

“Ties that Bind”: Understanding US-Israel Relations

Dr. Yoav Fromer

Spring Semester 2023

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Office Hours: Prior to class -Day of class

Course Credits: 3 TAU Semester Credits

For course times/days and location, please visit the TAU International web site (Study Abroad Course Offerings and Schedules). Please note that all information below is subject to change and/or adjustment as necessary.

Course Description

There is nothing more important to Israel's national security than its relationship with the United States. But what exactly explains the unique bonds between the countries that President Kennedy famously dubbed the "Special Relationship"? Is it mere geopolitical calculations – Israel is a strong and dependable strategic ally in an unstable region – or are there deeper historical, political, cultural, religious and ideological forces that bind the two countries?

This course employs a broad interdisciplinary approach in order to answer this important and timely question by reviewing the multiple factors that have acted, often in tandem, to shape, cultivate and ultimately consolidate the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. We will incorporate works of political science and international relations, along with history, religion, and literary fiction (as well as film), in order to understand the diverse – at times contradictory – sources of American support for Israel. Rather than offer a monolithic explanation, the course illustrates how multiple and contingent factors, each acting in a complementary manner, have gradually come together to reinforce one another and solidify the close relationship.

Among the central questions, some of them counterintuitive, the course will ask: Why and how did this relationship come about? How stable and durable is it? Were (and are) there alternatives? How relevant is it to the new 21st century geopolitical challenges and shifting (domestic) demographic realities in the U.S.? Who benefits and/or loses from it? Who is opposed to it and what might be its costs? What forces threaten to erode or even dismantle it – and why?

This short but intensive four-hour seminar will meet once a week for eight sessions and reevaluate different aspects of the relationship. Each meeting will be divided into two parts: The first will critically review and discuss the assigned readings and provide historical context; the second will focus on a particular cultural artifact (we will watch a film, view works of art) or an important primary historical source in order to offer a close analysis.

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Course Requirements and Expectations

- Active and informed participation based on the weekly readings and viewing assignments
- Short writing response, "Film Review" (2-3 pages)
- Final paper (8-10 pages) on relevant topic of your choice
- Please refrain from using cell-phones during class and make sure to bring the assigned weekly readings (hard-copy or digital) with you to every class.
- Attendance: you are allowed up to 3 unexcused absences. Due to the short semester, more than 3 absences will result in a grade penalty and might lead to automatic failure of the course.

Learning Outcomes

- Understanding the multiple factors that bind U.S.-Israel relations
- Understanding potential disagreements and challenges to the relationship and how they are negotiated
- Acquiring skills for cultural criticism (of art, film, literature)
- Acquiring skills for critical engagement with primary historical texts
- Acquiring skills for interdisciplinary analysis and independent research

Evaluation Criteria

Participation: 30%

Short writing response: 20% (due April 18 at 16:00)

Final Paper: 50% (due May 26 at 16:00)

Course Schedule

Week 1 | Origins: Faith and Fantasy

- Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad* (excerpts)
- Milette Shamir, "'Our Jerusalem': Americans in the Holy Land and Protestant Narratives of National Entitlement," *American Quarterly* (2003)
- David Tal, *The Making of an Alliance*, chapter 1

Week 2 | Dilemmas of Recognition: the Founding of Israel

- Jeffrey Herf, *Israel's Moment: International Support for and Opposition to Establishing the Jewish State, 1945–1949*, chapter 11



Week 3: Cold War Geopolitics

- Ya'akov Bar-Siman Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?" Diplomatic History (1998)
 - Douglas Little, "The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and Israel, 1957-68," International Journal of Middle East Studies (1993)
 - Avi Ben Zvi, The United States and Israel: The Limits of the Special Relationship, chapter 9.
- Spring Break

Week 4 | Reimagining Israel: the Cultural Shift

- Amy Kaplan, Our American Israel, chapter 2
- Philip Roth, Operation Shylock and The Counterlife (excerpts)
- John Updike, "The Holy Land," in Bech is Back
 - In-class Viewing: Exodus (1960)

Movie Review of Cast a Giant Shadow (1966) due in-class on April 18

(Assignment will be posted to moodle a month in advance of the due date)

