

Palestine at the Exhibition
AH255

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Office Hours: by appointment
Thursdays: 10:45-14:00

Course Description

In this course we will examine how Palestine has been staged, displayed, contested, and sometimes erased through exhibitions from the nineteenth century to the present day. Taking Timothy Mitchell's concept of the "exhibitionary order" as its point of departure, students will explore exhibitions as technologies, concepts and orders that organize knowledge, produce narrative authority, and shape public understandings of land, history, and identity. Rather than treating exhibitions simply as reflections of politics, the course asks how they actively produced Palestine as an object of vision, whether as biblical landscape, imperial possession, archaeological site, national homeland, humanitarian crisis, or decolonial project.

Moving from nineteenth-century Holy Land panoramas and world fairs to Ottoman exhibitions, Zionist pavilions, British Mandate museums, Palestinian exhibition projects, and contemporary artistic interventions in and on Palestine, students will examine how exhibitions construct historical narratives through objects, architecture, photography, painting, maps, archives, and digital media. Throughout the semester, selected case studies of exhibitions about Palestine are considered alongside their curators, institutions, audiences, and historical and political contexts, with particular attention paid to questions of representation, authority, contested memory, and the ethics of exhibition-making. The course will conclude with student curatorial proposals that develop an exhibition on Palestine using historical materials, artworks, archives, and concepts of exhibition design.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete the assigned reading before each class and engage with it critically. Critically engaging a text involves trying to identify the author's central argument, note recurring concepts or themes, and consider how the text relates to the course's overall themes, previous readings and discussions. Taking notes while reading is strongly encouraged, as is marking passages that raise questions or seem particularly significant. If you encounter unfamiliar terms or difficult sections, try to identify precisely what is confusing and bring those questions to class. You are not expected to understand every reference or argument immediately. Part of the purpose of the seminar is to work through challenging material collectively and to examine points of ambiguity or disagreement within the texts. Because this is a discussion-based course, regular and thoughtful participation is an essential component of the course. Students are encouraged to contribute by asking

questions, responding to one another's ideas, and offering interpretations grounded in the readings.

Course readings that are not provided with a link in the below schedule will be posted on Google Classroom. Students who have accommodation arrangements are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown

Class Participation (15%):

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings before class and actively engage with lectures, exhibitions, and peer presentations. Regular attendance is required. More than two unexcused absences will substantially affect the final grade.

Class Presentation (20%):

Each week, one student will deliver a 15–20-minute presentation on one assigned course reading and one exhibition selected from the syllabus (or otherwise approved by the instructor). The presentation should introduce the main themes, arguments, and methods of the reading and explain how they relate to previous course readings and discussions. Students should also analyze how the exhibition constructs and communicates knowledge about Palestine, considering its curatorial approach, visual strategies, historical context, intended audience, as well as the public response. Presentations should conclude with several discussion questions that encourage class discussion and classmates' participation.

In-class Exhibition Analysis Paper (20%):

In **week 5** Students will write a 800-1000 word critical analysis of one historical or contemporary exhibition discussed in class (TBD). The paper should examine the exhibition as a cultural and political narrative by considering questions such as: What story does the exhibition tell? Who organized it and for whom? How are objects, photographs, maps, architecture, labels, and exhibition space used to construct meaning? What historical, political, or ideological assumptions underpin the exhibition? Which perspectives are foregrounded and which are omitted? Focus for example on, how is Palestine described? What symbols/language are used (flag, language, maps, institutions, agriculture, industry)?

In-class Curatorial Statement (20%):

Students will prepare a 500-700 word curatorial project statement proposing a small exhibition on a theme related to Palestine. Possible themes could include, for example, Mapping Palestine, Objects and Memory, Archaeology and Empire, Pilgrimage and Photography, Water and Infrastructure, *and* Gaza in Contemporary Art. The statement should articulate the exhibition's central argument, identify its intended audience, propose 5–8 objects or artworks, outline its interpretive goals, and provide a working exhibition title. This assignment serves as the conceptual foundation for the final project.

