

## **HIST 491-1: The Arab-Israeli Conflict**

**MWF 1:00-1:50pm, North Quad 143**

Instructor: Dr. Yaron Ayalon, [yayalon@bsu.edu](mailto:yayalon@bsu.edu)

Office hours: MW, 10-11 or by appointment, Burkhardt Building 234

The land, which for Jews is ancestral Eretz Israel and for the Arabs is Palestine, has been the center of one of the modern world's longest and most intricate disputes. This course will provide you the background and understanding of the history of the conflict around Eretz Israel/Palestine, its roots, and recent developments. The course will look at both sides of the conflict at various moments throughout its history and will present two very different historical narratives: the Israeli/Jewish and the Palestinian/Arab. The first part of the semester will be devoted to a survey of the conflict's history. The second will be reserved for thematic discussion around issues that you will choose and we will study together.

Previous knowledge about the Middle East is helpful, but not required. Sufficient background will be given on the first week, and throughout the course, in the weekly readings and during lectures.

### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of the semester, you will

- have acquired a deep understanding of the history of and the problems and challenges that make up the Arab-Israeli Conflict
- have gained a better sense of the work of historians and the attention to details and integrity needed especially when dealing with politically sensitive issues
- have further developed your writing skills, or other creative skills, or both

### **Grading and Requirements:**

This course has no official requirements. You have complete freedom of choice over which assignments to complete or whether to come to class. Your final grade will be determined by the number of points you accumulate by the end of the semester (currently defined as 5/2/2014, but this might change). Each assignment listed below has a maximum number of points you may accrue for completing it. Points will be updated every week or 2 weeks on Blackboard, and it is your responsibility to monitor your progress.

The maximum number of points you may earn for this course is 1,000. Your final grade will be determined according to the following key: above 940 points\* : A; 900-939\* : A-; 860-899: B+; 820-859: B; 785-819: B-; 760-784: C+; 710-759: C; 690-709: C-; 660-689: D+; 600-659: D; less than 600: F.

\* Note on A and A- grades: to receive A or A- as a final grade, you must achieve a grade worth 90% or above at least in one of the following categories listed below: **3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11** (and possibly also **12**). This restriction is *in addition* to attaining the required total points for A or A- as listed above. In other words, you will not receive an A or A- as a final grade by completing a large number of assignments for which you got Bs or Cs, even if your total number of points exceeds 900. If you want an A or A-, you need to demonstrate at least once that you can perform A-level work.

## How to Earn Points:

You may earn points in any of the categories below, in any combination you wish. Please note that for some items, there's a minimum requirement you first have to meet before you start earning points.

\*\*\* Note: All deadlines below refer to the beginning of class on the date mentioned (for example, a deadline of Friday, 2/14, means 1pm on that day) \*\*\*

1. **Attendance** – attendance is directly linked to your ability to do well on most of the assignments listed below. In addition, you will earn 3 points for every class you attend when your signature appears on the sign-in page distributed at the beginning of class.

Minimum requirement: you must attend at least 25 classes to earn points under this section (upon your 25<sup>th</sup> class you will earn **75 points, and 3 points per class thereafter**).

**No cellphones, no texting during class!** Phones and related accessories should not be visible during class and must be either turned off or on silent mode. If you have special circumstances that require you to receive a call/text during class, please let me know in advance and make sure to sit by the door so you can exit without disrupting the class.

I allow the use of laptops/ipads etc. in class, but I ask you to refrain from using them for any purpose but taking notes or looking up a name/place mentioned in class online. This means no facebook/twitter/youtube etc. As with cellphones, please keep them on silent mode.

2. **Participation** – you may earn **up to 100 points** for participation. To that, you will need to:

- a. Meet with me at least once before spring break. After all, I can't reward you for participation if I don't know you.

- b. Speak up in class, either by asking questions, commenting on the topic of discussion, or answering questions I pose.

The key I'll use for giving points for this item is: 0 if you never said a word throughout the semester, 100 if you said something meaningful (beyond "yes" or "I agree") in at least 80% of the classes.

