

University of Florida

Ottoman Palestine (1516-1918)

JST3930 /

Fall 2025

M | Periods 8-9 (3:00 p.m. – 4:55 p.m.)

F | Period 8 (3:00 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.)

Instructor: Yehoshua Ecker

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Office hours: TBA and by appointment

Course description

The modern Middle East has its roots in the long period of Ottoman rule that ended with the First World War. The Ottoman centuries left a lasting impact on the region and shaped many of the political realities, movements, ideologies and actors of the post-Ottoman century which has recently come to an end. Focusing on the region that would become British Mandate Palestine, the contested territory at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this course explores it as a territory in the Ottoman Empire, as a religious center, a destination for pilgrims, visitors and immigrants, as a site of daily life, a site of change, and as a coveted geopolitical asset. It offers a close look at Ottoman regional realities, the workings of the Ottoman state and society, and the interactions of imperial, local and foreign trajectories, during the four tumultuous centuries of Ottoman imperial rule.

Course objectives

- Study the major events in four centuries of regional Ottoman rule and their wider Ottoman and global contexts.
- Have an appreciation of the local and global religious contexts of the region.
- Gain an understanding of the historical origins of one of the hotly disputed territories in the modern Middle East.
- Gain an understanding of long term political, social, cultural and economic developments and dynamics.
- Gain an understanding of regional and global political, economic, social, cultural and religious interactions involving the region.
- Gain knowledge of the inner workings of an early modern and modern imperial state, the relationship between imperial centers and peripheries, and the complex competition and rivalry between powers in the recent past.

Student learning outcomes

- Students will be able to:
 - ✓ identify the main regions and urban centers of Palestine in their historical contexts.
 - ✓ place the Ottoman period in Palestine within historical timelines and identify different subperiods.
 - ✓ evaluate and contextualize statements about the history of Palestine and the region.
 - ✓ explain the geo-political context of the Middle East in the early modern and modern periods until WW1.
- Students will be familiar with the conceptual frameworks of holy places, imperial structures, geo-political rivalries, reforms, modern nationalism and ethno-religious conflicts.

Week	Topics		Readings	Assignments
1	Introduction			
2	Geography & environmental constraints	Regions, topographies, landscapes, natural resources, mobility	Gröber; Huntington, preface, ch.2-3, maps	Map quiz
3-4	Locating Ottoman Palestine: chronology and periodization	Rulers & conquests, religions, populations, names & definitions	Kramer, ch.2. Kramer, ch.1; Oxford, ch. 12 (Hess & Pringle), ch. 11 (Walker & Hoyland)	Timelines quiz
5	From Mamluks to Ottomans	Background to conquest and general overviews	Hathaway, ch.2; Avi-Yonah, ch.6 (Sharon); Oxford, ch.9 (Luz)	
6-7	Imperial takeover: the first Ottoman century	Organizing imperial space, linking the local to the imperial center	Hathaway, ch. 3; Conermann & Şen, 1 (Winter), 2, intro. (Darling); Cohen, Economic, intro., conc.; Singer, ch.1;Reilly;Shafir	
8-9	Social & political divisions: the second Ottoman century	Local politics and dynasties, regional and provincial networks	[To complete 6-7]; Ze'evi, ch.2-3; Cook, ch.10 (468-492, 497-509)	Timeline 1 (1517-1717)
10-11	Shifts & adjustments: the third Ottoman century	Challenges to imperial rule	Cohen, Patterns, part I: ch.1-2, part II: ch.1-2, part III; Barnai, part III. Kramer, ch.3	Review + Take-home Midterm
12	Accelerated changes: 1818-1876	Innovations, transitions and crises; Reforms & centralization	Kramer, ch.4; Abu-Manneh; Dowty, ch.1. <i>B</i> : Tibawi, ch.5; Hoexter; Finn, ch.1-8.	
13	National & denominational challenges: 1876-1913	New educated elites, intellectual circles and ideas, new political arenas; Empire, nations and faith; Politics, economy and demography	Kramer, ch.5; Ben-Bassat & Ginio, intro.(pp.1-6), ch.3 (Yazbak); Campos, intro., ch.1-2; Shapira, ch.2. <i>B</i> : Deringil, ch.2, 4, 5; Büssow, intro., conc.	Timeline 2 (1718-1913)
14	Ottoman endgame 1913-1918 & Post-Ottoman legacies	Local conflicts, regional wars, world war, holy war; Legal & political impacts	Campos, ch.4; Khalidi, ch.6; Kramer, ch.7; Dolev et al., ch.5 (Lüdke). <i>B</i> : Kayali; Uyar & Erickson, ch.5; Gerwarth & Manela, ch.1 (Aksakal)	
15	Reviewing narratives, historiographies & demographies		Kramer, ch.6; Doumani, intro., ch.1, conc.; Singer, Review; Kark & Glass; Gerber, ch.1-2; Morgenstern.	Take-home final

