Israel: Experiential Learning

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<th>Course ID</th>
<th>EXLI-UF9301001</th>
<th>2 credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Gal Levy</td>
<td>Tel: 077-450 2650</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:Gal.levy@nyu.edu">Gal.levy@nyu.edu</a></td>
<td>NYU/TLV Center</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>office 202</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monday, 3:00-4:15pm</td>
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Important note on class Schedule

Please note! This course does not meet on consecutive weeks. Make sure to mark in your calendar the dates of the meetings as specified below.

Class Description

This course is designed to offer you, GLS student in Tel Aviv, a broad perspective on Israeli society and the Middle East at large, and to equip you with tools for self-exploration while studying abroad. The first part of the course will introduce you to Israeli society, through readings, films and tours. You will be required to read the newspaper (or of course e-paper!) regularly and on a daily basis, so you’re aware of current affairs. Each session will begin with a short review of the main news from Israel.

In the second part of the first semester we will focus on research methods, and on the development of the tools that would help you design your own research project in Tel Aviv. In addition, you’re asked to keep a journal of your fieldwork during the course.

Desired Outcomes

This course aims to lay the gournds for your exploration into Israeli society and culture, in a systematic and methodological fashion. You’re expected to become knowledgable about the Israeli society – through both scholarly and quotidian lenses. You will also be expected to familiarize yourself with the tools to explore a new society, and to prepare to undertake your own research project.

Assessment Components

Attendance is mandatory (no unexcused absences are permitted) your assessment is based on the following components:

1. You are expected to attend all activities, reading the assigned readings, participate in class and offering your own perspective. You’ll be asked to contribute by presenting current affairs, or sharing your reflections and experience in relation to a specific activity/class. (25%)
2. Your midterm assignment will be a precursor to your final research project. You’re expected to start as early as week 3 to preliminary identify your topic, and soon after submit a research question (no later than week 7), Assessment of your progress will be based on personal engagement with the course instructor. (20%)
3. Fieldwork log. You’re asked to maintain and eventually submit your log, in which you’ll record your research related activities, your impressions, and any raw data that you can or wish to bring from the field. (20%)
4. The final paper is the centrepiece of your journey, and after approval of your topic and question, you are expected to be engaged in this project throughout the semester. You’re of course invited to consult with your instructor throughout the course of study. Your work will be evaluated on its originality and depth of research. (35%)

Failure to submit or fulfil any required component results in failure of the class.
It is recommended that you read during your stay at least two books on Israeli society, and if you're interested in bringing your own reading for discussion in class, we will be happy to do so. Bear in mind that you're required to read the assigned material for each session. These materials are posted on our Blackboard site.

All reports should be sent directly to me at Gal.levy@nyu.edu

Please DO NOT attach a word file, but write directly in the message body.

At least one book (a novel or an academic book, at your choice)


It is hard to overestimate the importance of the internet, or its contribution, to the build up of contemporary knowledge of the world around us. Albeit it needs to be used wisely. This means that one must be selective and careful when relating to internet-based sources, identifying and distinguishing opinions from facts, and journalism from academics. Most importantly, one should make clear reference to internet sources, allowing the reader the opportunity to consult these resources as and if required.

Please also note that the ‘world-wide web’ – www – exists in many languages. Many sources about Israel in English, for instance, will be aimed at tourists or readers living primarily in English-speaking regions of the world. Sources might differ when reading them in other languages. Use the internet critically.

You can never be too safe, so do ensure both the reader and yourself that you know well what your internet sources are.

In order for you to pass the course, you must

a) Attend all sessions and co-curricular activities
b) Submit reading reports as requested
c) Submit a project proposal
d) Submit a final project

An F grade will be given if you fail to meet any of these criteria.

A camera, a video-camera, a sketch book – anything to help you collect and store your impressions and experiences.
<table>
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<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Introduction to Israeli society and history</th>
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<td>27 Aug</td>
<td>What is Israel? Where is Israel? In this session we ask to lay the grounds for a study of Israel, it’s history and present as a modern nation state. We will identify main issues and challenges to the study of this young country that, more often than not, is standing at the centre of global attention, and offer key concepts to guide us through its exploration.</td>
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<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Collectivities / Selves</th>
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<td>Similarly to other national projects, Zionism was, and still is, highly concerned with its cultural makeup and with the contours of its identity. Tensions between a singular national identity and a plurality of collectivities, and between these collectivities and the self(ves) have been constantly shaped by different social divides, such as between the city and the rural areas, between Arabs and Jews, or between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews. Our session will focus on the Kibbutz and Tel Aviv, as symbolic epitomes of this seemingly contradistinctive forms.</td>
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**Screening:**
*The Kibbutz.* (Anat Zeltzer, 2011). Chapter 1
*Tel Aviv.* (Anat Zeltzer, 2009). Chapter 3(6)

