The Israeli Riddle: From Bible Land to Start-Up Nation  
Course Code: HUMA2000D, Mode: L1  
Course Offered in: Fall 2023, Thursdays 13:30-16:20  
Room: 1409

Prof. Gad Yair

Course Description
This introductory course on Israel and Israeli society seeks to familiarize students with the deep historical roots of Jewish life in the land of Israel and the Zionist revolution – moving to contemporary Israel and its challenges. The course aims to provide a bird’s view of different aspects of Israeli society: From tribalism to military, from education and science to family, ethnicity and the occupation. A major theoretical guiding theme would revolve around the idea of "cultural trauma."

Israel dates from Biblical times yet has become renown for being "Start-Up Nation." Since 1948 it experienced repeated wars and terror attacks, yet its people are surprisingly happy. It has one government but is divided by highly autonomous "tribes." It lives by the shadow of the Nazi Holocaust and of Iranian threats to annihilate it, maintains a very strong military – but is also home to a thriving culture of informality. Students in this course will gain insights into the relevance of the past and into contemporary challenges and opportunities of modern Israel.

Key Course Intended Learning Outcomes

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students will understand the connection between Israel's past and present</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Students will understand the concept of &quot;cultural trauma”</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Students will learn to analyze constitutions and apply to their local context</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Students will be able to analyze a political speech</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Students will understand Israel's strategic challenges and opportunities</td>
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Contribution of Learning Outcomes to Programs of Study

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<tr>
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<th>CILO-1, 2, 4, 5</th>
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<td>Apply knowledge in social science theory to study issues of social or cultural significance.</td>
<td>CILO-1, 2, 4, 5</td>
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<td>Apply knowledge in social science theory to study issues relating to Israeli society and culture</td>
<td>CILO-1, 2, 4, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance students’ academic writing competence</td>
<td>CILO-1, 2, 4, 5</td>
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Course Assignments

Reading: Each class has a few reading options – read at least one from the list. Read required assignment before class. Write "think pages" after class presentation and discussion.

Written Analyses: 4 Think Pages (80%); 1 Summary Reflection (20%).

Think Paper: Select four topics over the course of the semester to write reflective “think pages” (750 words each). Think pages should include your reflections on that week’s reading and include critical analyses of the text(s).

A good think paper meets the length requirements, is free of spelling/grammar errors, makes clear points, and reflects deep thinking about the reading by connecting ideas in the reading to ideas covered in class, showing problems/contradiction within the arguments of the text, and/or highlighting or demonstrating further evidence of claims in the reading.

My recommendation is to read class readings before class yet write your assignments after class when we cover those readings. Please upload your think pages to the school's LMS.

Summary Reflection: A final paper (1000 words) should summarize your overview of ‘what have I learnt in this course’ – and what are your main takeaways from the course. The final reflection is due no later than November 30, 2023.

Quality: final reflections should meet the word requirement, be free of spelling/grammar errors, and identify at least three areas of learning, and explain why the “take away” is important.

Grading: Each of the five papers is worth 20% of the final grade.

Integrity Policy: Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is important that the written work that you present reflect your own reading, critical analysis, and writing. Plagiarism includes: a) submitting someone else’s work in your name whether that someone else is someone you know or someone who posted their work on the Internet; and whether you paid for the material or not; b) submitting your own work from another course without disclosure to the instructor; c) copying passages verbatim or in close paraphrase from published or unpublished material written by someone else without properly using quotation marks and/or without citing your source; d) use of AI technology to write assignments.

Citation of Sources: In everything you write for this class, you must properly cite your sources using either the Chicago (footnote) or MLA (parenthetical citations and works cited) methods. For references on how to cite according to different academic styles: http://www.citationmachine.net/
Readings and Topics

Class 1: Hello Me: Personal Introduction, Personal Approach
Screening: The Israeli Code

The Top Country in Digital Life: Here

Theoretical Framework: Trauma, Constitution, Character


Class 1.2: Start-Up Nation – State of the Art


The Top Country in Digital Life: Here

Class 2: Bible Land and Holy Land – The Past is Present
American Visitors in the 19th Century

The Zionist Revolution

Leon Pinsker, 1882. Auto-Emancipation. Link
Theodor Herzl. 1896. The Jewish State. Link


Class 2.1: Deep Cultural Codes – What are they, How to Identify them


Class 3: From an Idea to an Identity


**Class 3.1: Cultural Trauma, Cultural Codes and Constitutions**


**Class Exercise:** Please look at the [Constitute Project](https://www.constituteproject.org/), read your country's constitution, and look for any signs of historical, national or cultural trauma. Be prepared to present the trauma and its constitutional consequences in class.

**Class 4: Tribes, Integration and Division**


**Between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv**


**Class 4.1: Existential Anxiety and Survival**


### Class 5: Holocaust and Personal Identity


### Class 5: Hutzpa, Defiance, and Being Opinionated


### Class 6: Holocaust and Collective Identity


Class 7: Palestine, Jerusalem, and East and West Divides


Clash of Traumas: Israel and Iran


Class 7.1: The Greatest Fear of All – Being Freier


Class 8: Fertility and Family


Fertility charts
Israeli Wonder Women?


Class 8.1: Flat Hierarchies: Symmetry and Informality


Class 9: Education, Culture and Science


Class 9.1: Creativity and Innovation


Class 10: Military I: Gender and Economy


Military II: Trauma and War

Kaplan, Danny, 2008. “Commemorating a suspended death: Missing soldiers
and national solidarity in Israel,” American Ethnologist, Vol. 35(3): 413-427

Yair, Gad and Ohad Aviram, 2022. "The structured frustration of cultural aspirations: Selection to elite military units, symbolic violence, and trauma." British Journal of Sociology of Education.

Class 10.1: Big Head, Small Head: Vision, Motivation and Initiative


Class 11: Start-Up Nation


Class 11.1: Flames of Passion: Courage, Effort and Identification

Class presentation

Class 12: The Occupation and Settler Society


**Class 12.1: In a Mission from God: Or La'Goim and Tikkun Olam**


**Class 13: Working Memory: Trauma and Culture**


**His Brothers' Keeper: Israel, Israelis Abroad and World Jewry**


**Peace and the New Middle East**

President Obama's Cairo Address
Prime Minister Yair Lapid's Address to the UN, 2022

**Class 13.1: Concluding Ruminations on Culture and Start-Upism**