ISRL 329E / GVPT 309L  
Special Topics in Israel Studies; Israel & the Arab Spring: Fall 2017  
Wednesdays 4:00pm - 6:30pm  
TYD 2111 (Tydings Building)

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The so-called “Arab Spring” has been characterized by the proliferation of failed states as well as state and nonstate actors engaged in terrorist, proxy, and low-level conventional conflicts. How does the Arab Spring affect Israel? How does Israel respond to a transforming regional order? What is Israel’s policy in light of the disintegrating Arab nation-states? What are the implications of the regional turmoil on Israel’s relations with Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and the Palestinians? What are the ramifications of the Arab Spring on Israel-United States relations? Will Israel find itself in a direct war against the Islamic State (IS)? And, just as important, what are some of the opportunities for Israel amid a transforming Middle East?

The purpose of this course is to analyze and understand the political, diplomatic, and strategic effects of upheavals in the Middle East on the State of Israel. To augment the students’ understanding of Israel in the context of the broader Middle East, academic readings and lectures will be supplemented with policy papers, grass-roots level examples, media, comparative analyses, and guest speakers.

At the start of the, readings and class discussions will enable students to gain a basic understanding of Israel’s national security and foreign policy doctrines, including a historical framework for the study of the subjects under scrutiny. The bulk of the semester, however, will be devoted to exploring specific key ramifications of the Arab Spring on Israel’s national security, foreign policy; domestic politics; relations with other regional actors, the United States and Russia; as well as Israel’s strategy towards nonstate actors such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and IS. The course will explore themes and tensions that repeatedly confront Israel in the Middle East.

**Please note:** This course does not require any previous background in Middle East, Israel or Jewish studies.
Grading:

Attendance is necessary for successful participation in the class. Attendance will be taken, and absences will have a negative effect on your participation grade.

20%: Participation in class discussion: Class participation is integral to evaluating the ongoing work of the student. Personal involvement and active participation of the students is required.

1) Your personal involvement and your active participation are required.
2) Students can contribute to class discussions by preparing a set of critical questions about the readings assigned for that week.
3) You are encouraged to bring your questions to class and be prepared to open them for discussion.
4) To clarify, critical questions – as opposed to descriptive ones – aim at exploring gaps; tensions; recurring themes; highlight different views in the literature; and serve as a platform for in-class discussion and so forth.

20%: Discussion Leaders:

1) Each student will sign up to lead one discussion about the readings assigned for that week.
2) In case there is more than one discussion leader, students will divide the readings between them. There cannot be more than three discussants per week.
3) Discussion leaders will be given approximately 10 minutes (in total) to present their overview, critique and questions about the article.
4) In preparing for discussing the readings, consider the following guiding questions:
   a. The question/ main issue of concern addressed by the author: Is it important? Is it Interesting? Why?
   b. The author’s main arguments: What is the main argument/s? Are they coherent? Are they convincing? Are they innovative? Can we think of alternative argument/s to the author’s question?
   c. How does the piece relate to other themes we have discussed in class?

60%: Three Policy Memos (each 20%): Students will work in groups of 2-3 students to produce mock policy memos. Each policy memo will analyze different themes related the Israel and the changing Middle East (see below). Please refer to the Policy Memo Writing Guidelines for more information.

- Policy memo 1: Israel amid Regional Change: 20%
- Policy memo 2: choose one of the case studies: 20%
- Policy memo 3: Broader Challenges and Potential Opportunities for Israel: 20%

**The Fine Print:**

**Academic integrity:**

The student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibit students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).*

Allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Student Honor Council: [http://www.shc.umd.edu](http://www.shc.umd.edu)

**Attendance and absences:**

Students are expected to inform the instructor in advance of medically necessary absences, and present a self-signed note documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. This note must include an acknowledgement that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to University officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s policies on medical and other absences can be found at: [https://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html](https://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html)

Prolonged absence or illness preventing attendance from class requires written documentation from the Health Center and/or health care provider verifying dates of treatment when the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Absence due to religious observance will not be penalized, however, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor within the first 3 weeks of class regarding any religious observance absence(s) for the entire semester. The calendar of religious holidays can be found at: [http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html#religious](http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html#religious)

**Emergency protocol:**

Should the University of Maryland be closed for an extended period of time, students will be notified by email on future plans. As a general rule, on the first day after a closure of *any* length, students should come to class prepared to address the material that we were to address on the *first* cancelled class. During this class session, we will work out a plan for continuing the semester in abbreviated form. In cases of really extended cancellations, we will work out the process of remediation over email.
Students with disabilities:

The University of Maryland is committed to providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with a documented disability should inform the instructor within the add-drop period if academic accommodations are needed. To obtain an Accommodation Letter prepared by Disability Support Service (DSS), a division of the University Counseling Center, please call 301-314-7682, e-mail dissup@umd.edu, or visit the Shoemaker Building for more information.

Diversity:

The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body. Along with the University, I am committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Potential devaluation of students in the classroom that can occur by reference to demeaning stereotypes of any group and/or overlooking the contributions of a particular group to the topic under discussion is inappropriate. (See Statement on Classroom Climate, https://pdc-syapaap1.umd.edu/teach/classclimate.html).

Course evaluations:

Course evaluations are a part of the process by which the University of Maryland seeks to improve teaching and learning. Your participation in this official system is critical to the success of the process, and all information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. (Instructors can only view group summaries of evaluations and cannot identify which submissions belong to which students.)

Copyright notice:

Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and they may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.

