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 9:30-10:45 a.m., in King 335.

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.

Mideastweb.org brief history part I http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm
Mideastweb.org brief history part II http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory-oslo.htm

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. In addition to standard news sources (New York Times, Washington Post, BBC, Reuters, CNN, ABC), here are a few slightly more exotic ones:

World News (picks up from other sources worldwide)

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

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
Al Jazeera Arab TV English feed
Al Ahram Weekly Web site of Cairo newspaper

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).

Bitterlemons “Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints on prominent issues of concern. . . .”
Helene Cobban’s blog, US Middle East journalist, sympathetic to the Palestinians.
Mideastweb.org peace-oriented news and analysis with LOTS of links
Peace Now, Israeli peace organization

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Gaza)
B’selem 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
Washigton 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
J-Street, new, peace-oriented Jewish counter-lobby to AIPAC

Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, supports US support for Israel
CAMERA Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (Israel defender)
Masada2000.org, pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian
FrontPage Magazine, David Horowitz, scourge of US academia, pro-Israel
Daniel Pipes, head of the Middle East Forum, avid defender of Israel
Steven Plaut, sociologist, Israel defender
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
Institute for Palestine Studies, publishes Journal of Palestine Studies, current materials and links.

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

Global Security.org Palestine security links

Chaim Simons, A Historical Survey of Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine 1895 - 1947
http://www.geocities.com/capitolhill/senate/7854/transfer.html

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

United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNSIPAL), 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
Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, see in particular its “peace index” series.
Class sessions and readings

Week 1: Introduction. Feb. 8, 10.

2/8 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. *Al Jazeera* documents on Israel-Palestine negotiations
3. Possible UN Security Council Resolution on settlement construction
4. Current Obama Administration relations with Netanyahu government
5. Current Obama Administration relations with Abbas’s Palestinian Authority
6. Conditions in Gaza
   6a. Reconstruction (housing, public facilities)
   6b. Infrastructure conditions (water, sewage, electricity)
7. Conditions in West Bank
   7a. Settlement activity
   7b. Construction/demolition in Jerusalem
   7c. Economic conditions
8. U.S. lobby groups
   8a. AIPAC
   8b. J-Street
9. Egypt role in Gaza and Hamas-Fatah conflict
10. Palestinian weapons and other smuggling (by sea, under Gaza border, etc.)
11. Palestinian connections to outsiders (Iran, Hezbollah, Gulf States, Al Qaeda)
12. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on prisoners (Gilad Shalit, et al)
13. Natural resource and environmental issues in Israel/Palestine (including new fossil fuel discoveries).
14. Hamas governance in Gaza
15. Palestinian Authority governance in West Bank

2/10 Current events discussion based on topics assigned Tuesday

Week 2: Contemporary politics (1). Feb. 15, 17.

2/15 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as a “two-level game,” including the diplomacy between the two sides, on the one hand, and for each, the relationship between leaders and the public.

Jacob Shamir, *Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, pages 1-26 (Blackboard [Bb]).
(Recommended also Jacob Shamir, *Public Opinion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, pages 27-53 (Bb).)

Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, *Poll 38*,
[http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2010/p38e.html](http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2010/p38e.html), at least the “Main Findings” paragraphs;

Truman Center/PCPSR joint poll 34, “A majority of Israelis opposes intolerant steps toward
Arab citizens. Palestinians incorrectly believe that the majority of Israeli Jews supports such steps,” [http://truman.huji.ac.il/poll-view.asp?id=368](http://truman.huji.ac.il/poll-view.asp?id=368). If you click on “data” (under December 2010 near the top) you’ll get to the questionnaire and answer percentages.

### 2/17

#### Impasse and possible alternatives


### Week 3: Contemporary politics (2) - structure. Feb. 22, 24.

#### 2/22

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


#### 2/24

Current Palestinian politics


**Highly recommended:**


### Week 4: Early Zionism and Palestinian national consciousness. March 1, 3.

#### 3/1

Nationalism and Zionism


Be sure to read document extracts 1.3 (Der Judenstaat) (even better, read Herzl as recommended below), 1.5 (The Basel Program).

Recommended:


3/3 Arab nationalism


Recommended:


Week 5: Background(1): “Britain, WWI and the inter-war period.” March 8, 10.


3/10 Smith, Chapter 3: “Palestine Between the Wars.” Be sure to read documents 3.2 (Peel Commission Report) and 3.3 (1939 White Paper).

Highly Recommended

A complicated 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: Narratives of Israel-Palestine. March 15, 17** (Schiff will be out of town)

3/15 Visiting discussion facilitator Prof. Maren Milligan

Sandy Tolan, *The Lemon Tree* to page 122.

