UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
POLITICAL SCIENCE 631: THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT
SPRING 2015

Professor: Nadav Shelef
Email: shelef@wisc.edu
Phone: 263-2280
Office: 414 North Hall
Office hours: Wednesdays 1-3, and by appointment.

Course Description
This class will provide an in-depth understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its development over time. Our goal is to develop an appreciation of the complexities and dynamism of this conflict through an examination of its origins, actors, and the key historical and political factors that have shaped it.

Course objectives
At the end of this course students will be able to:
- Summarize the historical developments of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Describe how the main actors see the world and analyze their behavior.
- Evaluate the political dynamics driving the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Distinguish between political and analytical arguments.

Course Structure
This is a seminar. Most of our meetings will revolve around critical intensive discussions of the assigned readings. This means that the more you put into the course, the more you will get out of it. On occasion, there will be lectures oriented to providing contextual and introductory material for certain topics.

Course Requirements
Critical reaction papers
There are no examinations in this course. Students are expected to attend each class, having completed the reading assignments and ready to contribute to the discussion. To that end, students are required to submit a short (1-2 page) critical reaction to the readings each week. Reaction papers due in the dropbox folder in course’s Learn@UW site by 4 pm on the day before each class. There is no response paper due the first week. The critical reactions will be evaluated according to the following rubric:
- +: A comprehensive, but concise, analysis of the main arguments in the readings, their assumptions, shortcomings and implications that raises interesting and significant new issues for discussion.
- -: A satisfactory analysis of the arguments in the reading, including some attention to their assumptions, shortcomings, and implications.
- -: A summary of the readings, with little evaluation of their arguments.

Critical reaction papers are not simply summaries of the readings. I want you to demonstrate that you have read and given serious thought to the material for that week. Successful reaction papers
focus on the limitations of the readings, relationship with other readings or topics, and/or their wider implications. You might consider the following questions as you write your reaction papers:

1) What are the principal arguments or points of view offered in the readings? What are they trying to explain? Are they successful?
2) What assumptions do the readings make? Are they plausible? How would you refute them?
3) Is the evidence offered by the readings to substantiate their argument relevant, effective, and convincing? What are its weaknesses?
4) What are the broader implications of the readings?
5) How do these readings compare/contrast to, or expand on, other material presented in this class, other classes, or your outside experience?
6) What questions remain unanswered once you’ve finished reading this week’s reading? What should have been addressed? Why?

Regardless of the particular strategy you adopt for these assignments, your reaction papers should also be concise, well-written, and carefully proofread.

Research Paper

The main assignment in the class is a research paper that evaluates a general claim about Arab-Israeli relations or another relevant aspect of the conflict. Close consultation with the professor in the choice of topic and the development of research design is expected. Paper topic proposals with preliminary bibliographies must be turned in by March 13th. The final papers are due by the end of the day on May 11th. Late papers will be penalized half of one letter grade for every day they are late.

The research paper will provide you with an opportunity to explore an aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict in significant depth. I am relatively open about the scope of topics that can be chosen. If you have trouble coming up with an appropriate topic, I would be happy to work with you to develop an appropriate topic.

The paper itself should be 3000-5000 words long. Citations should be provided in footnotes using the Chicago Manual style. For information see, http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html

A good paper both informs and persuades; to do this it must be logically organized, clearly argued, and well documented. Avoid writing a paper that merely restates the readings or repeats the class discussions. You need to do some original thinking, research, and analysis in this paper. Stay away from normative arguments or political polemics. This is hard work. You are strongly encouraged to meet with me to discuss the progress of your paper throughout the semester.

Style Counts! Spelling mistakes and syntax errors are, at best, evidence of sloppy work. At worst they make your argument impossible to understand. While style does not replace substance, a poorly written or organized paper makes it difficult to get to your argument. I encourage you to consult the UW Writing Center’s “Writer’s Handbook” for more information about style, organization and references. http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/index.html
There are also a number of excellent guides on the web that I encourage you to consult about how you could go about writing an analytical research paper. Some good sites include:

- How to Research a Political Science Paper, by Peter Liberman: [http://qcpages.qc.edu/Political_Science/researching.html](http://qcpages.qc.edu/Political_Science/researching.html)
- Writing Political Science Papers: Some Useful Guidelines, by Peter Liberman: [http://qcpages.qc.edu/Political_Science/tips.html](http://qcpages.qc.edu/Political_Science/tips.html)

Here is a rough explanation of the rubric by which I will be evaluating the papers:

A: This is an outstanding paper. It is well organized around a clear and insightful argument that is logically organized and well-supported with evidence from the historical record and the scholarly literature. The paper considers alternative arguments, deals with countervailing evidence, and weighs their relative merits. It also convincingly shows that its main argument is better/more complete than the alternatives. This paper also shows how and why the question it pursues and the answer it offers are significant and important. There are few (or no) spelling or proofreading problems and the paper is well and appropriately documented.

