POLI 4060 “Politics of Israel”

Classroom: 116 Stubbs Hall
Class Time: T TH 9-10:20
Office Hours: MWF 10:00-12:00

Instructor: Leonard Ray
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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the political system of the modern state of Israel. After a quick review of the history of the Zionist movement and the foundation of the state of Israel, the course will focus on the social, economic, and demographic evolution of the country since 1948. These developments help explain the diversity of political parties which compete in legislative elections, and comprise coalition governments of varying stability. Whether there will be an early election during the course of the semester remains to be seen. The course will cover some of the quirks of the Israeli system, such as the use of judicial review in the absence of a written constitution, the use of primaries in a PR system, and the failed experiment with the direct election of the Prime Minister. We will conclude with discussions of some of the ongoing controversies in Israeli politics, including what exactly it means to be a Jewish State, relationships with the European Union and the United States, and the future of the territories occupied in 1967.

About the instructor: Dr. Ray is an associate professor of political science. Much of his research has focused on political parties and public opinion, and his teaching interests include French politics. This course will reflect these interests, and so students can expect some emphasis on the Dreyfus affair, Franco-Israeli cooperation during the French Fourth Republic, and the collapse of the Franco-Israeli alliance following Algerian independence in 1962 and the six day war in 1967.

Readings:

Assigned readings should be done before the class period for which they are assigned. Do not wait until the night before- the amount of reading varies from class to class, you will want to plan ahead.

Mahler, Gregory S. Politics and Government in Israel. Third Edition. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. This is one of the standard textbooks on the topic, and is used at many American, British, and Israeli universities. A typical government textbook, it focuses on the development of the state, demography, electoral and party politics, and government institutions. The book emphasizes political life within the pre 1967 borders, and concludes with a long discussion of negotiations to implement a two state solution to the issues of the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem. (ISBN: 9781442265363)

Shavit, Ari, My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel, Spiegel & Grau 2013. This is a personal reflection on important moments in the political and social history of Israel. Written by an Israeli journalist with both a strong affection for Israel, and a critical eye, this book gives you a cultural and emotional context for the factual framework presented by Mahler. It is a work which has attracted criticism from both the right (http://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/2013/12/their-tragic-land/) and the left (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/aug/14/liberal-zionists/). (ISBN: 978-0385521710)

Several additional readings will be posted on Moodle.

**News Sources:** Students are expected to keep up with developments in Israeli politics. Mainline media sources such as the Economist and New York Times are good starting points.

Three particularly useful Israeli English language news sites include:

- Ynews [http://www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com)
- Jerusalem Post [http://jpost.com](http://jpost.com)
- Times of Israel [https://www.timesofisrael.com/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/)

An interesting current events podcast is the “Promised Podcast” from TLV1 [https://tlv1.fm/podcasts/the-promised-podcast-show/](https://tlv1.fm/podcasts/the-promised-podcast-show/)

**Requirements:**

- Mid Tem Exam (25%)
- Final Exam (25%)
- Three short writing assignments (+/-2 pages) (10% each)
- Coalition Formation group project (10%)
- Class Participation (10%)

**Technology Use**

Cell phones and mobile devices must be put away for the duration of the class period. The use of laptop computers is discouraged. Notetaking by hand is a more effective learning strategy than notetaking on a computer. If you use a laptop in class, you are not allowed to connect to the internet during class. Seriously. Turn your wifi off for the duration of the class. Do not let me catch you with a web browser open.
Course Schedule (Subject to change)

January 11. Ancient Israel and Diaspora
Readings:
Mahler pp 1-17

January 16. European Antisemitism and the Enlightenment
Readings:

January 18. Religious Zionism and Political Zionism
Readings:
Herzl “The Jewish State” Sections I II and V and VI (online)
The Pittsburgh Platform 1885 http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/declaration-principles/

January 23. Ottoman Palestine and WWI
Readings:
Chapter One “At First Sight 1897”Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Mahler pp 17-22

