

**Kraft Seminar in Israel on Contemporary Jewish Life**  
**A Partnership with the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies**  
**HRNS 350A**  
**Fall 2013**  
**Instructor: Dr. Rachel Fish**

Class Meetings: Tuesday 12:00-1:50 pm on September 3, 10, 24; October 8, 22; November 5, 19; December 3. Class meets in the conference room of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Mandel Center for Humanities.

Room: Schusterman Center for Israel Studies Conference Room

Email: [rlfish@brandeis.edu](mailto:rlfish@brandeis.edu)

Office Hours: M: 9:30-11:00; W: 9:30-10:30 and by appointment in Schusterman Center for Israel studies located in the Mandel Center for Humanities, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Tuesdays from 12:00-1:50 pm during the Fall 2013 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 Sunday prior to the class meeting no later than 9:00 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:**

We will meet eight times during the Fall 2013 semester from 12:00-1:50 pm on Tuesdays: September 3, 10, 24; October 8, 22; November 5, 19; and December 3. The class will meet in the conference room of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies located on the third floor of the Mandel Center for Humanities.

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 six 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 Sunday 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 following rubric.

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 **November 19** 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:** With teams comprised of 3 people, students will select a topic for exploration with an emphasis on the content areas explored during the Kraft seminar (I will also provide possible topics). The purpose of this exercise is not for you to become experts in the content per se but rather learn how to develop a plan to acquire knowledge, determine which sources are academic in nature versus advocacy oriented, design a means of transmitting the knowledge and provide relevance and meaning of the topic to the community of stakeholders.

On the last day of class (**December 3**) student groups will formally present a plan of knowledge acquisition to their classmates. Topics for the final presentation should be determined by **October 22**. A written statement outlining your topic selection needs to be given to me. I am happy to meet with teams of students to discuss topic selections in advance. Please notify me if this is of interest.

**LATTE Posts and Comments:** Students are required to post six responses to the assigned readings on the class LATTE Site. Please write out FIVE 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 9pm the Sunday night before class, comments are due by the start of class.** 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 you are familiar with? What new material is presented, what is left out, and why is this important?

**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

## **Course Grades:**

**Attendance: Mandatory**

**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.

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:

**September 3 Class meets 12:00-1:50 pm**

**Introduction to course**

**Orientation survey**

**Profile of Learners**

**Class Discussion**

**Present Syllabus and Rationale for Course**

**Break-** 10 minute break

**Lecture:** Zionism and its Relevance in the Twenty First Century

**September 10**

**Israel's Foreign Policy**

**A. Lecture:** The content examines Israel's foreign political behavior based upon Zionist diplomacy, motivations as the Jewish state, geopolitics, national security and its role in the international community. How does Israel, as a state power, act or react on the basis of its foreign policy aims?

**B. Conversation:** After reading these texts how do you understand Israel's foreign policy and what are the primary factors that influence Israel's behavior? Has the ideology of Zionism contributed or detracted to Israel's foreign policy? Does Israel have a foreign policy ideology?

**Readings:**

1. Aharon Klieman. "Zionist Diplomacy and Israeli Foreign Policy," in *Jerusalem Quarterly*. Vol 11, 1979, pp.93-111.

2. Uri Bialer. "Top Hat, Tuxedo and Cannons: Israeli Foreign Policy from 1948 to 1956 as a Field of Study" in *Israel Studies*. Vol. 7, No. 1, 2002, pp. 1-80.

3. Charles Freilich. Chapter 1 "Constraints and Players," in *How Israel Makes National Security Policy: Zion's Dilemmas*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012, pp.11-26.

4. Shlomo Avineri. "Ideology and Israel's Foreign Policy," in *Jerusalem Quarterly*. Vol. 37, 1986, pp.3-13.

**September 24**

**Israel in the Context of the Middle East and the Palestinians**

**A. Lecture:** This class examines Israel in the context of its regional neighbors and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians living in the Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We will investigate the origins of the conflict between Jews in Israel and the Palestinians, the national security issues, the obstacles to peace, and the current state of affairs.

**B: Conversation:** What are the pressures Israel faces in terms of the regional conflict, Israel and the surrounding Arab states and Iran, and the local conflict between Israelis and Palestinians? Are there opportunities for serious engagement with the Palestinians and where have there been missed opportunities? What are the challenges Israelis face in attempting to create peace with the Palestinian people? How can a meaningful relationship between Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs be built and sustained?

