

Myra Kraft Seminar in Israel on Contemporary Jewish Life
A Partnership with the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies
HRNS 350A
Fall 2014
Instructor: Dr. Rachel Fish

Class Meetings: Monday 12:10-2:00 pm on October 20, 27; November 3, 10, 17, 24; December 1, 8. Class meets in the conference room of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, 3rd floor of the Mandel Center for Humanities.

Room: Schusterman Center for Israel Studies Conference Room

Email: rlfish@brandeis.edu

Office Hours: by appointment in Schusterman Center for Israel studies located in the Mandel Center for Humanities, 3rd floor, Office # 316

Course Description:

This course examines aspects of Israeli history and society from the establishment of the state of Israel through the current moment. The course will analyze three spheres of Israeli society: social issues, historical events and relations between Israel and the Diaspora specifically within North America. The aims of the Kraft Seminar are:

- to gain knowledge and confidence about the field of Israel Studies so as to examine the complexities and nuances of Israeli society and history and know the resources in order to access independent study
- to understand how Israel is relevant to the work of Jewish communal professionals
- for students to articulate their personal understanding of Israel and the tensions that may exist between that perspective and their professional role towards Israel.

Course Narrative:

This seminar consists of lectures, class discussions, student responses on LATTE, and presentations. The class is composed of materials that, I believe, will serve you both in terms of academic pursuits and professional activity. During your work in the Jewish community the subject of Israel will enter the discourse. Often, the conversations surrounding Israel have a tendency to be polemical and highly politicized, resulting in the spreading of misinformation and lacking complexity. This course examines Israel in an objective and academic manner with the intention of investigating Israel and its society in a nuanced, multi-vocal framework. Rather than think in terms of bullet points and propaganda the thrust of this course is to sophisticate one's thinking and to leave the student with more refined, complex understandings and questions. The course teaches and allows students to practice the skills of participating in and facilitating complex conversations about Israel, while considering alternatives to policies in Jewish communal organizations. In all our work in the course, we will seek to facilitate and encourage an environment that fosters sensitivity, empathy, and open mindedness.

Course Requirements:

This course will meet eight Mondays from 12:10-2:00 pm during the Fall 2014 semester. Students are required to read the materials in advance of the class meetings and prepare and submit any supplemental materials on time.

Students are required to post responses on LATTE the Friday prior to the class meeting no later than 5:00 pm. This allows time for students to read each other's comments and to respond to your colleague's thoughts online. We will discuss many of the responses in class. Below is an outline of guiding questions and thoughts for the student responses.

It is expected that each student will attend class on its scheduled dates and participate actively.

Course Framework:

Each class structure will consist of advancing one's literacy of Israel and the application of this knowledge in terms of Jewish communal work. Lectures and thoughtful, informed discussions comprise the teaching format. In order for the discourse to be fruitful it is imperative that the environment in the class be courteous and respectful. As mentioned previously, the subject of Israel can be associated with emotion. It is necessary to remember that diverse opinions and thoughts exist and at times these may conflict with or counter one's own beliefs. However, in this course this cacophony will be demonstrated in a respectful manner and in the framework of an academic discussion that models civic Jewish discourse.

Course Assignments:

Student Responses: Throughout the course students will be asked to respond to ideas, questions, statements, and readings on the course LATTE site. Students must post five times during the course. These posts are meant to serve as a tool that allows for self-reflection, academic inquiry, as well as matters related to professional development. The Friday prior to each class meeting, students will be asked to post responses to the assigned readings. Some of these responses will be shared during class participation.

I will review all of the posts and they will be graded according to the rubric guide explanation on page 3 of the syllabus.

In addition to the LATTE responses, students will be asked during the class meetings to discuss how individuals go about exploring topics in order to expand their knowledge base. Considering content, transmission of knowledge to their specific community of learners, and adapting the content to make it relevant to the community are aspects of this exercise.

Paper: Each student will write a 3-5 page paper in response to the **December 1** presentation analyzing particular policy(ies) or approach(es) by Jewish professionals with respect to their relationship or work with Israeli society and Israeli organizations. The paper should examine the various positions presented.

Final Project: This year we will have two choices for final projects.

