Politics 122  
First- and Second-Year Colloquium  
Palestine-Israel Conflict  

Course Syllabus  

Why, if majorities of Palestinians and Israelis individually want peace, endorse a two-state solution and favor negotiations, are peace, the two-state solution and negotiations so problematic? Is there any way out of the current impasse?  

This course proceeds from an evaluation of the current situation to seek historical and other kinds of answers to this question at the individual, national, and international levels.  

Requirements  
The class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-2:45 p.m., in King 235.  

Students are expected to have read the assigned materials prior to class date for which they are scheduled. Classes will proceed primarily through discussion of the readings.  

Books  


Assignments and grades  
There are five components to the grade for Politics 122: three papers, one journal, and discussion participation. Participation requires attendance, so this will be a component of the discussion grade. The proportions of the final grade constituted by these components will be approximately:  

Papers: 20% each  
Journal: 20%  
Discussion and attendance: 20%  

Application of honor code  
The Oberlin College [Honor Code](#) applies to all work in this class. Questions about how this applies should be raised with the instructor.
Students with disabilities

If you have a documented disability that may affect your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see me and the Office of Disability Services so that such accommodations may be arranged.

Electronic and Reserve Readings

Are embedded in the syllabus and available either on Blackboard or by direct link.

Items on Blackboard not integrated into this syllabus but that may be of interest to you: a two-part interview with Khalid Mishal of Hamas, appearing in Journal of Palestine Studies in 2008 (look at the bottom of the course documents section) and the Goldstone Report on the 2008-2009 conflict in Gaza.

This syllabus may be updated during the semester, readings may be added and/or subtracted.

Current events, useful and incendiary web sites

There are many web sources about current events and commentary on the conflict that might interest you. You will find, if you look, that there are enormously helpful and interesting sites and also quite a few that might be characterized as downright nasty (on many sides). If you find sites of particular interest, let me and the class know! In addition to standard news sources (New York Times, Washington Post, BBC, Reuters, CNN, ABC), here are some others. I note these without any claim to their veracity, even-handedness or representativeness. Some have further links to pursue.

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Palestine National Authority Ministry of Information
PLO Negotiations Affairs Department
Hamas English Website

Ha’aretz one of Israel’s largest newspapers, generally considered more sympathetic to the labor (left) side of Israeli politics than the right.
Jerusalem Post, a generally right-wing Israeli newspaper.
Ynet news, from Yedioth Group, publisher of “Yedioth Ahronoth,” Israel’s largest newspaper

Al Monitor Palestine Pulse Palestine page of a new Middle East web news source
Palestine News Agency, official site
Palestine News Network independent journalists and radio station
Dar Al Hayat Lebanon-based Arab newspaper
Al Manar Lebanese website of Hizb’allah TV station (google translations work pretty well)
Al Jazeera American version of Al Jazeera
Al Ahram Weekly, Web site of Cairo newspaper
http://www.qassam.ps/ Website of “Ezzedeen AL-Qassam Brigades - Palestine, The military wing of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas”
Institute for Middle East Understanding Palestinian-oriented current events, commentary, news.

Robert Fisk in the Guardian Long-time Middle East correspondent, war weary, skeptical of political poseurs and militants, sympathetic to civilians caught in war (on all sides).
Helene Cobban’s blog, US Middle East journalist, sympathetic to the Palestinians.
Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Gaza)
B’tselem, Israeli human rights organization headed by Oberlin alumna (1990) Jessica Montell
Badil, Palestinian Refugee Rights organization
Norman Finkelstein, critic of Israel and the “Holocaust Industry,” son of Holocaust survivors
Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, generally leftist, critical of Israel and US policy
Tikkun, journal and movement of Rabbi Michael Lerner, liberal social activist
Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics and Economics - peace-oriented, joint Israeli-Palestinian journal

AIPAC, American Israel Public Affairs Committee – best known pro-Israel lobby in Washington
American Jewish Committee - “AJC advocates for the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel, and for the advancement of democratic values for all.
Honest Reporting - “Defending Israel from Media Bias”
J-Street, Newer, peace-oriented Jewish counter-lobby to AIPAC
Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, supports US support for Israel (as seen from the right)
CAMERA, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (Israel defender)
Peace Now - “Peace Now is the leading voice of Israeli public pressure for peace.”
Daniel Pipes, head of the Middle East Forum, avid defender of Israel
Steven Plaut, sociologist, Israel defender
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East “…a grass-roots community of scholars who have united to promote honest fact based, and civil discourse, especially in regard to Middle East issues.”
Zionist Organization of America “…works to strengthen US-Israeli relations, through educational activities, public affairs programs, working every day on Capitol Hill, and by combating anti-Israel bias in the media, textbooks, and on campuses.”

Palestine Al Awda Right to Return Coalition
New Jersey Solidarity.org, pro-Palestinian articles, a useful set of pro-Palestinian links
Electronic Intifada, pro-Palestinian site, directed by Ali Abunimah, a leading proponent of one-state solution
Institute for Palestine Studies, publishes Journal of Palestine Studies, current materials and a long list of useful links.