* *B*: Background reading / ch.: chapter, chapters / intro.: introduction / conc.: conclusion

Main Text

Guðrun Kræmer, [A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel](#) (Princeton University Press, 2011).

Additional chapters from the following publications (Reading material will be posted on Canvas)

Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Rise of the Sanjak of Jerusalem in the Late Nineteenth Century”, reprinted in: Ilan Pappé (ed.), [The Israel/Palestine Question](#) (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 41-51.

Michael Avi-Yonah, ed., [A History of Israel and the Holy Land](#) (New York and London: Continuum, 2001).

Jacob Barnai, [The Jews in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: Under the Patronage of the Istanbul Committee of Officials for Palestine](#) (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992).

Yuval Ben-Bassat, Eyal Ginio, eds., [Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule](#) (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

Johann Büssow, [Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem 1872-1908](#) (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

Michelle U. Campos, [Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine](#) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

Amnon Cohen, [Economic Life in Ottoman Jerusalem](#) (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Amnon Cohen, [Palestine in the 18th Century: Patterns of Government and Administration](#) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973).

Stephan Conermann, Gül Şen, eds., [The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century](#), 2 vols. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, Bonn University Press, 2016, 2022).

Michael A. Cook, [A History of the Muslim World: From Its Origins to the Dawn of Modernity](#) (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2024).

Selim Deringil, [The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909](#) (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

Eran Dolev, Yigal Sheffy, Haim Goren, eds., [Palestine and World War I: Grand Strategy, Military Tactics and Culture in War](#) (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

Beshara Doumani, [Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900](#) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Alan Dowty, [Arabs and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: Two Worlds Collide](#) (Indiana University Press, 2019).

Finn, [Elizabeth Anne], [Palestine Peasantry: Notes on Their Clans, Warfare, Religion, and Laws](#) (London and Edinburgh: Marshall Brothers, 1923).

Haim Gerber, [Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present](#) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Robert Gerwarth, Erez Manela, eds., [Empires at War: 1911-1923](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Karl Gröber, Picturesque Palestine, Arabia and Syria: The Country, the People, and the Landscape (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1925). <https://archive.org/details/picturesquepales00grob/page/n1/mode/2up>

Jane Hathaway, The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule: 1516–1800, 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

Miriam Hoexter, “The Role of the Qays and Yaman Factions in Local Political Divisions. Jabal Nablus Compared with the Judean Hills in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century”, Asian and African Studies Vol. 9 (1973), pp. 249-311.

Robert G. Hoyland and H.G.M. Williamson (eds.), The Oxford Illustrated History of the Holy Land (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Ellsworth Huntington, Palestine and Its Transformation (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911).
<https://books.google.pl/books?id=6gttGYy2m9UC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Ruth Kark and Joseph B. Glass, “Eretz Israel/Palestine, 1800-1948“, in: Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, Sara Reguer, eds., The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 335-346.

Hasan Kayali, "Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1919", International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1995), pp. 265-286.

Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness (Columbia University Press, 2009).

Arie Morgenstern, "Dispersion and the Longing for Zion, 1240-1840", Azure 12 (2002), pp. 71–132.

James A. Reilly, Review of Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration Around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem, Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies, Volume 14, Number 3, Spring 1996, pp. 174-175.

Nir Shafir, “In an Ottoman Holy Land: The Hajj and the Road from Damascus, 1500–1800”, History of Religions, Volume 60, Issue 1 (August 2020), pp. 1-36.

Anita Shapira, Israel: A History (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012).

Amy Singer, Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration around Sixteenth Century Jerusalem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Amy Singer, Review of: Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand, *Ottoman Jerusalem: The Living City, 1517-1917* (London: Altajir World of Islam Trust, 2000), Mediterranean Historical Review 19 (2004), pp. 113-117.

