

Thinking About Israel/Palestine

4:30-6:00 pm **or** 7:00-8:30 pm

Tuesdays, March 5, 12, 19, April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, May 7, 14

Joel Beinin

beinin@stanford.edu

(503) 989-9892



Jerusalem/al-Quds: Western Wall and Dome of the Rock – Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount

Why did Jews in Eastern Europe come to embrace Zionism in the late-19th century? What was *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel)/Palestine like before the beginnings of modern Zionist settlement? Was it inevitable that the revival of a Jewish national community in *Eretz Yisrael* would entail a confrontation with the previously existing Palestinian Arab community? How did a movement among a small minority of Jews become the normative outlook for most late 20th century Jews? What kind of Jewish state was established in 1948? Why did it find itself in repeated wars with its Arab neighbors? Why haven't efforts to resolve the conflict since the first peace agreement – the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty – succeeded? Will Israel “[forever live by the sword](#),” as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said? What relationships between American Jews and Israel are possible/desirable?

This class will address these and other questions many Jews ask themselves about Israel/Palestine without presuming to offer definitive answers. All points of view are welcome and will be respected. Each week Joel will open with a brief presentation of the historical context. However, the heart of the class is discussions framed by the weekly readings. There will be time at the end of most sessions for free-form discussion.

Some General Books/Overviews

- *Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine* (Stanford University Press, 2017)
- *Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford University Press, 2013)
- Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Arab-Israeli Tragedy* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
- *Phyllis Bennis, *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer* (Olive Branch Press, 2019)
- James Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* 3rd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2014)
- Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Jewish Publication Society, 1997)
- *Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein, *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age* (Stanford University Press, 2015)
- *Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford University Press, 2013)
- *Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Brandeis University Press, 2014)
- Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, (Norton, 2014)
- Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* 9th ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016)
- *Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, "Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer" <https://merip.org/palestine-israel-primer/>

Schedule of Class Sessions

1) March 5 - Introductions, Expectations, Beginnings of Zionism

Reading

BEFORE COMING TO CLASS

Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (1896), 3 p. (excerpt)

Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948*, 21-57

Hilton Obenzinger, "In the Shadow of 'God's Sun-Dial': The Construction of American Christian Zionism and the Blackstone Memorial," *Stanford Humanities Review* 5 (no.1, 1995), 18 p. (also in the Dropbox folder)

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/obenzinger.html>

We will watch in class (but feel free to preview)

"1913: Seeds of Conflict" (to 15:32)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3e6CN9uMIU>

Questions

- 1) What are the core tenets of Zionism? Why did the idea of a Jewish state emerge in late-19th century Europe?
- 2) What is the difference between Jewish and Christian Zionism? Are Christian Zionists allies of Jews?

2) March 12 - Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period

Reading

Watch the rest of "1913: Seeds of Conflict"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3e6CN9uMIU>

Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, 145-75

Questions

- 1) What was Palestine like in the late Ottoman era? Who lived there?
- 2) How did Arabs and Jews relate to each other?
- 3) Why does Khalidi make a point of locating the crystallization of Palestinian Arab national consciousness in the years 1914-23?

3) March 19 - Zionists Encounter Palestine

Reading

Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land*, 1-44

David Hacoheh, speech to Secretariat of Mapai, Nov. 15, 1969

Ahad ha-'Am, excerpt from "Truth from Eretz Israel" in *Prophets Outcast*, 31-33

Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)"

<http://www.marxists.de/middleeast/ironwall/ironwall.htm>

Questions

- 1) What are the differences among the forms of Zionism espoused by Herzl (and his successor, Chaim Weizmann), the Labor Zionists, Ahad ha-'Am, and the Revisionists (Jabotinsky)?
- 2) What do they share in common? Where should we place Ari Shavit on this spectrum?
- 3) How did the labor Zionists see Palestinian the Arabs?

4) April 2 - Great Britain and Palestine

Reading

"Mandatory Palestine: The Palestinians before the British Mandate"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yVFVKIHCa0> (10:52)

"The Balfour Declaration," in Smith, 92-93

Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 33-50, 109-21
Balfour Memorandum on Syria, Palestine & Mesopotamia (1919), in Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 201-210
Recommended
Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration*, 303-46 (pdf in the Dropbox folder)

Questions

- 1) What is the difference between the proposed Zionist draft of the Balfour Declaration and the document that was eventually issued?
- 2) The British made three sets of promises during World War I: 1) to the Arab Hashemite family (Husayn-McMahon correspondence); 2) to the French (Sykes-Picot Agreement); and to the Zionists (Balfour Declaration). Were they contradictory?
- 3) Did Balfour think they were?
- 4) Does it matter today?