Choice One: Each student will select a topic for exploration with an emphasis on the content areas explored during the Kraft seminar- internal issues within Israeli society (I will also provide

possible topics). Using the essays from the Schusterman Center's Israel Literacy Project you will develop a plan of for acquiring knowledge, determining which sources are academic in nature versus advocacy oriented, and design a means of transmitting the knowledge and provide relevance and meaning of the topic to a particular community of stakeholders. The purpose of this exercise is not for you to become experts in the content per se but rather learn how to engage with various content areas and transmit knowledge in the realm of Israel education. There are two potential communities you can aim to reach in this exercise- professionals working in Jewish communal organizations and their constituents or educators working in Jewish environments (formal- dayschools or supplementary schools or informal- camps, youth groups, etc)

On the last day of class (**December 8**) students will formally present their plan of knowledge acquisition to their classmates. Topics for the final presentation should be determined by **November 10**. A written statement outlining your topic selection needs to be given to me. I am happy to meet with students to discuss topic selections in advance. Please notify me if this is of interest.

OR

Choice Two: Each student can work to create a video presentation either in the form of a TED Talk or animated short clip (think G-dcast.com). These TED Talks should be somewhere between 15-20 minutes in length. The purpose of the TED Talk or animated short clip is to take one particular content area focusing on internal issues within Israeli society and to present in TED Talk style or in an animated clip the essence of the content area, the necessary historical scaffolding which anchors one's knowledge about the content, and guiding questions or ideas that help illustrate why this material is relevant and significant in the twenty-first century and to one's life.

LATTE Posts and Comments: Students are required to post **five** responses to the assigned readings on the class LATTE Site. Please write out **THREE** critical questions of the assigned readings—on days with more than one assigned text, please address each text at least once. In addition, you must post at least **2 comments** in response to other student's postings for each week. **LATTE posts are due 5pm the Friday before class, comments are due by the Sunday evening no later than 8:00 pm.** Late LATTE posts/comments will not receive credit. LATTE posts make up a substantial 50% of your final grade. Please print your post and comments and bring to class.

How to ask good questions (for LATTE posts):

- What is the author's **main argument(s)**? Do you see a hole in his/her logic, an inconsistency in his/her reasoning? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- What **evidence** does the author use to make his/her argument? Think about the kinds of sources employed (personal experiences, scientific studies, books, scholarly journals, popular news articles, interviews, artwork, films, etc.). Do you find these convincing, what other sources would convince you? What different sources might contradict the argument here?
- What **perspective** does the author represent? Does the text reflect just one perspective or are alternative voices included or otherwise considered? Always ask, who would disagree with this? Why?

- Consider the **writing style** of the text, such as voice, word choice, and tone. Who is the intended audience? Does the writing style add to or detract from the argument, point to specifics.
- How does this text **compare** to others with which you are familiar? What new material is presented, what is left out, and why is this important?
- Also consider how the texts are **relevant** to your professional development. In what ways will this content enter the professional discourse?

LATTE Post Grading Rubric:

Out of 10 possible points

0 points = No posting/posted after 9pm on Sunday.

5 points = The student completed the assignment, but the intellectual quality of the comment is very low. The student has misunderstood the assigned readings and the posted comment is essentially incorrect or so vague as to be potentially *made up without having done the reading*.

6 points = The student has exhibited a *minimum effort* to complete the assignment. Questions or comments suggest that the student did not read carefully enough to understand what the assigned reading was saying. Comments are not quite accurate and very short.

7 points = The student is on the right track. He or she clearly understands the reading. At the same time, the student exhibits a surface level engagement by summarizing or commenting on the most obvious parts of the text.

8 points = The student has clearly understood the assigned reading and made an interesting comment about it. There is evidence that the student is beginning to think about connections between this text and other important ideas.

9 points = The student has clearly understood the reading and offers critical, insightful comments on the reading. He or she has captured a truly significant component of the central argument, or a main shortcoming in the author's logic or evidence. The student makes a powerful connection between the text he or she is commenting on and other texts or ideas discussed in class or found on-line. Post is well written and engaging.

10 points = The student demonstrates a mastery of the assigned text and offers a comment or question that pushes the rest of the class to consider something new about this text. The student makes a direct connection between the assigned reading and another text in a way that tells us something new about one or both texts. The student clearly understands not only a selected quote or small component of the overall text, but also clearly understands the argument the text is making and why this text is significant in the overall history we are discussing. The student has taken the time to fully develop his or her thoughts in a clear, but concise writing style that effectively conveys the student's rigorous thinking.

