

## **Identity & Conflict in the Middle East**

POLS 34478

Jerusalem Summer Session II

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Hannah Early Bagdanov  
Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science  
[hearlyba@nd.edu](mailto:hearlyba@nd.edu)  
WhatsApp: 978-844-0327  
Office Hours: By appointment

Dr. Emma Rosenberg  
Postdoctoral Fellow, New York University  
[erosenbe@nd.edu](mailto:erosenbe@nd.edu)  
WhatsApp: 609-558-2050  
Office Hours: By appointment

### **Course Description**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often regarded as an intractable, enduring clash between two diametrically opposed sides. The fact that the conflict has endured for decades with little progress seems to support this position. But the reality of this conflict is more complex. This course will examine the role of identity in Israel/Palestine and with regards to how the Israel/Palestine conflict has spilled over to fuel identity-based conflicts in other countries in the region. In addition to the better-known disputes between Israelis and Palestinians, the course will explore the many divisions within these groups. This approach highlights the various ways in which Israelis and Palestinians conceive of their identities; in other words, what does it mean to be an Israeli or a Palestinian? And how do different understandings of these identities affect the prospects for peace in the region?

This program includes numerous visits with religious leaders, civil society organizations, academics, and policymakers in order to gain firsthand experiences of the many approaches to identity and politics in Israel and Palestine. It also includes several site visits to historically influential destinations. Its guiding principles are to speak with as many people as possible, and to explore every possible perspective.

### **Student Wellbeing Abroad**

Study abroad is an unparalleled opportunity to learn about something in the context in which it occurs. At the same time, it is emotionally, intellectually, and physically grueling in ways that the normal classroom experience is not. From our own experiences, we recognize how taxing this 24/7 immersive, intellectual experience is. We are also aware that the nature of the subject matter, conflict, is incredibly challenging and will frequently be upsetting. There will be times you feel confused, overwhelmed, conflicted, and so-forth. These are all normal responses to both living abroad and to studying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in-depth. We have structured the assignments and itinerary in ways to best give you space for reflection and time to process these complicated themes and experiences. However, we urge you to come to us if you feel overwhelmed or at capacity. We will accommodate that. Similarly, we urge you to go easy on yourselves. We will all get the most out of this unique opportunity if we lead with grace, patience, and empathy.

## Learning Objectives

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

- identify factors that lead to conflict in Israel/Palestine and other Middle Eastern cases
- apply political science theories concerning identity cleavages and conflict to the particulars of the Israel/Palestine case
- acquire knowledge and understanding of key conflicts and tensions within Palestinian society, within Israeli society, and between Israelis and Palestinians;
- Integrate empirically based information from multiple sources of evidence to propose nuanced solutions for key conflict drivers that address the concerns of multiple parties;
- exercise epistemic humility, experience personal growth, and exhibit an awareness of the intersectionality of the region's cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity.

## Course Expectations

1. **Inclusion:** The University of Notre Dame is committed to fostering an educational environment of equity and inclusion. We share that commitment and the class will be an open learning environment that embraces a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know. If you feel like your participation in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. If something was said in class, by anyone, that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. *Gender inclusive language is required in written work.*
2. **Discussion Etiquette:** As a group we must remain committed to fostering a culture of respect and inclusion during our discussions. Toward this end, we must aim to;
  - a. Avoid speaking over each other
  - b. Pay attention to the number of times you have participated and refrain from participating again if you notice that another student who has yet to participate would like to chime in. If the instructor calls on you instead without noticing this dynamic, you can say—*"Actually, it looks like student X may have had her hand up, so she can go first"*
  - c. Speak to each other and not to the instructor
  - d. Maintain a continuous dialogue. Discussion sections are *less* effective when students participate by consecutively stating comments directed mainly at the instructor. Instead, students should aim to respond to the previous comment or the general conversation topic directly.
3. **Communication:** If you are in need of accommodations due to particular personal circumstances, the most important thing is that you communicate with the instructors regarding your needs. We are committed to working with you to figure out how to complete necessary requirements in a way that takes into account your needs, the continuously changing COVID-19 situation, and the various ways that you may be personally affected.

4. **Mental Health:** Diminished mental health can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of these symptoms might be related to stress induced by course work as well as challenging course themes. However, problems with other parts of your life can also contribute to decreased academic performance. The University Counseling Center (UCC) provides cost-free and confidential mental health services (available via Telehealth!) to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your emotional or academic well-being. Remember, getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do — for yourself and for those who care about you. For more resources, please see [ucc.nd.edu](http://ucc.nd.edu) or [care.nd.edu](http://care.nd.edu).
5. **Students with Disabilities:** Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Services should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible since accommodation typically needs to be arranged well in advance. - <https://sarabeadisabilityservices.nd.edu/>
6. **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and you must communicate with the instructors if you are going to miss any course-related programming. Unexcused absences will not be tolerated. Covid-related absences are excused absences.

