Israeli Society Seminar: Perspectives on Israeli Society

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Description:

The course is designed to propose a number of ways of looking at Israeli society, under the assumption that by using multiple perspectives, one can obtain a rich picture that can explain complex social processes. This approach casts doubt on the ability to provide a meta-narrative or uniform theoretical framework for describing social structures.

The different vantage points are meant to provide tools and an infrastructure for analyzing different phenomena in Israeli society which have an impact on national resilience and national security. However, this course also seeks to offer tools to analyze social phenomena from a complex perspective.

As such, emphasis is placed on the complex approach to state-society relations, though the course hesitates to overstate the politics of identity, whose vulgar manifestation appears in the perception of Israeli society in tribal terms. The complex approach to questions of identity is free of the sociological determinism of state-society relations, and assumes that questions of identity are an encounter between demographic and political processes and the institutional act of the state and the state. This sort of approach hints at "statism" as ethics and Israeli identity acting to counterbalance the overrepresentation of society and the media in identity structures.

In this course, Israeli society will also be analyzed in comparative terms, by comparing it with other societies contending with challenges faced by nation states thirty years after globalization had begun. This neglected perspective opens as window to the study of the agendas of liberal democracies, and understanding the role of globalization agents like the OECD and other organizations that set international standards.

This comparative perspective will be accompanied by an attempt to contemplate Israeli society in terms of Jewish civilization, which offers longer perspectives of time, which place Israeli society in the stages after the building of the nation, yet still within conflict and facing external threats. This type of complex situation helps explain the tension between a "recruited society" and growing individuation, as reflected, of course, in the many challenges familiar to participants in a course on force design issues and the fundamental questions concerning national security. An approach focused on Jewish civilization enables a discussion of the Jewish world, and allows us to ask questions on the deeper structure of the Jewish people and Israeli society.

After a discussion on the two global perspectives and Jewish civilization, the course will focus on two identity groups, the Arabs and the ultra-orthodox Jews, as a challenge regarding the status of the Arab minority in a Jewish and democratic state, and the integration of the ultra-orthodox in public systems. The discussion of the ultra-orthodox will also assess the role of religion in public life. The chapter following the discussion of the two identity groups, i.e. the Arabs and the ultra-orthodox, will deal with Israeli society through the perspective of political economics, social stratification and mobility during the decade before the social justice protest of 2011.

The final chapter of this course will look at Israeli society using the tools of political sociology and governance, and will assess the role of the state in shaping society and regulating conflicts and social challenges. During this part of the course, a scenario on an open social future of Israeli society and the Israeli state, assessed in terms of governance, and particularly in terms of the state ethos in public service and public systems, will be presented. In the final session of this chapter, we will discuss the interface between governance in social spheres and national security, in various contexts.

The structure of the course:

The course is comprised of 22 sessions, including a study tour. The sessions will be held during the specified times and in the specified places. Lectures delivered by the course supervisor and guest lecturers will be integrated into each topic in the course.

Requirements:

1. Full attendance in class, and active participation.
2. Reading the required reading materials for this course, which are assembled in a booklet and are available online, on the INDC website.
3. A 10-15 page long individual summary paper on one of the topics covered in the course, coordinated with the lecturer.

**Course topics and reading materials:**

1. Course introduction: General Introduction to Israeli Society, February 25th, 2020

13:00-14:30: Dr. Neri Horiwitz

14:45-15:15: Dr. Neri Horowitz

The introduction will include the general concept, along with the five shaping perspectives and the theoretical sociological logic based on perceptions of complexity in the analysis of social phenomena and multi-dimensional explanations.

The perspective of globalization will suggest assessing Israeli society in comparative terms, with an emphasis on various indices tied to the globalization process. During these sessions, we will work with OECD data. During the introduction, there will be a discussion of the concept of globalization in the context of the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

**Required reading:**

* OECD report on Israel (2018)

**Optional reading:**

Gronau, Reuben,

1. Politics of identity, February 26th, 2020

08:30-10:30 – Dr. Neri Horiwitz

10:30-12:30 – Israel and the Jewish people, by former minister Isaac ("Buzhi") Herzog

This chapter will examine Israeli society within the broader context of the shaping of collective boundaries as a challenge for Jewish civilization. The shaping of the boundaries of the collective will be assessed not only in broad historical terms, but also in terms of the Jewish world and the orientation of the State of Israel towards the global environments and the Arab world.

1. Session 3: March 3rd, 2020

13:00-14:30 – A sociological analysis of the elections, Dr. Neri Horowitz

14:30-16:15 – The place of Arab Israeli citizens in the Jewish and democratic state, Dr. Neri Horowitz

1. Session 4: Continuation of Israeli Arabs

08:30-10:00 – Exercise on visionary documents

10:30-12:00 – Dr. Mohammed Darawshe

This chapter will deal with the challenge of the large Arab minority in the Jewish and democratic country. In this context, civic models such as ethic democracy and republican citizenship will be assessed, in comparison with liberal citizenship, and a discussion will be held on the Kaadan supreme court ruling and the Nation State Law.

1. The Ultra-Orthodox, General Society and the State, March 11th, 2020

08:30-10:00 Dr. Neri Horiwitz

10:30-12:39 Dr. Neri Horowitz

This chapter, and the following week, will deal with the politics of identity in Israel, with an emphasis on the ultra-orthodox and the Arabs as a challenge to governance. Moreover, a discussion will be held on other contexts concerning identity, which tie into gender, ethnicity, and demographically smaller groups, such as the Druze population and Ethiopian immigrants. The point of departure for this discussion will be an assessment of the challenge of social sensitivity in terms of implications on government.