

TOPICS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS II
The Politics of Identity and Intergroup Relations in Israel
Faculty of Arts and Science, Department of Political Science,
Winter 2026
POL 378 H S, LEC 5101

Lecturer: Olga Talal, PhD

Lectures: Thursday, 5-7pm
Office hours: Thursday, 3-5pm
Contact information: olga.talal@utoronto.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The rich human fabric comprising contemporary Israeli society is divided along multiple identity-based lines. It is divided nationally (between Jews and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel), religiously (between religious and secular Jews, Muslims and Christians), and ethnically (between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews). Other salient identity markers separate new immigrants from the older ones and city dwellers from residents of peripheral areas - within state borders and outside them, located in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. In this course, students will learn about the complex web of cross-cutting identities within Israeli society and how these identities are (re)shaped by power. We will pay special attention to the interrelations of political power and identity politics in Israel.

TEXTS:

Online course readings are accessible through Quercus.

FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS:

One two-hour lecture per week. Course requirements include quizzes, an essay proposal, a final essay, and a final test.

Pop quizzes	15%	(Best 3 of 4 quizzes, 5% each)
Essay proposal	20%	
Essay	40%	
Final test	25%	

Pop quizzes (15%) – Students will take four (4) pop quizzes on course readings and lecture materials. The best three (3) will be calculated toward the final grade. Quiz materials are not cumulative. These are short (10 min) quizzes administered **in class via Quercus** at the beginning of lectures. The quizzes will present multiple-choice questions and true/false statements.

Essay proposal (20%) – The proposal provides an opportunity to receive feedback and prepare students for writing the final essay. It is the roadmap for developing your final paper, and it

includes several key components: A title, a research question, a topic description (one paragraph), a main argument (one paragraph), a brief literature review (two paragraphs) and a list of academic references (at least seven). The essay proposal should be no longer than 2 pages, not including references, double-spaced, font size 12, and standard margins (1 inch). **Essay proposals are due by the end of day on February 11th via Quercus.** Please sign and date your proposal prior to submission.

Research essay (40%) - The research paper should be approximately 10 pages long (not including the references), double-spaced, with font size 12, and standard margins (1 inch). **The papers are due by the end of day on March 25th.** The penalty for late submission is 5% a day, for a maximum of 7 days after the due date, at which point, late submissions will no longer be accepted, except for medical or personal emergencies and only with proper documentation.

I encourage you to research topics that truly interest you. You may develop one of the topics surveyed in the course, a topic directly relevant to the course, or a case study that explores a topic relevant to the course content. Given your discretion in choosing the topic of the final essay, I strongly recommend you seek my advice on your research focus and additional research materials.

Students are advised to exercise best practices for saving their essay drafts (on personal computers, clouds, external hard drives, etc.) before submitting the essay in class on the due date. The student should keep a copy of the essay until the marked essay is returned and the grade posted. Please sign and date your essay prior to submission.

Final test (25%) – The final test will take place during the last lecture of the term (April 2nd). It will include essay questions and draw on materials from course readings and lectures. Late tests will not be administered except for medical or personal emergencies and only with proper documentation.

PREREQUISITES: 1.0 credit in POL/ JPA/ JPF/ JPI/ JPR/ JPS/JRA courses

LEARNING GOALS, COMPETENCIES, AND OUTCOMES:

1. Learn about the different identity-based divisions within the Israeli society.
2. Apply research on identity politics to the current events in Israel's politics and news.
3. Learn to identify arguments and assumptions in academic research.
4. Evaluate the inner logic of arguments and theses, the validity of empirical claims, and generalizability of theories.
5. Improve academic writing skills.

PLAGIARISM and Turnitin Plagiarism Framework

According to U of T's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters: "It shall be an offence for a student knowingly: (d) to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism....(e) to submit, without the knowledge and approval

of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

Plagiarism will not be tolerated and all cases of plagiarism will be sent to the Dean's Office for appropriate action. For further information on the University of Toronto's policy regarding plagiarism, you may look at <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html>

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Students are strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their essays and assignments before handing in to Turnitin Plagiarism Framework. These should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned.

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GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to help you reach course learning outcomes. The use of generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of, a term test, essay, essay proposal, and quizzes may be considered an academic offence in this course. Students may not copy or paraphrase from generative artificial intelligence applications, or represent as one's own an idea, or expression of an idea, that was AI-generated.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Students are encouraged to visit and ask questions during office hours: Mondays 12-2pm in Sydney Smith 3007. You are also welcome to email your TA, TBA or the course instructor, Olga Talal, at olga.talal@utoronto.ca. Please email **short** questions and requests and allow up to 2 business days for a response. *Note, we will not be checking Quercus messages regularly, so please contact me by email.*

Course announcements, readings, and all other information will be posted on Quercus at:

<https://idpz.utorauth.utoronto.ca/idp/profile/SAML2/Redirect/SSO?execution=e2s1>

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:

It is the policy of the University of Toronto to arrange reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences.

Instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other

compulsory activities at these times. If compulsory activities are unavoidable, every reasonable opportunity should be given to the students to make up work that they miss, particularly in courses involving laboratory work. When the scheduling of tests or examinations cannot be avoided, students should be informed of the procedure to be followed to arrange to write at an alternate time.