Abdul Latif Tibawi, A Modern History of Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine (London: Macmillan, 1969).

Mesut Uyar, Edward J. Erickson, A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009).

Dror Ze’evi, An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

Grading

Attendance and Participation: 30

Weekly assignments (12 weeks): 24 [2 each]

Map quiz: 10

Timelines quiz: 10

Timeline 1: 10

Timeline 2: 10

Midterm exam (identification and definition questions, short essays): 20

Final exam (identification and definition questions, short essays): 20

Optional: Research paper (after approval), 7-10 pages / up to 4000 words (due on the day of the last class) + 1 letter size page “poster”:
20

Assignments details

TBA - Detailed instructions for the assignments will be provided at the beginning of the semester

Assignment submission dates [To Be Updated]

Map quiz (online) – Aug 30; Timelines quiz (online) – Sept 15; Timeline 1 – Oct 20; Review + Midterm (possibly takehome) – Oct 27*; Timeline 2 – Nov 17; Take-home final – Dec 4-11; Optional paper – Dec 4.

Syllabus Changes

The syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in advance. Changes and adjustments are to be expected.

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is required and will be taken at every class meeting; please write your name and sign the dated attendance sheet. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Read the university attendance policies here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. *When possible, please let me know in advance if you will not be attending a class session.* You are allowed up to 3 undocumented absences, after which any unexcused absence will affect your grade (4 points off for every absence). Excused absences include documented medical emergency, family crisis, military service, university sanctioned or official activities.

Email: As a matter of policy, UFL related communications are delegated to your UFL email. Information concerning the course, especially changes in venue, readings, assignments, etc., will be disseminated via Canvas announcements. Please make sure that your contact information is updated and that you are signed up to receive notification of course announcements.

Turning in assignments: Students are required to provide all assignments in digital form, by the date and time they are due (extra time in case of documented emergencies or extreme circumstances will be considered).

Late Papers and Tests: Tests and papers will not be accepted late without medical documentation or review of specific circumstances.

Electronic devices: All electronic devices are allowed, as long as you use them for class purposes or for other necessary purposes (emergency calls and updates, essential time sensitive communications). Please make sure they do not interfere with the class or disturb other students, do not emit high volume sounds, and are set to reasonably silent mode.

Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code: The University of Florida holds its students to the highest standards. Students are encouraged to read the University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040), so they are aware of these standards. The University principles address respect for people and property, for fairness, for Laws and Regulations, and for academic integrity. Any violation of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in academic sanctions and further student conduct action.

The University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (UF Regulation 4.040) can be found at these links:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

<https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>

<https://policy.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UF-Regulation-4.040.pdf>

The processes of applying the codes can be found at the Dean of Students Office website:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-honor-code/>

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Academic Honesty:

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Students commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Student Honor Code. Any Student who becomes aware of a violation of the Student Honor Code is encouraged to report the violation to the appropriate University Official. Click the links above to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: “A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another person or Entity.” To avoid plagiarism students must give proper attribution to any source used or consulted (oral or written materials, published or unpublished), and clearly mark and attribute direct quotes. Students should follow their faculty's policy on collaboration, should understand how to properly cite sources, and should not give nor receive an improper academic advantage in any manner through any medium. Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a failing grade.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at: <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at: <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center and provide appropriate documentation as early as possible in the semester. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. To get started use this link: <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> or call 352-392-8565.

Grading Policies and Scale: Current university grades and grading policies are explained here:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

The grading scale used for this class:

	A	93-100+	A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	68-69	D	63-67	D-	60-62
F	<60				

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
<https://umatter.ufl.edu/>
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services. <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website. <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website. <https://ufhealth.org/locations/uf-health-shands-emergency-room-trauma-center/>
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services:* For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450. <https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/>
- *University of Florida Police Department – UFPD.* Emergency and Police Assistance, <https://police.ufl.edu/>. Non-emergencies: 352-392-1111. For emergencies and immediate help call 9-1-1

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
<https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
<https://career.ufl.edu/>
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
<https://answers.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu/>
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.
<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-%20code-student-conduct-code/>
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process. <https://distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process/>

Additional lists of resources

There are additional resources on Campus, in Gainesville and in Alachua County, listed on UFL webpages, including:

- <https://www.ufadvising.ufl.edu/student-resources/>
- <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu/>
- <https://titleix.ufl.edu/get-help/campus-resources/>