

JNST OOOF
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Thurs. 1:00-3:50pm
Prof. Sharon Lang

Course Description

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be one of the most volatile, on-going, and intransigent clashes of the current era and one that has now taken a tragic toll on generations of men, women, and children. It is essentially a modern political battle that originated just over one hundred years ago. While religion plays a role, and certain parties draw on ancient religious arguments to support their positions, the problem is essentially a modern-day, nationalistic one; a confrontation between two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, that ensues because both parties lay claim to the same piece of land.

In this course, we will study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict historically from its inception to the present day, taking into account the many divergent views, opinions, contexts, and sentiments of relevant actors. Students are encouraged to be open-minded and sensitive to the multiple perspectives and deep feelings that this conflict often engenders. We will not only explore the background of the conflict, including the role of Western powers in creating the conditions of instability in the region after World War II, but also connect this history to more general 21st century socio-political conditions. Most importantly, we will take an anthropological approach, highlighting and concerning ourselves with cultural and human dimensions.

It is important to note that there is a tremendous amount of media information and disinformation regarding this conflict. Little that is said or written about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is completely neutral and even accounts that attempt to be “balanced” are often challenged as biased, accused of favoring one side or the other. Furthermore, U.S. national political interests and dominant cultural views have led many Americans to view the conflict through a particular lens. In an effort to counter our cultural preconceptions and instead think critically, our class approach will be to read and consider a wide array of voices including: primary-source documents, first-hand accounts, personal memoirs, short stories, international news and media reports, scholarly analyses and commentaries. Students are encouraged to develop their own views and plans for conflict resolution while becoming informed on the variety of Palestinian, Jewish, and other perspectives.