Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Middle East

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Course Overview
This course will take the students through the history of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict with particular attention to the successes and failures of peacemaking. The course draws upon literature and methodology from the disciplines of history, sociology, and political science and from the fields of conflict resolution and international relations. It is divided into two parts. The first part relates to the history of the two inter-related conflicts, while the second part relates to the challenges of peace-making in the 21st century.

To provide a background, the course begins with an introduction to the history and geography of Israel/Palestine. The course examines the history of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the emergence of Zionism and Arab nationalism up to the present day. It inquires into Zionist-Arab relations during the British mandate period; conflicting narratives about the 1948 War; the creation of the refugee problem; the 1967 War and its implications for Israel and Palestinians; the emergence and evolution of the Palestinian national movement; the Egypt-Israel peace treaty and the conditions that made it possible; the first and second Palestinian Intifadas; the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; the Jordan-Israel peace treaty; as well as aspects of Palestinian and Israeli domestic politics that complicate peace-making efforts. The second part of the course examines the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the post-9/11 period; the Saudi-led Arab peace initiative; the Gaza disengagement; the Gaza-Israel wars and Egyptian mediation; and the efforts by different regional and international players to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The course concludes with a field trip that is designed to provide deeper insights into political geography of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the ground.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course students will have a foundational knowledge of the history of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They will be able to distinguish between the opposing narratives and differing interpretations of the conflict; discuss and summarize the key turning points in the Arab-Israeli and Israeli Palestinian conflict; demonstrate knowledge of the region’s political geography, past and present; identify cases of successes and failures of peacemaking in the Middle East; recognize patterns in the causes, development and resolution of conflict at various levels of analysis; identify and evaluate central obstacles and problems for conflict resolution, conflict management, and durable peace; describe and compare the roles that third parties and civil society can play
in conflict resolution processes; demonstrate insight into historical and contemporary peace processes; evaluate the success or failure of a particular set of negotiations in writing; situate recent developments in the Arab-Israeli arena within the context of history.

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory and this will be reflected in the final grade. Students must be on time and remain present for the duration of the class period. Up to three absences are justified only if accompanied by a doctor’s note. Requests for exceptions to this rule should be directed to Yael Gazit in the TAU International office.

**Grading**

15% Preparation of Reading Assignments and Contribution to Class Discussions  
15% Preparation for and Participation in the Simulation Game  
35% Midterm Exam  
35% Final Essay

**Reading Assignments and Class Discussions**

Students are asked to do course readings as listed on the syllabus and be prepared to discuss them in class. Additional handouts, such as copies of primary source documents, will be distributed in class.

In addition to these readings, students are asked to stay informed about current events. Students should independently read from a variety of news sources about current developments in the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian arenas during the course. Each class meeting will begin with a 5-10 minute discussion of how current events relate to the historical topics and issues studied in the course. More details about the spotlight on current events will be provided in class.

**The Simulation Game**

The students will be set in a scenario involving Israeli, Palestinian, regional and international actors, that blends real and fictional events. The purpose of the simulation is to engage the students in the dilemmas and range of considerations that confront decision-makers in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Through participation in the simulation game students will have an opportunity to experience the decision-making processes from the perspective of one of the major actors while confronted with the challenges springing from the conflict and its regional and international context. More details about the simulation game will be provided in class and in a separate document.

**Midterm exam**

The midterm exam will include map, short answer and essay questions.
Final Essay

The purpose of the final essay is to provide the student with an opportunity to examine a specific case of peacemaking or mediation in the Arab-Israeli arena in greater detail. The essay should be composed in the style of an op-ed, written in response to a particular historic case of negotiations or mediation. The op-ed should endeavor to explain the reasons for the success or failure of the peacemaking effort, or alternatively, it should endeavor to explain the reasons for the suitability or unsuitability of the mediator or of its methods. There is no “correct” position that the student is required to take. Rather, the essay will be evaluated for the skill with which the student articulates and develops an argument to support his/her point-of-view. Successful essays will exhibit a command of the pertinent facts; a thorough understanding of the most significant, alternative view(s); and a well-organized, persuasive argument in favor of the student’s own position. A separate handout will be provided, to include a list of topics to choose from, a grading rubric, and additional guidelines about the assignment. A variety of op-eds are included as assigned reading. They will be discussed not only for their relevance to understanding the views of individual actors (and the groups they represent) toward the conflict and its solution, but also as models for this assignment. The essay should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words.

Course Outline

I. Arabs and Israelis: A Historical Background

Session 1
  • Approaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict
  • The Landscape and Geography of Israel/Palestine

Reading:


Session 2
  • The Beginnings of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Reading:


Session 3
  • The War of 1947-48: Contested Histories

Readings:

And


Or


**Session 4**
- War and Peace in the Arab-Israeli arena, 1949-1979
- The Rise and Fall of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

**Readings:**

**II. The Challenges of Peacemaking in the 21st Century**

**Session 5**
- The Role of Domestic Politics in Conflict and Conflict Resolution

**Readings:**

**Session 6**
- Mid-term, in class Exam
- Film and Discussion: To be announced

**Exam day/ No assigned readings**

**Session 7**
- The Regional System: Israel and the Middle East since 2003
- The Mediation of Local Powers: The cases of Egypt and Saudi Arabia
Readings:


Session 8

- Simulation Game: “The Role of Decision-Makers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict”

Readings:

1. Simulation Game Handout
2. Individually selected reading in preparation for the simulation game

Session 9


Readings:


2. And the following short op-eds:

Session 10

- Core Issues: Borders, Refugees and the Future of Jerusalem

Final Essay Due/ No assigned readings

Field Trip: “Political Geography of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from the Ground”