3/17 In-class video:

Sandy Tolan, The Lemon Tree, to 222.

*** Paper #1 due March 18 ***

**Week 7: The 1948 debate. March 22, 24.**

3/22 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; 4.6 – King Abdullah’s Offer to the Zionists.

3/24 The 1948 war


***** Break March 26-April 3 *****

**Week 8: Wars and negotiation (1), April 5, 7.**

4/5 Sandy Tolan, *The Lemon Tree* to end.

Recommended:


**Week 9: Wars and negotiation (2). April 12, 14.**


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 19, 21.**

4/19 Smith, ch. 9, “From Pariah to Partner . . . 1984-1993.”

Be sure to read Documents 9.1 – Communiqué No. 1 of the Intifada; 9.2 – Leaflet No. 1 of HAMAS.

Recommended:


Documents 10.1 – Declaration of Principles; 10.2 – Interim Agreement.


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 22***
Week 11: Political economy of occupation. April 26, 28.


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. May 3, 5.

5/3  Camp David and after. Who was to blame?


Recommended:


5/5 Israeli-Palestinian conflict in US discourse


**Week 13: The Obama initiative. May 10, 12.**

5/10 To be announced
5/12 Final wrap up, course evaluations.

***MAY 13: Paper #3 due***
Written Assignments

1. Journal

A. Current events:

Pick one of the topics listed at the beginning of the syllabus. For at least two weeks, check every day for information on your topic. When you have something, print it or take notes, and bring it to class! If you tire of the topic, or it isn’t making news, switch to another topic (for two weeks minimum). Alternative topics can be pursued with approval of instructor.

B. Discussions:

Immediately after class, write down a brief note on your impressions and feelings about the class. Note ideas or perspectives that you thought were particularly worthy or particularly controversial.

What points did you make in class about which you are (a) pleased or (b) that you’d change, upon reflection?

What points did others make that struck you as interesting and/or mistaken?

What would you like to have said that you didn’t? Why didn’t you? What role are you playing in discussion?

What do you think about how people interacted in class?

Were there moments when you thought you or someone else was being misunderstood? What caused the misunderstanding?

2. Papers

Three papers are due in the plastic box next to my office door (Rice 213) by 4:30 p.m. on the date indicated. They are to be printed (typed), double-spaced with at least 11 point type, with reasonable (at least 1 inch) margins and within the page limit. Endnotes and/or bibliography can be in addition to the page limit. The first two papers can be rewritten in consultation with me if you are unhappy with the result. These are expository essays. Refer to the style sheet for some format recommendations.

1. Nationalism

Due: March 18; page limit: Five.

Based on the class readings, describe the phenomenon of nationalism using the Jewish and Palestinian cases as examples.

2. Historical Responsibility
Due: April 22. Page limit: Seven.

Israelis and Palestinians make claims about the historical responsibilities (or moral obligations) that should impel others to help them, or at least to recognize their legitimacy, as they seek to establish independent existences in the Middle East. For example, Israelis frequently point to the Holocaust as a reason that Europeans should support Israel. Palestinians point to their lack of voice in the U.N. decisions that partitioned Palestine and led to the 1948 war as a reason that leaders within the U.N. of 1948 (particularly the U.S. and Britain) should help them to obtain, develop, and protect their state.

Discuss the idea of historical responsibility. Do historical events create lasting international obligations of a state, society, or people to another group or state? Use the Israeli and Palestinian cases to argue either in favor of, or against, the principle of such obligation, but be sure to structure your paper around a clearly stated position on this question. Remember that effective arguments take into account the strongest form of the counter-arguments.

3. Causes of peace and conflict


Isolate a small number (say 1–4) of basic causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, argue what short- and longer-term actions could lead toward peace, and evaluate the likelihood of these actions being implemented.
1. **Expository essays need arguments.** Arguments must be introduced at the beginning, argued and substantiated in the middle, concluded at the essay's end.

   **Introductions** say more than only the topic to be discussed. They indicate the outcome and the course of the argument to follow. So somewhere in the introduction there **MUST** be two sentences that say something like:

   “This paper will argue that, . . . .”
   “To reach this conclusion, the paper first . . . , and then . . . , and finally, . . . .”

   **Middles** combine empirical information (facts) with discussion and logic (arguments) to lead the reader toward conclusions. They are constructed in the order outlined in the introduction. It is very effective if the middle is divided into sections that correspond to the points you indicated in your introductory sentence that indicated the course of the argument.

