



Full Syllabus



Course Title

The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel: History, Society, and Politics

Lecturer

Dr. Arik Rudnitzky

Semester

Spring, 2026

Course requirements

Established in 1948 as a Jewish nation-state, Israel is home to an Arab minority that makes up approximately 20 percent of its population. These Arab citizens are the descendants of the Palestinian Arab population that constituted a majority in Mandatory Palestine prior to 1948. Since its founding, the Israeli state has faced the ongoing challenge of integrating this minority population into its social, political, and cultural frameworks. Marked by distinctions in ethnicity, national identity, religion, and culture, the Arab minority occupies a unique and often contested position within the broader Israeli societal structure.

This course aims to enhance students' knowledge of the historical, social, and political developments affecting the Palestinian-Arab community in Israel. It addresses key issues related to the establishment of Israel as a "Jewish and democratic state" and examines the dynamics of relations between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority.

The course is structured around four interconnected units. The first unit introduces theoretical frameworks for analyzing majority-minority relations in Israel and familiarizes students with research methodologies relevant to the historical study of the Arab community in Israel. The second unit provides an overview of key historical milestones and significant developments affecting the Arab population from 1948 to the present. The third unit examines ideological trends and patterns of political participation in elections to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. The fourth and final unit addresses contemporary social and cultural issues within the Arab community.

Final grade components

Participation in class discussions – **10%**

Midterm paper (700–800 words) – **20%**

Final paper (1,600–1,800 words). Submission deadline: September 2, 2026, 9:00 AM – **70%**

Course schedule

Class no. / Date	Subject and Requirements (assignments, reading materials, tasks, etc.)
1. March 15	Palestinian Arabs in Israel: Exploring the Dilemma of Identity
2. March 22	Trends in Scholarly Research on Arabs in Israel Sammy Smooha, "The Arab Minority in Israel: Radicalization or Politicization?" <i>Studies in Contemporary Jewry</i> , vol. 5 (1989), pp. 59-88. Nadim Rouhana and Asad Ghanem, "The Crisis of Minorities in Ethnic States: The Case of Palestinian Citizens in Israel." <i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i> , vol. 30, no. 3 (August 1998), pp. 321-346.



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	<p>Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Modernization as an explanatory discourse of Zionist-Palestinian relations." <i>British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>, vol. 24, no. 1 (1997), pp. 25-48.</p> <p>Yitzhak Reiter, National Minority, <i>Regional Majority: Palestinian Arabs versus Jews in Israel</i> (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009), "Introduction", pp. XI – XXX</p> <p>Hillel Frisch, "The PLO and the Arabs in Israel 1967–93: Politicization or radicalization?" <i>Nationalism and Ethnic Politics</i>, vol. 2, no. 3 (1996), pp. 446-464.</p>
<p>3. April 12</p>	<p>Approaches to Majority–Minority Relations in Israel</p> <p>Nadim N. Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, "Settler-colonial citizenship: Conceptualizing the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian citizens." <i>Settler Colonial Studies</i>, vol. 5 no. 3 (2015), pp. 205-225.</p>
<p>4. April 19</p>	<p>The Military Government (1948-1966) and the Nakba Generation</p> <p>Elie Rekhess, "Initial Israeli Police Guidelines towards the Arab Minority, 1948-1949." In: Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), <i>New Perspectives on Israeli History: The Early Years of the State</i> (New York University Press, 1991), pp. 103-123.</p> <p>Sabri Jiryis, <i>The Arabs in Israel</i> (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 9-35 ("For Security Reasons"), 137-157 ("From Deir Yasin to Kfar Kassim").</p> <p>Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 7, no. 2 (2002), pp. 175-198.</p> <p>Adel Manna', "The Palestinian Nakba and its Continuous Repercussions." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 2013), pp. 86-99.</p> <p>Shira Robinson, "Commemoration under fire: Palestinian responses to the 1956 Kafr Qasim Massacre." In: Ussama Makdisi and Paul A. Silverstein (editors), <i>Memory and violence in the Middle East and North Africa</i> (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 103-132.</p> <p>Arik Rudnitzky, "The Contemporary Historiographical Debate in Israel on Government Policies on Arabs in Israel During the Military Administration Period (1948–1966)." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 19, no. 1 (Spring 2014), pp. 24-47.</p>
<p>5. April 26</p>	<p>From the 1967 War to the 1990s Peace Process: An Era of Political Activism</p> <p>Nadim Rouhana, "The Political Transformation of the Palestinians in Israel: From Acquiescence to Challenge." <i>Journal of Palestine Studies</i>, Vol. 18, no. 3 (Spring 1989), pp. 38-59.</p> <p>Majid Al-Haj, "Whither the Green Line? Trends in the Orientation of the Palestinians in Israel and the Territories." <i>Israel Affairs</i>, vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), pp. 183-206.</p> <p>Nadim Rouhana, "The Intifada and the Palestinians of Israel: Resurrecting the Green Line." <i>Journal of Palestine Studies</i>, vol. 19, no. 3 (Spring 1990), pp. 58-75.</p> <p>Elie Rekhess, "The Arab nationalist challenge to the Israeli Communist Party (1970-1985)." <i>Studies in Comparative Communism</i>, vol. 22, no. 4 (1989), pp. 337-350.</p>
<p>6. May 3</p>	<p>Intensifying Palestinian National Sentiment in the 1990s and 2000s</p> <p>Elie Rekhess, "The Evolvment of an Arab-Palestinian National Minority in Israel." <i>Israel</i></p>



