

The International MA Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation

The Gershon H. Gordon
Faculty of Social Sciences
Tel Aviv University

The Israeli-Arab Conflict, Past, Present and Future

Thursdays 14:30-17:00

Naftali 004

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Office: 420 Gilman Sun-Wed by appointment

Course Description:

This course will examine the historical, political, and ideological origins and development of the Arab-Israeli conflict from the late 19th century to the present day. Through paired thematic units—each composed of a general topic and a detailed case study—students will explore competing narratives, key turning points, and the broader regional and global contexts of the conflict.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

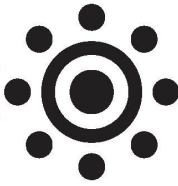
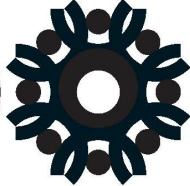
- Analyze the historical roots of Zionism and Arab nationalism.
- Understand major turning points in the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Evaluate a wide range of primary and secondary sources.
- Compare and contrast competing narratives and historiographies.
- Synthesize historical knowledge in analytical writing and discussion.

Required Texts and Materials

1. James L. Gelvin, **The Israel-Palestine Conflict: A History**, 4th Edition
2. Benny Morris, **Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001**
3. Charles D. Smith, **Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents**, 9th Edition
4. Martin Gilbert, **The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**, 10th Edition (Recommended)
5. Primary documents and journal articles provided via the course website

Classwork and Grading Assessment:

- Participation & Discussion: 35%
- Primary Source Analysis Project (5–6 pages): 25%
- Research Paper (3,500-5,000 words): 40% due March 8 2027



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Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the topics at hand. Computers are allowed, and use of AI is permitted for editing, organizing, and source management (and we will discuss how AI can help in certain cases). Yet only the student's original work with clear sources and accurate information will be accepted for written assignments. In other words, AI cannot write your paper, but it can help edit it, and help you organize it, and help ensure your sources are written properly.

Students will get credit for asking questions as part of class participation. Polite discussion is expected with reasonable tone and respect towards other students and their points of view. Participation does not depend on your knowledge, but rather on your curiosity.

Primary Source Analysis: We will learn how to define and locate primary source material and the project will be done outside of class and turned in before the end of the lecture series.

Final paper: Students will be asked to write a research paper on a topic related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This will be discussed further in class.

Note: There will be many more texts offered in the class as supplementary material drawn from the main historians of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but some of them will be optional. The reason for not writing them here, is that these texts will give students the basic synthesis of the main issues going on without getting into the competing narrative question. However, it will be important to understand some of the main historians, like Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Rashid Khalidi, Ilan Pappé and Nur Musalha. There are also several documentary sources that we will select sections to watch in class to both reinforce the written material and help students visualize some of the actors in the conflict.

Weeks 1–2: The Emergence of Competing Nationalisms

- General Topic: Zionism and Arab Nationalism at the End of the Ottoman Empire
- Case Study: From Balfour to San Remo (1917–1920)

Readings: Gelvin Ch. 1–2, Smith Ch. 1; Very Short Introduction to Zionism.

Primary Sources: Balfour Declaration, Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, San Remo Resolution

Supplement: Gilbert atlas on early Mandate

First discussion of the primary source project. (To be completed later on).

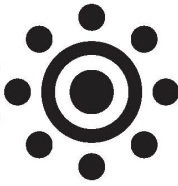
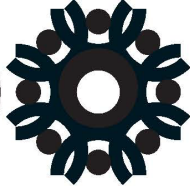
Weeks 3–4: The Palestinian Mandate and Escalating Tensions

- General Topic: The British Mandate and Colonial Rule
- Case Study: The Arab Revolt (1936–1939)

Readings: Gelvin Ch. 3, Smith Ch. 2–3

Primary Sources: Peel Commission Report, 1939 White Paper

Supplement: Gilbert atlas on British policy and resistance



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Weeks 5–6: Partition and War

- General Topic: UN Partition Plan and 1948 War

- Case Study: The Nakba and the Refugee Crisis

Readings: Gelvin Ch. 4, Morris Ch. 4

Primary Sources: UNGA Resolution 181, Israeli Declaration of Independence

Supplement: Maps on 1948 war and refugee flows (Gilbert)

Weeks 7–8: Regionalization of the Conflict

- General Topic: The Rise of Pan-Arabism and the Suez Crisis

- Case Study: The 1967 Six-Day War

Readings: Gelvin Ch. 5, Smith Ch. 6

Primary Sources: UN Resolution 242

Supplement: BBC footage and maps from Gilbert

Weeks 9–10: From War to Diplomacy

- General Topic: Peace Processes and Cold War Politics

- Case Study: Camp David Accords (1978)

Readings: Gelvin Ch. 6–7, Morris Ch. 8

Primary Sources: Camp David Accords, Sadat's Knesset speech

Supplement: News archives and Gilbert maps

Weeks 11–12: Occupation and Resistance

- General Topic: The Intifadas and Oslo Accords

- Case Study: Gaza from Disengagement to Hamas Rule

Readings: Gelvin Ch. 8–9, Smith Ch. 9

Primary Sources: Oslo Accords, UN Gaza reports

Week 13:

Film: *The Gatekeepers* (selections)

Roundtable Discussion about Solutions to the Conflict and paths forward.

Discussion on final papers.