"Israeli Politics," INTL4371
University of Georgia, Department of International Affairs
Spring Semester 2026

Dr. Eli Sperling
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:00-12:00pm, can also schedule Zoom meetings throughout the week, depending on my availability
Office Location: Candler 312

Course Description:
This course explores the Israeli political system's history, social and cultural contexts, institutional characteristics and components, and numerous dilemmas. Amidst Israel's rapidly evolving domestic, regional and global political outlooks *and* upcoming national elections (during the semester!), this course seeks to offer an opportunity to critically engage with scholarly sources and Israeli political discourses. The goal of the semester is to offer students— regardless of prior course work on Israel or the Middle East—the context necessary to understand and analyze events in modern Israeli politics.

Grade Scheme	**Grade Composition**
A: 93-100	Quizzes/writing assignments: 10%
A-: 90-92	Group Presentation: 15%
B+: 87-89	Midterm: 20%
B: 83-86	In class attendance and participation: 20%
B-: 80-82	Take home Final paper: 35%
C+: 77-79	
C: 73-76	
C-: 70-72	
D+: 67-69	
D: 63-66	
D-: 60-62	
F: 00-59	

<u>Assignments</u>

Quizzes and writing assignments:

There will be period quizzes on course topics and readings **and** two writing assignments with your groups.

Group Presentation:

Students will be divided into 6 groups. Each group will represent a different state or non-state actor in the region. During the last two weeks of the semester, each group will give a 20-minute presentation—details will be discussed in the first weeks of the semester

Participation:
Students should regularly attend class, having read all the required readings. They should be prepared to both pose and answer questions about the readings and engage in discussion on the broader subject matter.

Midterm Exam:

Midterm exam covering the topics in the course so far.

Final Exam:

Final exam covering major themes, topics, and concepts from the entire semester.

Policies

Academic Integrity:
Every student must agree to abide by UGA's academic honesty policy and procedures known as A Culture of Honesty and the University of Georgia Student Honor Code, which work together to define a climate of academic honesty and integrity at the university.

Use of generative AI:

Use of generative AI (i.e. ChatGPT, Perplexity AI, Claude etc.) is permitted only when explicitly allowed for specific assignments. When used, students must cite it appropriately and clearly indicate how it contributed to their work through a "Generative AI Disclosure" placed at the beginning of the assignment it was used for. Unauthorized or undisclosed use of AI tools will be treated as academic misconduct. If you're unsure whether AI use is allowed, ask before proceeding.

Attendance:

- You are allowed up to 3 unexcused absences without penalty. After that, each additional unexcused absence will lower your attendance/participation grade by 5 points. Excused absences (i.e. illness, family emergency, religious observance, university-sponsored activity) must be documented and communicated to me in advance or as soon as possible. You will have up to five days after an illness to provide a doctor's note.

- If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain any missed material or announcements from a classmate or the course website.

Special Needs:

This course is guided by the assumption of dignity and respect for all persons in the classroom. My hope is to support diversity of learners and to provide an inclusice environment. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of classes), and make sure that you have contacted the Disability Resource Center: http://drc.uga.edu

In-Class Discussion Guidelines:

Civility and respect are essential when engaging in productive academic discourse. All communications for this course should be conducted constructively, civilly, and respectfully. Differences in beliefs, opinions, and approaches are to be expected. Please bring any communications you believe to be in violation of this policy to my attention. Active interaction with peers and your instructor is essential to success in this course, paying particular attention to the following:

- Be respectful of others and their opinions, valuing diversity in perspectives, backgrounds, abilities, and experiences.
- Challenging ideas, phenomena and the scholars that we engage with is integral to critical thinking and the scholarly process. Please articulate your written and verbal communications carefully and thoughtfully, recognizing that a positive atmosphere of healthy discourse is encouraged.
- It is important to do the reading! We will be discussing nuanced and often complicated circumstances. Being a productive member of in-class discussions means doing the reading and being prepared to talk about those assignments and how they relate to lectures and concepts discussed in class.

Required books:

Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. **This book is available in its digital format for free/open source on the UGA Library website.**

Course schedule—session descriptions, reading assignments

*Changes to the syllabus during the semester are subject to the instructor's discretion.

