

Israeli Foreign Policy

Dr. Aaron T. Walter

Faculty of Social Studies

Masaryk University

Course description

This undergraduate level course examines Israel's geographic location in the Middle East its Western orientation and the inherent tension between the two. Moreover, Israel's relations with the superpowers during the Cold War, its search for recognition amongst its Arab neighbors as well as in Europe is explored too. International Relations theories are examined so that explanation for various policy initiatives and actions within Israeli foreign relations are explained. This course examines the traditional and non-traditional approaches to foreign policy, as well as the policy instruments available to Israel as it dealt with global changes such as the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, economic globalization, terrorism, and local insurgencies to name a few. Each of these topics and other major international events changed Israel's position and status.

The course also examines the multi-dimensional nature of political, economic, and cultural relations between Israel, the United States and Europe, and its Arab neighbors since 1948. In particular, it suggests that the definition of strategic interests and assessment about how best to pursue them are, in practice, shaped by cultural and ideological constructions, and domestic political factors.

Course Objectives

This course aims to provide the student with an in-depth understanding of major themes, historical events, and personalities in Israeli foreign relations. Throughout the term, we will discuss the nature of Israel's "relationship" with the U.S.; its relations with its Arab neighbors, Europe, and Israeli public opinion regarding foreign policy. You will become familiar with the key players and issues, as well as with the complexities of Israeli diplomatic efforts in the Middle East. The course is intended to provide students with the tools needed to follow with a critical eye day-to-day events in the Middle East

The structure of the course is simple and concise. An initial overview of a topic will be followed by interesting case studies, focused on key episodes in the evolution of Israeli foreign policy. Many of these studies center upon crisis situations, which tested the relationship and redefined it. After these case studies, discussion on some controversial contemporary aspects of the subject will occur. Interpretation of IR theory within the specific context of foreign policy and power projection will occur.

It is important to emphasize what this course is not.

Finally, as students you will upon completion:

1. Analyze selected contemporary policy issues using knowledge of theory, history and the political process.
2. Demonstrate research, analytical, writing, and presentation skills.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the term, you should be:

1. Thoroughly familiar with the types of theory and foreign policy practice of Israel since 1948.
2. Thoroughly familiar with the key issues and themes of Israel foreign policy and in particular foreign policy towards America.
3. Able to identify seminal events, their implications, and the personalities associated with them.
4. Able to critically assess the nature of Israel's "relationship" with the United States.

Requirements

The following course requires: (1) assigned readings; (2) class attendance and appropriate contributions to section discussions; (3) one short-essay analysis paper; and (5) a final examination or research paper determined in advance by instructor.

Classroom Code of Conduct

To pass this course, a student must attend all class sessions, do all assigned readings, actively listen to and focus on lecture material, take notes, and don't be afraid to ask questions or participate in discussions.

I use "cold calling", i.e. calling on students regardless of whether they have raised their hands or not, in order to encourage class discussion, so be attentive and familiar with the reading materials.

Mobile phones are NOT allowed in class.

Laptops and tablets should ONLY be used for academic purposes, and not for emails, browsing the internet, social media and other non-course related activities. I will occasionally walk around during class. Any violation of this request will result in the complete prohibition of the use of laptops and tablets.

Lastly, be courteous and respect the opinions of your classmates.

Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism means the use of the thoughts ideas words, phrases or research of another person or source as one's own without explicit acknowledgment.

In keeping with this definition, all work, whether written or oral, submitted or presented by students as part of course assignments must be the original work of the student unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

Cheating on examinations of any kind (midterms and finals) includes copying another student's answers, exchanging information, using notes or books unless expressly permitted to do so by the instructor, or gaining access to examinations prior to the actual taking of such examinations.

Other examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, copying or preparing another person's work; buying prepared papers.

Helping anyone to engage in any of the violations described above qualifies as academic dishonesty.

Late Submission Policy

I prefer that students submit their assignments on time unless they have a concrete and relevant reason (illness, family crisis etc.) that was brought to my attention as early as possible.

To avoid different types of plagiarism discussed in the previous section, I will accept late submissions. Yet papers submitted after due date will result in 1 full grade penalty.

Grading

- 20 percent on participation.
- 20 percent for the short paper.
- 60 percent on the final examination.

Required Readings

For this course, the readings will range widely. There is no one textbook. There are several. I have select chapters assigned. Also, I have select PDF and various journal and OpEd articles, if relevant, taken from a wide range of authors.

Course Materials

Below are book titles and PDF. The instructor reserves the right to edit required readings.

Books and PDF

Yehudi Avner. 2010. *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*. Toby Press

Nadav Safran. 1978. *Israel: Embattled Ally*. Harvard University Press.

Interpreting Israeli decision-making (PDF): <http://www.wikistrat.com/interpreting-israeli-decision-making/>

Uri Bialer. *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation 1948-1956*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Charles D. Freilich. *Zion's Dilemma: How Israel Makes National Security Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012.

Alfred Wittstock (ed.). The World Facing Israel – Israel Facing the World. Berlin: 2011.

Recommended reference:

The Knesset website: www.knesset.gov.il

Major Knesset Debates (1948-1981): <http://jcpa.org/article/major-knesset-debates-1948-1981/>

Israel's Foreign Policy – Historical Documents:

http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Pages/Documents_Foreign_Policy_Israel.aspx - see volumes located in the left side column.

Jewish Virtual Library: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/indexrestore.html> - many topics within the library are relevant, especially Israel's international relations:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/intltoc.html>; history: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/history.html>