

Politics of Israel and Palestine/INTL4372
University of Georgia, Fall 2026

Dr. Eli Sperling

Email: eli.sperling@uga.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:30-12:30pm, can also schedule Zoom meetings throughout the week, depending on my availability

Office Location: Candler 312

Course Description:

This course offers an engaging survey of the history, politics and diplomacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The course deals with the historical origins and development of the conflict from the Dawn of Zionist emigration to Palestine in the 1880s until the present. Coverage includes introductions to modern Jewish and Arab histories, evolution of Zionism and Arab nationalism, demise of the Ottoman Empire, and the operation and demise of the British Mandate in Palestine, political, social and economic aspects of the conflict, the Cold War in the region, the evolution of Palestinian national identity, and Arab-Israeli wars and clashes from the early 1950s to the present, the role of the UN in the conflict, American, and European successes and failures in mediating the conflict and Israeli and Palestinians' respective, domestic political consideration. The course will conclude by looking at Iran nuclear questions, new diplomatic breakthroughs in the region and the changing place of the Palestinian national cause in defining Israeli regional diplomatic constraints and opportunities.

Course Goals—by the end of the semester, student will be able to:

- Articulate a diverse range of sides/perspectives/opinions amongst actors in the conflict, their origins and their implications from the dawn of Zionist motivated immigration to Palestine until today
- Think critically, through the lens of reliable scholarly (and other) sources, about the Arab-Israeli conflict and its many developments
- Defend a written/spoken argument with quality and reputable sources, nuance
- Use the scholarly frameworks from the course to better understand and analyze other global conflict zones, diplomatic processes
- Analyze and speak about A-I related headlines in a critical, nuanced and non-polemical way

Grade Scheme

A: 93-100

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

Grade Composition

Short writing assignments: 15%

Group project/peace summit: 15%

Midterm: 20%

In class attendance and participation: 20%

B-: 80-82

Final exam: 30%

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 00-59

Assignments

Short writing assignments:

There will be three group writing assignments.

Mock peace summit:

Students will be divided into groups representing key players in the Arab-Israeli peace process and will participate in a mock peace summit at the end of the semester representing their states.

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 the topics and materials presented in the course .

Policies

Academic Integrity:

Every student must agree to abide by UGA's academic honesty policy and procedures known as ACulture 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. 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 inclusive 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:

- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Routledge. 2022. *Please be sure to purchase the (2022) 9th edition, ISBN 1032004851

Week 1: Introduction

Goal—contextualize the origins of the two national movements withing broader nationalist developments in Europe and the Middle East

Syllabus overview, goals and expectations of course

Week 2: The Great Powers and Palestine until the establishment of the British Mandate of Palestine

Goal—establish a clear understanding of ways in which the Great Powers, Zionists and Arabs cooperated and conflicted prior to Mandate period

How will we frame the conflict in this course? Why is methodology important?

- Khalidi, Rashid. *Palestinian Identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 35–62.
- Hertzberg, Arthur. *The Zionist Idea*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997. 15-32.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso. 1983. Pp. 1-7, 37-47.

Ottoman Palestine, Zionist immigration to Palestine

- Hourani, Albert. "Ottoman Reform and Politics of Notables," *Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East*(1968), pp. 41-68.
- Muslih, Muhammad Y. *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*. Columbia University Press, 1988. pp. 1-9.
- Kolatt, Israel. "The Organization of the Jewish Population of Palestine and the Development of its Political Consciousness Before World War I," *Studies in Palestine During the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), 1975, pp. 211-245.

Week 3: WWI and The British Mandate for Palestine (1922-1948)

Goal— establish a clear understanding of the respective Arab, British and Jewish national interests and actions in Palestine leading into WWII

WWI

- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 13-50.

The Beginning of the Mandate, The Positions of the Zionists, the Opposition

- Horowitz, Dan, and Moshe Lissak. "Ideology and Politics in the Yishuv," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* (Winter 1977), pp. 12-26.
- Nashif, Taysir. "Palestinian Arab and Jewish Leadership in the Mandate Period," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 (1977), pp. 113-121.

Week 4: Could a Jewish State have been declared in 1939? What did the Palestinians know?

Goal—develop the ability to analyze Zionist institutional development and national goals by the conclusions of the 1936-1939 revolt, the ways in which Palestinians and other Arab actors reacted, and the consequences associated with this tense period of the Mandate

Zionist Institution Building Amidst increased immigration

- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 119-155.

Arab Revolt and the 1939 White Paper

- Khalaf, Issa. "The Reasons for the Disintegration of Palestinian Society with an Emphasis on the Persistence of Factionalism," *Politics in Palestine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 231-248.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. "Involvement of Arab States in Palestine Conflict and British Arab Relationship Before World War II," *Asian and African Studies* (1974), pp. 59-78.

Week 5: The End of the Mandate, the 1947-49 War, Palestinians Refugees, Armistice Negotiations, Israeli Nation-Building, the Palestinian National Movement, and Absorption of Jews from Muslim Lands

***We will discuss and schedule in-class presentations this week**

Goal—shape a nuanced understanding of why/how intercommunal violence escalated in Fall 1947, the transition to regional war in May 1948, the historiography of the Refugee

crisis, and how this period impacted the young state of Israel and the Palestinian national movement as Israel penned armistice agreements with her neighbors

The Lead up to the war

- Cohen, Michael J. "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1982), pp. 79-94.
- Shapira, Anita. "Conclusion: The Birth of the State," *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 353-370; 414-415.

The 1947-49 War and its immediate aftermath

- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 67-87, 97—107.
- Morris, Benny. "Origins of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *New Perspectives on Jewish Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), pp. 42-56.
- Khalidi, Rashid. "The Palestinians and 1948: the Underlying Causes of Failure," in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 12-36.

Great Power Interests in the Middle East; the Cold War, the Suez War and the June 1967 War

Goal—build a clear framework to understand and analyze ways in which the A-I conflict (until the 1967 War) fit into regional, global political agendas and conflicts

The global landscape post-1948, 1956 Suez Crisis

- Tal, David. "Israel's Road to the 1956 War," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28 (1996): 59-81.
- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 114-126.

June 1967 War

- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 133-149, 156-164.

Week 7: Attempted and Failed Diplomacy, 1967-1973, United Nations Resolution 242, and the Prelude to the 1973 War

Goal—construct a clear understanding of the diplomatic process that were initiated and pursued as well as missed opportunities amidst in the aftermath of 67 through the October 1973 War. This context is essential in pursuing any contemporary inquiry in A-I diplomacy and land disputes.

Resolution 242, Palestinian National Evolution, and the Birth of Gush Emunim

- Eugene V. Rostow, “The Drafting of Security Council Resolution 242: The Role of the Non-Regional Actors,” *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 25 (1992-1993): 489-503.
- Feige, Michael. *Settling in the Hearts Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories*. Wayne State University Press, 2009. 1-20. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Settling_in_the_Hearts/CG_R01oa780C?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

Sadat Take the Reigns

- Ajami, Fouad. "The End of Pan-Arabism," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1978-1979), pp. 355-373.
- Watch: “From the Archives: Anwar El-Sadat on "Face the Nation,"” January 1971, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxG0jH3_nsM

Week 8: The October 1973 War—a catalyst of successful diplomacy? Sadat: the engine of a Diplomatic Option, Disengagement Agreements, Promises, and the Brookings Paper

Goal—unfold the complex circumstances Sadat faced as he assumed the presidency in 1970, his decision to initiate the 73 War and how it helped evolve the scaffolding for a new type of diplomatic process

October 1973—War for Peace

- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 165-172.

No Class, Jewish holiday (Yom Kippur)

Week 9:

MIDTERM!

