Modern History of Israel/Palestine: Society, Culture, and Politics

Instructor: Adey Almohsen, PhD
Meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00 pm – 3:50 pm
Location: Humanities and Social Studies Center N3118
Office hours: Thursdays 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm, or by prior appointment @ N3158 HSSC

Course description:
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often represented as an intractable impasse between Arab and Jew. The course will take such representations to task through a nuanced exploration of the conflict’s historical, socio-political, cultural, national, and intellectual origins and impacts. Our point of departure will be Ottoman Palestine before and after Jewish migration and settlement in the nineteenth century. The course will terminate with an examination of the conflict’s contemporary dynamics, injustices, and gridlocks. Along this chronology, we will survey themes and concepts such as imperialism, settler colonization, antisemitism, migration, exile, diaspora, and nationalism among others. Throughout the course, moreover, we will dissect the diverging narratives and interpretations surrounding the conflict’s history and politics. Our aim, here, is to make sense of how the past is variably depicted, recorded, commemorated, remembered, and disremembered.

Our historical survey and class discussions will be informed by a broad spectrum of readings and sources. For instance, we will read primary sources in the form of treaties, speeches, memoirs, manifestos, political treatises, or newspaper clippings alongside (or against) secondary sources and academic analyses. Foreign observations by diplomats or international organizations will also be included to appreciate the conflict’s global dimensions, however, the course will privilege readings that demonstrate the diverse perspectives of Israelis and Palestinians and, significantly, the diverse perspectives within Israelis and Palestinians themselves. Last but not least, the course will regularly complement and complicate historical study with selections from art, poetry, and film.

Going into the classroom, I accept and acknowledge the fact that some students may have personal and political investments in the Israeli-Palestinian issue. That said, my role as an educator is to channel this kind of energy toward course objectives and to press students to respect the ideas of their peers—whether they agree with them or not. Argumentation, likewise, could be a healthy learning experience so long as students build their arguments not on moralistic, impulsive grounds but on critical, historical grounds which defer to assigned readings and sound academic knowledge.

Course aims:
- Understanding the political and intellectual forces that shaped the history of Israel/Palestine.
- Connecting historical knowledge to present-day issues and contexts in a critical manner.
- Appreciating the nuances of historical events through primary sources.
- Demonstrating the importance of interdisciplinary sources for historical study.
- Deconstructing narratives about Israel/Palestine through historical and interdisciplinary study.
- Learning how to work productively in small groups to develop an argument.
- Engaging meaningfully in the classroom with the instructor and with peers.
- Conducting sound historical research by deferring to a mix of primary and secondary sources.

Grade breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Map quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responses to readings (300–400 words)</td>
<td>15% (thrice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary source exercises (work in teams)</td>
<td>30% (twice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manifesto exercise (1–2 pages)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper: mini research essay or long-form book review (6–9 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Important dates (highlighted in green):
Feb. 10               Map quiz
Mar. 3       Primary source exercise presentation I
             Report due: next day (Mar. 4) by 10 pm
Mar. 17      Primary source exercise presentation II
             Report due: next day (Mar. 18) by 10 pm
Apr. 17      Choose topic or book of your final paper (10 pm)
Apr. 24      Manifesto exercise due (10 pm)
May 20       Mini research paper due (10 pm)

Readings and texts:
Weekly course readings range between 60-100 pages. You are expected to prepare all readings before class (highlighted in yellow). Suggested readings are not mandatory, however, they will be discussed and analyzed during the lecture component of the class. All assigned readings and primary sources will be available on-line in the course’s OneDrive.

Primary source collections:
Below are edited volumes and websites which include primary sources covering the modern Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They include treaties, declarations, newspapers, and other documents of a political or diplomatic nature. They are either available on-line or on hold at Burling.

✓ Nabulsi & Takriti, The Palestinian Revolution, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford.
✓ “The Palestine Chronology,” Institute for Palestine Studies.

Attendance and participation (10%):
Attendance is the difference between failing a class and excelling in it. In the lectures, I will advance insights that go beyond assigned readings. I will also contextualize arguments raised by the different authors and relate them to the present. In addition, student discussions bring to the class perspectives that cannot be gained by a simple reading of assigned texts. I am aware that some students are less shy than others, therefore, this grade is geared more toward showing up to class, taking notes, and being attentive as opposed to mere verbal participation—although the latter is encouraged.

Map quiz (5%):
It is crucial to know where the different countries and capitals mentioned in this course are. Familiarize yourself with the map of the Middle East today, Israel, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Response to readings (3 x 5%):
In the first week, students will pick three class sessions to which they will respond to its readings in 300 to 400 words. Your response will try to synthesize the main theses of the readings and offer a brief reflection on how these readings come together and how they informed your view of the history of Israel-Palestinian conflict. Responses are due before their respective class sessions.

Primary source exercises (2 x 15%):
This is a group assignment. Students will be divided into teams and will be tasked to read and analyze a set of primary source documents selected by the instructor. Teams will convert their reading and analysis of the sources into a class presentation (10 minutes) where they will offer an overview of the reading, its
author, its context, and its audience coupled with a thoughtful response to a specific question on the primary source posed by the instructor beforehand. Team presentations are then to be organized and summated into a brief report (300–400 words), which lays out analysis of the source and offers a response to the instructor’s question. Reports to be submitted by 10 pm on the day following class presentations.

**Manifesto (10%):**
This is an individual assignment. You will be tasked to assume the position of a thinker, political party, or terrorist organization—real or imagined. You will produce a text of 1–3 pages which lays out the thought of your chosen individual or group in a language that is historically accurate, ideologically coherent, and philosophically relevant to the worldview of your chosen individual or group.