## Readings:

1. Itamar Rabinovitch. *Waging Peace*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. pp.1-37.
2. Emile Sahliyeh. "The PLO and the Israeli Arabs", *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 27:1-2, (March-July 1993), pp. 84-96.
3. The Hamas Charter, 1988.
4. Meir Litvak, "The Islamization of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Case of Hamas," in *Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. 34, No. 1, January 1998, pp. 148-163.
5. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage" in *The Monthly Atlanta*. September 1990, pp. 47-60.
6. Michael Milstein, "A New-Old Middle East: Current Developments and their Implications for Israel," in *Strategic Assessment* . Vol. 14, No. 1, April 2011.
7. Khalil Shikaki. *Building a State, Building Peace*. Washington DC: The Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, No. 1, December 2003.
8. Shlomo Brom, "Quiet in the Palestinian Arena: The Eye of the Storm," in *Strategic Assessment*. Vol. 14, No. 1, April 2011.
9. Khalil Shikaki, "Coping with the Arab Spring: Palestinian Domestic and Regional Ramifications," in Middle East Brief, Crown Center, December 2011.

## October 8

### The US-Israel Relationship

**A. Lecture:** The United States and Israel share a special relationship. This class meeting examines the roots of this unique relationship, the history of American supporters of Zionism and the evolving relationship between Israel and the North American Jewish community.

**B. Conversation:** How would you categorize the relationship between the United States and Israel? What is the role of the United States political leadership with respect to the peace conflict, terrorism, and balance of power in the Middle East? How has the United States's relationship toward Israel transformed over time? Where are the points of convergence and divergence in terms of interests between the United States and Israel?

## Readings:

1. Kurtzer, Dan and Scott B. Lasensky. *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East*. Washington DC: The United States Institute for Peace, 2008. Selected chapters available on LATTE
2. Shimon Stein, "United States-Israel Relations: Is Anything Forever?" in The Institute for National Security Studies, *Insight No. 237*, January 12, 2011.  
<http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=4740>
3. Zvi Ganin. *An Uneasy Relationship: American Jewish leadership and Israel, 1948, 1957*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005. Chapter 1 and 8.
4. Dennis Ross. *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004. Chapter 24.

## October 22

### The Portrayal of Israel on the World Stage

**A: Lecture:** How Israeli society is perceived and viewed by the world community in an age of

de-legitimization. This lecture will dissect the evolution of anti-Semitism and understanding anti-Israel sentiment and anti-Zionism. We will also investigate the perceptions of Israel within Christianity.

**B: Conversation:** How is Israel perceived of on the world stage within the international community? What factors have contributed to the perception of Israel? How does one delineate between anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israel sentiment? How do various denominations within Christianity perceive of Israel and what accounts for their differing perceptions?

**Readings:**

1. Gil Troy. *Moynihan's Moment: American's Fight Against Zionism As Racism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Introduction and Chapter 5.
2. Yaakov Ariel. *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*. New York: New York University Press, 2013. Chapter 10.
3. Manfred Gerstenfeld. "Anti-Israelism and Anti-Semitism: Common Characteristics and Motifs," in *Jewish Political Studies Review*. Vol. 19, Nos. 1-2, Spring 2007.  
<http://jcpa.org/article/anti-israelism-and-anti-semitism-common-characteristics-and-motifs/>
4. Uri Bialer. "Israel and Nostra Aetate: The View from Jerusalem" in A. Melloni and Y. Lamdan (eds.) *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish-Catholic Relations*. Munster, 2007, pp. 63-86.

**November 5**

**Israel and the Global Jewish Community- Ties and Tensions**

**A. Lecture:** This class meeting examines the concept of peoplehood and the relationship between Israel and diaspora communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A particular emphasis will be placed upon changing attitudes within the North American Jewish perspective toward Zionism and Israel.

**B. Conversation:** How can one define peoplehood? The relationship between Israel and the Diaspora has transformed over time, what factors have contributed to these changes? How does the North American Jewish communal leadership and community understand and relate to Israel? Does one's Jewish identity intersect with one's personal relationship to Israel? Must Israel be a factor within one's understanding of Jewish life?

**Readings:**

1. Yossi Beilin. *His Brother's Keeper*. New York: Schocken Books, 2000, chapters 3 and 4.
2. Steven Cohen and Charles Liebman in Allon Gal's and Alfred Gottschalk's *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000, pp.3-37.
3. Steven Bayme. "American Jewry and the State of Israel: How Intense the Bonds of Peoplehood?" in *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1-2, Spring 2008, pp. 7-21.

**November 19**

**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 3**

Students will present their plans of knowledge acquisition to their classmates at the last class meeting.

Students may select, in coordination with their partners, a topic and submit it for approval by November 5. I can provide students with potential topics of interest from which they may select if this is desired.

Groups should be formed prior to October 22. Each team is comprised of 3 people. One member of your team should not be in the same cohort.

**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?**