paper. They can decide to collaboratively write the whole paper and be graded as a group for the paper, or to divide up the work so that each student is responsible for a section of the paper and each student then would receive an individual grade for their section. Much research is required regarding the history of the party, its changing composition, strength, and platforms. In your party platform you must address your party's stance on foreign policy (highlighting policy toward the Palestinian Authority), your party's identity and how it will shape Israel's identity in terms of ethnic pluralism, stance on Israel as a democracy (what type of democracy, civic, ethnic, or in between), stance on religion and the state, and possibly other issues that are important to your particular constituency. Prioritize your strategies and recommendations for the future (which are you highlighting and will distinguish your campaign?) Base your platform on your party's actual current party platform, but don't simply regurgitate it. Use some creativity in modifying, expanding, and changing your party's platform while still grounding it in its present context.

Each paper will be written double-spaced, in 12pt font. Include footnotes and a bibliography. Example for citing a book in a footnote, Gregory S. Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), pp. 3-6. In

the bibliography you write the last name of the author first and use periods instead of commas. Use at least 10 sources for your paper. In addition to academic books written about your particular party (or books about the parties which include yours) also look at the past few years of the informative periodical *Jerusalem Report*, and the academic journals *Israel Studies*, *Israel Affairs*, and *Israel Studies Forum*.

3) Oral presentation of party platform and participation in debate (7%)

Do not read the paper. Speak in an engaging manner based on an outline of your platform. Be ready to answer questions posed by other party members, and to pose questions to others. You will take turns with your party members emphasizing different aspects of your platform and will be graded individually. More detailed instructions will be provided separately.

4) Participation in negotiations over the formation of a coalition government (7%)

Detailed instructions will be provided separately.

3) Mid-term exam (20%)

The mid-term will cover all material in the readings and lectures covered until the exam. It will consist of short answer questions, and one longer essay question. There will be no excuses for not taking the midterm at the designated time, unless you have been given permission from me prior to the exam.

4) Final exam (20%)

The final will be comprehensive of all lectures and readings throughout the semester. It will consist of short answer questions and one longer essay question. There will be no excuses for not taking the final at the designated time, unless you have been given permission from me prior to the exam.

Evaluation Criteria: I use the following criteria for assessing work:

4.0 – Your work is excellent relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements; you not only make strong, organized arguments that make good use of evidence and link theory to empirical cases, but also are able to recognize the limits of those arguments through thoughtful assessments of alternative explanations. Your work is probing, perceptive, and well expressed.

3.0 – Your work is good relative to the level of course requirements; it demonstrates very good command of the materials, is well written, and is insightful.

2.0 – Your work meets requirements of the assignment, demonstrates adequate command of materials, and is fairly well expressed.

1.0 – Your work meets minimum requirements for credit but shows weaknesses in the mastery of material and expression.

0.0 – Your work is unsatisfactory for credit because of major problems in understanding and expressing that understanding of course material.

Office Hours and Availability:

I strongly encourage everyone to take advantage of the 4 hours a week I have devoted to office hours. Please do contact me if you cannot make the office hours due to your class schedule, and I

will be happy to make an appointment with you at another time. Please feel free to come with questions concerning lectures, readings, or assignments, or if you would just like to discuss the reading, relate the reading to what you are doing in another class or your past experiences. I encourage you to come to office hours with outlines for all written assignments, so that we can discuss your ideas and so that I have the opportunity to advise you. I also encourage you to write outlines for answers to possible essay questions (you of course will not be getting the questions before hand) on the midterm and final, and I would be happy to discuss those with you in office hours as well. My door is open to you, and I look forward to have stimulating discussions with out outside class (over lunch and in office hours), as well as in class. I would like everyone to succeed, and am available to help you do so.

