



## EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT OF THE SUBJECT

### **Introduction to Israel Studies (KBS /1IIS)**

Department of Middle-Eastern Studies

Lecturer: Zbyněk Tarant, Ph.D.

Lecturer's profile page:

<https://www.zcu.cz/cs/Employees/person.html?personId=6829>

Language of instruction: English

Credits: 5

### What can you expect?

This 101 course explores the multilayered political, economical, social, religious and cultural affairs of the State of Israel. After brief overview of the history of the modern Jewish state, the following classes will introduce the country's founding political ideology and constitutional system. The main portion of the course will then explore the particular histories and individual daily struggles of the various sectors within the Israeli society (Arabs, Oriental Jews, Russian Jews, Ethiopians, Druze, Christians etc.). The course uses the State of Israel as a case-study into the anthropological concepts and phenomena, such as migration, integration, melting pot or multiculturalism, allowing the students to see the possibilities and limits of these concepts in a real-world setting.

The course was developed in collaboration with the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University. It is best suited for MA level students, but undergraduates with basic knowledge or interest in Middle-Eastern affairs are also welcome.

### What will be expected from you?

1. Active participation in classes - oral presentation of reading assignments and active engagement in discussions. You may be required to follow the news about the region and present your insight about contemporary events in classes.
2. SWOT analysis - the student will choose one phenomena of the Israeli society according to his/her interest, about which he/she will elaborate an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). This SWOT analysis will be presented in the form of essay (5 standard pages), delivered by January 20th.
3. Electronic exam - the student will have to pass an electronic quiz consisting of 20 questions, designed to verify the student's basic understanding of the relevant terminology, legal system and political affairs.

### What will it give to you?

After passing this course, you will understand the basic composition of the Israeli society and the key challenges it is currently facing. You will be able to navigate Israeli history and society beyond the perspective of Middle-Eastern conflict, the way you understand any other nation or country. You will see practical examples to much of the theory, you already know from other classes (social change, melting pot, demographical trends, religion and state etc.). You will understand the proper terminology in English and Hebrew and you will be able to pronounce it properly. You will know, where to look for independent sources of information. You will learn the SWOT analytical method, used by security services, businesses and NGOs and you will try doing one yourself. You will use your English skills to discuss difficult, sensitive and complex issues in a safe setting, under supervision of a lecturer with 15 years of teaching and research experience.

## 1. Introduction

The first introductory lecture will discuss and define “Israel” as a field of study. It will introduce sources of information and how to read them (example of various discourses by means of analyzing the Wikipedia entries in seminar), Explanation of course requirements. Terminology. Proper pronunciation of Hebrew and Arabic names. (discussion with the students on motivations to enlist Israel study course). Basic overview of key moments in Israeli history.

Reading:

Troen, Ilan et al.: *Israel – Demography, Geography, Economy*.

Kishon, Efraim: *Israel is the only country where...*

## 2. Jewish and Democratic

How to define Zionism? Judaism and Democracy. Democracy or Theocracy? The issue of Constitution. Status Quo Agreement.

Reading:

Divine, Dinna Robinson: *Citizenship and Democracy in Israel*

Stern, Yedidia: *Israel – A Jewish Democracy*

## 3. Mamlakhtiyut - The Israeli way in Socialism?

Ben Gurion's statist ideology. Israeli socialism, collectivism. Kibbutz movement. Migration shock of 1948-1951. Economical and social processes of the 1950s. The birth of Israel as regional power.

Reading:

Yanai, Nathan: *Ben Gurion's Concept of Citizenship*

Kedar, Nir: *Ben Gurion's Mamlakhtiyut: Etymological and Theoretical Roots*

## 4. Mizrahim - The Oriental Jews of Israel

Israeli Jewish citizens from Arab and Muslim lands. The issue of expulsion, government policies, melting pot, religious and political preferences. Cultural influence and significance of the Eastern Jews for the Israeli society.

Reading:

Talmon-Morag, Pnina: *The Integration Processes of Eastern Jews...*

PEW Research Center: *Israel's Religiously Divided Society*

## 5. Haredim - The Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Society in Israel

Who are the Haredim? How does their lifestyle influence the Israeli society? Haredi politics and values. Demography and future of the ultra-religious sector.

Reading:

Lintl, Peter: *Israel's Culture War: Genesis and Lines of Conflict*

Tarant, Zbyněk.: *Blessed Be the Surgeon? : The Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Emuna u-Mada' Controversy and Its Legacy.*

## 6. Israeli Arabs / Palestinian Citizens of Israel

The so-called Israeli Arabs are Palestinian minority within the borders of Israel proper. Unlike Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, the "Israeli Arabs" have full citizenship of Israel. This lecture explores the complex and multilayered "Arab minority within a Jewish majority that itself feels to be a Jewish minority within the Arab majority".

Reading:

Rekness, Elie: *The Arab Minority in Israel*

Rekheiss, Elie: *Initial Israeli Policy Guidelines Towards the Arab Minority*

### **7. Being a Christian in the Jewish state**

There is about 150 thousand Christians living in Israel, most of them Arab-speaking. How are the Christian communities related to their Muslim and Christian neighbors? What is their socio-economic status? Are Arab Christians the new emerging elite of the Jewish state?

Reading:

Hazran, Yusri: *The 'Druzification' of Arab Christians in Israel*

Dumper, Michael: *The Christian Churches in Israel in the Post-Oslo Period*

### **8. Beta Israel / Ethiopian minority**

What is it like to be a Black Jew in Israel? This lecture covers the early rescue attempts of Ethiopian Jewry as well as the struggle for recognition of their Jewish status and daily intersectional challenges of "being black while being Jewish" in today's Israel.