Final Curatorial Exhibition Proposals and Presentations (25%):

Student will produce a professional exhibition proposal as the final assessment. The proposal should include an exhibition title; a 2,500–3,000-word jointly written curatorial essay presenting the exhibition's central argument, historical significance, interpretive framework, and intended audience; an annotated checklist of 10–20 proposed works (including artworks, photographs, archival materials, maps, films, architectural models, or digital media), with a brief justification for each object; a simple exhibition layout or gallery sequence; and sample interpretive materials, including an introductory wall text, two object labels, and one proposed interactive or digital component. The proposal should also include an “Envisioned Curatorial Challenges and Ethics” section (approximately **500–750 words**) that identifies potential ethical, political, or interpretive controversies the exhibition may generate. Students should reflect on issues such as representation, historical accuracy, audience reception, institutional context, contested narratives, or the display of sensitive materials, and explain how they would address these challenges through curatorial choices, interpretation, or public programming. Projects will be assessed on the originality and coherence of the curatorial concept, the quality of research, close engagement with course themes and the consideration of ethical and curatorial challenges, and the the exhibition design and accompanied text. **Due December 11 midnight.**

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss

seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Course Schedule

1.Week 1 (September 3)

The Exhibitionary Order: The Great Exhibition

Required Reading

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Chapter 1. Read "The World as Exhibition".

Case Study

Examine the Crystal Palace exhibition through official catalogue and contemporary illustrations. Consider how exhibition design organized knowledge and produced imperial authority.

<https://sacredfootsteps.com/2021/06/21/exhibited-in-life-and-death-western-imperialism-and-the-exhibition-of-colonised-bodies/>

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/pdp6m5e3/items?canvas=12>

2.Week 2: (September 10): Inventing the Holy Land

Required Reading

Nassar, Issam, Stephen Sheehi, and Salim Tamari. *Camera Palæstina: Photography and Displaced Histories of Palestine*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022. Read Chapter 2 "Visual Interlude: *Photographic Images from Ottoman and Mandate Palestine*".

<https://www.luminosoa.org/books/m/10.1525/luminos.126>

Case Study Holy Land Panoramas and exhibitions organized by the Palestine Exploration Fund. Compare Camera Palestina images with Palestine Exploration Fund photographs, maps, and exhibition displays. <https://www.pef.org.uk/>

3.Week 3: (September 17): Empire on Display

Required Reading

Displaying the Orient. Çelik, Zeynep. *Displaying the Orient*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. Read Chapter 2.

<https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/public/book/displaying-the-orient-architecture-of-islam-at-nineteenth-century-world-s-fairs.html>

Case Study

Palestine at the Ottoman Pavillion of the Centennial Fair of 1876.

Jacobs, Linda K. "Palestine at the Centennial Fair of 1876." *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 80 (Winter 2019): 76–91. <https://doi.org/10.70190/jq.180.p76>.

4. Week 4: (September 24): Nation Before the State

<http://www.1939nyworldsfair.com/JPC-40/JPC.aspx>

Required Reading

Gökatalay, S. "Women, the Jewish Palestine Pavilion, and the New York World's Fair of 1939–1940." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 16, no. 4 (2025): 349–375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2025.2569742>.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "Performing the State: The Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, 1939/40." In *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*, edited by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp, 101–126. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Case Study: The Jewish Palestine Pavilion, New York World's Fair. Examine the pavilion catalogue

<http://www.1939nyworldsfair.com/JPC-40/JPC.aspx>

BCB Community Forum 1 (12:30–13:30)

5. Week 5: (October 1)

Controversy and the Exhibition

In-class writing assignment.

Required Reading

Katz, Emily Alice. It's the Real World After All: The American-Israel Pavilion-Jordan Pavilion Controversy at the New York World's Fair, 1964–1965." *American Jewish History*, Bd. 91, Nr. 1, 2003, S. 129–155

Case Studies:

- i. The 1964-1965 NY World Fair Jordan/Israel Controversy

<https://newlinesmag.com/essays/a-mural-brought-the-palestine-conflict-to-the-1964-worlds-fair/>

ii. The word “Palestine” at the British Museum

<https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/why-did-the-british-museum-remove-references-to-palestine/>

6. Week 6 (October 8)

The Museum Without a State

Required Reading

Hamdan Taha, *Jerusalem's Palestine Archaeological Museum*.

Case Study

Study *Jerusalem Lives (Tahya Al Quds)* through its catalogue, website, and exhibition design.

