



## The International MA Program in Conflict Resolution and Mediation

The Gershon H. Gordon  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Tel Aviv University

### **History of the Middle East 10444007** **The Israeli-Arab Conflict, Past, Present and Future**

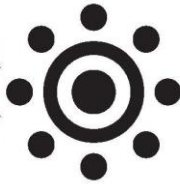
Thursdays 13:00-15:30 Naftali 004

Dr. Joel D. Parker, [joeldparker@gmail.com](mailto:joeldparker@gmail.com), +972-54-429-1917 (also on Whatsapp)  
Office: 420 Gilman Sun-Wed by appointment generally between 10:00-17:00 and  
Thursdays by 'drop in' before class between 11:00-12:30.

**Course Objectives:** This course is designed to introduce the Arab-Israeli conflict to MA Students in the Conflict Resolution and Mediation program. We will consider a range of studies regarding the origins and trajectory of the conflict (as well as partial resolutions that have lowered tensions) and discuss the implications of framing the conflict in a variety of ways. Namely, we will look at both Zionist and Palestinian narratives, while asking why certain events, people, and concepts remain relevant to the situation and the discourses of each side (also why some people, events, and ideas are excluded by contemporary collective discourses). We will discuss the origins of the conflict, the conflict itself, including settlement, violence, wars, and terrorism. Towards the end of the course, we hope to look into the contexts of a series of peace agreements starting with Egypt and moving on to the Abraham Accord member states. Several "sticking points" will be examined in detail, including the refugee issue, Jerusalem, post-1967 settlements, and ongoing violence as well as what the state of Israel perceives as "existential threats." While the course will accept multiple viewpoints, we will try to come up with some core terms and phrases that are arguably less distorted by ideology and can be useful for academic discussions of the conflict. We will try to do this collectively through respectful discussion and listening. Students are expected to attend classes and participate in the discussion, as this is a key component of the process.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

1. We will discuss the history of the conflict going back to at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with in-depth discussions of how and why historical (and geographic) context matters. While the conflict is often defined by Jewish immigration to Palestine, we want to keep in mind larger socio-political changes in the contemporary world, as well as dynamic change happening among the Palestinian population (including how, when, and why a specific Palestinian national movement developed).
2. Several legal and political source texts will be discussed, as well as their impact on the ground and reaction of the local Palestinian Arabs; namely, the Balfour Declaration, the UN Partition Plan of 1947, and other historical texts that led to later documents designed to resolve some aspect of the conflict.
3. Students should be familiar with documents related to the resolution of the conflict including the "Saudi Plan," the "Deal of the Century," the "Oslo Accords," as well as what was discussed at Camp David in 2000, etc.



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4. Students will gain an understanding of the Palestinian demands for a “right to return” and other issues that form the diverse set of positions on both the Palestinian and Zionist sides, including a thorough discussion on alternatives to the Two-State Solution, such as the Single State Solution and what implications might emerge from various models for future co-existence.
5. The international/regional context will be discussed as it pertains to the conflict, including the historical and present day effects of the rise of Arab nationalism and the individual cases of each of Israel’s neighboring countries, as well as economic and geographic issues that complicate the two-state solution.

**An Interdisciplinary Approach** utilizes elements from the fields of: History, Political Science, International Relations, Geography, Religious Studies, Sociology, Economics, and Conflict Resolution

### **Readings and preparation per week:**

Around three-four hours of reading per class is expected, and between 30-60 pages of reading (occasionally more), as well as keeping up to date on current developments.

### **Grading:**

Class participation, 50%: attendance at each class is not mandatory, but strongly encouraged, as your final grade will depend on the \*quality of your participation in class, as well as the simulations, debates, and discussions. A variety of measures will be used to gauge how much students are doing the readings, and this is a very serious matter because there is a ton of literature on this topic and even gaining a passable entry level understanding requires a good amount of sitting and reading. **This is an extremely important part of the class. Due to the occasionally sensitive nature of our discussions, it will be important to learn how to express our thoughts with clear contexts and terminology (especially drawing from our readings), and how to listen to each other. Occasionally, our discussions may end with the classic line: “At this point we are going to have to agree to disagree.”**

Mid-term quiz for historical knowledge, 25%: a take home exam with short answers and one longer essay choice answer to be typed and no longer about 1,500 words.

Final paper, 25%: Students will be asked to write a 2,500 to 3,000-word research paper with at least five academic sources and Chicago Style footnotes that focuses on one element of the Israeli-Arab conflict along with an argument in favor of a path to resolving that element. For instance, one might focus on Lebanese land claims in northern Israel and how to resolve this claim through a negotiated settlement that might exchange some territory controlled by Israel for a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon. There are many separate elements of the conflict, which will be discussed in the course. One may also chose to discuss a historical topic that is no longer directly relevant to the conflict per se, but applies to the topics in the course.