3. **Suggest a topic for discussion** – the second half of the semester will be up to you to decide. If there's a topic related to the Arab-Israeli Conflict you would like to learn more about (possible topics include, but are not limited to: music, cinema, poetry, literature, refugees, education, Palestinians living within Israel), you may submit a proposal for a weekly topic. If I approve your topic and you do your part in the presentation, you may **earn up to 200 points** for this section. Here's what you'll need to do:
  - a. Come up with a topic you'd like the class to discuss for an entire week (typically 3 classes). Feel free to discuss it with me before submitting your proposal.
  - b. Find relevant texts to read in preparation. Texts need to be either 2 separate pieces of at least 30 pages each, or one piece of 50 pages or more, or feel free to suggest another combination that addresses these length requirements. Texts don't have to be academic in nature, but they cannot be taken off some obscure website or be poorly written. They do not have to be available from the library: if the texts exist anywhere in the world, we can get them through interlibrary loan, scan, and upload to Blackboard for everyone to read. Again, I highly recommend you seek my advice on choosing your texts.
  - c. Find audiovisual media where appropriate. If you are focusing on an area where listening to audio or watching video clips makes sense, you will need to find those materials. They do not have to be available online or at the library – we have the ability to obtain almost any video or sound recording with the appropriate advanced notice.
  - d. Prepare a 10-minute talk to introduce your topic. You will be the first to speak in front of the class on the Monday your topic begins. The rest of the discussion will be for the rest of the class and me to prepare.
  - e. Write a 1-2 page proposal outlining the reason why you want the topic discussed, what you plan to do in class (or how you envision the discussion going), and what sources you plan on using (texts or other materials). All proposals are due by Monday, 2/10/2014, to give enough time to choose the winning proposals (if there are too many) and to arrange the schedule for the rest of the semester.
  - f. Collaborative work is permitted. Up to 3 students may propose one topic. In this case, all 3 have to meet with me at least once; the proposal submitted as per item e above must include the role each participant in the group will play; and each of the participants will have to present separately for 10 minutes on a different issue related to the theme chosen.
4. **Quizzes** – there will be three quizzes during the first part of the semester (see the schedule below for exact dates) that would test your knowledge of the assigned reading and things we've said in class. Each quiz will consist of 20 questions worth 3 points each, for a **maximum of 60 points or 180 points altogether**.

Quizzes will be given on Blackboard. They will be open-book multiple-choice quizzes that you'll be able to take anywhere you wish, either on your computer or at a computer lab/the library.

5. **Final exam** – a 50-question multiple-choice open-book final exam on Blackboard will be offered at the end of the semester (date TBA, depending on the university’s calendar of final exams). The exam questions will cover some of the issues already asked in the quizzes, as well as the topics we discussed in the second part of the semester. Each question will be worth 4 points for a **total possible 200 points**.
6. **Analyze a document** (or a movie/musical piece) – you may write a short (up to 1000 words) analysis of a primary document (or two-three related ones) that appears in *The Israel-Arab Reader* (see below for full details) or in another source you find. Your analysis should briefly introduce the document, explain its importance (short- and long-term implications), and what one might learn from it on the person who wrote/spoke it. Alternatively, you may do the same by analyzing a musical piece or a movie. Deadline to choose a document and talk to me about it: Friday, 2/21. Deadline to submit: Friday, 5/2. **Maximum points: 100.**
7. **Write/update a Wikipedia entry** – many Wikipedia entries on the Middle East are lacking in information, references, or both. Find one that has some relevance to the conflict (even a bleak reference), talk to me about it, and work to improve it. Your performance will be evaluated by comparing the page before you edited it to the final version you prepare. Some basic web programming skills are needed for this, but don’t let that deter you: you can easily learn how to do this. Deadline for choosing an entry and approving it with me: 2/21. Deadline to have the page ready: 5/2. **Maximum points: 200.**
8. **Develop a digital history resource** – digital history is the growing field of making history accessible and allowing new and creative inquiries based on technology. Examples for digital history (or digital humanities, in general) projects include Google books (<http://books.google.com>), the Digital Public Library of America (<http://dp.la>), or the Digital Media Repository at Ball State University.

One possible relevant project to our topic would be creating a library of links to primary documents, images, sound bites, and videos about the conflict. There are thousands of websites about the Arab-Israeli Conflict out there, but not one central place to go for all materials.