AB: High quality in terms of style and content. The paper has a clear thesis statement, good organization and supporting evidence. It shows a solid grasp of the issues at stake and is well written. This paper shows evidence of original thought and planning. While it makes some reference to the scholarly literature it does not fully engage it.

B: The paper shows a decent understanding of the phenomenon and the overall argument is relatively clear although it may tend more toward summary than analysis. While the wider literature is acknowledged, the paper does not add its own insights. However, there may be significant grammatical and syntax errors, organizational problems, and the references to the literature may be perhaps a bit narrow, superficial or insufficient.

BC: The paper conforms to some of the requirements, but falls short on many, or is seriously marred by crucial shortcomings, including, but not limited to, poor organization, poor grammar or a poor understanding of the question. While there is some attempt to deal with the question, the argument is unclear and/or it is not adequately supported by appropriate evidence. There is little attempt to anchor the argument in the literature on the topic.

C: The paper attempts to pose and answer a question but does not actually do so. In other words, it has no argument. It may also be plagued by, among other problems, poor organization, poor writing, over-generality, lack of evidence or its inappropriate, selective or partial use.

F: The paper does not meet the requirements of the assignment and/or is so poorly written as to be unintelligible or has plagiarized from a published text or another student. Note also that an adequate paper that is not on an appropriate topic also falls within this realm.

I will take into consideration papers whose final draft shows substantial and significant improvement over earlier drafts. Note, to take advantage of this you have to complete drafts of
your paper early enough to get feedback. I require at least 3 weekdays to get a draft back to you with comments. In other words, don’t wait until the last moment to start your paper.

**Grading Criteria**
Final course grades will be assigned according to the following weights:
- Attendance and discussion participation: 20 percent
- Critical reaction papers: 20 percent
- Research paper: 60 percent

**Academic Conduct**
This class is geared to maximize our joint exploration of important topics in the history and politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Serious scholarly discussion becomes impossible when diatribe and invective displace scholarly analysis. As a result, when posing questions or responding to others, students are expected to demonstrate an appropriate level of respect despite what might be deep disagreements.

The paper you are required to write will require you to cite other people’s work. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated!** If you are caught turning in work that is not your own or using another author’s work without properly citing it, you will receive an F on the assignment. If you have any questions about what constituted academic dishonesty, please consult the Dean of Students Web page, at [http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html](http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html)

**Required Readings**
Many of the required readings for this course are in the course reader, which is available online at the course’s Learn@UW site. If you would rather have a physical copy of the readings, they can be ordered from StudentPrint ([http://studentprint.rso.wisc.edu/](http://studentprint.rso.wisc.edu/)). The books can be purchased at the University Book Store or found on reserve at the College Library.

The following books are required for the course:


The following recommended books are recommended and have been placed on reserve at College Library:
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 20, 22): Historical background and making sense of conflicting accounts
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The danger of a single story,” TED talk, July 2009:
http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html
Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 1-33

Week 2 (January 27, 29): Zionism and Israeli Nationalism
Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 33-75, 145-156.
Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion testimony before the Peel Commission

Week 3 (February 4, 5): No class: POMEPS conference

Week 4 (February 10, 12): Palestinian Nationalism
Hamas Charter

Week 5 (February 17, 19): No class: International Studies Association Conference

Week 6 (February 24, 26): The dynamic of the mandate and the logic of partition
Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 76-91, 117-127.
Haj Amin al-Husseini’s testimony before the Peel Commission
Jabotinsky, Vladimir (Ze’ev). “The Iron Wall,” and “The Ethics of the Iron Wall” (13)
UNSCOP Recommendation, Jamal al Husayni and Hillel Silver reactions, in Smith, Charles.
Leonard Mosely, 1955. Gideon Goes to War, 55-64.

Week 7 (March 3, 5): Triumph and Catastrophe: different understandings of the 1948 war
Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 127-144.
Zeev Sharef. “Meeting of the National Administration and the Formation of a Provisional Government of Israel, May 12, 1948: Memoir,” in Rabinovitch and Reinharz, eds. Israel in the Middle East, 63-70.

Week 8 (March 10, 12): The refugee question
Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 156-164.

Week 9 (March 17, 19): Arab-Israeli wars 1956-1982
Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 166-196.

Week 10 (March 24-26): The Intifadas

March 31, April 2: Spring Break: No class

Week 11 (April 7, 9): Impact of the conflict on Palestinian and Israeli societies
Week 12 (April 14, 16): The Great Debates I: What to Do with the Occupied Territories in Israel?


Week 13 (April 21-23): The Great Debates II: Acceptance of Israel among the Arabs?


Week 14 (April 28-30): The role of the United States


Kurtzer, Dan in “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Has the U.S. Failed, a symposium.” 2014. *Middle East Policy*, 21(4): 2-7, the rest is optional, but recommended.

**Week 15 (May 5-7): Peace Processes, the two state solution, and its alternatives**


“The One State Declaration” Electronicintifadah.com


Shelef, Nadav and Yael Zeira, “Recognition Matters!: UN State Status and Attitudes Towards Territorial Compromise,” 1-23.

**Papers due May 11th**