### Course Materials

With the exception of the two pre-trip novels, all required materials and readings are available in the course google drive.

### Course Components

**Classroom lectures:** Each week there will be one lecture delivered by one or both of the instructors that provides framing for the topics we will learn about that week through other course components (site visits, tours, guest lectures and speakers, and films). This lecture is meant to help students understand how all of the course components fit together. This is a great place to ask questions and identify areas of confusion.

**Discussions:** Each week there will be 1-2 evening discussions during which we will discuss topics covered in lectures and readings and debrief excursions and experiences. Given the difficult nature of the subject matter, these discussions are also meant to be a space to process feelings related to what we have seen, heard, and experienced.

**Site visits and tours:** Much of our learning and “class time” will take place outside of the classroom. We will visit key historical and religious sites and take tours of key geopolitical areas with local organizations, scholars, and activists.

**Guest lectures and speakers:** A guiding principle of this course is to listen to and learn from as many perspectives as possible from all points on the political spectrum(s). To this end, we will hear from academics, religious leaders, civil society organizations, politicians, and activists from a diverse array of backgrounds and political persuasions.

**Novels & Films:** Prior to arriving in Jerusalem you will be required to read two novels which highlight the lived experiences of Israelis and Palestinians, respectively. During the program we will also watch two films as a group. These alternative mediums help to convey the nuances and complexities of both history and daily life and to remind us of the human dimension of conflict.

**Assignments:** The assignments associated with the course are meant to facilitate personal reflection, to aid in synthesizing course themes and material, and to challenge you to put forth nuanced yet viable solutions that recognize the needs, fears, and hopes of multiple parties.

**Free days and individual exploration:** Free days are included in the schedule so that you can recharge and have space to dig deeper into areas that pique your interest. While you may feel the pressure to *go go go* during a free day, if you feel the need to take a day to relax, listen to your body! This program is a long sprint and you need to take breaks.

### Assignments

**Participation (30%):** Your participation grade is calculated based upon attendance to all program activities (15%) and active engagement in discussions, lectures, and site visits (15%). Active engagement involves asking questions, contributing comments to debriefs and discussions, taking notes, and coming prepared having completed readings and/or assignments.

**Reflection Journals (30%):** Each **Sunday at 11:30pm** you will be required to submit entries to a reflection journal which is housed in a google doc that is shared with both instructors. In these reflection journals you will respond to (3) prompts from the “prompt bank” as well as the weekly check-in question. You may pick which prompts you respond to each week OR substitute one photo for a prompt, but must answer all of the prompts by the end of the course (always including the check-in prompt which counts as the first) . These prompts will ask you to reflect on program components and themes from the week. You will be evaluated on your ability to synthesize your thoughts drawing upon the readings, discussions, lectures, and site visits. Responses should be at least 900 words per week (spread across three prompts).

**Photographs (20%):** Each week you are to take at least one photograph that encapsulates one of the course themes. You will upload this(ese) photograph(s) to the “Photo Diary” section of your reflection journal with a 300-word description explaining the connection between your photograph and the course theme. You will not be evaluated based upon your photography skills, but rather on your ability to describe how your photograph relates to relevant course themes. You may pick which theme you address each week, but all four themes must be represented in your photo journal by the end of the four-week period:

- ~~Theme 1: The role of identity in conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians~~
- ~~Theme 2: Intra-Jewish Israeli divisions and identities~~
- ~~Theme 3: Intra-Palestinian divisions and identities~~
- ~~Theme 4: Peacemaking visions and strategies~~

**Final Paper (25%):** You will be required to complete a 8-page paper in which you propose an alternative political arrangement to the one established during the Oslo Accords. This arrangement should attempt to

satisfy the demands and concerns of four separate contemporary groups or constituencies across the political and ideological spectrum. You will be asked to;

- (a) pick two Jewish Israeli constituencies and two Palestinian constituencies;
- (b) Describe the key terms of the Oslo Accords, and identify problems resulting from the Oslo arrangement as seen by the four chosen constituencies;
- (c) identify the demands of the four chosen constituencies and propose an alternative political arrangement that attempts to satisfy these demands;
- (d) identify areas of compromise for each constituency and make an argument for why each constituency should compromise in their respective areas.

**Self-Evaluation of Effort (15%):** At the conclusion of the course you will be asked to evaluate the effort you put into the course. You will upload a 300-word reflection to your Assignment Portfolio which will include a proposal for the grade you think that you should receive. You must also include a justification for the grade and how it reflects your demonstration of knowledge and effort. This grade will be factored into your final grade (10%).