5) April 9 - Violence and Counter-Violence in British Mandate Palestine (Hebron 1929, the Arab Revolt, 1936-39, and Beyond)

Reading

Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete*, 314-27
Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, 105-24
Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete*, 382-87
Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism*, 19-33
B. Michael, " Hamas and the Irgun? How dare I compare the two..." *Haaretz*, May 2, 2016 <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.717293>

Recommended

Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (a pdf of the chapter on the Arab Revolt, 219-76 is in this week's Dropbox folder).
Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, 26-46, 59-61, 212-30 (pdf in the Dropbox folder).

Questions

- 1) What happened in Hebron in 1929? Is this a legitimate basis for post-1967 settlers to establish themselves there?
- 2) What do we think of Agnon's conclusion (Segev, 327) after the Hebron events?
- 3) Why and how was the 1936-39 Arab Revolt defeated?
- 4) Why did the Labor Zionist attitude towards the use of force change during the late 1930s?
- 5) Why did the Irgun (Etzel in the Hebrew acronym) use violence against civilians? Should we call that terrorism? Does it matter?

6) April 16 - 1948

Reading

Benny Morris, "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts its Past," in *Making Israel*, Benny Morris, ed., 11-27.

https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2015/SAN277/um/59355238/Morris_2007_-_Making_Israel.pdf?lang=en

Ari Shavit, "Lydda, 1948," in *My Promised Land*, 99-132

Benny Morris, "Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948," in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine*, 37-56

Recommended

Shabtai Teveth, "Charging Israel with Original Sin," *Commentary*, Sept. 1989, 24-33

Norman Finkelstein, "Born of War, Not by Design" in *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 51-87 (pdf in the Dropbox folder)

Peretz Kidron, "Truth Whereby Nations Live," in Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims*, 85-96 (pdf in the Dropbox folder)

Ilan Pappé, "The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36 (Autumn 2006): 6-20

Questions

- 1) What was the role of Zionist force in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem? What terminology should we use to describe what happened?
- 2) What was the Arab role in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem? What terminology should we use to describe it?
- 3) Why did some labor Zionist leaders think transfer was "moral"?
- 4) Is there a difference between Morris's argument in "The New Historiography..." and in "Revisiting..."?

7) April 23 - Palestinians and the PLO

Reading

Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 125-81

https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/771224/mod_resource/content/1/The%20Iron%20Cage_The%20Story%20of%20the%20Palestinian%20Struggle%20for%20Statehood.pdf

Recommended

Yezid Sayigh, "Armed Struggle and State Formation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, (no. 4, Summer 1997):17-32 (pdf in the Dropbox folder)

Questions

- 1) Why were the Palestinian and Arab forces defeated in 1948?
- 2) What were the long-term consequences of this defeat?
- 3) What was the attraction of armed struggle for Palestinians in the 1960s?

8) April 30 - 1967

Reading

Abba Eban, "The Six Days War," (speech to the UN) in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), *The Israeli-Arab Reader*, pp. 207-29

Norman Finkelstein, "To Live or Perish: Abba Eban Reconstructs the June 1967 War," *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 123-49

Recommended

Guy Laron, *The Six Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East*

Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East*

Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*

Questions

- 1) Why did the 1967 War break out?
- 2) Who shot first? Does it matter?

9) May 7 - The Occupation

Reading

Joel Beinin, "The Oslo Process and the Limits of a Pax Americana" in Joel Beinin and Rebecca Stein (eds), *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel*, 21-37

Jeff Halper, "The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control," in *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, 62-71

David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," *Vanity Fair*, March 3, 2008,

<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/04/gaza200804>

Henry Siegman, "The Great Middle East Peace Process Scam," *London Review of Books*, Aug. 16, 2007 http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n16/sieg01_.html

Recommended

Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Arab-Israeli Tragedy*, 188-332 (on the Oslo years)

B'tselem, *Land Grab: Israel's Policy of Settlement in the West Bank*, 7-8, 11-19, 37-41, 47-51, 91-116

http://www.btselem.org/Download/200205_Land_Grab_eng.pdf

Questions

- 1) Why did Israel and the Palestinians sign the Oslo Declaration of Principles?
- 2) Has the United States been an honest broker in the post-Oslo negotiations?
- 3) How did Hamas come to rule in the Gaza Strip?

10) May 14 - Israel and the United States

Reading

Melani McAlister, "The Good Fight: Israel after Vietnam," in *Epic Encounters Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, updated ed., 151-97

Recommended

Exchange in *The New York Review of Books*:

Robert Malley, Hussein Agha, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors," August 9, 2001: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/14380>

Camp David and After: An Exchange (1. "An Interview with Ehud Barak"), June 13, 2002: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15501>

Camp David and After: An Exchange (2. Robert Malley & Hussein Agha, "A Reply to Ehud Barak") June 13, 2002: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15502>

"Camp David and After – Continued," Benny Morris and Ehud Barak, reply by Robert Malley & Hussein Agha, June 27, 2002: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15540>

Questions

- 1) Does the United States support Israel or the Palestinians more in the conflict? Why?
- 2) Was there ever a reasonable chance that the Oslo process would lead to peace?