January 13: Syllabus overview, goals and expectations of course

January 15: What is the Israeli political system? How will we analyze its evolution and many moving parts?

- Edit Hazan, Reuven Y., and Gideon Rahat. "Israeli Party Politics." Party Politics, vol. 14, no. 6, 2008, pp. 659–661. (uploaded as PDF)

- Caramani, Daniele. 2017. "Party Systems" —alternative text, uploaded as PDF

January 20: What is Nationalism? Zionism? Political Zionism?

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso. 1983. Pp. 1-7, 37-47.

- Hertzberg, Arthur. *The Zionist Idea*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997. 15-32.

January 22: Zionist immigration to Palestine, evolution of political institutions and ideologies

- Mahler, Gregory S. *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State*. Rowman and Littlefield. 2004. pp. 13-42

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 3-26.

January 27: 1948 War, the Labor establishment, and *Mamlachtiut (statism)*

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. pp. 155-178

- Zerubavel, Yael. "The 'Mythological Sabra' and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities." Israel Studies, vol. 7, no. 2, 2002, pp. 115–144.

January 29: The Position of the Palestinian Israelis

- Peleg, Ilan, and Dov Waxman. *Israel's Palestinians: The Conflict Within*. Cambridge University Press, 2011. pp. 19-34.
  — https://www.google.com/books/edition/Israel_s_Palestinians/oIi3BK_mT5YC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

- Muslih, Muhammad Y. *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*. Columbia University Press, 1988. pp. 1-9.

February 3: Israel's population doubles

- Stillman, Norman. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976. pp. 328 – 333, 336-342.

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 222-270.

February 5: Demographic questions, Labor solutions

- Kohavi, Noya. "Why Was the 1965 Beatles Concert in Israel Really Canceled?" *Haaretz*, January 12, 2018, www.haaretz.com/1.5018895

- Chetrit, Sami Shalom. "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2000, pp. 51–65.

- Shalev, Ben. "The Hardest-Hitting Protest Song Ever Written in Israel." *Haaretz*, June 6, 2018, www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-the-hardest-hitting-protest-song-ever-written-in-israel-1.6152410

February 10: The Lead up to the war, ideational balancing in the region

- Bunch, Clea Lutz. "Strike at Samu: Jordan, Israel, the United States, and the Origins of the Six-Day War." *Diplomatic History*, 32:1 (2008): 55-76.

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. pp. 295–306

February 12: The June 1967 War

- Goldstein, Yossi. "The Six Day War: the war that no one wanted," *Israel Affairs*, 24:5 (August 2018): 767-784.

- "The end of Nasserism: How the 1967 War opened new space for Islamism in the Arab world," Brookings, June 5, 2017. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/06/05/the-end-of-nasserism-how-the-1967-war-opened-new-space-for-islamism-in-the-arab-world/

February 17: The aftermath of the War, midterm preparation

February 19: No class!

February 24: Midterm!

February 26: 1973 War and its aftermath

- Blanga, Yehuda. "'The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming': American Management of the Crisis Associated with Ending the October 1973 War." Middle Eastern Studies, 49: 4 (2013): 563-580.

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. pp. 326–339

March 3: A path to peace built out of war, the ascendency of Likud

- Menshawy, Mustafa. "Turning 'Defeat' into 'Victory:' the Power of Discourse on the 1973 War in Egypt." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 52: 6 (2016): 897-916.

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 340-356.

- Kenneth W. Stein, "Evolving a Diplomatic Legacy from the October War: The US, Egyptian, and Israeli Triangle," in Asaf Siniver (ed.), *The October 1973 War Politics, Diplomacy, and Legacy*, London: Hurst and Company, 2013, pp. 209-229.

March 5: 1982 Lebanon War, First Intifada

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 391-421.

Spring Break!

March 17: First Gulf War, Madrid, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Bush 41

- Scott B Lasensky. "Friendly Restraint: US-Israel Relations During the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991, Rubin Center, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol 3, No. 2 (June 1999), pp. 24-35.

March 19: The Oslo Accords

- Rekhess, Eli. "The Arabs of Israel After Oslo: Localization of the National Struggle." Israel Studies 7:3 (2002): 1-44.