Reading:

Kaplan, Steven – Rosen, Chaim: *Ethiopian Jews in Israel*

Kaplan, Steven: *Can the Ethiopian Change His Skin?*

Kaplan, Edward H.: *Israel's Ban on Use of Ethiopian Blood*

### **9. The Druze in Israel**

The small, esoteric and endogamous community of Druze was split by artificial borders during the 20th century, causing significant religious, political, social and demographic challenges. How has this affected the Druze in Israel? How does a community, which takes pride in its loyalty and fidelity, navigate the artificial borders between hostile nations?

Reading:

Nissan, Mordehai: *The Druze in Israel: Questions of Identity, Citizenship, and Patriotism*

Theodorou, Angelina E.: *5 facts about Israeli Druze, a unique religious and ethnic group*

### **10. Russian Israelis / "The Russian Street"**

The fall of the Soviet Union opened the floodgates of Russian-Jewish migration to Israel. The largest migration wave in Israeli history completely re-wrote the political, linguistic and ethnic composition of the society. As a result, the small Jewish state experienced significant "brain gain", which stood at the core of the subsequent "high-tech miracle".

Reading:

Ze'ev Khanin, Vladimir: *Aliyah from the Former Soviet Union: Contribution to the National Security Balance* (note: feel free to skim through the long report, look for statistics and conclusions).

Remennick, Larissa: *Providers, Caregivers, and Sluts: Women with a Russian Accent in Israel*

**10. The tenth lecture is offered in two or more options based on preferences of the particular group of students. Topic of the lecture will be selected by online student vote.**

#### **10a. Optional lecture 1: Americanization of Israel**

This optional lecture, scheduled only if there is a time left, maps the social, cultural, political and economical transformations of the Israeli society after the decline of Mamlakhtiyut. It documents the changing attitude of the American administration towards the Zionist enterprise - from fears that Israel will become a new Communist entity up until the strategic

collaboration since the 1970s, which also led to increased cultural influence of the United States. Why do we call Israel today "Amerika Ktana" (Little America)?

Reading:

Azaryahu, Maoz: *The Golden Arches of McDonald's: On the "Americanization" of Israel*

Rebhun, Uzi – Waxman, Chaim Isaac: *The "Americanization" of Israel – Demographic, Cultural and Political Evaluation*

### 10b. Optional lecture 2: The Czech-Zionist and Czech Israeli relations - 1918-2022

This lecture will provide an introduction into the rollercoaster known as “Czech-Israeli relations”. It will explore the affinity between Czech national movement and Zionism, ties between Czechoslovak governments and the Zionist Yishuv, cooperation during exile periods (WWI, WWII), Czechoslovak arms deal, anti-Zionist show trials during the Stalinist period, Prague spring of the mid-1960s, Communist normalization of the 1970s and 1980s and the contribution of Václav Havel to the re-start of Czech-Israeli relations in the 1990s. Contemporary collaboration, common projects and possible challenges will be discussed at the end of the lecture.

Reading:

Wein, Martin J.: *The Czechoslovak Exile in London and the Jews 1938–1945*.

Tarant, Zbyněk: *From Munich to London – Responses to the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1938-1939 in the Press of the Yishuv in Palestine*.

FrontPage Magazine: *Czech-Israeli Relations: An Enduring Friendship*

## 11. Final Quizz and Project discussion

The final quizz will be taken electronically during the last session. Students will receive their results immediately, along with explanation to questions, where errors occurred. This last session is also an opportunity for the students to discuss the details of their SWOT analyses/essays, to receive feedback or resource recommendations.

Reading:

SWOT Analysis: How To With Table and Example:  
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/swot.asp>

### Recommended reading:

- Hillel Shulewitz, Malka, ed. *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*. New York: Continuum, 2000.
- Katz, Ethan, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud Mandel, eds. *Colonialism and the Jews*. The Modern Jewish Experience. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017.
- Leshem, Elazar, Judith T. Shuval, and Agudah ha-sotsyologit ha-Yi'sre'elit, eds. *Immigration to Israel: Sociological Perspectives*. Studies of Israeli Society, v. 8. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998.
- Rabinovich, Itamar, and Jehuda Reinharz, eds. *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present*. 2nd ed. The

Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series. Waltham, Mass.: Hanover: Brandeis University Press ; Published by University Press of New England, 2008.

- Segev, Tom. *1949, the First Israelis*. 1st Owl books ed. New York: Henry Holt, 1998.
- Senor, Dan, and Saul Singer, eds. *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*. 1st international mass market ed. A Council on Foreign Relations Book. New York: Twelve, 2011.
- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. The Schusterman Series in Israel Studies. Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2012.
- Troen, S. Ilan, and Rachel Fish, eds. *Essential Israel: Essays for the 21st Century*. Perspectives on Israel Studies. Bloomington ; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017.
- Troen, S. Ilan. *Imagining Zion: Dreams, Designs, and Realities in a Century of Jewish Settlement*. Neudr. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

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## MOODLE

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND STUDY MATERIALS:**

STUDENTS, WHO SIGN-UP FOR THE COURSE CAN FIND ALL THE RELEVANT STUDY MATERIALS, INCLUDING THE MANDATORY READING EXCERPTS AT THE DEDICATED MOODLE PLATFORM OF THIS COURSE. ACCESS IS LIMITED ONLY TO STUDENTS WITH VALID ORION CREDENTIALS:

[HTTPS://PHIX.ZCU.CZ/MOODLE/COURSE/VIEW.PHP?ID=7893](https://phix.zcu.cz/moodle/course/view.php?id=7893)