



Rothberg International School
בית הספר לתלמידים מחו"ל ע"ש רוטברג
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים



Department of Summer
Courses and Special
Programs

המחלקה לקורסי קיץ
ותוכניות מיוחדות



Israeli Multiculturalism (Course 48777)

Dr. Eric Saranovitz

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45 Academic Hours, 3 Academic Credits

Instructor Contact Details

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Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to introduce students to the diversity of Israeli society, which is comprised a variety of identity groups. It will do so by introducing students to five main segments of Israeli society, their contributions to Israeli society, and the relationships among these groups. The course will discuss the multicultural intersect of the following five communities: the LGBTQ community, the Ethiopian community, members of the settlement movement, the Ultra-Orthodox community, the Arab community



Upon completion of the course, students are expected to:

1. Identify each community's current challenges and educational, cultural and tradition-based dilemmas that arise from these challenges, as well as their political representation.
2. Understand the major points of conflict that affect each community and its integration into the general Israeli public.
3. Learn how the institutions of socialization (e.g, educational institutions) within each community affect its member's ability to integrate in the general society.
4. Use examples from Israeli society to elucidate outstanding characteristics of similar societies in other parts of the world that are comprised of groups of differing identities who share a common political and geographical space.

Method of Study

The course will use two main learning formats. Classes will mostly be immersive educational experiences, where students will spend time in various Israeli communities as part of an ongoing deepening of understanding. Classes will involve workshops (e.g., a visit to a mosque and a meeting with Muslim religious experts) and discussions.

This experiential learning will take place side by side with in-class lectures, presentations and discussions on the particulars of each group.

Classwork and Written Assignments

Upon completion of the course, students will upload their final assignments to Moodle within two weeks after the end of the course.

Students will write an essay that answers one of the central questions of the course and should be based on the reading materials and work that was covered during the course. The length of the writing assignment will be no less than 7 pages and no more than 9 pages and will be based upon the assigned reading passages and academic presentations. Students will have to be able to show synthesis of the material and analysis of the topics rather than simply summary.



Grading

The written assignment will make up 80% of the final grade, with 20% of the grade given for active participation in the course.

All reading material indicated as required in the syllabus is mandatory and students are required to read all relevant text passages in preparation for the appropriate class.

Course Units

1. Israel as a Multi-Cultural Society

Israeli society is based upon many groups of differing identities. We will look at Israel as a multicultural society, with the connection between sectoral affiliation and ideological outlooks as well as the main topics around which discussion is based in the general Israeli public and various sub-groups.

The first lecture will establish an understanding of multiculturalism in general and how we can apply the concept to understand Israeli society. Providing a historical, political and sociological context, the lecture will establish a common ground from which the students will be able to delve deeper into several of the more prominent groups in Israeli society; the Secular majority, the Ultra-Orthodox, Arabs, Immigrants and Settlers. We will also touch upon one of the significant characteristics of Israeli society across the different sectors and the differences between them.

2. Arab Society (Part 1) Israeli – Arab Citizens

Approximately one fifth of the residents of the State of Israel are Arab. In a State that is defined as “Jewish Democratic” they are left with questions of meaning that affect their position and integration into “The Jewish State”. We will learn about the characteristics of Arab society from different viewpoints and religious traditions, such as the Arab community, family and culture.

Unit topics:

- 2.1. Muslims in Israel-a historical background, religion and civilization (open academic presentation)