**Reading:**

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<th>Session 3</th>
<th>Cityscapes</th>
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<td>The session focuses on urban space as a site for the construction of collective identities, and as the backdrop against which social encounters result in patterns of exclusion and inclusion. We will look at a variety of urban spaces and the stories they produce in order to understand better how the built environment is shaping Israelis, to paraphrase on a famous line from the Hebrew poet Saul Tchernikhovsky, as ‘the mold of the landscape of their homeland’.</td>
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**Reading:**
Session 4  Beliefs

From the religion of labour to religious workers, in this session we will focus on the place of religion and religiosity in Israeli society. Religiosity, as we shall see, is more than being religious in the traditionalist way, and here we shall explore various ways and means of being religious in various places and times in Israeli history.


Fischer, Shlomo. 2012. Yes, Israel is becoming more religious, ISR.


Session 5  Periphery

The tentional relationship between centre and periphery has intrigued social scientists from the early days of modern sociological thought. In the beginning, it was conceived simply as a relationship of diffusion, whereby the periphery is (unquestionably) benefits from the development of the centre. However, as the gap between the two has not been diminished, rather the contrary, this relationship has become a matter of renewed research. When the periphery started to claim its own voice, it shed much needed light on our understanding also of the centre.

Screening:

Underdogs: A War Story: a documentary about Jews of Moroccan origin playing the Beit She’an soccer team against Hapoel Tel Aviv in the National League championship in 1995 (Doron Tzabari)

Reading:


**Session 6**

**Identities**

The modern state is primarily identified with a nation, be it a long living people, or a relatively recent advent of ‘new immigrants’ (as in the case of the USA), or ‘new collectivities’ (France is an example). National identities however evolve in an array of other identities that are mutually integrated thus giving each society it’s own particular makeup. In this session we discuss some aspects of identity in the context of the Israeli society.


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**Session 7**

**Conflict**

These sessions investigate representations of conflict, identity and militarism in Israel. The discussion will focus on representations of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as well as of (ethnic) social conflicts, and on the ways these conflict implicate representations of subject-positions, be them depicted in national, ethnic or gendered terms.

**Screening:**

I. *As if Nothing Happened*, a television docudrama (dir. Ayelet Bargur)

II. *Jerusalem Moments 2009*: Seven short documentary films by seven young Palestinian and Israeli directors

**Reading:**


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**Mid term Assignment**

Details will be given in class
Part II: Methods

In the following sessions we will explore several methods of investigation that may be useful to your own projects. Once each of you is decided on their project, we shall discuss personally the specific needs for that project.

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<th>Tonkiss, Fran. 2000. A to Z. in <em>City A-Z</em>, S. Pile &amp; N. Thrift (eds.), pp. 1-3. (this is in fact an invitation to look further into this great book).</th>
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Final session
10 Dec

Conclusion and presentation of personal projects

Final paper

Students are required to submit a final paper which reflects their own inquiry into Israel. The paper should be no longer than 1500 words, and its topic needs to be approved individually by the course instructor.

*Students need to submit a written description, and receive approval of their topic and the method of investigation by Week 9 of the semester. Unapproved papers will not be accepted.*

*Papers are due no later than 22 December 2012*

Required Co-curricular Activities

All designated excursions and activities are a part of this course.

Your Instructor

Gal Levy is the director of NYU Tel Aviv. He holds a PhD from the London School of Economics and BA (Economics and Political Science) and MA (Political Science) from Tel Aviv University. Following his doctoral dissertation, in which he explored how the interrelationship between ethnic politics and educational policy led to the development of the Israeli ethnicized society, Gal became engaged in various research projects that aim to examine the triad of education, ethnicity and citizenship. Most recent research projects focus on the education of children to labour-migrant and on alternative Arab education. His book manuscript, which is under review at CUP, is a political account of the history of education in Israel and its implications for the construction of ethnic identities and conceptions of citizenship. Gal has published locally and internationally on these topics, as well as on class- and ethnic-voting in the Israeli general elections.