### **Grading Standards**

*(Adapted from Dr. Gloria Y.A. Ayee, Department of Government, Harvard University 2018)*

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	Student produces work of superior quality and demonstrates complete mastery of course material, concepts, and facts. Earned by work whose excellent quality indicates a full mastery of the subject and, in the case of the grade of A, is of extraordinary distinction.
<b>A-</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	Student's work completely fulfills course requirements, and student demonstrates a very good understanding of concepts and facts. Earned by work that indicates a very good comprehension of the course material, a very good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities.
<b>B+</b>	<b>Good</b>	Student's work completely fulfills course requirements, and student demonstrates a good understanding of concepts and facts. Earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities.
<b>B/B-</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	Student demonstrates an acceptable degree of mastery of concepts and facts. Student's work minimally meets the course requirements. Earned by work that indicates an adequate and satisfactory comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.

<b>C</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Class participation is minimal and student's work reflects minimal comprehension of concepts and facts. Earned by work that is unsatisfactory but that indicates some minimal command of the course materials and some minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
<b>F</b>	<b>Failure</b>	Unsatisfactory performance on all measures. Student does not meet the minimum requirements of the course as outlined above. Earned by work which is unsatisfactory and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

### Course Schedule

#### Pre-course work

- *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abdulhawa
- *The Man Who Sold Air in the Holy Land: Stories* by Omer Friedlander

#### Week 1: Identity & Conflict in Israel and Palestine

- **Guiding Questions:** What are the drivers of conflict in the Middle East? Who are the actors? What role does history play?
- **Readings**
  - a. Patel, David Siddhartha. "Ch. - Identity and Politics." *Politics & Society in the Contemporary Middle East*, Michelle Penner Angrist ed. 2019, pgs. 145-166.
  - b. Tessler, Mark. "Ch. 7- The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" in *The Middle East* 14<sup>th</sup> Edition, Ellen Lust Ed. 2017, pgs. 288-368.
  - c. [The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is Becoming More Religious](#) by Michael Freedman, *Religion in Public blog*
- **Assignments**
  - a. Journal #1 (Due Sunday 11:30pm)
  - b. Photograph #1 (Due Sunday 11:30pm)

#### Week 2: Intra-Jewish Israeli Conflicts

- **Guiding Questions:** Is Israel a Jewish state or a state for Jews? Who is an Israeli? Who is an Israeli Jew?
- **Readings**
  - a. Soper, J. Christopher, and Joel S. Fetzer. *Religion and Nationalism in a Global Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, Chapter 3: Israel.
  - b. Berman, Eli. *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*. MIT press, 2011, ch. 4: Sect, Subsidy, and Sacrifice.
- **Assignments**
  - a. Journal #2 (Due Sunday 11:30pm)
  - b. Photograph #1 (Due Sunday 11:30pm)

### Week 3: Intra-Palestinian Conflicts

- **Guiding Questions:** What does Palestinian consensus look like? How have Palestinian ambitions of statehood evolved? How does geography (where one lives) impact how Palestinians think about key issues related to peace?
- **Readings:**
  - a. Tartir, Alaa and Benoit Challand. "Ch. 20- Palestine" in *The Middle East* 14<sup>th</sup> Edition, Ellen Lust Ed. 2017, pgs. 707-736
  - b. Samira Alayan & Lana Shehadeh (2021) "Religious symbolism and politics: hijab and resistance in Palestine," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 44:6, 1051-1067, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2021.1883699](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1883699)
  - c. [Al Tahhan, Zena. " Hamas and Fatah: How are they different?" Al Jazeera. 2017.](#)
  - d. [Baroud, Ramzy. "Palestinian division goes far beyond the Fatah-Hamas 'split'. Arab News. 2021.](#)
- **Assignments**
  - a. Journal #3 (Due Sunday 11:30pm)
  - b. Photograph #3 (Due Sunday 11:30pm)
- **Additional Resources**
  - a. [Mapping Palestinian Politics](#) webpage
  - b. [Kairos Palestine Document](#)
  - c. [Robinson, Kali. "What to know about the Arab Citizens of Israel" Council on Foreign Relations. 2021.](#)

### Week 4: Peacemaking visions and strategies

- **Guiding Questions:** Given the varied concerns of different groups, what does peace look like? How is it achieved? How might different groups define what peace means for them? How have conceptions of peace changed over time? What do you think is the most productive path forward towards peace?
- **Readings:**
  - a. The Two State Illusion, Ian Lustick. Opinion. The New York Times. 9/13/2015.
  - b. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Viability of One-State Models, Pnina Sharvit Baruch, The Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University. December 2021. *Executive Summary and Introduction, skim the rest. May be useful for the final paper.*
  - c. Role of Public Opinion in the Resilience/Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, Khalil Shikaki and Dahlia Scheindlin, Palestine Center for Survey and Policy Research, December 2018.
- **Assignments**
  - a. Journal #4 (Due **Saturday** 11:30pm)
  - b. Photograph #4 (Due **Saturday** 11:30pm)

**\*\*\*The final paper and self-evaluation will be due one week after the conclusion of the program (July 10th)\*\*\***