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- 2.2. Teens and Young Adults in Arab Society-Encounter young Arab adults volunteering for Civil Service, while their Israel cohort peers are in the army service.
- 2.3. Culture and Folklore in Arab society-We will learn the Arabic dance “Davka” and its place in culture and community events.(interactive learning workshop)
- 2.4. Education in Arabic Society- Challenges of the educational system- integration of young Arab adults into the Israeli workforce and academia (dialogue and discussion with Dir Al Assad high school students.)
- 2.5. Women in the Arab-Israeli Society -Lecture by female Arab entrepreneur on the topic of female entrepreneurship in the Samaritan society.(presentation)
- 2.6. The Culture of Food in Arab Society- Understand the importance of food and hospitality in Arab society and in Muslim religion (practical workshop).
- 2.7. Village Life in Arab Society-Its unstable infrastructure and the reasons behind it. Characteristics of village life and the central institutions of village life (tour accompanied by presentation)
- 2.8. The Muslim Religion- We will familiarize ourselves with the Koran, the mosque and Muslim prayer through a visit to the central mosque in Dir Al Assad. We will speak with a Muslim Imam about religious zealotry versus religious moderation (visit to the mosque accompanied by presentation)
- 2.9. Arab –Jewish Relations- We will examine the fragile relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel through case studies, for example the relationship of the residents of the village of Dir Al Assad with their Jewish neighbors in nearby Carmiel. Discussion with a resident of the village. Lookout over both places from nearby Mt. Halutz. (Tour and presentation).
- 2.10. Family Structure in Arab Society-the generation gap, the question of parental authority and the role of the patriarch. The structure of the “Hamoula” or extended family and family loyalty. Hosting by village families and a mediated discussion. (hosting workshop)



3. Arab Society (Part 2) – The Arab-Israeli Conflict

The Arab society in Israel finds itself in constant tension. On the one hand Arab individuals owe loyalty to the State of Israel as citizens but on the other hand, they have family ties and a common culture and nationality with the Arab World, which has been embroiled in a long and historical conflict with the State of Israel. In order to understand their unique situation, we will survey the Jewish-Arab conflict from its roots, up until recent times. We will also address how Zionism has impacted Jewish-Arab relations. Through familiarizing ourselves with the Jewish-Arab conflict, we will get acquainted with one of the most influential motives of Israeli society- the reality of being a society that is under a constant threat of terrorism.

Unit topics:

- 3.1. The Gaza Strip and its surrounding settlements. A case study of the Gaza Strip and its Israeli perimeter in the Arab-Israeli conflict. We will get acquainted with the history of the conflict, the Jewish residents of the villages bordering the Gaza perimeter and the missile attacks against them, and Hamas dominance in the area. (Educational tour and encounter)
- 3.2. The ethics of Masada and its place in Zionism - Visit to the historical site of Masada near the Dead Sea. Encounter the events from the Jewish rebellion against the Romans, and interoperate the famous story of Jewish Zealots in today's context. Understand the processes that turned Masada into an inspiring example in the history of Israel's wars. (Educational tour and Lecture)
- 3.3. David Ben Gurion as a visionary- A visit to his final home in the desert and his grave overlooking the Zin Valley, read through Israel's first Prime Minister's vision of Israeli society and compare it the contemporary society you've experienced so far.
- 3.4. History of the establishment of the State of Israel and its wars. Historical overview of Israel's Declaration of Independence (Presentation and educational visit to Independence Hall in Tel Aviv)

4. Ultra-Orthodox Society in Israel (Part 1) The Hassidic Community



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The Ultra-Orthodox community is very closed to the outside secular world. On one hand it is conservative and desires to guard its religious identity, and on the other hand it is compelled to acclimate itself to its surroundings and integrate into general Israeli society. This duality opens up heated discussion within the Ultra-Orthodox community as well as outside of it, on issues such as the mandatory army draft, and Ultra-Orthodox community member's involvement in the Israeli work force.

Yet all those falling under the category of "Ultra-Orthodox" are also divided into many streams. In this unit we'll focus on one of the more prominent groups, the Hassidim. Hassidim as well, are subdivided into many different communities which are delineated by closed courts led by one rabbinical authority.

Unit topics:

4.1. The Hassidic communities of Tzefat-Discussion with a local Hassid regarding the differences between the many Hassidic sects, the Kabbalistic history of Tzefat and the relationship between the Ultra-Orthodox and the –Non-Religious residents of the city. The discussion will be accompanied by a tour of the alleyways of Old Tzefat and visits to the historical synagogues there (Presentation and Educational tour)

4.2. Hassidism and Spirituality - Hassidism as a sect that emphasizes a personal relationship with G-d and character development. Promoting joy and spiritual enlightenment in Judaism through the importance of theoretical learning. Discussion with Chabad Hassid on Mysticism, Spirituality and Messianism. Hassidic yoga exercise. (Workshop)