<https://palmuseum.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2023-04/Engl.pdf>

BCB Community Forum 2 (12:30–13:30-class ends early)

Week 7: (October 15)

Competing Jerusalems

Required Reading

Boord, Ofer. “The War of Independence Exhibited: A Study of Three Israeli Museums.” *Israel Studies* 21, no. 1 (2016): 82–108.

<https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.21.1.82>

Case Studies:

Atshan & Galor, “Jerusalem, Museums, and Discourses on Settler Colonialism”.

<https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/Jerusalem, Museums, and Discourses on Settler Colonialism.pdf>

Tower of David Museum, Palestinian Museum, Jewish Museum Berlin

8. Week 8: October 19- 25 NO CLASSES

FALL BREAK

9. Week 9: (October 29)

Exhibitions without Borders

Required Reading

Toukan, Hanan. "The Palestinian Museum." *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 3 (December 2018): 10–22. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/the-palestinian-museum>

Salti, Rasha. "On Qalandiya International," in *This Sea Is Mine* (2016) or *Solidarity Is Not a Matter of Charity* (2022), plus one catalogue essay.

Case Study:

Qalandiya International. Examine the different editions of the exhibition and its decentralized curatorial model. Consider how the project reimagines the exhibition beyond the conventional museum by working across multiple sites, institutions, and communities.

<https://archive.ibraaz.org/publications/79> (

10. Week 10: (November 5)

Exhibiting Historical Solidarity with Palestine

Required Reading

Foster, Hal. "An Archival Impulse." *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 3–22.

Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity and Museums in Exile. Introduction.

<https://framerframed.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/FF-past-disquiet-updated-DEF.pdf>

Case Study: Past Disquiet (2015–present).

Examine how the exhibition mobilizes archival documents, photographs, correspondence, posters, and ephemera to reconstruct histories of international artistic solidarity with Palestine and other anti-colonial movements.

Community Forum 3 (12:30–13:30 class ends early)

11. Week 11: (November 12)

The Global Exhibition: Curating Palestine

Required Reading

Wijaya, Angga. 2024. "The Ruangrupa's Collective Curatorial Practice at Documenta Fifteen." In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference of Art, Craft, Culture and Design (ICON-ARCCADE 2023)*, 90–97.
<https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/icon-arccade-23/125999440>

Case study: *documenta fifteen* (2022).

Toukan, Hanan. "Refusing Epistemic Violence: Guernica-Gaza and the 'German Context'." *Afterall*. September 10, 2024. <https://www.afterall.org/articles/refusing-epistemic-violence-guernica-gaza-and-the-german-context/>.

12. Week 12: (November 19)

Re-Writing History

***In-class curatorial statement writing assignment*.**

Required Reading

As'ad, Ali T. "[*Exhibiting Nation: A Brief History of Palestinian Exhibition-Making in the Twentieth Century*](#)." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 53, no.1 (2024): 46–67.

Case Studies: Palestine from Above OR At the Seams

- i. Anani, Yazid. "Accounts of Palestine from Above." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 81 (Spring 2020): 8–19. Institute for Palestine Studies.
<https://doi.org/10.70190/jq.l81.p8>.
- ii. *At the Seams* (Palestinian Museum, 2018).
Examine how memory and embroidery in family archives, objects, and oral histories become exhibition materials.

13. Week 13 (November 26)

The Exhibition as Evidence

Required Reading

Bois, Yves-Alain , Michel Feher , Hal Foster and Eyal Weizman , On Forensic Architecture: A Conversation with Eyal Weizman, October, 156 (2016), 116–140
10.1162/OCTO_a_00254.

https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/20055/1/octo_a_00254.pdf

Case Study

Selected investigations by Forensic Architecture, particularly those concerning Palestine. <https://forensic-architecture.org/programme/exhibitions/inhumane-zones>

<https://www.palestinianyouthmovement.com/our-work/the-architecture-of-genocide>

14. Exhibiting Human Rights (December 2)

Required Reading

Purbrick, Louise. "Museums and the Embodiment of Human Rights." *Museum & Society* 9, no. 3 (2011): 166–89. <https://doi.org/10.29311/mas.v9i3.183>

Case Study

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights exhibition "Palestine Uprooted: Nakba Past and Present"

<https://humanrights.ca/exhibition/palestine-uprooted-nakba-past-and-present>

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt4Zh0wpdRk>

15. Final Project Presentations (in-class) and Paper due