### Readings:

The following books are available in the book store and in the Madison library reserve:

1) Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993) ISBN 0-15-648114-6

2) Donna Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* (New York: Free Press, 2005) ISBN 0-7432-7035-5

3) Uzi Rebhun and Chaim I. Waxman, editors, *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2004) ISBN 1-58465-327-2

4) Myron J. Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989) ISBN 0-88738-255-X

5) Alan Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) ISBN 0-520-22911-8

6) Gregory S. Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004) ISBN 0-7425-1611-3

7) All other articles and book chapters will be on library reserve and on the web.

8) Knowledge of current events is expected for the exams and class discussions.

Newspapers:

All students are required to regularly read the *New York Times*, or a comparable newspaper (it is readily available around the College). Also regularly read:

Haaretz (English Edition, Internet) [www.haaretzdaily.com](http://www.haaretzdaily.com)

*Jerusalem Post* (Internet) [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)

### Academic Integrity:

James Madison College and Michigan State University policies on academic integrity and plagiarism will be strictly enforced in this course. See the James Madison College Handbook

section, Standards and Expectations, and the MSU Academic Programs catalogue, for further information. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

### Honors Option:

The topic for the Honors Option will be exploring the tensions between Jewish idealism and humanism and the development of liberal-democratic conceptions of individualism, and ethnic particularism, religious transcendentalism, and power. We will be discussing Yaron Ezrahi, *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Ezrahi is a Professor of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Senior Fellow of the Israel Democracy Institute. According to him, “Rubber Bullets embodies the inherent tensions between nationalism and democracy.” There will be extra meetings in which students will present critiques and analysis of each chapter, within the context of the issues of religion and the state, democracy, and security, we are learning in class. The written assignment is a 5 page analysis and critique of the book. A 3.5 must be maintained in order to receive Honors credit. The honors designation for this course requires outstanding work in all aspects of the class, in addition to satisfactory completion of the additional work that is required of those participating in the honors option sessions. Please contact me during the first week of class to express your interest.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

January 8, M - Introduction to the class and overview of the course

### **The Zionist Idea and Movement**

January 10, W: The Zionist Idea and Movement

#### Required Reading:

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 1, “Major Trends in the Development of Israeli Jews: A Synthesis of the Last Century,” pp. 3-19  
Ben Halpern, *The Idea of a Jewish State*, pp. 3-54

January 15, M: **no class, Martin Luther King Day**

### **The Yishuv, the Creation of Political Institutions, and the Creation of Statism**

January 17, W: The transformation of society and the civic state

#### Required Reading:

Dowty, *The Jewish State*, chapter 3, “The Zionist Revolution,” pp. 34-60 and chapter 4, “Building a Civic State,” pp. 61-84

### **Immigration, Ethnic Diversity, and Identity – the Social Context of Politics**

January 22, M: Waves of immigration, assimilation and multiculturalism

Required Reading:

*Jews in Israel*, chapters 2 and 3 pp. 20-80, DellPergola, “Demography in Israel at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century,” and “Jewish Ethnicity in Israel: Symbolic or Real?”

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, chapter 3, “The Social and Economic Context of Politics,” pp. 85-114

Recommended Reading: emigration

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 19 by Steven Gold, “The Emigration of Jewish Israelis,” pp. 445-465

January 23, T: Former Ambassador to Israel (2001-2005) and to Egypt (1997-2001), Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer will speak at 7pm at the Kellogg Center on the current situation in the Middle East. I will be moderating the questions.

January 24, W: The early waves of Ashkenazim and the more recent Russian immigrants

Required Reading:

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 5 “The Ashkenazim: Israel’s “WASPS,” pp. 97-112

Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, chapter 10, “At the End of That Autumn: A Midwinter Epilogue,” pp. 221-241

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 4, “The Soviet Immigrant Community in Israel,” by Leshem and Sicron, pp. 81-117

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 7, “The Russians: The New Exodus,” pp. 130-147

January 29, M: The Sephardim, Mizrahim, and Haredim

Required Reading:

Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, chapter 2 “The Insult and the Fury,” pp. 25-48