4.3. Hassidic sects in Judaism - The difference between the Lithuanian Ultra-Orthodox and Hassidim. The development of Hassidism, survey of central Hassidic sects- Gur, Habad, Vizhnitz, Breslov and the anti-Zionistic Satmar and Toldos Aharon sects. (Academic lecture)

5. Ultra-Orthodox Society in Israel (Part 2) The General Haredi Public



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Ultra-Orthodox or Haredi society is comprised of two main groups: Hassidim and Lithuanian. Together they make one of the largest and most important communities in Israeli society. We will encounter the world of the Haredi yeshivot (Torah seminaries), the value of Torah learning, of rabbinical authority and of their conservatism in the face of exposure to the outside world. We will also address the role of women in the Haredi family and society at large.

Unit topics:

- 5.1. Haredi Society- from separation to integration. A survey of the interrelationship between Haredi society, the State of Israel and Zionism. (Academic Presentation)
- 5.2. Haredi communities in Jerusalem- A visit to Haredi neighborhoods and yeshivot. Lecture on the Haredi community of Jerusalem. Opposition and scuffles over Sabbath observance. The Haredi family and Haredi values (Lecture and tour)
- 5.3. Ceremonies and customs in the Haredi community- Sabbath meals, Haredi prayer, the family and its leaders. Meet with key figures in the Haredi world. Participate in a Hassidic "Tish". Get to know the world of Haredi tunes. (Practical workshop and hosting at families in Jerusalem during the Sabbath).
- 5.4. The Western Wall as a holy place. The ideological and religious conflict between the Haredi community and liberal Jewish sects (Conservative and Reform) regarding the Western Wall. Visit the Western Wall. Lecture on its religious and historical importance. (Lecture and Educational Tour)

6. Secularism and Liberalism in Israel

Most secular Jews in Israel maintain a constant dialogue with different conservative groups in society; namely the Religious and the Haredim. We will discuss the political, social and cultural connections between them, with a focus on the ideological conflict. We will be introduced to Israeli secular culture and its defining characteristics.

Unit topics:



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- 6.1. The “State” of Tel Aviv- The city, many times referred to as a bubble, or the capital of Israeli liberalism, can be explored by visiting its various coffee shops, each telling a different story of the city. (Workshop)
- 6.2. The inception of the first secular Hebrew city-a tour of Neve Tzedek, the first neighborhood in Tel Aviv. We will address its historical value as the founding neighborhood of Tel Aviv as well as the differences between secular Tel Aviv and holy, religious Jerusalem. (Educational Tour)
- 6.3. The LGBTQ community in Israel. Introduction to the LGBTQ community in Israel and its challenges relating to conservative and religious groups in society. We will survey the development of the legal position and rights of its members and learn about their struggles. (study presentation and educational visit to the Tel Aviv Gay Center).

7. Ethiopian Community beginning in the 1980’s, Jews from Ethiopia began to immigrate to Israel. Their absorption raised many difficult questions regarding the balance between preserving their identity and tradition and integrating into Israeli society. We will get to know the Israeli Ethiopian community and its ways, as well as how Israeli society relates to those different from them. We’ll use the Ethiopian case to study the question – Is Israel a Melting Pot or A Salad Bowl?

Unit topics:

- 7.1. The Ethiopian immigration as a test case for personal and communal identity preservation in the face of Israeli socialization processes. Does unity also mean uniformity? (educational presentation)
- 7.2. The religious heritage of the Ethiopian Jews- Lecture from a “Kess” (Ethiopian religious community leader) regarding ceremonies and customs of the community and visit to an Ethiopian synagogue. (tour and lecture)
- 7.3. “Am I Ethiopian or Israeli?”- The identity conflict of Ethiopian immigrants regarding how Israeli society relates to them. Meet with social activists in the Kiryat Moshe neighborhood of Rehovot. Lecture on the Ethiopian Jews’ social protest in 2011. (tour of neighborhood and its institutions).