**Final paper: mini research essay or long-form book review (30%):**
After the spring break, students will meet the instructor during office hours to discuss a topic they would like to explore further in a mini research essay or a book they would like to review critically. Students will inform the instructor of their choice of topic or book as well as of their main thesis in an e-mail correspondence by Apr. 17, 10 pm. For the mini research essay, students can choose a topic that is covered in a particular week or a topic that has arisen from a given reading. For example, you may be interested in researching the Nakba’s history and historicization as covered in Week VII. For the book review, the instructor will circulate a list of books before the spring break. Students will choose a book they are interested in and review it thoughtfully and analytically akin to the style of the *New York Review of Books* or the *London Review of Books*. Final papers due on May 20, 10 pm.

**Class decorum:**
Deadlines are final. Failure to submit an assignment on time equals failure in the assignment (i.e., a grade of zero). Missing 4 sessions (of the total 27) without a legitimate excuse will result in a zero grade for attendance. Missing 5 or more sessions will result in failing the course altogether. Accommodations will be made for students’ needs (cultural, personal, or otherwise) and for dire or special circumstances upon contacting and informing the instructor well in-advance.

**Writing assistance:**
Grinnell’s Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, and presentations, as well as applications for internships, fellowships, and graduate school. In one-on-one sessions, students work with professional instructors to interpret readings, talk through ideas, choose and analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, organize and revise whole drafts, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, plan presentations, and more. Instructors do not proofread papers, but they can teach you how to edit your own work effectively. For a link to the schedule and appointment system, search for “Writing Center” on grinnell.edu.

**Academic difficulty and advising:**
College academics are demanding. Thus, it is normal to experience difficulty from time to time. If you are experiencing academic difficulty in this class (or any other class for that matter), I encourage you to get in touch with me or with your academic advisor. We can help you take advantage of the resources Grinnell offers to resolve problems you may be experiencing during the semester.

**Honor policy:**
Grinnell College’s academic honesty policy is to be found in the student handbook. It is expected that students are aware of the tasks expressed in this policy and regularly follow them.

**Accommodations:**
I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom. I invite students to approach me about their distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom could impact them and what accommodations would be necessary. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability from Accessibility and Disability Services.
**Lateness, absence, and illness:**
I am aware that circumstances beyond one’s control may arise from time to time, and I will be reasonable about such exceptional circumstances. Recurring episodes of lateness or unexcused absence, however, will not be tolerated. Note that an excused absence is usually one that you have arranged with me in advance, not *post facto*.

**Communication:**
You can always contact me by e-mail, and I will try to respond within a reasonable timeframe. That said, I do not necessarily read e-mails after 5 pm or on weekends.

### Week I – Syllabus and Introduction

#### Tue. Jan. 25, 2022
- No readings

#### Thu. Jan. 27, 2022

### Week II – Theorizing Orientalism and Nationalism

#### Tue. Feb. 1, 2022

#### Thu. Feb. 3, 2022
- Gelvin: 14–45.

### Week III – Ottoman Palestine and Early Zionist Settlement

#### Tue. Feb. 8, 2022

#### Thu. Feb. 10, 2022
- Gelvin: 46–75.

**Map quiz during class session: Feb. 10, 2022 (5%)**
Week IV – The Elusiveness of Ottoman Citizenship

Tue. Feb. 15, 2022

Thu. Feb. 17, 2022

Week V – Scenes from British Palestine after the First World War

Tue. Feb. 22, 2022
- Gelvin: 76–91.

Thu. Feb. 24, 2022

Week VI – Jewish and Arab Writings on the Eve of Disaster

Tue. Mar. 1, 2022
NO CLASS MEETING

Thu. Mar. 3, 2022
Primary source team presentations I (15%)
- Khalil as-Sakākini
- Matiel Mogannam
- Ze’ev Jabotinsky
Week VII – 1948: A Point of No Return

Tue. Mar. 8, 2022
- Shapira: 155–79.

Thu. Mar. 10, 2022

Week VIII – Struggles of Statehood and the Tragedies of Dispossession

Hand-out clarifying Final Essay

Tue. Mar. 15, 2022

Thu. Mar. 17, 2022
**Primary source team presentations II (15%)**
- Ghassān Kanafānī
- Samirah ‘Azzām
- Jabrā ʻIbrāhīm Jabrā
- Fadwa Ṭuqān
- Thurayā Malḥas
- Edward W. Said

Weeks IX & X – Spring Break

**NO CLASS MEETINGS**

Weeks XI & XII – The Long Sixties in Israel and the Arab world

**Schedule mandatory office hours to discuss final paper’s potential topic or book**

Tue. Apr. 5, 2022

Thu. Apr. 7, 2022
Hand-out clarifying Manifesto Exercise

**Tue. Apr. 12, 2022**
- Shapira: 295–325.

**Thu. Apr. 14, 2022**
- [Film viewing] Folman, *Waltz with Bashir* (Israel/France/Germany, 2008).

Finalize selection of topic or book for final paper
Send me an e-mail confirming your selection by Apr. 17, 2022 (10 pm)

Week XIII – From Gaza to Oslo

**Tue. Apr. 19, 2022**
- Gelvin: 166–197.
- Rogan: 410–38.

**Thu. Apr. 21, 2022**

Manifesto (10%) due Apr. 24, 2022 (10 pm latest)

Week XIV – A Terrible, Fragile Peace

**Tue. Apr. 26, 2022**

**Thu. Apr. 28, 2022**
- Dowty: 125–78

Weeks XV & XVI – Reflections on Contemporary Issues

**Tue. May 3, 2022**
Thu. May 5, 2022

Tue. May 10, 2022

Thu. May 12, 2022
- [Film viewing] Andoni, Ghost Hunting (Palestine/France: Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, 2017).

Mini research paper or long-form book review (30%) due May 20, 2022 (10 pm)