



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

The Balfour Declaration: History Diplomacy and International Law - 13627

Last update 04-09-2024

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: History of Jewish People & Contemporary Jewry

Academic year: 2025

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Eran Shlomi

Coordinator Email: eran.shlomi@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours:

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Anat Helman,
Dr. Shlomi Eran

Course/Module description:

The course deals with the different interpretations given by the British, the Arabs, the Jews and the League of Nations to the Balfour Declaration and the mandate text, in light of the historical events and geopolitical transformations in the Middle East and Europe between the world wars and the eve of Israel's declaration of independence. Alongside the analysis of aspects of international law, the course examines the political maneuvers of the parties involved, the interests and agendas, the diplomatic strategies and tactics.

Course/Module aims:

The course deals with the different interpretations given by the British, the Arabs, the Jews and the League of Nations to the Balfour Declaration and the mandate text, in light of the historical events and geopolitical transformations in the Middle East and Europe between the world wars and the eve of Israel's declaration of independence. Alongside the analysis of aspects of international law, the course examines the political maneuvers of the parties involved, the interests and agendas, the diplomatic strategies and tactics.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

analyze primary sources; Critically discuss the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate text and other political documents from the British Mandate period; Demonstrate proficiency in basic concepts in international relations and international law in the period between the world wars.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Weekly discussion of the reading portion; submission of a short final essay.

Course/Module Content:

*-Introduction: Jewish and Arab nationalism on the eve of the First World War.
- The background to the publication of the Balfour Declaration: the motives of the British government to issue the Balfour Declaration; the British pledges during the*

First World War.

- *From Balfour's letter to the Balfour Declaration: a reading of the Balfour Declaration, and the reactions of the Zionist and Arab-Palestinian leadership to the declaration.*
- *From a declaration to international law: the diplomatic struggle over the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the text of the mandate and the status of the mandate in international law.*
- *Mandate text – A "Constitution" for Palestine: reading various mandate articles.*
- *International diplomacy after the mandate's ratification: the strategies and practices adopted by the Zionist and Arab diplomats.*
- *Campus tour on the occasion of the centenary to Balfour's visit to Palestine and the inauguration ceremony of the Hebrew University.*
- *New interpretations of the Balfour Declaration: the different interpretations given by the British, the Arabs, the Zionists and the League of Nations to the mandate following the August 1929 riots in Palestine.*
- *Why wasn't a Legislative Council established in Palestine? Discussion of political and legal aspects.*
- *The mandate's status following The Peel Commission's report and the partition proposal.*
- *The Mandate vs. the 1939 White Paper.*

Required Reading:

Primary sources:

- *The Balfour Declaration, 1917*
- *The League of Nations Convent, 1920*
- *The Mandate text, 1922*
- *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission, 1925*
- *The Shaw Commission of Inquiry Report, 1930*
- *The Peel Commission Report, 1937*

Secondary sources:

- *"The Mandate", 3 episodes, Kan 11.*
- *דניאל גוטוין, "הגורמים לפרסום הצהרת בלפור: חיים ויצמן, התנועה הציונית והאימפריאליזם הבריטי. ישראל: כתב עת לחקר הציונות ומדינת ישראל - היסטוריה, תרבות, חברה, 24, 2006, עמ' 163-142.*
- *Pedersen, Susan. "Writing the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate for Palestine." International History Review, 45, no. 2, (2023): 279-91.*
- *Pedersen, Susan, The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 359-93.*
- *Wheatley, Natasha. "Mandatory Interpretation: Legal Hermeneutics and the New International Order in Arab and Jewish Petitions to the League of Nations. Past and Present 227, no. 1, (May 2015), 206-48.*

Additional Reading Material:

- ברזילי, דבורה יגר. בית לאומי לעם היהודי: המושג בחשיבה ובעשייה המדינית הבריטית, 1923-1917. ירושלים: הספריה הציונית, 2003.
- גולני, מוטי וריינהרץ, יהודה. האב המייסד: חיים ויצמן, ביוגרפיה, 1952-1922. תל אביב: עם עובד, 2020.
- דותן, שמואל. המאבק על ארץ ישראל. תל אביב: משרד הביטחון-ההוצאה לאור, 1981.
- הד, מיכאל, ושאל בן מנחם כץ (עורכים). תולדות האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים: שורשים והתחלות. מהדורה ראשונה, הוצאת ספרים ע"ש י"ל מאגנס, האוניברסיטה העברית, 1997.
- שגב, תום. ימי הכלניות: ארץ ישראל בתקופת המנדט. ירושלים: כתר הוצאה לאור, 1999.
- כהן, הלל. תרפ"ט: שנת האפס בסכסוך היהודי-ערבי. ירושלים: כתר ספרים, 2013.
- פורת, יהושע. ממהומות למרידה: התנועה הלאומית הערבית-פלסטינית, 1939-1929. תל אביב: עם עובד, 1978.
- . צמיחת התנועה הלאומית הערבית-פלסטינאית, 1929-1919. תל אביב: עם עובד, 1976.
- ריינהרץ, יהודה. חיים ויצמן: עלייתו של מדינאי, 1922-1914. כרך ב', ירושלים: הספריה הציונית, 1996.
- ריינהרץ, יהודה, ושביט, יעקב. הדרך לספטמבר 1939: היישוב, יהודי פולין והתנועה הציונית ערב מלחמת העולם השנייה. תל אביב: עם עובד, 2013.
- שטיין, ליאונרד. מסד למדינת ישראל: תולדותיה של הצהרת בלפור. תל אביב: שוקן, 1962.

- Kayyālī, Abd al-Wahhāb. *Palestine: A Modern History*. London: Croom Helm, 1978.
- Lesch, Ann Mosley. *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1979.
- Mctague, John J. "Zionist-British Negotiations over the Draft Mandate for Palestine, 1920." *Jewish Social Studies* 42 no. 3/4 (1980): 281-92.
- Pedersen, Susan. "Back to the League of Nations." *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007), 1091-117.
- . "The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine", in Rory Miller (ed.). *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate (2010), 39-65.
- . "The Meaning of the Mandate System: An Argument", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2006): 560-82.
- Renton, James. *The Zionist Masquerade: The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance, 1914-1918*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Grading Scheme:

- Active Participation / Team Assignment 80 %
Presentation / Poster Presentation / Lecture 20 %

Additional information: