

# Israel and the Middle East

POLS 477  
Spring 2013  
Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-3:15pm  
202 Henslik Hall  
Coffee Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:45-10:45am

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## Required Texts

Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*  
How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate,  
ed. Wittes  
Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*

## Purpose of the Course

There is no denying the fact that Jews and Arabs seem to have been fighting with one another for most of recorded human history. Even with so much time passing, this tension between Israel and its neighbors seems to defy any sort of permanent solution. Yet even more problematic is the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which has arisen quite recently and with an intensity that threatens to consume both peoples. This semester, then, we will focus on the conflicts that surround the interactions of Arab and Jew in the Middle East, hoping to gain a greater understanding of the religions, histories, and politics that shape those conflicts. Having considered all of these important aspects, we will attempt to work out solutions to some of the most intransigent problems – especially to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Of course, there is unlikely to be a single, simple solution to the many interrelated problems that we will identify over the course of this semester. But in recognizing the depth and complexity of those problems, we will undoubtedly learn a great deal about what any solution must include.

## Design of the Course

There will be an hour-long midterm examination and a two-hour cumulative final examination, as well as an ongoing online informal writing assignment. On occasion, you may be assigned brief reflective writing exercises or quizzes in class.

Make-up exams will not be given, except in the event of a medical emergency; a note from a doctor is required before a make-up can be scheduled and the note must say more than simply that you saw a doctor on the day of the missed quiz or exam. Further, an illness that prevents you from using the time that you set aside to study will not be considered a legitimate excuse.

This will be a highly interactive class and the success of each of our meetings depends upon both your active involvement in the day's discussion and upon your careful assessment and critique of the daily reading assignment. Because of the importance of these activities, the quality of your class involvement will be evaluated daily. In addition, because events in the Middle East are unfolding as we study them, you are strongly encouraged to read an Israeli newspaper as well as a Middle Eastern news source like *Al Jazeera*; we will often begin our class meetings with a discussion of the latest happenings in Israel or its neighbors.

## Technology

In place of traditional writing assignments, we will have an on-going weblog project for our course. When thinking about how or what to post, consider the following archetypes, which you can write at any time and in any quantity you choose.

1. If you think that something you've seen online resonates with our discussions, then you might write an **In the News** post about it. These posts should be a minimum of 100 words and should include a hyperlink to the original story, post, or item that you read. These posts should do more than describe what you read; they should explain and analyze. Students will be expected to write a minimum of two such posts each week. Standards of professional writing apply.
2. **Commentary** on other students' posts will count as a form of writing in this course; you may comment as often or as infrequently as you choose. Standards of civility, quality of argumentation, and writing apply.

You should plan to read your classmates' blogs and news sources like those mentioned above, alongside the international section of the *New York Times*, on a daily basis in order to find material for your "In the News" posts.

## Grading

Weblog	25%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Group Exercises	20%
Quality of Class Involvement	10%

Each assignment for this course is graded on the same four-point scale that is used to calculate student grade point averages. An A is a 4 and an F is a 0. There are gradations for A, B, C, and D grades; for example, a B+ is a 3.3 and a C- is a 1.7. There are no gradations for an F. What this means is that if you receive a 38% on your midterm, you get a 0 as the grade for your midterm. If you receive a 52% on your midterm, you get a 0 as the grade for your midterm. An F signifies that you failed to meet the minimum standards for the assignment; I award no points for failing to meet the minimum standards.

## Class Absences

The work of this course demands regular attendance. Excessive absence, therefore, will be reflected both in the kinds of grades you likely will receive on written work, and – of course – in my evaluation of your class participation. Arriving approximately ten minutes late or leaving early on three occasions will be counted as one absence. Missing roughly 1/4 (7) of the total number of classes (30) will result in automatic failure of the course.