In thinking of a digital history project you do not have to be so ambitious, though. Here’s what you will need:

1. Discuss your idea with me. It needs to be somewhat related to the Middle East or the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and must involve primary sources (text, music, video, etc.). After we agree on your idea you will need to submit a written proposal (2-3 pages).
2. Make sure you have the skills to carry out the project. You will likely need some knowledge of building a website, scanning, and image and video editing. These are all skills you should learn anyway these days, so this might be your chance to pick them up. Learning them is easier than you might think, and the university has resources to help you with that (such as <http://lynda.com>). If it is language skills you need, either find a way to work around a language you don’t know, or find someone who knows the language who can assist you.

3. Collect the evidence. There are many more places to look for evidence than the Ball State library. I'll be happy to help you obtain what you need.
4. Arrange for access to equipment (scanners, cameras, etc.). I can help with that too, and so can the library.
5. Be ready to present your project at the end of the semester to the class.

Projects may involve up to 5 students (in which case the role of each student needs to be clearly defined). Deadline to talk to me about initial idea: Friday, 1/31. Deadline to submit proposal: Friday, 2/14. Deadline for project completion: Friday 4/25. **Maximum points: 500.**

9. **Write a research paper** – 490-level classes typically have a research paper requirement. Here this requirement is optional, but it is still a good way to earn a large number of points. A research paper should be 10-20 pages long (double-spaced, Times New Roman font size 12), rely on at least 7 different sources of which at least 2 must be primary ones, and use footnotes to appropriately document those sources.

Writing a research paper will take place in several stages:

- a. Meet with me (once or more) to approve your topic. Deadline to approve topic: Friday, 2/14. You will earn 25 points for completing this stage.
- b. Submit an outline of your essay (I will explain how to do that). Deadline: Friday, 2/28. Up to 75 points.
- c. Submit a bibliography list (sources you plan to use in your paper) with 1-2 sentence per source explaining how that source will contribute to your essay/argument. Deadline: Monday, 3/17. Up to 25 points.
- d. Submit a first draft of your entire essay. Draft has to already include all the elements your final essay will have. It may be missing some footnotes and not more than 1-2 paragraphs overall. Deadline: Friday, 4/18. Up to 125 points.
- e. Submit final version. Deadline: Friday, 5/2. Up to 300 points.

**Total possible points: 500.**

10. **Make a Documentary** - perhaps you don't think of yourself as a very good writer, but you would still like to show your creativity and original thought in some other way? You may decide to film a short documentary on the conflict, for example. Topics may include the attitudes of people at Ball State toward the conflict, or those of people from your own community; or maybe you would like to work on attitudes toward Israel/Jews or Arabs/Muslims on campus or back home. Or perhaps you would like to bring some pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian students together, have them negotiate or talk to each other, and film that. The possibilities are endless, and with the relative ease of obtaining

equipment from the university and editing your movie on Adobe Premier or other movie-editing software (available on computers on campus), all you need is a good idea.

Up to 3 students will be able to cooperate on one such project (more than 3 – with special permission). The process will be quite similar to that described above for proposing a topic for a weekly discussion. Your documentary will have to be ready for screening in class the last week of the semester. It needs to be at least 10 minutes long. If working in group, your proposal has to include the specific role of each member of the group, and that role must be reflected in your final product.

**Total possible points: 500.**

11. **Work on a creative project** – do you have a special talent for music, theater, or dance? If you have an idea to incorporate some element this class covers into one of those areas, come talk to me. Up to 3 people may cooperate on such a project (or more, with special permission), and the **total possible points** here will also be **500**.
12. **Anything I haven't thought of?** – if there's any other task you would like to propose and earn points for, please feel free to talk to me about it. Tasks will range from small (at 100 points) to large (at a maximum of 500).

Miscellaneous things you should know:

1. I care a lot about how you write. In fact, how you write is more important to me than what you say. I have a website dedicated to improving college students' writing skills (<http://writingmaster.net>). The website has all the information you may need on grammar, style, punctuation, and citing sources. When grading your book report, I will assume you are familiar with the rules described on this website. If you use facebook, I suggest you "like" this site's page (<http://facebook.com/writingm>) and follow it to receive occasional writing and academic tips. If you find it useful, feel free to spread the word and share this resource with your friends. It is free to use.