Week 5: Domestic Politics 1: The Lobby

- John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, The Israel Lobby, chapters 1-2
- Hugh Wilford, "American Friends of the Middle East: The CIA, US Citizens, and the Secret Battle for American Public Opinion in the Arab–Israeli Conflict," Journal of American Studies (2017)
 - Watch: London Review of Books special forum on the Israel Lobby

Week 6: Domestic Politics 2: Public Opinion and the Rise of the Evangelicals

- Samuel Goldman, God's Country: Christian Zionism In America, chapter 6
- Walter Russell Meade, "The New Israel and the Old – Why Gentile Americans Back the Jewish State," Foreign Affairs (2008)
 - Watch in-class: Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth" (1979)



Week 7: Domestic Politics 3: The Jewish-American Debate over Israel

- Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (2016), chapters 1, 7.
- Peter Beinart, "The Failure of the American-Jewish Establishment," *New York Review of Books* (2010).

Week 8: Roadblocks and Challenges to the Future of US-Israel Relations

- Zaki Shalom, "The United States and the Israeli Settlements: Time for a Change," *Strategic Assessment* (2012)
- Steven Cook, "The BDS movement has already lost," *Foreign Policy* (2022)
- Susie Linfield, "Palestine isn't Ferguson," *Atlantic Monthly* (2021)

Final Paper due via email (yoavfromer@tauex.tau.ac.il) on Tues, May 26 at 16:00
(assignment will be posted a month in advance of the due date)

Course Readings

*All readings will be uploaded in advance to the class moodle. There is no need to purchase any books. Most movies are available on YouTube and will be linked to the class moodle. The film "Cast a Giant Shadow" (1966) can be purchased on Amazon or Apple.TV (among other places online) and is widely available for viewing.

TAU International Academic Guidelines

Students may only attend classes which they are officially registered for. No auditing of courses is permitted. Students are responsible for reading and adhering to all policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#) at all times. Below is a summary of some of these relevant policies and procedures.

Learning Accommodations

In accordance to University guidelines, TAU International may be able to accommodate students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests if these requests are also honored at the student's home university or home school. To be considered, students must submit official documentation from their home school or university (if not in English, a notarized official copy translated into English is required) to TAU International in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs and how these are accommodated at the home school or university. Students must also bring a copy of this documentation with them on-site and give it to their faculty on the first day of class while introducing themselves so that the faculty know who they are and

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what sorts of needs or accommodations they may have. **Without official**

documentation from the home school submitted on or before the first day of courses, TAU will not be able to honor accommodation support.

With supporting documentation and by following the correct procedure as outlined above, TAU International and its faculty will do the best it can to make any suitable accommodations possible. However, we cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU. For example, TAU is usually not able to offer note-taking services in English, private testing rooms, or advance viewing of classroom presentations, exams, or assignments.

It may be an option to provide a student with additional tutoring or support outside the classroom as needed. Students should be aware that this additional support cannot be guaranteed and is based on teacher availability in the subject as well as the specific student level. If available, the cost of additional tutoring or support will be the sole responsibility of the student.

In-Class Exams

TAU does not permit, under any circumstances, taking any in-class (including mid or final) exams early or later than the scheduled exam day. When selecting courses, it is thus very important to note if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. It is also the student's responsibility to clarify exam dates with the professors at the beginning of a course, with the understanding that not all exam dates can be decided up front as it can sometimes depend on the pace of the course and class learning. It is the student responsibility to plan to be present for all courses including the final day of class for this reason. Early departures from the program are not approved, nor are early or exception in-class exams.

TAU International Absence Policy

Attendance is mandatory in all of the courses including Hebrew Ulpan. Faculty can and will take attendance regularly. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified and properly documented absences from classes may be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require a doctor's note). Such cases of absence should be reported to the faculty immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. Teachers are entitled to treat any lateness or absence without documentation as unexcused. Some of our courses such as Service Learning or the Internship Seminar require more practical in-class work; thus, attendance policies may be stricter in some courses and students then must adhere to the stricter attendance policy as outlined by the faculty/syllabus.

Students are required to arrive on time for classes. Teachers are entitled to treat any single case of lateness and/or repeated lateness as an unjustified absence.



Please note that according to official TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during is disagreeable his/her course participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU with no due refund.

Grade Appeals

Students are responsible for checking grades once posted or distributed by faculty. The limited grade appeals window and the detailed procedure for appealing a grade – whether a graded assignment, exam or final grade – is outlined clearly in the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#).

