

Instructors: Eve Spangler, 400 McGuinn, (617) 552-4146

Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 12 noon – 2:30 p.m., McGuinn 531

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursday 1:30 – 2:30 p.m, and by appointment.

### **Social Justice in Israel/Palestine**

This seminar is designed to prepare students for a study/immersion trip to Israel/Palestine during winter break. We hope that the curriculum will accomplish three major tasks:

- The readings will present a variety of descriptive materials about a part of the world that is little known to most Americans. The selection of readings reflects the paradox that Israelis and Palestinians are equally stakeholders in a just peace and that relations between them are highly unequal – the relations of an occupier and the occupied.
- The class discussions and written assignments will provide an analytic framework to help students ask and answer such basic questions as: what happened to set Israel/Palestine on a collision course? How could this long-standing conflict be transformed to produce a just peace? What would a healthy economy and a healthy state in Israel/Palestine look like? How do religious narratives create models of right living and responsibility toward others in the context of Israel/Palestine?
- The project that students are asked to design (in the seminar) and to implement (upon their return) should allow students to test their capacity for using their education to do good in the world.

Taken together, the seminar, study trip, and project will ask students to practice a version of discernment – to experience this work as an opportunity to explore their strengths, the causes that might move them, and to build a model of how they might serve the world. The course is primarily focused on intellectual analysis, while the field trip and project add a significant service component. On the trip, the primary form of service is bearing witness – to the sufferings and strengths of occupied communities and the courage and wisdom of dissidents. The project should combine service with intellectual analysis; it is designed to test students' capacities for thinking strategically and acting effectively in service to the world. My assumption (following the distinction proposed by historian Richard Flacks) is that BC students will aspire to more than making a living; they will want to make history. This course is an opportunity to explore the possibility of making history.

A human rights perspective, broadly construed, provides the ethical spine of the course. By “broadly construed,” we mean that human rights include both *freedom from* state

interference in our lives, and also *freedom* to live in peace and safety and to develop oneself, one's family, and community to be the best they can.

Using a human rights perspective, we will examine the historic background to the present Israeli/Palestinian conflict. In this process, we shall find ourselves studying the profound impact of narrative strategies on shaping our sense of past, present, and future. In many ways, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is being waged through contradictory narratives competing for support from the United States, the United Nations, and others. While reading both Palestinians (Karmi, Khalidi, Jawad, Masalha, Said) and Israelis (Rogan and Shlaim, Morris, Kimmerling and Migdal, Segev) narratives, students should be asking themselves: "What happened here?" remembering, with Thomas Kuhn, that narratives trump facts in so far as they have the power to organize attention to facts; and that such narratives operate within a field of unequal power. The joint work of Sami Adwan and Daniel Bar-On will provide a contemporary example of the mutual and intentional construction of historical narratives.

Second, we will focus on models of conflict transformation and peace-making, especially as developed by Nadim Rouhana and John Paul Lederach. We will be asking how the actions of grass roots activists, NGOs, and states could be aligned to further the transformation of this heretofore intractable conflict. On our trip, we will be meeting with some of the leaders of Palestinian civil society (M. Barghouti), leaders of the boycott/sanctions/divestment movement (O. Barghouti), people building joint Israeli-Palestinian organizations such as Combatants for Peace and Family Circle (while recognizing that, often, it is Western funders who privilege NGO partners at the expense of grass roots groups [Jad]).

A sustained, just peace in Israel/Palestine depends also on the development of a robust economy or economies. To study past and possible future economies in the region, we will be looking at the historic work of Alexander Scholch who documents an industrious and prosperous 19<sup>th</sup> century Palestine. From there we will look at trajectories of de-development (Roy), labor policy (Farsakh) and business development (Bahour). On the Israeli side, we will consider Friedman's analysis of Israeli capitalism and the alternative views of Klein and Halper, who emphasize the degree to which Israeli capitalism relies on militarism as its engine of growth.

Finally, no study of the Middle East would be complete without an examination of religious narratives. For this class, we will not be interested in the often described, seemingly contradictory claims of the Old Testament and the Islamic waqf. Instead, we will be asking: what ideas do each of the major religions of the area offer about a preferred way of life, care of the world, obligations to one's own community and "the other." Cohen's historic work, *Under Crescent and Cross*, provides an example from 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century Andalusia of peaceful coexistence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, while Daniel Gavron supplies more contemporary examples in *Holy Land Mosaic*. Michael Lerner's *Healing Israel/Palestine* offers a faith-based vision of conflict transformation.