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The class readings are mandatory even if you cannot attend the class itself. In addition, students will be asked to follow developing news closely, which will be discussed at the end of each class.

**Week 1 (Class 1) Introduction to the issues, and historical context, focus on European Jewry before WW1 and some general thoughts on anti-Judaism/antisemitism as well as the rise of nationalism. What is Zionism, and what is Palestinian Nationalism, when and where did they begin, and why does it matter?**

Anita Shapira, "Anti-semitism and Zionism." *Modern Judaism* (1995): 215-232.

Liora R. Halperin, "Forging beginnings: Commemorative cultures and the politics of the "First Aliyah"." *Journal of Israeli History* 38, no. 1 (2020): 53-76.

Additional:

Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) pp. 1-13.

Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001) pp. 14-29.

**Discuss:** How does one "frame" the problem in time and space, and use of terms like Jew, Arab, Palestinian, Zionist, etc., and how does the use of time (periodization), space, and terminology affects our perception of the conflict and its potential resolution today? Why did Zionism emerge when it did and not earlier, or later? When did Palestinian nationalism emerge?

**Class 2: From 1917 to 1948, Digging deeper into Balfour, the British Mandate, the Mandate context, and the start of the Palestinian nationalist discourse.**

Avi Shlaim, "The Balfour Declaration And its Consequences" in Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain*, (London, I. B. Tauris, 2005) 251-270.

Ernest Dawn, "The Rise of Arabism in Syria," *Middle East Journal* (Spring, 1962), 145-168.

Additional:

Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 9-34.

**Discuss:** Should the Balfour Declaration be referenced in contemporary conflict resolution negotiations, or it is a relic of a colonial past that needs to be "archived" and left out of talks?



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### **Class 3: The International Context from Mandates to Democratic States**

Rashid Khalidi, "Arab nationalism: historical problems in the literature," *The American Historical Review* (1991): 1363-1373.

Kenneth Stein, "One Hundred Years of Social Change: The Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem." In Laurence Silberstein (ed.), *New Perspectives on Israeli History: The Early Years of the State*. New York University Press, (1991): 57-81. Link here: <https://israeled.org/one-hundred-years-of-social-change-the-creation-of-the-palestinian-refugee-problem/>

Additional:

Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, (Reno: University of Nevada press, 1991) Ch. 2.

A: Introducing the modern idea of the nation-state from Westphalia to Hegel, and national identity, various forms of nationalism and the question of Israel as a "settler colonial state" versus the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland.

B: What is Arab Nationalism (and does it matter who is talking about it?); also, why did the Arab states reject the 1947 Partition Plan? Was that a mistake, or an inevitable outcome?

**Discuss:** Did Arab nationalism help or harm the Palestinian cause from the 1920s until the late 1940s? Did Zionism rely on colonial (mandatory support) for its survival, or would it (theoretically) have survived even without British support? (Both questions need to be answered in terms of specific historical contexts).

### **Class 4: The start of the Palestinian refugee problem:**

Issa Khalaf, "The Effect of Socioeconomic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine," *IJMES*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (February, 1997): 93-112.

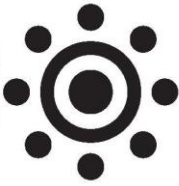
Adel Manna', "The Palestinian Nakba and its continuous repercussions," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2013): 86-99.

Additional:

Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 549-580. [This is the last chapter of the revised edition that discusses the various proposals for resolving the problem.]

A: A discussion of the refugee issue in history and an overview of the plans that have been put forward to resolve the problem.

B: Should we distinguish between violence and non-violent factors (like socio-economic trends) as causes leading to the Nakba/Refugee crisis?



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**Discussion:** Students will be asked to discuss a recent news article they found on Palestinian refugees today, and note what the context and conditions are, and we will discuss what measures might improve the plight of the descendants of Palestinian refugees, including freedom of movement, better education, civil rights, and economic opportunity, as well as the ongoing negotiations over a potential limited “right of return.”

### **Class 5: The role of violence: Overview from the Cold War to the Second Intifada**

Moshe Naor, “Israel’s 1948 War of Independence as Total War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2008, Vol. 43 No 241, 241-257.

Ken Stein, The Great Powers, the Middle East and the Cold War, August 2020, <https://israeled.org/themes/great-powers-the-middle-east-and-the-cold-war/>

Additional:

Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, “The Road to Suez, 1955-1957,” 143-185.

A: Inter-state violence, 1948-1974, explaining the miracle of Israel’s survival.

B: Understanding the military cultures of the 1950s and 1960s and the post-WWII rise of military-industrial cultures.