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	<p><i>Studies</i>, vol. 12, no. 3 (Fall 2007), pp. 1-28.</p> <p>As'ad Ghanem and Mohanad Mustafa, "The Palestinians in Israel: The Challenge of the Indigenous Group Politics in the 'Jewish State'." <i>Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs</i>, vol. 31, no. 2 (2011), pp. 177-196.</p> <p>Hillel Frisch, "Israel and its Arab Citizens." <i>Israel Affairs</i>, vol. 11, no. 1 (2005), pp. 207-222.</p> <p>Nadim N. Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, "Memory and the Return of History in a Settler-colonial Context: The Case of the Palestinians in Israel." <i>Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies</i>, vol. 21, no. 4 (2019), pp. 527-550.</p> <p>Avi Raz, "Reviewed Work: <i>The Stand Tall Generation: The Palestinian Citizens of Israel Today</i> by Dan Rabinowitz, Khawla Abu Baker." <i>Israel Studies Forum</i>, vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 136-138.</p>
7. May 10	<p>From the Arab Spring to the October 7 War: A Decade of Political and Social Transformations</p> <p>Yusri Hazran Khaizran and Muhammad Khalaily. 2025. <i>Palestinians in Israel after the Arab Spring: The Political Impact of Regional Protest and Fragmentation</i>. Bloomsbury Publishing. Chapter 5, "Undermining the national discourse," pp. 117-166.</p>
8. May 17	<p>The Debate on a "Jewish and Democratic" State</p> <p>Ruth Gavison, <i>Can Israel be Both Jewish and Democratic?</i> Van Leer Institute, 2004. Chapter 1: "Compatibility and Justifiability, in Principle, of a Jewish and Democratic State", pp. 23-74.</p> <p>Nadim N. Rouhana, "'Jewish and Democratic'? The Price of National Self-Deception." <i>Journal of Palestine Studies</i>, vol. 35, no. 2 (Winter 2006), pp. 64-74.</p> <p>Elie Rekhess, "The Arabs of Israel after Oslo: Localization of the National Struggle." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 7, no. 3 (Fall 2002), pp. 1-44.</p> <p>Sammy Smootha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 2, no. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 198-241.</p> <p>As'ad Ghanem, Nadim Rouhana and Oren Yiftachel, "Questioning 'Ethnic Democracy': A Response to Sammy Smootha." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 3, no. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 253-267.</p> <p>As'ad Ghanem, "State and minority in Israel: The case of ethnic state and the predicament of its minority." <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>, vol. 21, no. 3 (1998), pp. 428-448.</p>
9. May 24	<p>Arab Participation in Knesset Elections, 1949–2022</p> <p>Arik Rudnitzky, "A minority goes to the polls: Arab voters in Israel." In: Francesco Cavatorta and Valeria Resta (eds.), <i>Routledge Handbook on Elections in the Middle East and North Africa</i> (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 237-250.</p> <p>Salim Brake, "Representation and De-legitimation in Semi-democratic Regimes: The Case of the Arab Citizens in Israel." <i>Sociology and Anthropology</i>, vol. 6, no. 5 (2018), pp. 447-458.</p> <p>Rebecca Kook, "Representation, minorities and electoral reform: The case of the Palestinian minority in Israel." <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>, vol. 40, no. 12 (2017), pp. 2039-2057.</p>



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	<p>Arik Rudnitzky, "Searching for political efficacy: The Israeli Arab vote in the 2019-21 Knesset elections." <i>Israel Affairs</i>, 28:6 (2022), pp. 856-877.</p>
<p>10. May 31</p>	<p>Islam in Arab Society: Social and Political Dimensions Muhammad al-Atawneh and Meir Hatina, "The Study of Islam and Muslims in Israel." <i>Israel Studies</i>, vol. 24, no. 3 (Fall 2019), pp. 101-125. Elie Rekhess, "Islamization of Arab identity in Israel: The Islamic movement, 1972-1996." In: Elie Rekhess and Arik Rudnitzky (editors), <i>Muslim Minorities in non-Muslim Majority Countries: The Islamic Movement in Israel as a Test Case</i> (Tel Aviv University: The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation, 2013), pp. 53-66. Lawrence Rubin, <i>Islamic political activism in Israel</i>, Analysis paper, no. 32 (The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, April 2014).</p>
<p>11. June 7</p>	<p>Field Trip to the Arab Sector (TBC)</p>
<p>12. June 14</p>	<p>Palestinian Cinema in Israel: Reviving Collective Memory Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, <i>Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory</i> (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 10-58 (Introduction + Chapter I: "A Chronicle of Palestinian Cinema").</p>
<p>13. June 21</p>	<p>Arabs in a Jewish State: Concluding Discussion</p>
<p>Required course reading</p>	
<p>Optional course reading</p>	
<p>Comments</p>	