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 6 “The Mizrahim: The Other Israelis,” pp. 113-129

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 9, “The Haredim,” pp. 173-194

January 31, W: Ethiopian Israelis

Required Reading:

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 5, “Ethiopian Jews in Israel: A Part of the People or Apart from the People?” by Kaplan and Salamon, pp. 118-150

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 8, “Out of Africa: Ethiopian Israelis in the Promised Land,” pp. 148-172

February 5, M: Palestinian Israelis/Israeli Palestinians, Bedouins and Druze

Required Reading:

Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, “The Dawn,” pp. 157-180

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 15, “The Cleavage between Jewish and Arab Israeli Citizens,” by Yuchtman-Yaar and Shavit, pp. 345-370

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapters on Muslims, Bedouins, Druze, and Christians, pp. 247-326

February 7, W: Palestinian Israelis continued – possible video conference with Dr. Saliba Sarsar, political scientist who has written on the subject and Associate Vice President of Monmouth College (He is a Palestinian who grew up in Jerusalem first under Jordanian rule and then in Israel).

Required Reading:

Dowty, *The Jewish State*, chapter 9, “Arabs in Israel” pp. 184-215

## **Government Institutions**

February 12, M: Basic Laws, Parliamentary Government, the Prime Minister, and the Knesset

Required Reading:

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, chapters 4-5, pp. 117-170

February 14, W: Political parties, the electoral process

Reading:

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, chapter 6, pp. 171-192

Aronoff, *Visions and Divisions*, chapter 1, pp. 1-17

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 7, Arian, “Elections and Voting Patterns,” pp. 174-194

February 19, M: The electoral process, voting behavior, and bureaucracies

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, chapter 7-8, pp. 193-247

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 14, “Civil Military Relations in Israel at the Outset of the Twenty-First Century,” by Ben-Dor and Ami Pedahzur, pp. 331-344.

February 26, M: Review for midterm

February 28, W: **Midterm**

March 5, M: **no class, Spring break**

March 7, W: **no class, Spring break**

## **Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State**

March 12, M: The debates concerning democracy in Israel

Required Reading:

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 20, “Challenges for the Twenty-First Century,” pp. 467-479

Dowty, *The Jewish State*, chapter 1, “Democracy in Israel,” pp. 3-18, and chapter 2, “Jewish Politics,” pp. 19-33

Sammy Smooha, “Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype” *Israel Studies*, Volume 2, number 2, Fall 1997

Yoav Peled and Doron Navot, "Ethnic Democracy Revisited: On the State of Democracy in the Jewish State," *Israel Studies Forum*, Volume 20, Issue 1, summer 2005

March 13, T: You are strongly encouraged to attend the public lecture by Ilan Peleg, Dana Professor of Government and Law at Lafayette College and the editor of *Israel Forum* "Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State: Balancing the Particular and the Universal" in 334 ab Case Hall. Professor Peleg will be inaugurating the annual Serling Lecture in Israel Studies

March 14, W: Dr. Ilan Peleg guest speaker on Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State

Required Reading:

Ilan Peleg, "Beyond Hegemony in Deeply Divided Societies: Alternative Approaches to the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict," forthcoming in *Nations and Nationalism*, 2007, pp. 1-20

Ilan Peleg, "Jewish-Palestinian Relations in Israel: From Hegemony to Equality?" *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 3, spring 2004, pp. 415-437

Dowty, *The Jewish State*, chapters 7 and 8, "The Communal Split," pp. 143-158 and "Religion and Politics," pp. 159-183

March 15, TH: Beginning of Israeli Film Festival with showing "Now I am Free," 7:00. The Director will be in attendance and speaking before and/or after the film. All the films tackle the issues that we are discussing in class this semester. All films in the festival are screened in 147 Communication, Arts, and Sciences Building. Attendance strongly encouraged since the director will also be speaking to our class on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

March 18, S: Israeli Film Festival – "Two Minutes From Faradis (2003) at 2:00, "Empty Rooms: The Aftermath of Terror (2002) at 3:30 (I will be introducing this film), and "Live and Become (2005) at 6:30

March 19, M – Gadi Kviatek, the director of "Now I am Free," a film about Gadi's experience teaching drama to older Mizrahi women in Israel, and director of documentaries about bedouins in Israel, will speak with our class. His films deal with issues regarding assimilation/multiculturalism and social cleavages, and also the status of women in Israeli society that are in the reading for today.

