

POLITICAL SCIENCE 121B

POLITICS IN ISRAEL

Summer I, 2015

Dr. David Barzilai

Office hours: Tuesdays 11:30-1:00 at Peet's, or by appointment

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to provide a thematic and historical study of the political system of the State of Israel. Using a critical approach and a comparative examination we will focus on Israel as a unique and yet common phenomenon of a modern democratic nation state. Unique in its Jewish and democratic character and its ideological foundations as well as its history and contemporary challenges, Israel gives us many opportunities and exciting raw material for political and historical understanding. Small in size, but second only to the United State in media coverage, Israel is continually in the limelight and has had an extraordinary impact on the world at large. We will examine thematically Israel's political system and governmental branches, the economy, the legal system, social structure and tensions, as well as topics like the relation between State and religion, national security and international relations. We will acquire knowledge about main Israeli historical landmarks and their significance, but also follow and examine contemporary day-to-day events. In addition to the studying of the political system of Israel, we will use the case of Israel as a case study for a comparative and critical examination of the contemporary political realm at large.

Textsbook:

Mahler, G.S., *Politics and Government in Israel*, Rowman, 2010

Shavit, A, *My Promised Land*

Procedures and Requirements:

It is important that you address the issues discussed critically and reach independent insights and opinions. Please address the reading assignments attentively and come to class ready to raise and discuss questions.

As for the requirements, they are as follows:

1. Present a chapter in class. The presentation should be accompanied with handout detailing the main ideas and arguments.
2. Submit a one page report each Tuesday (three out of the five weeks of the course) summarizing the week's news in Israel. The short report should include a summary of current political events. You can find resources for these reports on the web and Israeli newspapers, such as Haaretz and the Jerusalem Post, as well as in traditional American media.

Here are a few of the many sites:

<http://www.haaretz.com>

<http://www.jpost.com>

<http://jewishhistory.huji.ac.il/>

<http://www.israel.org/mfa>

See also the magazines like The Forward, Tikkun, Commentary, Jewish world

3. Write a short (2-3 pages) reflective essay on A. Shavit's book *My Promised Land* due July 14, in class.

4. Write a mini-research paper on a topic of your choice related to the politics of Israel. Details about this assignment will be given in a prompt during the third week of class.

Evaluation:

- A. 3 Newspaper reports - 30%
- B. Essay/Book report on Shavit's book (due July 14) -- 10%
- C. Presentation – 20%
- D. Final Paper - 40%

Course Outline:

WEEK 1(June 30 and July 2)

SUBJECT: General Introduction: History, method and context

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, 1-10

WEEK 2:

I. (July 7) SUBJECT: Palestine 1517 - 1948, the Zionist Movement and the formation of Israel

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, 13-72

II. (July 9) SUBJECT: The Economy, the Social Structure and the Elites

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, pp. 73-96

WEEK 3:

I. (July 14) SUBJECT: Israeli Government - The Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial Branches

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, pp. 97-139

Essay/Book report on Shavit's book is due.

II. (July 16): SUBJECT: Political Parties and Interest Groups

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, pp. 141-159

WEEK 4:

I. (July 21) The Electoral System

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, pp. 161-203

II. (July 23) SUBJECT: Demographic Challenges, and Foreign and neighboring Policies

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, pp. 207-267

WEEK 5:

(July 28 and 30) SUBJECT: The Arab (Palestinian)-Israeli Peace Process

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Mahler, pp. 269- 302

Final Paper is due on Sunday, August 2, by 4PM, on line at dfb@ucsd.edu

Students' Presentations:

	Week2	Week3	Week4	Week5
Tuesdays	July 7	July 14	July 21	July 28
	Scott P		Roger Q	Caroline
Thursdays	July 9	July 16	July 23	July 30
	Leonid	Quian Ma	Satya	