American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Anti-Defamation League – “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people”

Global Security.org, Palestinian security links page

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), with recent UN resolutions and reports. For history, see in particular the “origins and evolution” summary, with useful maps (way down in the annexes). This has been reformatted and posted also at Palestine Remembered, especially see the maps in the annexes,

Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research polling organization

2/4  Course outline, introductions.

For Thursday, each student will pick a topic and prepare to present a very short description of what’s going on (3-4 minutes each).  Follow these topics in your journal until further notice.

1.  Hamas v. Fatah/PLO
2.  Current US-Israel-Palestine negotiations (Kerry initiative)
3.  Israel settlement plans and construction
4.  Current Obama Administration relations with Netanyahu government
5.  Current Obama Administration relations with Palestinian Authority
6.  Conditions in Gaza
    6a.  Economic conditions
    6b.  Infrastructure (water, electricity)
    6c.  Political conditions and security
    6d.  Egypt role in Gaza: PLO, Hamas relations
7.  Conditions in West Bank
    7a.  Settlement activity outside of Jerusalem
    7b.  Construction/demolition in Jerusalem
    7c.  Economic conditions
    7d.  Political conditions and security
8.  U.S.  lobby groups and politics
    8a.  American-Israel Public Affairs Committee
    8b.  J-Street
    8c.  Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee
    8d.  US Senate and House action on Israel/Palestine
9.  Palestinian weapons and other smuggling (by sea, under Gaza border, etc.)
10. Palestinian connections to outsiders (Iran, Hezbollah, Gulf States, Al Qaeda)
11. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on prisoners
12. Natural resource and environmental issues in Israel/Palestine (including new fossil fuel discoveries).

2/6  Current events discussion based on topics assigned Tuesday

Over the weekend, for next Tuesday, read Izzeldin Abuelaish I SHALL NOT HATE.  Let’s discuss it on Tuesday 2/11.

•  About what does Dr. Abuelaish care most?
•  How has his upbringing affected him?
•  How have his political and economic circumstances affected his thinking about personal action?
•  Can a person be non-political in a politicized environment?
•  Do you think his consciousness changed as a result of experiences he had?
•  What were the most important experiences to him?
•  Do you think there are generalizable principles of human nature or behavior that Dr. Abuelaish embodies, and/or is he unusual?
•  Does his story give you hope or lend you despair?  Why?
•  What questions does the book raise for you?

2/11  Discussion of Izzzeldin Abuelaish, *I SHALL NOT HATE*

2/13  Aggregating Israeli and Palestinian public opinion:

Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, **Poll 50**, 
http://pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2013/p50e.pdf  1-7 [also on Blackboard].

University of Maryland program for Public Consultation, “Israeli and Palestinian Public Opinion on Negotiating a Final Status Peace Agreement” (December 6, 2013) 
http://public-consultation.org/pdf/is-pal-report.pdf  1-7 [also on Blackboard].


2/18  Israeli political system: parliamentary, low threshold for Knesset participation, coalition governments and the political spectrum; bureaucracy of occupation.


Recommended:


2/20  Palestinian politics

http://www.palestinianbasiclaw.org/2003-amended-basic-law

Excerpts from As’ad Ghanem, *Palestinian Politics After Arafat* (Indiana U. Press, 2010) [Bb]  
Ch. 3, “Arafat’s Heritage of Political Control” p. 71-90;  
Ch. 5, “Palestinians in Search of Authoritative Leadership after Arafat,” p. 109-134;  
Ch. 6, “The Empowerment of Hamas and the Outbreak of Palestinian Infighting,” p.143-169. [This is also also available through OBIS: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/oberlin/docDetail.action?docID=10375734]

Highly recommended:


2/25 Nationalism and Zionism


Be sure to read document extracts 1.2 – Theodore Herzl, Der Judenstaat, 1.3 – Naguib Azoury, from “The Awakening of the Arab Nation” 47-49.

Recommended:

Theodore Herzl, The Jewish State (Bb);


2/27 Arab nationalism

E.G. H. Joffe,”Arab Nationalism and Palestine,” Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June, 1983), 157-170 (Bb);


Recommended:

Mandel, introduction - ch. 1, “Ottoman Policy and Practice: 1881-1908,” 1-31 (Bb);


Week 5: Background(1): “Britain, WWI and the inter-war period.” March 4, 6.


Highly Recommended

A complicated, fascinating tale and description of the “father” of Israel, Chaim Weizman, and his crucial role in negotiating the Balfour Declaration: Jehuda Reinharz,”The Balfour Declaration and its Maker” Journal of Modern History Vol. 64, No. 3 (Sept. 1992), 455-499 (Bb).
Week 6: March The 1948 debate. 11, 13.