Required Reading:

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, chapter 8, "Women in Israeli Society," by Herzog, pp. 195-220

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 16, "Marriage, Divorce", pp. 327-356

Last film in Israeli film festival at 7:00, "Syrian Bride"

## **Civil Religion**

March 21, W – **Short essay due.** Civil Religion

Required Reading:

All readings for today in Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*

Chapter 9, Waxman, “Religion in the Israeli Public Square,” pp. 221-242

Chapter 10, Schweid, “Judaism in Israeli Culture,” pp. 243-264

Chapter 16, “The Sanctification of Space in Israel: Civil Religion and Folk Judaism,” by Bilu pp. 371-393

Recommended Reading:

Chapter 11, Levy, Levinsohn, and Katz, “The Many Face of Jewishness in Israel,” pp. 265-284

Chapter 12, Tabory, “The Israel Reform and Conservative Movements and the Market for Liberal Judaism,” pp. 285-314

Chapter 13, Ezrachi, “The Quest for Spirituality among Secular Israelis,” pp. 315-330

March 26, M - In class debate on the nature of democracy in Israel

**Political Culture, Political Divisions, and Political Movements**

March 28, W: Political polarization and the manipulation of political culture

Required Reading:

*Israeli Visions and Divisions*, Introduction, pp. xiii- 1, chapters 2 and 3 pp. 19-68

April 2, M: Gush Emunim

Required Reading:

Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions*, chapter 4, pp. 69-91

Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, “The Finger of God?” pp. 51-73, “An Argument on Life and Death (A and B), pp. 103-153

Recommended Reading:

Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, chapter 10, pp. 195-220

April 4, W: Protests for Peace, interpreting political culture

Required Reading:

Aronoff, *Visions and Divisions*, chapters 5-6 and Epilogue, pp. 93-160

Recommended Reading: Collective Memory

Rebhun and Waxman, *Jews in Israel*, “History, Memory, and Identity: Perceptions of the Holocaust in Israel,” pp. 394-420

April, 5, TH: Viewing of documentary “Shattered Dreams,” 6:00-8:00

**Israeli Foreign Policy, the Peace Process, and Disengagement**

April 9, M: Israeli foreign policy

Required Reading:

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, chapters 9 and 10, pp. 251-319

Recommended Reading:

Oz, "A Postscript Ten Years Later: The Middle East Between Shakespeare and Chekhov," pp. 245-261

April 11, W: The Peace process

Required Reading:

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, chapter 11, pp. 331-366

Ron Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?" *Survival* autumn 2001;  
Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Error," *New York Review of Books*, August 9, 2001; Reply by Ehud Barak and Benny Morris and then response to them by Malley and Agha.

Recommended Reading:

Yossi Beilin, *The Path to Geneva*, chapter 8, pp. 266-297 and appendix, Geneva Agreement

April 16, M: **Papers due.** The recent war with Hezbollah

Required Reading:

The following articles in Nov/Dec 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*:

Ze'ev Schiff, "Israel's War with Iran,"

Volzer Perthes, "The Syrian Solution,"

Paul Salem, "The Future of Lebanon"

Edward Djerejian, "From Conflict Management to Conflict Resolution,"

April 18, W – Simulation of election, public debate, and voting

April 22, S – Invited to an Israeli theme end of the semester party at my home

April 23, M – Simulation of forming government coalition

April 25, W – Review for final

May 2, W: Final Exam 12:45-2:45