The Arab-Israeli Conflict (POLS 3470)
Department of Political Science, Northeastern University
Mondays and Wednesdays 2:50-4:30pm
Richards Hall 227

Professor Dov Waxman
Email: d.waxman@neu.edu
Tel: (617) 373-3120
Office: 225-E Renaissance Park
Office Hours: 5:00-6:30pm Mondays and Wednesdays, and by appointment

Course Description:
The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the longest and most intractable conflicts in the world, and probably the most controversial. This course covers the history of the conflict from the emergence of Zionism and Arab nationalism in the nineteenth century up to the present day. By examining the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict, its development over time, the major events that have shaped it, and the contrasting narratives about these events, students will gain a better understanding of the dynamics and complexities of the conflict. After covering the history of the conflict, the course will then focus on the major issues that currently prevent a resolution of the conflict. Although the course examines the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole (i.e., the conflict between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states), particular emphasis will be given to the Israeli-Palestinian dimension since this is at the very heart of the conflict. The purpose of this course is a scholarly one—it seeks to provide students with a deeper understanding of the conflict and its main actors, not to moralize or assign blame. Rather than trying to show that one party is right or wrong; the course will try to explain why the various parties to this conflict have thought and acted as they did.

Course Learning Goals:
At the end of this course you will be expected to:
• Understand the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
• Explain the emergence of Zionism, Arab nationalism, and Palestinian nationalism.
• Understand the impact that the major Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 had upon the development of the conflict.
• Explain why the Oslo peace process came about and why it collapsed.
• Understand the impact of Islamism and Jewish fundamentalism on the conflict.
• Understand the major issues that have to be settled for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
• Explain why there is still no peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Course Texts:
• Abdel Monem Said Aly, Shai Feldman, Khalil Shikaki, Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
Course Requirements:

Attendance: You must attend all classes. If you miss more than four classes, you will receive a zero for your participation grade. If for a valid reason (such as a medical problem or other emergency) you cannot attend class, you must inform me by email ahead of time. Students who miss class are responsible for obtaining the material discussed in class. I will not provide my lecture notes.

Participation: You are expected to come to class having completed the required readings, and your active participation in class is essential to creating an interactive learning environment.

Peace Negotiations Simulation: In order to gain a more direct experience and understanding of the challenges involved in trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we will stage a simulation of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations in class on November 29th (this class will be extended until at least 6:00pm). Students will be divided into delegations (Israel, PLO, and the US) and will be tasked with trying to negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement.

Take-Home Exams: You will have to complete two take-home exams, each requiring you to answer two essay questions out of a choice of questions. The first exam will be distributed in class on October 4th, and will be due on October 11th. The second exam will be distributed in class on November 8th, and will be due on November 15th.

Final Exam: This will be a comprehensive exam, consisting of multiple-choice and identification questions, and an essay question. It will take place during exam week.

Grading:
Participation (includes attendance and simulation): 15 points
First Take-Home Exam: 20 points
Second Take-Home Exam: 20 points
Final Exam: 25 points
Total Points: 80 points

Letter Grading System:
90-100% = A
80-89% = A-
70-79% = B+
60-69% = B
50-59% = B-
40-49% = C+
30-39% = C
20-29% = C-
15-19% = D+
10-14% = D
0-9% = F
I reserve the right to make adjustments to this system, especially to take into account the overall performance of the class, or individual cases where a student has demonstrated substantial improvement across the semester.

**Teaching Format:**
Class time will consist primarily of lectures, supplemented by class discussion. Students must pay close attention to the lectures and take notes; otherwise they will not learn what is necessary for the course and the exams. The lectures are based in part on the assigned readings, but will not necessarily directly discuss them; it will be assumed that students have completed the readings.

**Professor and Student Responsibilities:**
Both the professor and students have responsibilities in this course. My responsibilities include sharing my knowledge and facilitating learning; treating students fairly and respectfully; and trying to keep my personal politics out of the classroom. Students’ responsibilities include fully preparing themselves for the classes; actively participating in class; treating each other and the professor with respect; maintaining a willingness to hear other opinions, and a readiness to think about the course material with an open mind.

**WARNINGS:**

**Class Discussion:**
Class discussion must be conducted in a scholarly manner, free of diatribes, insults, and intimidation. Students are expected to demonstrate an appropriate level of respect despite what might be deep disagreements. All opinions and perspectives are welcome, but they must be presented in a civil manner. This is particularly important because this course tackles issues that might touch upon students’ personal backgrounds, ethnic and religious identities, and political beliefs.

**Classroom Conduct:**
You may not use laptop computers during class. Before entering class, you must turn off your cell phones. If you are late or have to leave early, choose a seat that will not disrupt the class. Repeated latecomers will be penalized. If you know you will have to leave early for a valid reason, please let me know before class. In addition to these rules, the following behavior is not permitted in class: texting, talking while the instructor is talking; sleeping; reading material unrelated to the class. You will be penalized for repeated violations of these rules.

**Academic Honesty:**
You must always give credit for direct quotes, paraphrased quotes, or borrowed ideas. Plagiarism, cheating, and other types of academic dishonesty are strictly prohibited. If a student commits plagiarism in any assignment or cheats in an exam, they will automatically receive a failing grade for the assignment. A student who violates Northeastern University’s Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy may also be referred to the University’s Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Week 1 (Sept 6)  
**Introduction to the Conflict**

Week 2 (Sept 11, 13)  
**Ottoman Palestine and Arab Nationalism**
Abdel Monem Said Aly et al., *Arabs and Israelis*, ch.1, pp. 7-10.

Week 3 (Sept 18, 20)  
**The Emergence of Zionism**

Week 4 (Sept 25, 27)  
**The British Mandate**

*** Guest Speaker on September 27: Mouin Rabbani, “Palestine: Anatomy of an Abyss” (This class will be held in 240 Dockser Hall).

Week 5 (Oct 2, 4)  
**The 1948 War**
Abdel Monem Said Aly et al., *Arabs and Israelis*, ch.2, pp. 46-79.

Week 6 (Oct 11)  
**The 1956 War**

Week 7 (Oct 16, 18)  
**The 1967 War**
Abdel Monem Said Aly et al., *Arabs and Israelis*, ch.4, pp. 118-149.

Week 8 (Oct 23, 25)  
**The 1973 War and the Camp David Accords**
Abdel Monem Said Aly et al., *Arabs and Israelis*, chs.5, 6, pp. 156-201

*** Guest Speaker on October 25: Elan Ezrachi, “Fifty Years after the Reunification of Jerusalem: An Insider’s View” (This class will be held in room 909 Renaissance Park).

Week 9 (Oct 30, Nov 1)  
**The Lebanon War and the First Intifada**
Abdel Monem Said Aly et al., *Arabs and Israelis*, chs.6, 7, pp. 202-265.
Week 10 (Nov 6, 8) The Oslo Peace Process
Abdel Monem Said Aly et als., *Arabs and Israelis*, ch.9, pp. 306-328.

Week 11 (Nov 13, 15) The Collapse of the Peace Process and the Second Intifada
Watch “Shattered Dreams of Peace: The Road From Oslo,” Frontline, PBS.

Week 12 (Nov 20) Israel’s Disengagement from Gaza and the Rise of Hamas

Week 13 (Nov 27, 29) Is a Two-State Solution Possible?

*** Guest Speaker on November 27: Gershon Shafir, “Unsettling the Occupation: Where Do Go From Here?” (This lecture will take place outside of regular class, from 5:30-7:00pm, and will be held in Raytheon Hall).

Week 14 (Dec 4, 6) Alternative Solutions and Approaches to the Conflict

******************************************************************************************