

POL 110A – Contemporary Politics

Monday/Wednesday/Thursday

Time: 16:00 – 16:50

AJU Mission Statement

Learning and Scholarship: We believe in the principle of Torah – learning as an intellectual and inspirational endeavor – that embraces both academic scholarship and the efforts of all Jews to explore their shared heritage through the formal and informal study of Judaism and the other great civilizations of the world.

Culture: We acknowledge that Judaism is a flourishing civilization with a culture that is fundamental to modern Jewish identity. We strive to advance that culture by encouraging artistic endeavor in all of its many forms.

Ethics: We recognize that ethics is the language of Judaism and its most important link to the world at large.

Leadership: We understand that the future of Jewish life depends on the careful preparation of dedicated and impassioned individuals who are called to leadership.

Peoplehood: We are a pluralistic institution that embraces diversity within Judaism and values the contributions of all groups to the growth of Jewish Civilization.

Students with Disabilities

American Jewish University is committed to assisting our students with documented disabilities to have a successful career at AJU. Contact the Office of Student Affairs to request accommodations and begin the documentation process. (See Enhancing Accessibility and/or AJU website for complete policy.)

Standards of Academic Integrity

The Honor Code of American Jewish University was written by a committee of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and administrators. Under the Honor Code, students have a two-fold obligation: individually, they must not violate the code, and as a community, they are responsible to see that suspected violations are reported. Academic Dishonesty includes, but is not limited, to the following definitions:

A. Examination Behavior: Unless expressly permitted by the instructor, the use of external assistance during an exam shall be considered academically dishonest. Inappropriate exam behavior includes but is not limited to: (1) communicating with anyone in any way during an exam, (2) copying material from another student's exam, (3) allowing a student to copy from one's exam, (4) using unauthorized notes, calculators, or other sources of unauthorized assistance.

B. Fabrication: Any intentional falsification, invention of data, or citation in an academic exercise will be considered to be academic dishonesty. Fabrication involves but is not limited to: (1) inventing or altering data for a laboratory experiment or field project, (2) padding a bibliography of a term paper or research paper with sources one did not utilize, (3) resubmitting returned and corrected academic work under the pretense of grader evaluation error when, in fact, the work has been altered

from its original form.

C. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the appropriation and subsequent passing off of another's ideas or words as one's own. If the words or ideas of another are used, acknowledgement of the original source must be made through recognized referencing practices. Use of another's ideas or words must be properly acknowledged as follows:

- (1) Direct Quotation: Any use of direct quotation must be acknowledged by footnote citation and by either quotation marks or proper indentation and spacing.
- (2) Paraphrase: If another's ideas are borrowed in whole or in part and are merely recast in the student's own words, proper acknowledgement must, nonetheless, be made. A footnote or proper internal citation must follow the paraphrased material.

D. Other Types of Academic Dishonesty: Other forms of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Submitting a paper written by or obtained from another person.
- (2) Using a paper or essay in more than one class without the instructors' expressed permission.
- (3) Obtaining a copy of an examination in advance without the knowledge and consent of the instructor.
- (4) Altering academic records outside of official institutional procedures.
- (5) Using another person to complete academic assignments such as homework, take-home exams or using another person posing as oneself to take classroom examinations.

Course Description:

This course takes as a premise the importance of rational, informed discussion and analysis of current political events for good citizenship. It aims to provide a space to foster these skills and knowledge, in an atmosphere of mutual respect. All major news events, domestic and international, are fair game for class discussion during the semester. There may be periodic guest speakers or field trips. In addition to analysis of current events, we will review writing issues and styles in Political Science, using the course text.

Course Goals:

- Be better able to summarize, analyze and evaluate policy arguments (that is, improve critical thinking skills)
- Be better informed about domestic and international political issues
- Be more comfortable speaking in public
- Improve analytical skills, both oral and written writing skills

Course Requirements:

Class participation, attendance, and demeanor:

All students are required to attend class regularly, to have read a major daily newspaper, to be informed of major political and economic events, and to participate in class discussions. Because this class is organized around discussion of current events, class attendance is essential. *If you are absent more than three times you will imperil your grade, unless you have a documented medical or personal family emergency. Should a student miss 20% or more of class sessions, he/she will be automatically withdrawn from the course and receive a W.* To get an excused absence one must be ill and bring a doctor's note. The classroom is a special environment. Sometimes, because we live in a small institution, we tend to forget the niceties of classroom etiquette. In the classroom, we treat each other as fellow academics, engaged in a common enterprise of learning. We treat each other with respect, and we use language appropriate for the classroom, as opposed to language that

we might use with friends in the dorms or in the cafeteria. I encourage all students to participate in class, and I also discourage a few students from dominating classroom discussion. Last, I expect students to come to class on time and to remain in class for the duration of the class session. To do otherwise is to detract from the classroom environment and the learning experience.

Note: Plagiarism and proper citation: Plagiarism involves using someone else's ideas without acknowledging the source. This includes using an author's ideas or the structure of his/her argument without citing the source (even if written in your own words), as well as unacknowledged quoting. A good rule-of-thumb to follow is this: any information or argument that you learned from a source and that is not common knowledge (i.e., a fact that you assume anyone in our society would know, such as the fact that George Washington was our first President) should be cited. Research papers that lack sufficient citations will be returned, without a grade, so that the student can include the proper citations. Students should also remember that while it is acceptable practice to study together, exam questions (whether in a take-home or in-class format) are to be the student's own work. Students should not consult or assist each other in preparing specific exam questions.