Readings:

1) There are no required text books for this class.
2) Articles, book chapters and other materials will be available via ELMS (under “Files”).
3) I would highly recommend you to do the readings in the order in which they are listed.
4) It goes with saying that all students are expected to read all readings before the date due, and understand them sufficiently to discuss them. I consider in-class participation a central factor in calculating your final grade.
5) Each reading will have a point of view and when you finish each one you need to ask yourself: what was the author trying to convey beyond the facts? This is what I will ask you.
Schedule of readings & lectures:

Part I: Israel amid Regional Turbulence:

Week 1: August 30th: Introduction, Overview of the Course & General Background.

Week 2: Sept. 6th: The Old Middle East:


Supplementary readings:

- Steven Cook and Amr T. Leheta, “Don’t Blame Sykes-Picot for the Middle East’s Mess,” Foreign Policy, 13 June 2016. http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/13/sykespicotisntwhatswrongwiththemodernmiddleeast100years/
Week 3: Sept. 13th: The New Middle East: Theoretical Approaches to the Arab Uprisings:


Supplementary readings:

- Asher Susser, "The 'Arab Spring': The Origins of a Misnomer", Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 2012 http://www.fpri.org/article/2012/04/the-arab-spring-the-origins-of-a-misnomer/
• Adam Garfinkle, “How to Think About the Middle East Before the Arab Spring – and After”, Foreign Policy Research Institute, November 2013 http://www.fpri.org/article/2013/11/how-to-think-about-the-middle-east-before-the-arab-spring-and-after/
• Freeman Jr., Chas W. 2014. “The Collapse of Order in the Middle East.” Middle East Policy Vol. 21 no. 4, pp. 61-68.
• Habun, Waleed. 2015. “A History of Insecurity: From the Arab Uprising to ISIS”, Middle East Policy Vol. 22 no. 3. Available at: http://mepc.org/history-insecurity-arab-uprisings-isis
**Week 4: Sept. 20th: – Rosh HaShanah: No class**

**Week 5: Sept. 27th: Israel: Foreign Policy:**


**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 6: Oct. 4th: Israel: National Security:**


Supplementary readings:


Week 7: Oct. 11th: Israel amid Regional Turmoil:

1. Inbar, Efraim. 2015. “Implications for Israel in a Transformed Middle East.” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol. 19 no. 1, pp. 74-78.


Supplementary readings:

Part II: Case Studies:

Week 8: Oct. 18th: Israel and the Major Powers: the United States and Russia:

Policy memo 1 is due 2 (hard copy) by tomorrow at the beginning of class: Israel amid Regional Change.

Subject: Israel amid a Regional Change.

Description: In light of the dramatic changes in the Middle East, draft a policy memo which elaborates on (1) the specific challenges that Israel faces and which you predict will intensify; and (2) suggest what are some of the steps that Israel needs to take in order to address regional changes such that its strategic interests are best served.

Guest speaker: Amir Tibon is the Washington correspondent for Haaretz newspaper, where he covers the U.S.-Israel relationship and the peace process. His articles on these issues have been published in The Atlantic, The New Yorker, Foreign Affairs and other leading U.S. publications. In 2015, he was nominated for a National Magazine Award for an article on the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. His first book, a biography of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, was published in July 2017.

The United States:


Russia:


Supplementary readings:

- Ross, Dennis. 2015. Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Ch. 11, pp. 342-392 and Ch. 12, pp. 393-408.


Week 9: Oct. 25th: Israel and the Palestinians:


**Supplementary readings:**

- Even, Shmuel. 2015. “’The Decision that Changed History’: Ten Years since the Disengagement from the Gaza Strip.” *The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS): Strategic Assessment* Vol. 18, no. 2 pp. 73-87.

**Week 10: Nov. 1st: Israel and its Arab Allies: Egypt & Jordan:**

**Egypt:**


Jordan:


Supplementary readings:

Egypt:


Jordan:

• Köprülü, Nur. 2014. “Jordan since the Uprisings: Between Change and Stability.” Middle East Policy Vol. 21 no. 2, pp. 116-123.

Week 11: Nov. 8th: Israel and the Challenge of Militant Nonstate Actors: Hezbollah and Islamic-Jihadi Salafi Militancy:

Theoretical background to nonstate actors:


Hezbollah:


Islamic-Jihadi Salafi militancy:


Supplementary readings:

• Hamzeh, Ahmed Nizar. *In the Path of Hizbullah*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004

**Week 12: Nov. 15th: The Iranian Issue:**


**Supplementary readings:**


**Week 13: Nov. 22**

**Week 14: Nov. 29**


3. Stern, Moran and Ross, Dennis. 2013. “The Role of Syria in Israeli-Turkish Relations”, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* Summer/Fall 2013, **pp. 115-128.**


**Supplementary readings:**


**Part III: Broader Challenges and Opportunities Facing Israel:**

**Week 15: December 6th: Opportunities/ Broader Challenges Facing Israel:**

Policy memo 2 (hard copy) is due at the beginning of class: choose one of the case studies Israel and Other Regional Actors amid a Transforming Region.

**Description:** In light of the dramatic changes in the Middle East, draft a policy memo that proposes ways in which Israel should (if necessary, in your view) revise its policies towards *(choose one)*: the Palestinian issue; Egypt; Jordan; Hezbollah; Islamic Jihadi-Salafi groups; Iran; Turkey - such that its strategic interests are best served.


**Supplementary readings:**


December 13th:

Policy memo 3 is due by 5pm via email: Broader Challenges and (potential) Opportunities for Israel

Subject: Opportunities/ Broader Challenges Facing Israel

Description: In light of the dramatic changes in the Middle East, draft a policy memo which elaborates on (1) a specific challenge (choose one) that Israel faces and which you predict will intensify; and (2) what regional opportunities, created by the current reality, can Israel build on in order to address that challenge such that its interests/ regional position is best served.