THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Political Science Department

Political Science 28500
Seminar on Zionism and Palestine
Spring 2015
Instructor: John Mearsheimer
Teaching Assistant: Davi Strauss Bernstein

Course Description: This course has three broad aims, the first of which is to explore the various strands of early Zionist thinking in Europe during the late 19th and early 20th century. The second aim is to analyze how the European Zionists who came to Palestine created the Jewish state in the first half of the 20th century. The third aim is to examine the key developments in Israel’s history since it gained its independence in 1948. While the main focus will be on Zionism and the state of Israel, considerable attention will be paid to the plight of the Palestinians over the past century.

Course Requirements: Every student is expected to do all the reading, attend all the seminars, and participate in the discussion. The grade will be based on classroom participation (25%) and one 15-page paper (75%). As should be clear from the syllabus, there is a substantial amount of reading for this course. Students who might not be committed to doing all the reading each week should not take the class.

A list of paper topics will be provided, from which students will choose one. Papers will be due in my office (Pick 416A) no later than 5:00 pm on Wednesday of exam week -- June 10. However, for graduating students, papers will be due no later than 5:00 pm on Wednesday, June 3. Papers received after that time will be dropped one letter grade for each day past the due date. The paper must be: no longer than 15 pages of text, double-spaced, have at least 1-inch margins on all four sides, and have a standard-sized font.

Readings and Books: The following books have been ordered through the Seminary Coop Bookstore:

- Norman Finkelstein, This Time We Went Too Far (OR Books)
- Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea (Jewish Publication Society)
- Theodor Herzl, The Jewish State (Dover)
- Ilan Pappe, The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine (Oneworld)
- Shlomo Sand, The Invention of the Jewish People (Verso)
- Ari Shavit, My Promised Land (Spiegel & Grau)

All articles and book chapters are on Chalk.

Course Outline:

1. March 30, 2015 (Mon): Organizational Meeting

2. April 6 (Mon): The Rise of Nationalism & The Demise of the Ghetto

   -- "Nationalism" entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, available on the Internet
   -- Ernst Renan, "What Is a Nation?" available on the Internet.
   -- Sand, Invention of the Jewish People, chap. 1.

3. April 13 (Mon): Early Zionist Thinking

   --Hertzberg, Zionist Idea, Introductory Essay (pp. 15-100) and the writings of: Moses Hess (115-139), Leo Pinsker (178-198), Max Nordau ((232-245), Ahad Ha-Am (248-277), Jacob Klatzkin (314-327), Rabbi Abraham Kook (416-431), Judah Magnes (440-449), Martin Buber (450-465).

4. April 20 (Mon): The Origins of Zionism

   -- Sand, Invention of the Jewish People, chaps. 2-5.
5. April 27 (Mon): Creating and Building Up the Yishuv (1900-1947)

-- Shavit, My Promised Land, chaps. 1-4.


-- Pappe, The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, preface and chapters 1-5.
-- Shavit, My Promised Land, chap. 5.

7. May 11 (Mon): The First Thirty Years (1948-1978)

-- Shavit, My Promised Land, chaps. 6-7.


-- Shavit, My Promised Land, chaps. 8-17.


-- Finkelstein, This Time We Went Too Far, read all.

10. June 1 (Mon): The Future of Israel

-- Ian Lustick, “Abandoning the Iron Wall: Israel and ‘The Middle East Muck’,” Middle East Policy, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Fall 2008), pp. 30-56.