3/11 From WWII to the partition

Smith, ch. 4, “WWII and the Creation of the State of Israel.” Be sure to read these crucial documents! 4.1 – the Final Solution; 4.2 – UNSCOP partition proposal; 4.3 – Jamal Al Husseini on the Palestinian reaction to UNSCOP; 4.5 – Israel Declaration of Independence; 163-205, 210-214, 216-218.

3/13 The 1948 war


Efraim Karsh, “Were the Palestinians Expelled?” Commentary Vol. 110 (July/August 2000) available at http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/mems/people/staff/academic/karsh/articles/WerethePalestiniansExpelled.pdf. (Bb);

Ilan Pappé, The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine (Oneworld Publications, 2006) excerpts on Haifa, pp. 58-61,92-96, 207-208 (Bb);


Recommended:

Nadine Picaudou “The Historiography of the 1948 Wars” Sciences Po Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence (2008) (Bb);

*** Paper #1 due March 14 ***

Whew. You did the paper!

Over the weekend, read David Harris-Gershon, What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill your Wife? It’s absorbing and easy to read. Let’s discuss it on Tuesday. Some suggested questions for discussion:

• What perspectives did Harris-Gershon take with him as he went to Israel from the U.S.?
• How well informed about the political situation in Israel/Palestine would you say he was upon arrival?
• Did his experiences up until the time of the bombing lead Harris-Gershon to question his beliefs
or convictions?

• Why did the attack at Hebrew University seem to affect Harris-Gershon more than his wife?
• What did Harris-Gershon have to uncover within himself to confront his own depression?
• What do you think of Harris-Gershon as you read the book: would you have liked to sit down with him for lunch and a chat before the attack? Afterwards?
• Did Harris-Gershon become increasingly or decreasingly sympathetic as the book went on?
• Why do you think he wrote the book?
• What’s the message he’s trying to convey?
• Think about how different audiences might read this book: Israeli nationalists, U.S. supporters of Israel, Israeli peace movement participants, Palestinian nationalists, Palestinian rejectionists, other Third World observers of what’s going on in Israel/Palestine?
• What questions does the book raise for you?

Week 7: March 18, 20.

3/18 Discussion: Harris-Gershon, What Do You Buy . . .

3/20 First half wrap up and thoughts about the second half. How’s it going? How would you like it to go? How can be best go that way?

***** Break March 22-30 *****

Week 8: Wars and negotiation (1), April 1, 3.


Week 9: Wars and negotiation (2). April 8, 10.


Be sure to read documents 7.1 – UNSC Res. 242; 7.3 – UNSC Res. 338; 7.4 – Arafat at the UN; 7.5 – Yosef Tekoah’s response to Arafat; 8.2 – Sadat’s speech to the Knesset; 8.4 – Camp David Agreed Framework for Peace, 1978.


Ian Lustick, (Bb) “Israel’s Dangerous Fundamentalists,” Foreign Policy No. 68 (Autumn 1987), 118-139.
Week 10: Wars and negotiation (3) Intifada I, Oslo. April 15, 17.


Be sure to read Documents 9.1 – Communiqué No. 1 of the Intifada; 9.2 – Leaflet No. 1 of HAMAS; 9.3 – “Peace Initiative of the National Unity Government” 431-437.

Recommended:


Documents 10.1 – Declaration of Principles; 10.2 – Interim Agreement, 476-484;

Ziad Abu Amr, (Bb) “Hamas, a Historical and Political Background,” Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 22, No. 4. (Summer, 1993), 5-19.

Recommended:

Wendy Kristianasen, (Bb) “Challenge and Counterchallenge: Hamas’s Response to Oslo,” Journal of Palestine Studies Vo. 28, No. 3 (Spring, 1999), 19-36.

*** Paper #2 Due April 18***


Recommended, more on water:


- State of Israel, “The Issue of Water between Israel and the Palestinians” (March, 2009) (Bb).

**Week 12: Camp David, Intifada II and Separation. April 29, May 1.**

**4/29**  
Camp David and after.


- Max Blumenthal, excerpt from *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (Nation Books, 2013) 208-223 [Bb].


Recommended:

- Mearsheimer and Walt, “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy” *London Review of Books* (2006) and responses (Bb);


**5/1**  
**One State, Two States, or something else entirely?**

**Envisioning futures** (direct links except for Shavit interview of Benvenisti)

**Two states:**


**One state:**

- Ari Shavit interview of Meron Benvenisti in *Ha’aretz* [Blackboard].

Electronic Intifada on the bi-national state  
[http://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-palestine-time-bi-national-state/6821](http://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-palestine-time-bi-national-state/6821)
Frustration:


Critique of frustration: Jerome Slater, “Deconstructing Lustick’s ‘Two State Illusion’”

New forms of sovereignty:


Week 13. Current negotiations. May 6, 8

5/6 To be announced
5/8 Final wrap up, course evaluations.

***MAY 9: Paper #3 due***