January 25. Labor Zionism
Readings:
Chapter Two “Into the Valley” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land

February 6. The British Mandate/ Revisionist Zionism
Readings: Correspondence with the Palestine delegation and the Zionist Organization
http://hdl.handle.net/2027/yale.39002033907149
Mahler pp. 23-33

February 8. The Great Arab Revolt and the Peel Commission
Chapter Three “Orange Grove 1936” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Ben Gurion 1937 letter (On Moodle)

February 13. Mardi Gras Holiday
February 15. Nazism and WWII
Readings: Chapter Four “Masada, 1942” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Mahler pp. 33-44

February 20. The birth of the State of Israel
Readings:
Israeli Declaration of Independence (on Moodle)
Chapter Five “Lydda, 1948” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Mahler pp.
Recommended:
Forces Intelligence Branch Analysis of June 1948.” Middle Eastern Studies, 22: 5-19.*

February 22. Consolidation of the Israeli State
Readings:
Chapter Six “Housing Estate, 1957” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Chapter Seven “The Project, 1967” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Mahler Chapter 2

Recommended:
Yael Zerubavel, “The Mythological Sabra and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities,”

February 27. The Six Day War (1967) and Greater Israel
Readings: Chapter Eight “Settlement, 1975” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
“Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders” Yigdal Allon Foreign Affairs
“Growing Risk of Egyptian Resumption of Hostilities With Israel” State Dept memo 1973

Recommended: Edward Said, “The Condition of Palestinians after Camp David”
“Blow up the Dome of the Rock” http://www.middleeast.org/archives/1999_01_05.htm

February 29. Lebanon and the First Intifada
Readings:
Chapter Nine “Gaza Beach, 1991” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
The Intifada and Political Discourse in Israel

March 6. Oslo. (The 2 state solution)
Mahler Chapter 12
Chapter Ten “Peace, 1993” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
“The Israel PLO Accord is Dead” Amos Perlmutter

March 8. Midterm Exam

March 13. The Contemporary Setting
Reading: Mahler Chapter 4 and 5

March 15. Ethnic politics in Israel
Chapter Eleven “J’Accuse, 1999” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
“The Russian Revolution in Israel” in Dowty ed. Critical Issues in Israeli Society

March. 20. The Government and the Party System
Mahler Ch 6 and 7

March. 22. Political Behavior in Israel
Mahler Ch 8

March. 27. Economic Policy
Chapter Fifteen “Occupy Rothchild, 2011” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Jacob Metzer Some Perspectives on the Israeli Economy: Stocktaking and Looking Ahead “ Israel Studies
March 29. The role of Religious Law
Mahler Chapter 3

April 3. Who is a Jew?
Reform resolution on patrilineal descent
Alexander Yakobson “Jewish Peoplehood and the Jewish State, How Unique?—A Comparative Survey”

April 5. Settlements and Jerusalem
Mahler Ch 10, 11
“Israel: The Alternative” Tony Judt
Naftali Bennnett “A New Plan for Peace in Palestine”
http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304081804579559432394067704

April 10. The Arabs of Israel
Chapter Thirteen “Up the Galilee, 2003” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Sayed Kashua “Native”

April 12. Coalition Formation exercise

“Foreign” policy
April. 17 The Palestinians
Ashrawi interview from JPS
The Jewish State, What’s in a name?
The Likelihood, Consequences, and Policy Implications of a PA Collapse or Dissolution

April 19 Relations with Europe and a shifting Middle East
Chapter Sixteen “Existential Challenge, 2013” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
TBA

April. 24. Israel in American Politics
John Judis “Zionist Movement” in Foreign Policy

April 26. The war of words (and images)
Lutz Ch 12 and 18,
“Defeating Anti-Israel Propaganda: A Guide”
University BDS Campaigning Guide: Student Solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle

April 28. Looking back and ahead
   Chapter Seventeen “By the Sea” Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
   “Tony Judt’s Final Word on Israel “
   Re-read Hertzl “Jewish State”

Final Exam 12:30-2:30