C: How the Arab-Israeli conflict fits into the new paradigm of multilateralism in a world divided between Soviet, Western, and non-Aligned states.

**Discuss:** Did Israel “win” the war with the Arab states? Did it “lose” the war on terrorism? Does the conflict persist because of violence, or does the absence of a “just” resolution to the conflict create the conditions needed for violence to persist?

**Midterm:** A 1500-2000 word essay with at least three different references to academic sources answering just one out of seven questions that will be given around class 5 with 48 hours to complete. The questions will be based on the readings and the lectures and answers will be graded on how well the student demonstrates knowledge of the topic and readings, as well as based on clarity of writing, organization, style, and quality of references (i.e., an academic book or journal is going to be considered more serious than a short opinion piece from a blog).

### **Class 6: The Sada’at-Begin talks and the Peace Accords with Egypt in 1978**





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Samuel Lewis and Ken Stein, "Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis: Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience." United States Institute of Peace, October 1991, 1-43.

Seth Anzia, "Egypt's Sacrificial Lamb," 80-116 in *Preventing Palestine*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

A: What was the historical context for the Peace Accords with Egypt in 1979, and how did it happen?

B: What was the end result on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab state system, and non-state actors in the region?

Discuss: Were the Palestinians really the victims of the Israeli-Egyptian peace deal?

### **Class 7: Oslo Accords between two Intifadas: Is the Two-State solution our only hope?**

Yezid Sayigh, "The Armed Struggle and Palestinian Nationalism," in Avraham Sela and Moshe Maoz (eds.) *The PLO and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964-1994* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 23-35.

Joel Singer, "The Israel-PLO Mutual Recognition Agreement," *International Negotiation* 26 (2021) 1-25.

Additional:

Avraham Sela, "Politics, Identity and Peacemaking: The Arab Discourse on Peace with Israel in the 1990s," *Israel Studies* 10, No. 2 (2005), pp. 15-71.

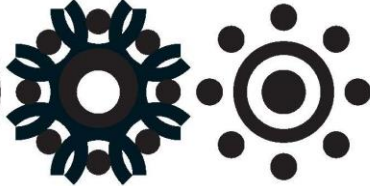
A: The context of the Oslo Accords and their content, also developing a timeline and comparison of the first and second intifadas as well as the Madrid Conference of 1991.

B: Reasons for the delay/failure of the Accords to fully develop, was it settlements or violence, or some combination of both, or perhaps other factors were to blame for the current situation?

**Debate solutions:** Team debate, One State versus Two-States, and base your arguments on whether the Oslo Accords are dead, or whether they should be considered frozen but alive and necessary for a conflict resolution.

### **Class 8: The Israel-Syrian Peace Negotiations**

Itamar Rabinovich, "Trying to recapture yesterday's shadow," 3-13 in *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, revised edition).



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Frederic C. Hof, *Reaching for the Heights* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2022) 85-117.

Additional:

Maria A. Kastrinou, Salman Fakher El-Deen, and Steven B. Emery, "The stateless (ad) vantage? Resistance, land and rootedness in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights," *Territory, Politics, Governance* (2020): 1-20.

A: Review of the Golan Heights issue with some background on the Syrian political situation. Issues involved, and the imbalance of political systems: how does a "Jewish democracy" negotiate with an "Arab socialist" regime?

B: From the 1990s indirect negotiations to the present day; Syrian overtures and Israeli hardening over the years.

Discuss: In light of the Syrian Civil War, is there a prospect for a negotiated settlement that involves an Israeli compromise with the Syrians?

### **Class 9: Palestinians in Israel, Arab Israelis, Ethnic Minorities in a Democracy**

Rami Zeedan, "The Role of Military Service in the Integration/Segregation of Muslims, Christians and Druze within Israel," *Societies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1.

Pnina Sharvit Baruch, "The Ramifications of the Nation State Law: Is Israeli Democracy at Risk?" *INSS Insight*, No. 1080, August 1, 2018.

Additional:

Nimrod Ben Zeev, "Toward a history of dangerous work and racialized inequalities in twentieth-century Palestine/Israel." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 51, no. 4 (2022): 89-96.

Discuss: Changes in Israeli society especially regarding the question of identity, labor rights, military service, the secular-religious divide, gender and LGBTQ issues, as well as ethnic differences and their impact on the nature of the state of Israel.

### **Class 10: Models for Conflict Resolution in Our Case**

Brendan O'Leary, "Power-Sharing and Partition amid Israel-Palestine" *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 15, issue 4 (September 2016) 345-365.

Benjamin Miller, "Israel-Palestine: One State or Two? Why a Two-State Solution is Desirable," *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 15, issue 4 (September 2016) 438-452.

