Sociology 179: Sociological Perspectives on Israeli Society
Spring 2015, Tu-Th, 11am - 12:30pm, 54 Barrows Hall

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 pm and by email appointment
444 Barrows Hall

Course Description:
In recent decades, Israeli society has undergone significant demographic, economic, and political transformations that have reshaped its socio-cultural landscape. In this seminar we will discuss how these processes, including the move toward a neoliberal economy, massive immigration from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, the arrival of migrant workers, and increasing political polarization, have affected Israel's stratification system and institutions. We will focus on several axes of stratification and their intersections, including ethnicity (the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi divide), the status of Palestinian citizens of Israel and other minority groups, social class, and gender. Using insights from various sociological approaches, special attention will be dedicated to the issue of how features and dynamics of Israeli society reflect broader global trends. This seminar is designed for students interested in gaining critical knowledge about contemporary Israeli society and an in-depth understanding of the ethnic, national, religious, and political cleavages that characterize it.

Requirements and Grading:
Class participation (20%)

Research paper - All participants are required to submit a paper (12-15 pp. double-spaced) that deals with a research question of their interest about contemporary Israeli society. Answers to the question should address the relevant literature and be based on empirical data drawn from secondary sources. The research paper will be broken down into several assignments:

1. Approval of topic and research question – All participants are required to meet with me during my office hours and get approval for their research question no later than March 3rd.
2. Memo (2-3 pp) describing the topic, research question, and outline of the paper, including bibliographical references. The memo is due on the class of March 24th (10%)
3. Short class presentation of the research paper during week 14 - April 21st and 23rd (10%)
4. Final research paper. Due Friday May 15th (60%)
Readings and Course Schedule:

All the readings are available through bCourses at https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1292949/.

Week 1 (January 20) – General Introduction

No readings

(January 22) – Background, Demographic & Economic Trends


Week 2 (January 27, 29) - Background, Demographic & Economic Trends


Week 3 (February 3, 5) – Ethnic Cleavage: The Mizrahi-Ashkenazi divide


Week 4 (February 10, 11) - Ethnic Cleavage: The Mizrahi-Ashkenazi divide


Week 5 (February 17, 19) - Ethnic Cleavage: Immigrants from the former USSR


Week 6 (February 24, 26) - Ethnic Cleavage: Immigrants from the former USSR


Week 7 (March 3, 5) - Ethnic Cleavage: Ethiopian immigrants


Week 8 (March 10, 12) –Ethnic Cleavage: Ethiopian immigrants


**Week 9 (March 17, 19) – Religious Cleavage: The Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Community**


**Week 10 (March 24, 26) – National Cleavage: Palestinian Citizens of Israel**


**Week 11 (March 30, April 2) - National Cleavage: Palestinian Citizens of Israel**


**Week 12 (April 7, 9) - National Cleavage: Labor Migrants**


Week 13 (April 14, 16) – Gender Cleavage


Week 14 (April 21, 23) - Class Presentations

Week 15 (April 28, 30) – Summary
