



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 renowned 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

1	Students will understand the connection between Israel's past and present
2	Students will understand the concept of "cultural trauma"
3	Students will learn to analyze constitutions and apply to their local context
4	Students will be able to analyze a political speech
5	Students will understand Israel's strategic challenges and opportunities

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

Alexander, Jefferey, 2012. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Yair, Gad, 2015. "The Germans: Cultural trauma and the Israeli habitus," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, Vol. 3(2): 254-279.

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

Senor, Dan and Saul Singer, 2009. *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*. New York and Boston: Council on Foreign Relations.

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](#)

Shavit, Ari, 2013. *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*. New York: Random House.

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

Ortner, Sherry, 1973. "On key symbols," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 75(5): 1338-1346.

Rapaille, Clotaire, 2006. *The Culture Code: An Ingenious Way to Understand Why People Around the World Live and Buy as They Do*. New York: Broadway.

Class 3: From an Idea to an Identity

Almog, Oz, 2000. *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. **Overseas library E933.015 A451; EBOOK**

Elon, Amos, 1983. *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books. **Overseas library E982 E48**

Zerubavel, Yael. 2002. The "Mythological Sabra" and Jewish past: Trauma, memory and contested identity," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 7(2): 115-144.
EJOURNAL

Class 3.1: Cultural Trauma, Cultural Codes and Constitutions

Alexander, Jeffery C., 2012. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Mayer, Tamar. 2005. "[National symbols in Jewish Israel](#)." Pp. 3-34 in *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, edited by Michael E. Geisler. Lebanon, NH: Middelbury College Press.

Sztompka, Piotr, 2000. "Cultural trauma: The other face of social change," *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 3(4): 449-466.

Class Exercise: Please look at the [Constitute Project](#), 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

Kimmerling, Baruch, 2001. *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press
Overseas library E933.015 K49; EBOOK

Oz, Amos, 1983. *In the Land of Israel*. London: Flamingo. **Overseas library E320.9 O99**

Sorek, Tamir, 2013. "Public silence and latent memories: Yitzhak Rabin and the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel," *Israel Studies Review*, Vol. 28(1): 78-97. **EJOURNAL**

Between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv

Vinitzky-Seroussi, Vered. "Jerusalem assassinated Rabin and Tel Aviv commemorated him": Rabin memorials and the discourse of national identity in Israel," *City and Society*, Vol. 10(1): 183-203.

Class 4.1: Existential Anxiety and Survival

Shrira, A., 2015. "Transmitting the sum of all fears: Iranian nuclear threat salience among offspring of Holocaust survivors," *Psychological Trauma*, Vol. 7(4): 364-371. [Link](#). **EJOURNAL**

Yair, Gad and Behzad Akbari, 2014. "From cultural trauma to nuclear war? Interpreting the Iranian-Israeli conflict." *Human Figurations*, [Vol. 3\(2\)](#).
EJOURNAL

Class 5: Holocaust and Personal Identity

Aronson, Shlomo, 2009. "Israel's security and the Holocaust: Lessons learned, but existential fears continue." *Israel Studies*, Vol. 14(1): 65-93.
EJOURNAL

Yair, Gad, 2015. "The Israeli existential anxiety: Cultural trauma and the constitution of national character," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, Vol. 20 (4-5): 346-362. **EJOURNAL**

Yair, Gad, 2015. "The Germans: Cultural trauma and the Israeli habitus," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, Vol. 3: 254-279.

Yair, Gad, 2019. "The uncanny: How cultural trauma trumps reason in German-Israeli scientific collaborations," *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 45(1): 87-102.

See also: Fuhr, C., 2016. "Vicarious Group Trauma among British Jews." *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 39, 309–330.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-016-9337-4>

Class 5: Hutzpa, Defiance, and Being Opinionated

Katriel, Tamar, 1986. *Talking Straight: Dugri Speech in Israeli Sabra Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Odom, Sharona and Gad Yair, 2014. "Israeli diplomacy: The effect of cultural trauma," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 9(1): 81-103.

Class 6: Holocaust and Collective Identity

Katriel, Tamar, 1986. *Talking Straight: Dugri Speech in Israeli Sabra Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Odom, Sharona and Gad Yair, 2014. "Israeli diplomacy: The effect of cultural trauma," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol. 9(1): 81-103.

Roniger, Luis and Michael Feige, 1992. "From pioneer to freier: The changing models of generalized exchange in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33: 280-307.

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

Roman, Michael and Alex Weingrod, 1991. *Living Together Separately: Arabs and Jews in Contemporary Jerusalem*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Yair, Gad and Nabil Khattab, 1995. "Changing of the guards: Teacher-student interaction in the Intifada." *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 68: 99-115.

Yair, Gad and Samira Alayan, 2009. Paralysis at the top of a roaring volcano: Israel and the schooling of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 53(2): 235-257.

Clash of Traumas: Israel and Iran

Shrira, A., 2015. "Transmitting the sum of all fears: Iranian nuclear threat salience among offspring of Holocaust survivors," *Psychological Trauma*, Vol. 7(4): 364-371. [Link](#). **EJOURNAL**

Yair, Gad and Behzad Akbari, 2014. "From cultural trauma to nuclear war? Interpreting the Iranian-Israeli conflict." *Human Figurations*, [Vol. 3\(2\)](#). **EJOURNAL**

Class 7.1: The Greatest Fear of All – Being *Freier*

Bloch, Linda-Renée, 2003. Who's afraid of being a *Freier*: The analysis of communication through a key cultural frame." *Communication Theory*, Vol. 13(2): 125–159.