A: Power-Sharing and Partition, discuss how other conflicts have adopted power-sharing and why it may or may not work in our case.



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B: Variations of the Two-State Solution: A careful look at the map, and detailed discussion of the geography of the Two-State solution(s).

**Debate:** Is the “two-state solution” biased towards a pro-Zionist deal? Is the One State Solution an option? If so, how would it look?

### **Class 11: The Abraham Accords and regional normalization deals**

Yoel Guzansky and Zachary A. Marshall, “The Abraham Accords: Immediate Significance and Long-Term Implications,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* (2020): 1-11.

Fred A. Lazin, “President Donald Trump's Abraham Accords initiative: Prospects for Israel, the Arab states, and Palestinians,” *Politics & Policy* Vol. 51, No. 3 (2023): 476-487.

Additional:

Jonathan Rynhold and Michal Yaari, “The quiet revolution in Saudi-Israeli relations,” *Mediterranean Politics* 26, no. 2 (2021): 260-268.

David Makovsky, Yosef Al Otaiba (UAE Ambassador) and Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa, “Inside the Normalization Agreements between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain,” November 2022 Transcribed interview, Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

A: The context and recent history of Israeli-UAE and Israeli-Bahrain deals, as well as agreements for normalization with Sudan, Morocco.

B: What about Saudi Arabia, especially in 2023?

**Discuss who might be next:** Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, or perhaps a warmer relationship with Egypt and Jordan? Also, what role do the normalization deals play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Do you think they improve the likelihood of a final settlement with the Palestinians? Explain why/why not.

### **Class 12: Revisiting the models and discussing how we frame the problem, again, with another look at Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees:**

Joseph Zeira, “An Outline of the Economic Issues of a Final Status Agreement in Jerusalem,” in Arie Arnon and Saeb Bamyia (editors), *Economic Dimensions of a Two-State Agreement Between Israel and Palestine* (Aix Group, 2007), 23-72.

Rami Goldstein, “The Palestinian Refugees in Light of the 2020 Abraham Accords,” *Middle East Policy* 29, no. 2 (2022): 46-54.





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A: Can we distinguish between identity and the actual political formulae we implement on the ground? For instance, can Palestinians be content with being spread out over historical Palestine even if they do not have a separate country that includes every town and village, and even if the refugees in the region do not all get to return? While we know that not all Jews are Zionists, would Jews agree to live in a country that is not at its core a Zionist state?

B: Having a closer look at Jerusalem, demographic changes, and the question of East Jerusalem

Debate: Should Jerusalem be an international city, a divided city, or should we keep it as it is? Why does Jerusalem tend to internationalize the conflict so quickly? What role should religious identity play in the negotiations for a better situation in Jerusalem?

### **Class 13: Putting it all together.**

**Debate: Teams will be selected to prepare 5-10 minute presentation in class, preferably with maps (such as on a PowerPoint slideshow) with an aim to promote one of the potential conflict resolution plans. The number of team members will depend on the number of students in the class and how many models are adopted as solutions for the Arab-Israeli Conflict by students. Each team will allow each member roughly equal time to discuss the pros and cons of their model, with an aim to convince fellow classmates and the lecturer as to the benefit and potential of their model. (For instance, some may feel that a radical departure from the status quo is needed, and other groups may feel that the main benefit of their chosen model is that it is very close to the status quo today, giving it a fighting chance to be adopted by the dominant parties to negotiations at the present time.) This is required and will count towards class participation.**

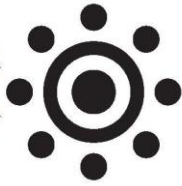
### Academic Fraud

Any person found guilty of academic fraud will be subject to severe sanctions. Some examples of academic fraud include:

- plagiarism or cheating of any kind;
- submitting work of which the student is not the author, in whole or in part (except for duly cited quotations or references);
- presenting research data that has been falsified or concocted in any way; and
- submitting, without written prior approval from the professors concerned, the same work for more than one course.

### Classroom rules

- Cell phones and laptops are allowed in the classroom only if the lecturer agrees.
- Courses will be taught in the classroom and recorded on Zoom. Students located in a time zone when the course is live between 7am and 11pm their local time, are expected to be on the Zoom session live. For courses taught at other times, students must watch the



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recordings later. Some lectures may have a requirement for periodic live attendance even if not convenient for some students.

- Students are expected to arrive to all classes on time, be in the classroom or live on the Zoom session if between 7am and 11pm the student's local time. If a student misses a class live, it is the student's responsibility to watch the recording before the next class.
- Note that due to the unpredictable nature of the Covid-19 situation (and the Arab-Israeli conflict), times, dates and locations may change for this course. Students will be notified through email of all changes.