Adapted from Dr. Zoe Burkholder, Montclair State University

How to Post Weekly Responses in LATTE

Many people like to compose their forum posts, labels, and other text-heavy entries in Microsoft Word or other word processing program. Benefits to composing in a word processing program:

- Superior Grammar and Spell Check capabilities

- Ability to save a draft
- No risk of a dropped connection during composition

However, on many platforms, **the word processor's formatting code will be copied over and can create errors and other complications.** Word formatting code is incompatible with the LATTE formatting code. *This incompatibility has been known to corrupt courses, causing sections to disappear and other unusual behavior.* If you have composed your labels in Word, you may experience difficulty importing from past courses or other losses of functionality.

Solution to Remove Unwanted Formatting Code

Step 1: Type your post in the word processing program (e.g. MS Word), regularly saving your work.

Step 2: Perform Spelling and Grammar Check.

Step 3: Open a plain text editor (e.g. WordPad (PC), Notepad (PC), TextEdit (Mac)).

Step 4: Copy the text in the word processing program and paste it into the plain text editor. The plain text editor will strip the word processor's formatting from the text.

Step 5: Copy the text from the plain text editor and paste it into the LATTE window.

Step 6: Apply any text formatting (font color, bold, italics, etc.) in the LATTE window.

Note: The LATTE editor (not visible in Safari) has a "Clean Word HTML" button . However, this button does not work reliably. Use the solution detailed above.

Course Grades:

Attendance: Mandatory

Five LATTE Posts and Class Participation: 50%

Response Paper: 25%

Final Project: 25%

Readings:

Most of the readings listed below can be downloaded from the course website or will be selected from the purchased books.

The assigned books for this course are: Anita Shapira's, *Israel: A History* I will notify you when to bring the Shapira book. This book should have been read in advance of the seminar.

I recommend purchasing *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present*. This primary source reader contains an important collection of documents that you should know and have access to.

These books will not be used each class session but they are assigned as they are foundational texts for examining Israeli history, society, and culture. They should be viewed as part of your professional bookshelf.

Course Website:

You should regularly check the course website for further information on requirements and for downloading of required and optional reading materials. The selected readings from the Shapira reader will not be available on LATTE.

Please print all required readings.

Required Texts:

All students should acquire the followings books. It is important to build your professional bookshelf and the Rabinovich and Reinhartz Reader will be one of the central elements in it.

1. Anita Shapira. *Israel: A History*. Brandeis University Press: Waltham, MA 2012. In syllabus the book is referred to as Shapira.
2. All other assigned readings will be posted on the course website on LATTE.

Class Policy:

During this course computers and ipads may be used for the sole purpose of note taking. I request that you refrain from checking email, facebook, chatting, texting etc. during our class meetings. Please turn off the wifi capabilities of your technological devices during the Kraft Seminar.

There will be times during the class in which I request students to turn off their technology and engage in classroom discussion.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies on academic integrity (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai>). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

Students may bring their lunches to class and eat during the Seminar.

Changes to the Syllabus will be discussed in class and through email messages to the Hornstein listserv.

Syllabus:

October 20 Class meets 12:10-2:00 pm
Jewishness in Israel

Introduction to course

Orientation survey

Profile of Learners

Class Discussion

Present Syllabus and Rationale for Course

Break- 10 minute break

Readings:

1. A. Ravitzky, *Religious and Secular Jews in Israel: A Kulturkampf?*, (Israel Democracy Institute, 2000).
2. B. Neuberger, "Religion and Democracy in Israel," (The Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 1997)
3. Rabbi Dr. David Ellenson's draft essay for the Israel Literacy Project- " 'Jewishness' in Israel: Israel as a Jewish State"
4. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Messianism and Politics: The Ideological Transformation of Religious Zionism" *Israel Studies* vol. 19, no. 2 (2014), pp. 239-263.
5. Yoel Finkelman, "The Ambivalent Haredi Jew," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (2014), pp. 264-293.

