

Political Fantasies of Zion

Instructor: Yaniv Feller (yfeller@ufl.edu)

Meeting Times: MWF 11:45am-12:35pm

Office Hours: Friday 3-4pm or by appointment

Course Description: Palestine, Zion, Judah, the Promised Land. A small piece of land in the Middle East has a very long and contested history full of religious meaning for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Some imagine the State of Israel as an island—“the only democracy in the Middle East” or the only Western state in the region—surrounded by a hostile environment. The geographical area, by contrast, has often been portrayed as a crossroad, a place where cultures clashed, merged, and exchanged ideas.

In this class, we will examine this tension between a physical and imagined space, between political reality and idea, by recovering alternative Zionist, non-Zionist, and anti-Zionist visions of the Zion. Is Zionism colonialism? What role does the imagination of Zion play in today’s political context? Is Zion only in Palestine? How do Zionist interpretations of the world shape certain understanding of art, history, and language? Reading political pamphlets, maps, artworks, and utopian fiction, we will pay attention to the construction of the Zionist idea not just in political Zionism but also in contrasting visions including Rastafari, Canaanism, a Jewish-Arab federation, a bi-national state, and the rejection of statehood as heresy.

Course Outcomes: By the end of this course, you will

- Become acquainted with the history of Zionism
- Learn to critically examine the intertwining of religion and nationalism
- Develop and execute a research paper or artistic project that tackles
- Improve your ability to discuss, in writing and orally, on difficult subjects within an academic setting
- Be able to identify ideological influences in academic disciplines

Required Texts

- There is no textbook for this class. Instead, we will cover multiple perspectives through articles and chapters. They have all been gathered in a Course Pack and are available on Moodle to print.

Recommended Texts: There are many overviews of Zionism, its history, and in particular the State of Israel and the Palestinian people. Two readable accounts (from very different perspectives) are

- Stanislawski, Michael. *Zionism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917-2017*. New York: Picador, 2021.

Methods of Evaluation

Active Participation (10%): This is a discussion-based seminar. Coming to class, having done the readings and ready to discuss them, is essential for your success in this course, and for the enjoyment of all of us. If you cannot make it to class because of a valid reason (religious observance, illness etc.) please let me know as soon as possible. Other than that, you are allowed to miss one class “no questions asked.”

Ten Responses (25%): For each unit, you are required to submit one response paper (12-font, double-space, about two pages). You are allowed to miss one unit. If you submit to all 11, the highest 10 would be considered. A response should consist of the following elements: a) a one or two paragraph summary of the main argument of the text; b) an observation about its methodology or a critique of its content. Remember that critique is not simply a disagreement, but an argument about potential flaws in logic, contrasting it with other readings etc.; c) a question you were left with after the careful reading and critique. You can also include as part of (b) and (c) a connection to your own research project, once this has been decided. **Date:** the day of class, 9am.

Website Analysis (5%): There is a lot of information out there about Zionism, Palestine, and the State of Israel. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to start engaging potential topics for your final project while learning to critically analyze online sources. You will pick one website, detail its general structure or purpose, offer an assessment of what you think is valuable in it, the reliability of its sources, as well as its potential biases. **Date:** Feb. 1

Project proposal (5%): What interest you the most in studying Zionism and political fantasies? It does not have to be a topic we discuss directly in this course as long it is relevant to the themes at hand. What is exciting, interesting, or new about this subject? What perspective can you bring from the class and individual research? For this assignment, you are required to give the main contours of your interest, the reasons why it interests you, and a detailed bibliography with five relevant books and articles. Artistic projects will be considered but need to be cleared with me prior to submission of the proposal. The most important thing is that you are passionate on this topic and want to dedicate the semester to it. **Date:** Mar. 3

Book Review (20%): You will write a short book review (about 900 words) on a book about the themes of the class. A tentative list is attached as an appendix at the end of the syllabus. Ideally, you will find a book that is relevant to your final research project, but feel free to reach out and we can discuss other options. **Date:** Mar. 29

Class Presentation (5%): You will get a chance to present your research and get valuable feedback from your classmates near the end of the semester. This is a great opportunity to practice not only oral presentation skills but also the ability to convey, and receive critical feedback. **Date:** Apr. 14, Apr. 17

Final project (30%): After the earlier assignments, and the class presentation, you are good to go! 8-10 pages research paper on your topic. **Date:** Apr. 26, 23:59

Bonus Events (1% up to three times): You are welcome to attend and then write a one or two page response on selected bonus events that will be announced in advance. You should offer a brief summary of the topic discussed followed by one point you found compelling, and then one question you had after the event. Events will be mentioned in class as they approach. **Date:** no later than one week after the event.