## Requirements

A schedule of assignments and dates is attached below.

Students will be **REQUIRED** to attend classes, to participate in class discussions and organized presentations, and to write five reflection papers that integrate intellectual learning and a broader sense of discernment about the world which we share.

By the end of the semester, students are asked to prepare a project prospectus outlining what they particularly want to accomplish during the field trip and how they propose to use their knowledge and experience to promote Israel/Palestine focused social justice work upon their return.

**ABSOLUTELY NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR CREDIT UNLESS AN EXTENSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY ME **BEFORE** THE DUE DATE OF THE ASSIGNMENT.**

Assignment sheets will be distributed separately.

Your final grade will be computed as follows:

5 essays @ 12% each	= 60%
class participation	= 30%
Project prospectus	= 10%

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a standard of utmost importance in this class. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the Boston College website at:

**[www.bc.edu/integrity](http://www.bc.edu/integrity)**

If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with me or with the teaching assistant. If you are caught violating Boston College's policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and the appropriate Dean will be notified in accordance to the rules set forth by Boston College.

## Abbreviated Schedule of Assignments

Pre-readings:

Over the summer, please read Edward Said's *Orientalism*, (New York, Pantheon, 1978).

*(A complete schedule of readings and assignments is provided separately)*

Assignment: due September 16

Using the assigned readings, please construct your own model of an essential human rights framework. In your opinion, what are the most important points, the non-negotiable political and economic rights, of a viable human rights framework? To whom do these rights belong – individuals, communities, states? Does this framework apply only internationally or intra-nationally as well? Is it universally applicable? How should it be tailored to local cultures. Please be sure to use the reading materials in constructing your answer.

Assignment due: October 7

The philosopher Santayana argued that “those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.” Others argue that history is a millstone, best cast off lest it pull us down. And still others argue that there is no “real” history, only competing narratives, in which power, not truth, determines the outcome. Drawing on our readings and discussion, how does the Israeli-Palestinian history illustrate each of these perspectives? Based on your analysis, how do you now view the uses and abuses of history, using specific examples from our work.

Assignment: October 28

- (1) We have examined four images of the Israeli occupation of Palestine: Israeli self-defense, genocide, apartheid, and sociocide. Please evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of these four narratives: Which facts does each highlight? Which facts does each obscure? Which seems to coherently organize the most data? Which is most consistent with the human rights standards you have developed? When you focus on the Israeli view of the occupation, in addition to Avnery and Hare, you may wish to review Morris and preview Swirski.
- (2) Given your evaluation of these four narratives, how would you construct a peace-making/conflict transforming agenda? Please bear in mind, that your peace plan should reflect Rouhana's ideas (namely that reconciliation requires a sense of history, a sense of justice, and a sense of power) as well as Lederach's (that states, NGOs, and grass roots movements must all be involved and their actions aligned).

Please be sure to draw on the reading materials in constructing your answer.

Assignment: Due November 18

If you were a consultant for the European Union or the Quartet, what advice would you give them about healthy economic development in Israel/Palestine? Please be sure to draw on the reading materials in constructing your answer.

Assignment: Due December 9:

How do the Abrahamic faiths of the Middle East understand concepts like right living, care of the world, obligations to self and others? Do you think these narratives share a large common ground? Can they produce compatible religious and ethical directives for their respective communities? Please be sure to use the material above in constructing your answers.

Final Project Prospectus – during the finals period for this course

Please complete your prospectus for the project you would like to accomplish after returning from our field trip.

Describe the project – what do you plan to do?

What are the intellectual foundations of your project – i.e. what questions are you trying to answer?

Who is the audience for your project? Who is the intended beneficiary?

How will you know if the project is successful – what are your measures of success?

In what ways might this project be a prototype for your further engagement in “making history” (as distinct from simply making a living)?

What is the place of your project in the world – i.e. if we consider legislation and regulation (law) , market incentives (economics), people-to-people initiatives (grass roots action), ngo development (civil society), and faith based initiatives (religion) as the principle instruments for constructing just societies, where does your project fit on this map and how could it link to other projects that share your values?