## Plagiarism / Academic Dishonesty

I consider academic integrity essential to teaching, learning, and research – in short, to the entire academic enterprise. I hope you will talk to and learn from one another both inside and outside the classroom. You must provide appropriate citations whenever you incorporate someone else's words or ideas into your writing and you may not turn in the same work for multiple classes. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in an

automatic F on the assignment in question and, at my discretion, referral to the relevant university officials. If you have any questions about academic integrity, don't hesitate to ask.

### **Other Important Notes**

Mobile phones, MP3 players, PDAs, PSPs, and all other electronic devices should be turned off and put away before class begins. If your cell phone rings during class, I reserve the right to deal with the interruption in a manner of my choosing. If you are awaiting an important telephone call, please set your phone to "vibrate" and then take the call outside. Using any electronic device during an examination will result in automatic failure of the exam, no questions asked.

If for any reason you need to leave class early or arrive late, please do so quietly and without ceremony. I will not be offended or disturbed – unless you stop the class to ask if you may come or go. If you plan to leave early or arrive late on a regular basis, you should speak with me due to the above attendance policy.

If you miss a class – with or without a legitimate excuse – you are responsible for getting lecture notes from a classmate. If you have questions about the material after looking over the notes, please stop by during my office hours or schedule an appointment with me. Please do not send me an e-mail to ask whether you missed anything important, as you definitely did.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

### **Day-by-Day Assignment Breakdown**

Tuesday, January 8	Introduction: What <i>is</i> History?!
Thursday, January 10	Hebrew Bible, <i>Genesis</i> 18 and <i>Numbers</i> 33; Koran, Surah 3:1-28, Surah 93:1-11, and Surah 107:1-7
Tuesday, January 15	Peace Summit, Aleph Round
Thursday, January 17	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapter 4)
Tuesday, January 22	Gelvin, <i>Israel-Palestine Conflict</i> (Chapters 2-3)
Thursday, January 24	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapter 2)
Tuesday, January 29	Gelvin, <i>Israel-Palestine Conflict</i> (Chapters 4-5)
Thursday, January 31	Gelvin, <i>Israel-Palestine Conflict</i> (Chapters 6, 8)

Tuesday, February 5	Gelvin, <i>Israel-Palestine Conflict</i> (Chapter 9)
Thursday, February 7	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapter 3)
Tuesday, February 12	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapters 5, 7)
Thursday, February 14	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapters 6, 8)
Tuesday, February 19	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapters 9, 16)
Thursday, February 21	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapters 11, 12)
Tuesday, February 26	Horowitz, <i>Ethnic Groups in Conflict</i> (Chapter 15)
Thursday, February 28	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Tuesday, March 5	Peace Summit, Bet Round
Thursday, March 7	Peace Summit, Bet Round
Tuesday, March 12	Gelvin, <i>Israel-Palestine Conflict</i> (Chapter 10); Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Epilogue)
Thursday, March 14	Bar-Siman-Tov, ed., <i>From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation</i> (Chapter 3)
Tuesday, March 19	<b>Spring Break – No Class Meeting</b>
Thursday, March 21	<b>Spring Break – No Class Meeting</b>
Tuesday, March 26	Shipler, <i>Arab and Jew</i> (Chapter 13)
Thursday, March 28	Wittes, ed. <i>How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate</i> (Chapter 2)
Tuesday, April 2	Wittes, ed. <i>How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate</i> (Chapter 3)
Thursday, April 4	Wittes, ed. <i>How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate</i> (Chapter 4)
Tuesday, April 9	Wittes, ed. <i>How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate</i> (Chapters 1, 5)
Thursday, April 11	Bar-Siman-Tov, ed., <i>From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation</i> (Chapters 6, 11)

Tuesday, April 16	Peace Summit, Gimmel Round
Thursday, April 18	Peace Summit, Gimmel Round
Tuesday, April 23	Peace Summit, Gimmel Round
Thursday, April 25	Conclusion
Monday, April 29	<b>Final Exam (1:00-3:00pm)</b>