Numerical Grading Scale:

A	93-100	A-	90-92		
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	68-69	D	63-67	D-	60-62
E	<60				

Grading Criteria is as follows:

- A-range – 90s – Excellent – Full command and facility with material with the ability to place it within larger historical/literary context and to make arguments based upon it.
- B-range – 80s – Very Good and Good – Solid understanding of material but without complete facility or ability to make arguments based on it.
- C-range – 70s -- Fair – Some understanding of major themes, lack of command with detail, or some understanding of detail but lack of contextual understanding.
- D-range – 60s -- Poor – Enough factual understanding to pass, but little to no contextual clarity.
- F-range – Fails – Lack of university level quality.

For the grading policies of the University of Florida in general, follow this link:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/> (Links to an external site.)

Late Submission Policy: No late submissions will be accepted for response papers or bonus events. There is enough flexibility built into the assignment. For all other assignments, a penalty of a third letter grade will be assigned for each day past the deadline, including weekends. Please do reach out if you have any medical or other concerns and we will find a solution!

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of Florida Student Honor Code is located at this link:

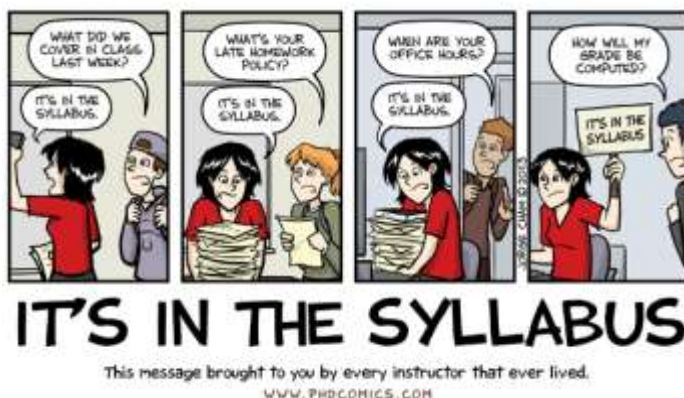
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php> (Links to an external site.).

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Office Hours and E-Mail: Please feel free to talk to me about the class materials and any other concerns you might have. Meetings, either in-person or via Zoom, are preferable to email. If you cannot make it to the office hours, you can schedule a meeting using this link: <https://calendly.com/yfeller-1/30min>



In the case of email, please use your university email account (other accounts may land in the spam folder) and include a topic-line, your name, and the question(s) you have. I try to respond quickly, but note that emails will receive a reply within two working days. This means that if you send me an email on the weekend, or if you send a request for extension in the last minute, they might be answered only later, and the penalty incurred will be implemented.

Academic Resources:

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learningsupport@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.)

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Classroom Etiquette: We, as students and faculty, have a shared responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, ability, and nationality.

Religion is a sensitive topic for many people. And in recent decades the question of Zionism arguably even more so. You may come from a faith tradition, or you may not. You may be a staunch opponent of the State of Israel or its supporter. The focus of our class is on fostering critical learning and emphatic listening. We are here together to learn more, so any question that comes from an honest desire to learn is a good question. Our goal is to explore and learn, but not to judge either each other's traditions, or ignorance about them. You do not ever need to volunteer anything about your own beliefs, traditions, or practices (or lack thereof) but if you do, make sure that you speak in the first person, thereby making clear that you are representing yourself and not an entire tradition in the discussion.

Journaling: This class includes difficult and uncomfortable topics and materials. No matter what your background is, there is a chance you will find some aspects of the class disturbing. Emotions, and our understanding of our own emotions, are central to the process of our learning, academically and about ourselves. I encourage you to maintain a journal in which you detail your emotional journey throughout the semester. What unsettled you and why? How did you react? I suggest that you track this in a physical journal and find time to write after every class. To be clear, these will not be seen by anyone or graded, and are solely for your own reflection and well-being.

Schedule

I. Historical and Theoretical Foundations

Jan. 9: What is this class about anyway? *recommended: Jacqueline Rose, "States of Fantasy"

Jan. 11: Appiah, *The Lies that Bind*, 71-104

Jan. 13: Stanislawski, *Zionism: A Very Short Introduction*, 1-10.

II. Herzl and The Origins of Zionism (1897-1917)

Jan. 16: NO CLASS (MLK Day)

Jan. 18: Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (sections I. Intro, II. The Jewish Question, V. Society of the Jews & The Jewish State)

Jan. 20: Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*, books 1-3

Jan. 23: Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*, books 4-5

Jan. 25: Ahad HaAm (selections)

III. From Balfour to Statehood

Jan. 27: Rashid Kahlidi, "The First Declaration of War," 17-54.