   **Conclusions** should not open up new territory. They follow logically from, or summarize, what has gone before. If you find yourself inspired with new ideas in your conclusion, **GO BACK** and fit the ideas into your text where they belong. These ideas should be familiar when they appear in the conclusion.

   **NOTE:** **Rewriting** is the key to good writing (for most of us). Rewriting requires TIME. So start early, write a draft and study your draft to find out what it is you really want to say. Then go back, reorganize, smooth and polish to make your argument and evidence hang together convincingly for your reader.

2. **Short words and sentences are as valuable as long ones.** As Mark Twain said, “eschew surplussage.”

3. **Make sentences direct, verbs active, attribute effects to causes.** It's not that "International insecurity has been exacerbated by the increasing propensity of formerly weak recipients to threaten to use or actually to employ endogenously developed or exogenously sourced military technologies." Rather, "Formerly weak states often threaten their neighbors by brandishing weapons."

4. **Eliminate the double (or multiple) negative.** Do not say, for instance, that "the risk of failure was not inconsiderable."

5. **Long sentences with many qualifying dependent clauses frequently indicate indecision.** Pare sentences down to their essential meanings. Divide separate points into separate sentences.

6. ** Paragraphs are units of argumentation.** If a paragraph can't be summarized in one sentence, it is probably confused. Either it contains too many arguments, or it has no point. Very
long paragraphs and one sentence paragraphs are danger signs.

7. **Avoid the fallacious quantity.** Don't say something happened "a number of times." The word “several” is concise and equivalent. More than several might be “often.” A few times might be . . . “a few times.”

8. **Be brave.** Good writing requires decisiveness. If something "seems" or "appears," consider instead whether it "is."

9. **If you have to say "clearly", you probably haven't been clear.** "Clearly," "obviously," "thus," "moreover," “therefore,” and similar words are not always bad. Mostly, however, writers use them to assert a logical connection when one hasn't been made successfully in the text.

10. **Use first person pronouns ("I", "we", "our", etc.) sparingly.** They can weaken your argument. Unless discussing a personal view, it is more powerful impersonally to convince with logic and evidence than to depend on personal credibility (at least for those of us who aren’t famous). First person pronouns are appropriate when writing about your own view or approach. “My approach to this question is based on . . . .” On the other hand, you can just as well say, “This paper approaches this question based on . . . .”

11. **Singular nouns, even if they represent collectives, are considered singular in American English.** The British use plurals. For example, in American: "The U.S. government has its interests . . . ." But in British: "The U.K. government have their interests . . . ." (Note: we are in the U.S., speaking American English.)

12. **It's = it is or it has.** There is no other correct use of an apostrophe with its. There is no possessive form – if an its is possessive, it’s an its. (I know I’m a curmudgeon, but it’s the rule.)

13. **References (footnotes, endnotes) of some sort should be used whenever you are using information or arguments that you’ve gotten from another source.** Any standard form is acceptable (to me). The rule of thumb is that the reference should enable a reader to find the exact material that you are using.

14. **Rescue “affects” from “impacts upon,” and “effect” from “impact.”** Affect(s) and effect(s) are tough but rewarding.

Examples:  
““The water shortage has grievous effects upon crop fertility.”” (Effects as a plural noun.) Poor alternative: “The water shortage has grievous impacts upon crop fertility.”)


More examples, other uses:

“Shirley’s affect is straight-forward and blunt.” (Affect as a noun, meaning the way Shirley interacts with other people.)
Poor alternative: “Shirley’ impact upon others is straight forward and blunt.”

“Shirley is a very effective debater.” (Effective as an adjective.)
Poor alternative: “Shirley has great impact as a debater.”

15. **Other random (curmudgeonly) stylistic advice:**

- **Proactive** = active, aggressive, vigorous, etc.

- Time frame, timeframe and point in time are mixed metaphors (spacial and temporal).
  Time frame = period, time, or duration. Point in time = moment, instant, now, then.

- Prioritize, perhaps unfortunately, made it into the dictionary. Still, consider whether it might be felicitous to rank, or set priorities.

- Forward planning and future planning are both redundant. Planning always refers to the future (just try planning the past!).

- Avoid cliches.

  Move forward (progress)
  The bottom line (conclusion)
  At the end of the day (finally)
  Having said that (never necessary)
  That said (never necessary)
  Arguably (never necessary, could perhaps be perhaps)
  By and large (mostly)

- Speaking of cliches, “all intents and purposes” is the correct formulation (not all intensive purposes).

- Evict tenants when you mean tenets.