March 24: Netanyahu's opposition, Palestinian-Israeli outlooks, and
Camp David II

- Watch "Netanyahu At War," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W-xxpXzAC0 — come to class ready to discuss

- Rynhold, Jonathan. "Making Sense of Tragedy: Barak, the Israeli Left and the Oslo Peace Process." *Israel Studies Forum* 19:1 (Fall 2003): 9-33.

March 26: The Second Intifada, Likud pursues hard power solutions to Israeli security threats

- Shamir, Jacob, and Khalil Shiqaqi. *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: The Public Imperative in the Second Intifada*. Indiana University Press, 2010. pp. 64-89.

- Rynhold, Jonathan, and Dov Waxman. "Ideological Change and Israel's Disengagement from Gaza." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 123, no. 1, 2008, pp. 11–37.

March 31: The Gaza Wars, Iron Dome and domestic shifts in Israeli domestic politics

- Levy, Yagil. “The Gaza Fighting: Did Israel Shift Risk from Its Soldiers to Civilians?” *Middle East Policy*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2017, pp. 117–132.

- Cohen-Almagor, Raphael and Cohen-Almagor, Raphael, *Israel as an Ethnic Democracy: Palestinian Citizens and the Fight for Equal Rights* (August 6, 2021). Berkley Forum 2021, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3900711

- Tamar Hermann, Or Anabi, Yaron Kaplan, "Israelis Say They Base Their Vote on Party’s Economic Platform,” Israel Democracy Institute, August 2022, https://en.idi.org.il/articles/39510

April 2: Today’s electoral map in Israel—why so many elections since 2019?

- Cohen-Almagor, Raphael and Cohen-Almagor, Raphael, *Israel as an Ethnic Democracy: Palestinian Citizens and the Fight for Equal Rights* (August 6, 2021). Berkley Forum 2021, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3900711

- Tamar Hermann, Or Anabi, Yaron Kaplan, "Israelis Say They Base Their Vote on Party’s Economic Platform,” Israel Democracy Institute, August 2022, https://en.idi.org.il/articles/39510

- Nasreen Haddad Haj-Yahya, Muhammed Khalaily, Arik Rudnitzky, Ben Fargeon, "Statistical Report on Arab Society in Israel: 2021," Israel Democracy Institute, March 2022, https://en.idi.org.il/articles/38540

April 7: Saudi-Israel relations in a new era

- Podeh, Elie. “Saudi Arabia and Israel: From Secret to Public Engagement, 1948–2018.” *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 72, no. 4, 2018, pp. 563–586.

- Watch three-part *al-Arabiya* interview with Saudi Prince Bandar Bin-Sultan, "Prince Bandar bin Sultan on Israel, Palestine and Washington," *Al-Arabiya News*, October 5, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edKZbu5OM1c — to be discussed in class.

- "Pitching Abraham’s Tent: The Human Dimension of UAE-Israeli Normalization," https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pitching-Abrahams-Tent-The-Human-Dimension-of-UAE-Israeli-Normalization-An-Atlantic-Council-INSS-Emirati-Policy-Center-report-working-group-Chaired-by-Yoel-Guzansky.pdf

April 9: The politics of tech—defense and drought

- Evron, Yoram. “4IR Technologies in the Israel Defense Forces: Blurring Traditional Boundaries.” Journal of Strategic Studies, 2020, pp. 1–22.

- Dany Zaken, "Israel, UAE to cooperate on clean hydroelectricity," al-Monitor, March 23, 2022, https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/israel-uae-cooperate-clean-hydroelectricity

April 14: Israel- China, Japan and India relations

- Efron, Shifra, Howard J. Shatz, Arthur Chan, Emily Haskel, Lyle J. Morris, Andrew Scobell, *The Evolving Israel-China Relationship*, Rand 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2641.html

- Brummer, Matthew and Eitan Oren, "Israel and Japan's Rising Sun Relations*," Foreign Affairs*, July 28, 2018. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/japan/2017-07-28/israel-and-japans-rising-sun-relations

- Charles, Dani. Dani Charles, "Chutzpah meets Monozukuri: A Look at the Japanese-Israeli Cyber Relationship," *Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA*, September 24, 2019. https://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Chutzpah-meets-Monozukuri-FINAL-1.pdf

April 16: Presentations!

April 21: Presentations!

April 23: Presentations!