October 27

Jewishness in Israel continued and Origins of Zionism

Readings:

1. Dr. Michael Brenner- Draft essay in the Israel Literacy Project
2. Walter Laquer, *A History of Zionism*. MJF Books: New York, 1996, Chapter 2, "The Forerunners," pp. 40-83.
3. Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desir in Early Zionism*. Brandeis University Press: Waltham, 2011, Chapter 1, "Pioneers and Pioneerism," pp.1-28.
4. Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*. Hanover, NH, 1995, Chapter 8, "The Right to the Land."

November 3

The Mosaic of Majority-Minority Relations

Readings:

1. Lihi Ben Shitrit, "Israel" in *The Middle East*, ed. Ellen Lust (Thousand Oaks: CQ Press 2014), pp. 537-563. Ellen Lust – The Middle East – Ch 14
2. Dr. Donna Divine's essay for the Israel Literacy Project- "The Mosaic of Majority-Minority Relations in Israel"
3. A. Cohen and B. Susser, "From Accommodation to Decision: Transformation in Israel's

Religion Political Life”, *Journal of Church and State* , Vol. 38 (1996), pp. 817-839

4. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, “Authority Without Sovereignty: The Case of the National Centre of the Jewish Community in Palestine,” in *Government and Opposition*. Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp.48-71.

November 10

Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel

Readings:

1. The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel. *The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel*. (2006)

2. Seth J. Frantzman, Havatzelet Yahel, Ruth Kark, “Contested Indigeneity: The Development of an Indigenous Discourse on the Bedouin of the Negev, Israel,” *Israel Studies*, 17:1 (2012), 78-104.

3. Naim Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY, 1989). pps. 102-114. Ateek – Theology of Liberation

4. Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, Eyal Naveh *Side by Side; Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine* (New York, 2012), Introduction; Chapter 4.

5. Asher Susser, “Partition and the Arab Palestinian Minority in Israel”, *Israel Studies*, Vol 14:2 (2009), pp. 105

6. Rouhana, Nadim. “Accentuated Identities in Protracted Conflict: The Collective Identity of Palestinian Citizens in Israel.” *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 27 (1993), pp. 97-127.

7. Elie Rekhess, “The Arab Minority in Israel: Reconsidering the ’1948 Paradigm,” *Israel Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2014), pp. 187-217.

Turn in written statement for final project.

November 17

Israeli Culture

Readings:

1. Dr. Rachel Harris- Draft essay in the Israel Literacy Project

2. Dr. Ranen Omer-Sherman- Draft essay in the Israel Literacy Project

3. Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004

November 24

Israel as Jewish and Democratic

Readings:

1. D.J. Elazar, “The Constitution of the State of Israel,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1993

2. Ruth Gavison, “Jewish and Democratic?” *Israel Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1999), pp. 44-72. Ruth Gavison, Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the “Ethnic Democracy” Debate

3. Dr. Yedidia Stern- Draft essay in the Israel Literacy Project

December 1

Analysis of North American Jewish Communal Organizations' Relationship with Israel
Conversation with Jewish professionals about the American Jewish communal relationship with Israel and the various communal organizations whose emphasis is on Israel-American relations. Why is Israel relevant to your work as a Jewish professional? What was, is, and should be the portrait of a Jewish professional vis a vis his/her knowledge about Israel? What are the future possible relations with Israel with respect to your communal organizations' work?

Assignment: In a 3-5 page paper discuss and analyze a particular policy(ies) or approach(es) that was/were mentioned during the conversation with leaders in the Jewish community. As an aspiring professional in Jewish communal life how do you understand the various perspectives presented and their vision for Israel-Diaspora relations and the role Israel plays in North American Jewish communal life.

December 8

Students will present their final projects: either plans of knowledge acquisition or video presentations to their classmates at the last class meeting.

Students may select a topic and submit it for approval by November 10. I can provide students with potential topics of interest from which they may select if this is desired.

Questions to consider when developing a plan for knowledge acquisition:

What are the sources of knowledge?

Who are the experts in the field?

How can this knowledge be transmitted to your particular community of learners?

For what purpose are you exploring this topic?

What is the relevance or importance for understanding this information?

What is the bibliography? What cultural materials (art, literature, film, music) can be employed in learning about this topic?

If developing a film presentation- TED Talk or animated short clip- consider including elements such as: identifying the essence of the content area, key moments or historical scaffolding necessary for understanding the context of Israeli history or society, why this ought to be relevant and meaningful to the Jewish people in the twenty-first century.