In addition, you might want to seek the help of the writing center. The Writing Center is a community of Ball State students and faculty who value writing. You may go there to collaborate with one of the center's trained peer tutors on any project for any major. The Writing Center is a comfortable, supportive environment for writers from all communities and backgrounds. It is located in Robert Bell 291. It has both online and face-to-face appointments. To make an appointment, go to [ballstate.mywconline.com](http://ballstate.mywconline.com).

Furthermore, if you feel you need help with preparing for class, reading, understanding lectures, or preparing for exams, there's a resource on campus you can use: the Learning Center. The Learning Center offers free tutoring for many courses on campus, including science and humanities (and including this one!), modern and classical languages, math and business, help with any writing task, and study strategies such as time management, test taking, note taking, and effective textbook reading. Call 765-285-1006 or visit NQ 350 to make an appointment to meet with a tutor, or visit them online at [www.bsu.edu/learningcenter](http://www.bsu.edu/learningcenter). Needless to say, I would be happy to hear from you and help out as much as I can.

2. I have zero tolerance for violations of academic dishonesty, and especially plagiarism. Even the slightest suspicion of plagiarism, cheating in the form of copying the work of another student, or having someone write an exam for you, or any other violation of academic dishonesty as defined in the University's Student Academic Ethics Policy, will result in an F grade for the course and possible further disciplinary action. For more details, see:

<http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/studentrights/policiesandprocedures/studentcode/viethicspolicy>.

3. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or [dsd@bsu.edu](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu).

4. Questions? Concerns? Suggestions how to make this course better? Just need someone to talk to? Feel free to get in touch via email. I will respond to all emails within 24 hours (48 hours during the weekend), but usually a lot faster. I'm looking forward to getting to know all of you!

### **Course Schedule:**

We will be using two books that you will need to purchase:

1. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001)

2. Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader: a Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008)

Earlier editions are available for the *Israel-Arab Reader* book, and used editions are available for both online.

We will read Morris' book in its entirety during the first 8 weeks of the semester as we tell the story of the conflict. We will resort to the second book occasionally during the first 8 weeks, and later in the semester as well. Our weekly reading load will be 70-150 pages. Sometimes I will ask you to read everything over the weekend; at other times I will divide the reading assignments into different days.

Readings from other sources, as well as videos, images, PowerPoint presentations, or audio files will be available via the Content section of Blackboard. All quizzes/tests will be posted there too, so you should make it a habit to check Blackboard regularly.

**Note:** the schedule below is subject to change; I reserve the right to make changes to assigned readings, the day each text is assigned, or the topics discussed every week. I will provide an updated schedule for the second part of the semester once it is available.

Week 1 – introduction, the origins of the Conflict

Wednesday, 1/8 and Friday, 1/10

Morris, 3-66

Week 2 – from World War I to 1947

1/13, 15, 17

Morris, 67-184

Laqueur and Rubin, 11-16, 65-77

Weeks 3-4 – from the first Arab-Israeli War to the Six Day War

Monday, 1/20 – no class, MLK Day

1/22, 24, 27, 29, 31

Morris, 184-346

Laqueur and Rubin, 81-86, 103-105

Week 5 – from the War of Attrition to early peace talks

2/3, 5, 7

Morris, 347-455

Laqueur and Rubin, 143-152

Week 6 – peace with Egypt, war in Lebanon

2/10, 12, 14

Morris, 455-560

Laqueur and Rubin, 207-215, 269-273

Week 7 – The Palestinian uprising (first Intifada) and the peace process of the 1990s

2/17, 19, 21

Morris, 561-651

Laqueur and Rubin, 341-348, 354-358, 413-428

Week 8 – from Netanyahu to Netanyahu (late 1990s to the present)

2/24, 26, 28

Morris, 652-675

Laqueur and Rubin, 535-564, 573-580, 583-593, 603-626

Weeks 9 –

3/3, 5, 7

Week 10 –

3/17, 19, 21

Week 11 –

3/24, 26

Friday, 3/28 – no class due to prearranged conference (class will take place online)

Week 12 –  
3/31, 4/2, 4

Week 13 –  
4/7, 9, 11

Week 14 –  
4/14, 16, 18

Weeks 15-16 –  
4/21, 23, 25, 28