7.4. Culture and Folklore in the Ethiopian Community- Visit an Ethiopian family and participate in a traditional “Boneh” ceremony (roasting coffee) and discuss its importance. Learn Ethiopian dance and cooking. (practical workshop)

8. The Settlement Movement

Since the time of the Six Day War in 1967, Israeli society has been divided over the question of Jewish settlement on the land that was won in that same war, known as the West Bank. Residents of these settlements, in the area of the West Bank of the Jordan River are at the heart of the political controversy in the State of Israel.

Please note – all tours take place within the 1947 Armistice (green) line.

Unit topics:

8.1. The Settlement Movement-A historical and ideological background. We will get to know the doctrine of the Whole Israel movement and the heritage of one of its most outstanding leaders- Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, his doctrine regarding settling the Land of Israel and his teachings about the Final Redemption (academic presentation).

8.2. Settlement as a religious imperative- Encounter the Biblical and religious background that formed the settler world (educational tour and discussion with opinion leaders.)

8.3. Social Solidarity within settler communities-Characteristics of settlements and mutual relationships through a visit to a therapeutic farm in the settlement of Elazar in Samaria.

8.4. The Relationship of the Settlers with their Palestinian Neighbors- Visit “Shorashim” tent- a cooperative space for settlers and Palestinians. (tour and workshop).

9. Mediation Between Different Groups- Final Session. Discussion based on arguments allows a higher level of openness. Is it possible to turn a social dispute in Israeli society into a discussion about positions and arguments. Is the ideological position necessary to forge the identity and the connection of the different groups.



Required & Recommended Reading

General

Required:

Regev, M. (2000). To have a culture of our own: On Israeliness and its variants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(2), 223-247. [E-journal](#)

Rafael, E. B., & Peres, Y. (2005). Is Israel one?: religion, nationalism, and multiculturalism confounded (Vol. 5). Brill Academic Pub. Chapters 1&2 pp. 3-58

Sharaby, R. (2015). Immigration and entry into the cultural mainstream. *International Migration*, 53(4), 155-175. [E-journal](#)

Recommended:

Dahan, Yossi & Gal Levy (2000) . "Multicultural Education in the Zionist State – The Mizrahi Challenge". Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (Ed.), *Conflicting Philosophies of Education in Israel*. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers (Published also in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 19(5-6), 423-444. [E-journal](#))

Israel Rights in LGBT

Required:

Hartal, G., & Sasson-Levy, O. (2016). Being [in] the center: Sexual citizenship and homonationalism at Tel Aviv's Gay-Center. *Sexualities*, 20(5-6), 738-761. [E-journal](#)

Recommended:

Kama, Amit (2000). "From Terra Incognita to Terra Firma: The Logbook of the Voyage of Gay Men's Community into the Israeli Public Sphere". *Journal of Homosexuality*, 38(4), 133-162. [E-journal](#)

The Ethiopian Community in Israel

Required:



Offer, S. (2007). The Ethiopian community in Israel: Segregation and the creation of a racial cleavage, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(3): 461-480. [E-journal](#)

Recommended:

Ben-Eliezer, Uri (2007). Multicultural society and everyday cultural racism: Second generation of Ethiopian Jews in Israel's 'crisis of modernization'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(5): 935-961. [E-journal](#)

The Ultra-Orthodox Society in Israel

Required:

Friedman, Menachem (1991). *The Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Society - Sources, Trends and Processes*, The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies Research, Series No. 4, p. I- VIII. **Free access** (for English scroll down): <http://jerusalemstitute.org.il/upload/haredcom.pdf>

Recommended:

Stadler, Nurit; Lomsky-Feder, Edna; & Ben-Ari, Eyal (2008). Fundamentalism's encounters with citizenship: the Haredim in Israel. *Citizenship Studies* 12(3): 215-231. [E-journal](#)

Arabs in Israel

Required:

Lawrence, R. (2014). *Islamic Political Activism in Israel*. Washington: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy. Analysis Paper 32. **Free access:** <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Rubin-web-FINAL.pdf>

Recommended:

Al-Haj, M. (2002). Multiculturalism in deeply divided societies: The Israeli case. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(2), 169-183. [E-journal](#)