



Rothberg International School
בית הספר לתלמידים מחו"ל ע"ש רוטברג
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים



Department of Summer Courses
and Special Programs

המחלקה לקורסי קיץ
ותוכניות מיוחדות

The Jewish World in the Wake of October 7

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3 Academic Credits

Tentative syllabus

Course Description:

The brutal Hamas attack on October 7 against Israeli civilians in the “Gaza Envelope” created a new reality for Jews worldwide. In Israel, the population’s sense of security and trust in the government were severely shaken. Israeli society, bitterly divided over the government’s plans to limit the power of the Judiciary, united to combat the terrorist threat from without, and to meet the tremendous needs of the survivors, families of victims and hostages, evacuees, army reservists and businesses owners adversely affected by the war. Anxious about the future of the hostages held by Hamas, Israelis are in a state of collective mourning over the victims of the massacres and soldiers killed during the war. The debate over the future of the Gaza Strip and by extension the possibility of a Palestinian State is gaining momentum. The deeper causes of the Israeli intelligence and policy failures and their political ramifications are also a major focus of attention. Looming in the not-so-distant future are basic questions regarding the ideological and political nature of the state.

The attack and the Israeli response have also impacted heavily on Jewish communities around the world. The immediate wave of demonstrations calling for the destruction of Israel, replete with antisemitic symbols, stereotypes and rationales, was a shocking reminder that antisemitism is very much alive, and can be mobilized and disseminated whenever circumstances permit. The failure of civil rights organizations to condemn the massacres and the antisemitic campaign, and the abdication by many universities of their responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of their Jewish students are reminiscent of darker days when Jews in distress were abandoned even by the most liberal elements of their societies. At the same time, a humanitarian concern for the welfare of the Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip, seen against the background of the mounting number of civilian casualties and the massive destruction of private

property there has led many diaspora Jews to criticize Israel for what they see as a disproportionate response to the Hamas attack.

Following an introduction to the Jewish experience with a visit to the Anu Museum in Tel Aviv, the course will explore the background to the attack on October 7, with emphasis on the Israeli occupation of the “territories” during the Six Day War in 1967 and their subsequent administration, the rise of fundamentalist Islamic movements in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli withdrawal from the Strip (2005) and the Hamas takeover (2007), the Israeli-Hamas war (2007-2023) and Israeli policy toward the Hamas prior to the attack. Attention will then be focused on the preparations and execution of the attack itself. Students will visit the area in which it took place and meet with survivors and families of hostages as well as representatives of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). Attention will then be focused on Israeli military, diplomatic and civilian responses to the attack and include meetings with representatives of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a visit to an NGO set up in the wake of the war to provide assistance to Israeli civilians. The class will examine the war’s impact on Israel’s internal politics and foreign relations, as well as the possibility of a two-state solution. Discussion will also focus on the future of world Jewry: will it experience a period of rejuvenation and solidification as it did following the Six Day War in 1967? Will increased criticism of Israel widen the rift between sections of the Jewish community and the State of Israel? What do the current expressions of antisemitism indicate regarding the status of Jews in general society?

The course is relevant for anyone interested in understanding the current situation of the Jewish world, and especially for Jewish educators and leaders as well those who wish to pursue careers in diplomacy, government, journalism, and public policy.

*** NB: The course content is subject to change.**