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool

Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, students in participating divisions may use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool to declare an absence **once per academic term** (e.g., the fall term) for **a maximum period of seven (7) consecutive calendar days**. The seven-day declaration period can be retroactive for up to six (6) days in the past, or proactive, up to six (6) days in the future.

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

COURSE READINGS

Introduction (January 8th)

Part I - The Great Divides

National divide - Jews and Palestinian Arabs in Israel (January 15th)

- Peleg, Ilan, and Dov Waxman. *Israel's Palestinians: the conflict within*. Cambridge University Press, 2011. Chapter 1 "Palestinians in Israel: Separate and Unequal" pp.19-46.
- Ghanem, Asad (2001). *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study*. Albany, State University of New York Press, pp. 1-30.

Jewish subdivisions - Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, Russian-speaking, and Ethiopian (January 22st)

- Smooha, Sammy, 'The Jewish Ethnic Divide and Ethnic Politics in Israel', in Reuven Y. Hazan and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society* (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 8 Oct. 2020), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190675585.013.12_update_001, accessed 25 July 2023.
- Khanin, Vladimir (Ze'ev). "Russian-Jewish Political Experience in Israel: Patterns, Elites and Movements." *Israel Affairs* 17.1 (2011): 55-71.
- Uri Ben-Eliezer (2008) Multicultural society and everyday cultural racism: second generation of Ethiopian Jews in Israel's 'crisis of modernization', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31:5, 935-961, DOI: [10.1080/01419870701568866](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701568866)

Arab subdivisions - Muslim, Christian, Druze, Circassian, and Bedouin (January 29th)

- Shamir, R. (2017). Suspended in space: Bedouins under the law of Israel. In *Consciousness and Ideology* (pp. 97-123). Routledge.
- Nisan, M. 2010. The Druze in Israel: Questions of identity, citizenship, and patriotism. *The Middle East Journal*, 64(4), 575-596. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/400811/pdf>
- Haklai, Oded, and Rida Abu Rass. "The fourth phase of Palestinian Arab politics in Israel: The centripetal turn." *Israel Studies* 27, no. 1 (2022): 35-60.

Religious divide (February 5th)

- Yedidia Z. Stern, "Religion, state, and the Jewish identity crisis in Israel", Center for Middle East Policy, the Brookings Institute, 2017. https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2017/03/cmep_20170331_jewish-identity-crisis.pdf
- Cohen, Asher, 'Religion, Society, and Politics in Israel', in Reuven Y. Hazan and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society* (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 June 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190675585.013.10>

Green line divide (February 12th) **ESSAY PROPOSALS ARE DUE THE DAY BEFORE CLASS ON FEBRUARY 11th BY 11:59PM**

- Haklai, Oded. "Religious—Nationalist Mobilization and State Penetration: Lessons from Jewish Settlers' Activism in Israel and the West Bank." *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 6 (2007): 713-739
- David Newman. 'From *Hitnachlut* to *Hitnatkut*: The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society,' *Israel Studies* vol. 10, 3, fall 2005, 192-224.

Reading Week – No Class (February 19th)

Part II – Political Power and Identity Politics

A Jewish and a Democratic State (February 26th)

- Galnoor, Itzhak, 'Israeli Democracy under Stress' in Joel Peters and Rob Geist Pinfold (eds.), *Understanding Israel: Political, Societal and Security Challenges* (2019), London: Routledge. pp. 29-45.
- Neuberger, Benyamin, 'From Liberal Democracy to Ethnocracy: Different Conceptions of Israel's Democracy' in Reuven Y. Hazan and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society* (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 June 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190675585.013.9>, pp.705-740.

Policy toward Arabs in Israel: Between Integration and Alienation (March 5th)

- Ephraim Lavie, "Arabs in Israel: Between Integration and Alienation", INSS [http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/\(FILE\)1283331796.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/uploadimages/Import/(FILE)1283331796.pdf)
- Galnoor, Itzhak, 'Arab Citizens in the "Jewish" State of Israel', in Reuven Y. Hazan and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society* (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 June 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190675585.013.9>

Israel and the Jewish Diaspora (March 12th)

- Waxman, Dov, 'Israel and the Jewish People,' in Joel Peters and Rob Geist Pinfold (eds.), *Understanding Israel: Political, Societal and Security Challenges* (2019), London: Routledge. pp.265-279.
- Sucharov, Mira, 'Israel and the Jewish Diaspora', in Reuven Y. Hazan and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society* (2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 June 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190675585.013.31>

Multiculturalism (March 19th)

- Ben-Porat, G. (2009). Multicultural realities. *Jewish Virtual Library Publications*.
- Kook, Rebecca B, 'Multiculturalism and Identity Politics,' in Joel Peters and Rob Geist Pinfeld (eds.), *Understanding Israel: Political, Societal and Security Challenges* (2019), London: Routledge. pp.119-133.

Israel – (Not) Unique in being Unique? (March 26th) **ESSAYS ARE DUE THE DAY BEFORE CLASS ON MARCH 25TH BY 11:59PM**

- Alexander Yakobson, "Jewish Peoplehood and the Jewish State, How Unique?: A Comparative Survey," *Israel Studies* 13:2 (2008), 1-27.
- Migdal, Joel S. "THE STATE-IN-SOCIETY APPROACH: A NEW DEFINITION OF THE STATE AND TRANSCENDING THE NARROWLY CONSTRUCTED WORLD OF RIGOR." Chapter. In *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, 3–38. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Final test (April 2nd)