Movie

Week 10: The Carter Administration's regional Goals, the White House vs. Begin and Sadat, Camp David, the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Treaty

Goal—unpack and analyze the circumstances that allowed for the 1979 agreement to come to flower and what that period can tell us about future diplomatic process between Israel and Arab states

The context

- Cohen, S. P. and E. E. Azar. “From War to Peace: The Transition between Egypt and Israel.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25:1 (1981): 87-114.
- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 172-186.

The negotiations, the actors, and the Deal—context and legacy

- Ken Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, Introduction

Week 11: The 1980s—Lebanon War, First Intifada, Hamas’ establishment, and the US–Israeli Relationship leading into the first Gulf War.

Goal—Analyze the 1982 Lebanon War and first intifada on the backdrop of broader local, regional, global political contexts

1982 Lebanon War

- Elbaz, Sagi, and Daniel Bar-Tal. “Dissemination of Culture of Conflict in the Israeli Mass Media: The Wars in Lebanon as a Case Study.” *The Communication Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1–34.
- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 206-217.

First Intifada

- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 218-228.
- Pressman, Jeremy. "Throwing stones in social science : Non-violence, unarmed violence, and the first intifada." *Cooperation and Conflict*, 2017 Dec 01. 52(4), pp. 519-536.

Week 12: The 1990s—The Gulf War, Bush 41, The Madrid Peace Conference, Clinton’s election, Oslo I & II

Goal—Place the A-I conflict squarely in global and regional political developments, and establish a clear understanding of why/how the diplomacy of the 1990s unfolded in the ways it did

First Gulf War, Madrid

- Scott Lasensky, “Paying for Peace: The Oslo Process and the Limits of American Foreign Aid,” *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 2 (2004): 210-234.
- Bickerton, Ian and Carla Klausner. *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 237-245.

Oslo—the 1990s

- Horowitz, Dan. “The Israeli Concept of National Security,” in A. Yaniv (ed.), *National Security and Democracy in Israel* (Boulder, 1993), pp. 11-53.

Week 13: The Second Intifada, 9/11/2001, The Arab Peace Initiative, Palestinian Elections, Gaza Withdrawal, Gilad Shalit, Lebanon II, 2007 Gaza War, and Transition from Bush II to Obama

Goal—develop a framework to analyze the impacts of Camp David II’s failure and subsequent Second Intifada on regional politics and the ways in which Obama’s approach to Middle East policy mimicked and diverged from Bush 43.

Diplomacy breaks down, The Second Intifada (Writing Assignment)

- Ajami, Fouad. “The Century’s Solitude,” *Foreign Affairs* 80:6 (November/December 2001), pp. 2-17.
- Raphael Cohen-Almagor, “The Failed Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process 1993-2011: An Israeli Perspective,” *Israel Affairs* 18, no. 4 (2012): 563-576.

Operation Defensive Shield, Gaza Withdrawal, and the ongoing Gaza conflict

- Jeremy Pressman, “Israeli Unilateralism and Israeli-Palestinian Relations, 2001-2006,” *International Studies Perspectives* 7, no. 4 (2006): 360-376.
- Lisa Thomas. “Reconstructions of ‘Reality’?” *Journalism Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2011, pp. 522–538.

Week 14: Hamas-Israel Conflict, decline (end?) of Israeli left & its impacts on diplomacy, Water, Gas, regional demography and the Arab Spring

Goal—construct a clear understanding of how the current “status quo” evolved, and, in many ways, became concretized in the late 2000’s - 2010s.

The Arab Spring, The Abraham Accords, Gaza War and the future of the A-I conflict?

- The article for this session has not yet been published—I will post it to ELC when it is available.

Imagining a two-state solution? Three state solution? Something else?

- Susser, Asher, “The Two-State Solution: Getting from Here to There,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 2012, <http://www.fpri.org/articles/2012/10/two-state-solution-getting-here-there>
- Scheindlin, Dahlia, and Dov Waxman. “Confederalism: A Third Way for Israel–Palestine.” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2016, pp. 83–94.

Week 15:

In-class mock peace summit

In-class mock peace summit

Final Exam