Roniger, Luis and Michael Feige, 1992. From pioneer to freier: The changing models of generalized exchange in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33: 280-307.

Class 8: Fertility and Family

Harari, Dror and Gillit Kroul, 2019. "Debating natalism: Israeli one-woman shows on experiencing childlessness," *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 35(2): 121-134. **EJOURNAL**

Okun, Barbara S., 2013. "Fertility and marriage behavior in Israel: Diversity, change, and stability," *Demographic Research*, Vol. 28: 457-504.

EJOURNAL

[Fertility charts](#)

Israeli Wonder Women?

Yair, Gad, 2020. "A different reason: How Israeli scientists think about careers and family life," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 25(1): 159-178. **EJOURNAL**

Class 8.1: Flat Hierarchies: Symmetry and Informality

Kahane, Reuven, 1975. "Informal youth organizations: A general model," *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 45(5): 17-28.

Yair, Gad, 2019. "Hierarchy versus symmetry in German and Israeli science," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* Vol. 8: 214-245. **EJOURNAL**

Class 9: Education, Culture and Science

Cohen, Uri, 2007. "University vs. society in a period of nation building: The Hebrew University in pre-state Israel." *Historical Studies in Education*, Vol. 19(1): 81-110. **EJOURNAL**

Yair, Gad, 2019. "Hierarchy versus symmetry in German and Israeli science," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* Vol. 8: 214-245. **EJOURNAL**

Class 9.1: Creativity and Innovation

Milgram, Roberta M., and Nava L. Livne, 2000. "Research on creativity in Israel: A chronicle of theoretical and empirical development," Pp. 307-336 in James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The International Handbook of Creativity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. [Link](#)

Class 10: Military I: Gender and Economy

Kober, Avi, 2015. "From heroic to post-heroic warfare: Israel's way of war in asymmetrical conflicts." *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 41(5): 96-122. **EJOURNAL**

Orna Sasson-Levy & Edna Lomsky-Feder, 2022. "Gendered gratitude: the civic subjectivity of Israeli women soldiers." *Citizenship Studies*, 26(2): 245-261.

Swed, Ori and John Sibley Butler, 2015. "Military capital in the Israeli hi-tech industry." *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 41(5): 123-141. **EJOURNAL**

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

Chorev, Shaul and Alistair R. Anderson, 2006. "Success in Israeli high-tech start-ups: Critical factors and process," *Technovation*, Vol. 26(2): 162-174.

Class 11: Start-Up Nation

Beyar, Rafael, Zeevi, Benny, and Rechavi Gideon, 2017. "Israel: a start-up life science nation." *The Lancet*, Vol. 389: 2563-2569. **EJOURNAL**

Senor, Dan, and Saul Singer, 2009. *Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*. New York: Twelve. **Overseas library E330.9 S478**

Yeshua-Katz, Daphna and Dorit Efrat-Treister, 2021. "‘Together in the tech trenches’: A view of Israel’s innovation culture." *Innovation: Organization and Management*, Vol. 23(3): 337-353.

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

Class presentation

Class 12: The Occupation and Settler Society

Allegra, Marco, Erez Maggor, 2022. "The metropolitanization of Israel's settlement policy: The colonization of the West Bank as a strategy of spatial restructuring." *Political Geography*, Vol. 92: 1-11.

Feige, Michael, 2011. "Passion and territory in Israeli historiography." *Israel Studies*, Vol. 16(1): 179-197. **EJOURNAL**

Monterescu, Daniel and Ariel Handel, 2019. "Liquid indigeneity: Wine, science, and colonial politics in Israel/Palestine." *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 46(3): 313-327.

Shafir, Gershon, 2017. *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict*. California: University of California Press. **EBOOK**

Susskind, Lawrence et al, 2005. "Religious and ideological dimensions of the Israeli settlements issue: Reframing the narrative?" *Negotiation Journal* 21.2: 177–191. [Web](#). **EJOURNAL**

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

Kahane, Bernard, 2016. "'Tikkun Olam': how a Jewish ethos drives innovation," *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 31(9): 938-947.

Persoff, Tova, 2021. "Understanding Israeli start-up founders in the context of 'Tikkun Olam'", *Kultura-Spoleczeństwo-Edukacja*, 20(2), 71-89.
<https://doi.org/10.14746/kse.2021.20.4>

Class 13: Working Memory: Trauma and Culture

Lumsky-Feder, Edna. 2004. The memorial ceremony in Israeli schools: between the State and civil society." *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 25(3): 291-305. **EJOURNAL**

Vinitzky-Seroussi, Vered. 2002. Commemorating a difficult past: Yitzhak Rabin's memorials. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 67(1): 30-51. **EJOURNAL**

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

Rebhun, Uzi and Lilach Lev-Ari, 2010. *American Israelis: Migrations, Transnationalism, and Diasporic Identity*. The Netherlands: Brill. **Main library DS 132.1 R42 2010; EBOOK**

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

Yair, Gad, 2019. "Culture counts more than money: Israeli critiques of German science," *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 49(6): 898-918.