Plagiarism will earn the student an F on the assignment and, depending on the extent, possibly for the course. Please consult the AJU Statement of Academic Integrity for a more detailed explanation of Academic Honesty.

Required Reading and Other Assignments:

A. Diane E. Schmidt, *Writing in Political Science*

This book is a useful source for Political Science students, both for the short papers you will write in this course and for other Poli Sci papers you will write in college.

B. Newspaper: Read one newspaper daily; students are encouraged to consult other printed and/or audio-visual sources, as these constitute the major source material for the course.

1. Keep a written account (journal) of the news articles you find, including your thoughts about them. The journal may help you as you develop your short papers (see below).
2. Come to class prepared to discuss a news event; this may include your covering a geographic area of the world. You will also give 5 formal class presentations (see below).
3. Write 5 short (2 pages) papers analyzing an area and/or issues that you have decided to focus on. These short papers should follow the following format:
 - What is the issue?
 - What is the context of the issue (e.g., historical, economic)?
 - What are the arguments pro/con and who is arguing them?
 - What is your assessment of these arguments? You may also provide your own viewpoint, and explain why.

Presentations:

1. Israel's Political Parties – 10 minutes (info-mercial) session on the political party you were assigned
2. political Simulation – come prepared with laws you want passed and your position vis-à-vis other parties and their major issues
3. Israel Update – each week a group will lead the Israel Update – each person in the group will have to tell 1–2 stories from the week
4. Choose a hot topic of the week and lead the class in discussion for 15 minutes on that issue – prepare history of the issue, present the sides, lead the debate with leading questions and finally help the class reach a conclusion
5. The Future of Israel – 10 minutes – your projection of where you think if Israel's long term future

Short papers – Write 5 short (2 pages) papers analyzing an area and/or issues that you have decided to focus on. These short papers should follow the following format:

- What is the issue?
- What is the context of the issue (e.g., historical, economic)?
- What are the arguments pro/con and who is arguing them?
- What is your assessment of these arguments? You may also provide your own viewpoint, and explain why.

Due dates:

1. 25th September
2. 27th November
3. 11th December
4. 25th December
5. 8th January

Assessment/Grading:

Attendance and Class participation: 25

Journal and papers: 35

5 presentations: 40

Attendance is mandatory for all class sessions. Should a student miss 20% or more of class sessions, he/she will be automatically withdrawn from the course and receive a W. To get an excused absence one must be ill and bring a doctor's note.

Course Schedule:

September

Topic #1

Wed 7 Introduction, Class overview – The Miracle of Israeli Democracy

Thurs 8 The Art of Political Inquiry
Reading: Schmidt, chs. 1-2

Topic #2

Sun 11 Political Issues: Introduction to discussing the news
Reading: daily newspaper

Wed 14 Israel Update

Thurs 15 Writing in Political Science: Getting started the right way
Reading: Schmidt, ch. 3; ch. 8,
Also: The Jewish people – a History of Schisms

Topic #3

Sun 18 Israel Update

Wed 21 Political Schisms in early modern Zionism (pre State)

Thurs 22 Political History of Israel from 1948 - 1977

Sun 25 Political History of Israel from 1977-2010

October

Topic # 4

Sun 2 Israel Update

Thurs 6 The Israeli Political System

Topic # 5

Sun 9 Israel Update

Sun 16 Israel Update

Topic # 6

Sun 23 Israel Update

Wed 26 Israel's Political Parties 1 (presentation 1)

Thurs 27 Israel's Political Parties 2

Topic # 7

Sun 30 Israel Update

November

Wed 2 Israel political parties Sikkum and prep for next week

Thurs 3 Focus on Hot Topic - Yitzchak Rabin

Topic #8

Sun 6 Political Simulation (presentation 2)

Wed 9 Political simulation pt.2 (presentation 2)

Thurs 10 Israeli Political Parties sikkum

Topic #9

Sun 13 Israel update

Wed 16 Focus on hot topic of the week – Ariel Sharon

Thurs 17 Focus on hot topic of the week –

Topic #10

Sun 20 Israel Update (presentation 3)

Wed 23 Israel Update (presentation 3)

Thurs 24 Focus on hot topic of the week –

Topic #11

Sun 27 Israel Update

Tues Siyur to Hevron and Gush Etzion

Wed 30 Focus on hot topic of the week – Hevron in perspective

December

Thurs 1 Focus on hot topic of the week

Topic #12

Sun 4 Israel Update

Tues 6 Siyur to Foreign ministry

Sun 11 Israel Update

Thurs 15 Siyur to Supreme court and Knesset

Topic #13

Sun 18 Israel Update

Wed 21 no Class – 1st day of Chanukah

Thurs 22 no class – 2nd day of Chanukah

Topic #14

Sun 25 Israel Update – Simon

Wed 28 Focus on hot topic of the week (presentation 4)

Thurs 29 Focus on hot topic of the week (presentation 4)

January

Topic #15

Wed 4 The Future for Israel – (presentation 5)

Thurs 5 The Future of Israel (presentation 5)

Sun 8 Sikkum of the course – Simon