Jan. 30: Ari Shavit, "Lydda, 1948"

MAKE-UP CLASS: Jan. 31, 5pm: Mark Oppenheimer, "Whoa, where did this come from? The Antisemitism of 2022 and Its Origins" (Graham Center)

Feb. 1: Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall" Website analysis assignment

IV. Utopias

Feb. 3: In-class screening: *Children of the Sun*

Feb. 6: In-class screening: *Children of the Sun* (finish)

Feb. 8: Yael Neeman, *We Were the Future* + Children of the Sun discussion

Note that if you want to write a response

V. Returns

Feb. 10: Aviezer Ravitzky, "Messianism, Zionism, and Orthodoxy: Historical and Conceptual Background"

Feb. 13: Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, "Powers of the Diaspora"

Feb. 15: Yaacov Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation* (selections)

MAKE-UP CLASS, Feb. 16, 5pm: Courtney Bender, TBD

Feb. 17: Emily Raboteau, "The Twelve Tribes"

Feb. 20: **ON RASTAFARI RETURNING**

VI. Discipline

Feb. 22: Marc Volovici, "Palestine and the Monolingual Imperative"

Feb. 24: **NO CLASS**

Feb. 27: Visit to the Price Judaica Library and meet Dr. Rebecca Jefferson

Mar. 1: Margaret Olin, "The Nation with Art? Bezalel in Palestine"

Mar. 3: Nadja Abu El-Haj, "Excavating Jerusalem" Paper Proposal Deadline

VII. Holocaust

Mar. 6: Meir Kahane, *Never Again!*

Mar. 8: David Novak, "Is there a theological connection between the Holocaust and the Reestablishment of the State of Israel?"

Mar. 10: Marc Ellis, "Auschwitz and Palestine in the Jewish Imagination"

Mar. 13-17: SPRING BREAK. YAY!!!

VIII. Christian Zionism

Mar. 20: Victoria Clark, "This New English Israel"

Mar. 22: Melanie McAlister, "I walked Today Where Jesus Walked"

IX. Arab Jews

Mar. 24: Albert Memmi, “What is an Arab-Jew?”

Mar. 27: Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims”

Mar. 29: Ella Shohat, “The Invention of Mizrahim” Book Review Deadline

Mar. 31: Houria Bouteldja, “You, the Jew”

X. Passover and Exodus

Apr. 3: Exodus (Selections)

Apr. 5-7: PASSOVER (No class)

Apr. 10: Robert Allen Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians”

Apr. 12: Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (selections)

Class Presentations

Apr. 14: Class Presentations

Apr. 17: Class Presentations

XI. Reimagining

Apr. 19: Walter Russell Mead, “American Crisis and the Fate of the Jewish People” Upload

Class Presentation Notes

Apr. 19, MAKE-UP CLASS: Walter Russell Mead lecture (Graham Center)

Apr. 21: Edward Said, “The One State Solution”

Apr. 24: Atalia Omer, “Reimagining Tradition”

Apr. 26: Concluding discussion, reading TBD Final Paper Submission

Appendix A: Potential List of Books to Review

1. Aboubakr, Farah. *The Folktales of Palestine: Cultural Identity, Memory and the Politics of Storytelling*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2019.
2. Cesari, Chiara De. *Heritage and the Cultural Struggle for Palestine*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.
3. Dekoven Ezrahi, Sidra. *Figuring Jerusalem: Politics and Poetics in the Sacred Center*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2022.
4. Ewing, Adam. *The Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.
5. Halperin, Liora. *The Oldest Guard: Forging the Zionist Settler Past*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021.
6. Hazkani, Shay. *Dear Palestine: A Social History of the 1948 War*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021.
7. Kravel-Tovi, Michal. *When the State Winks: The Performance of Jewish Conversion in Israel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
8. Kupfert Heller, Daniel. *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.
9. Noy, Chaim. *Thank You for Dying for Our Country: Commemorative Texts and Performances in Jerusalem*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
10. Rovner, Adam L. *In the Shadow of Zion: Promised Lands Before Israel*. New York: NYU Press, 2014.
11. Shumsky, Dmitry. *Beyond the Nation-State: The Zionist Political Imagination from Pinsker to Ben-Gurion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
12. Sorek, Tamir. *Palestinian Commemoration in Israel: Calendars, Monuments, and Martyrs*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.
13. Waxman, Dov. *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict Over Israel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.