



Middle East Learning Academy

Listen, see, understand, debate.

Middle East Seminars

Jerusalem... Teheran... Cairo... Beirut... Damascus... Amman...

Today, understanding the **Middle East** is an integral part of obtaining a comprehensive view of the world and the way it is headed. Many of the global issues originate from this region and their effects ripple throughout the globe.

Resolving these conflicts is a task that starts with a single question: **How much do I really know about this?**

MELA's premise: in order to work towards a resolve of the Middle Eastern conflicts, education needs to be a key instrument of the tools used, whether on the macro level of the state or the micro level of one's neighbors. If knowledge is power, then offering knowledge could mean building strength.

MELA's goal: to reach out to people motivated to expand their knowledge base in Middle Eastern affairs, and to educate through a nonpartisan, innovative, multimedia learning experience – **MELA Seminars**.

Like building blocks added carefully to an infrastructure of understanding, the participant is first granted the knowledge basis of the **core issues**, before engaged in a learning process to comprehend the **complexities of the region**. Further drill down of the elements that are unique to the Middle East engenders in turn a better understanding of the **'local' perspective** of the different actors of the region.

The participants are engaged in an array of subjects such as the **Arab-Israeli conflict**, the **Arab spring**, the **Iranian threat**, and a spectrum of dilemmas that highlight the evening news. **MELA Seminars** are **multimedia** sessions, put together to achieve the **desired level of study**, using different **educational modules**.

For the different options for seminars and lectures please scroll down to the last page.



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Iftah Burman, founder of the Middle East Learning Academy, is a Middle East expert, and delivers seminars on a variety of Middle Eastern topics. Born in Israel, he served in the IDF and later on received his Bachelor's degree from the University Center of Ariel in Middle Eastern studies and Political Science. Iftah completed his Master's degree at the Department of Contemporary Middle East of the Tel Aviv University, focusing on Syrian and Lebanese politics.

Iftah speaks on the Middle Eastern geopolitics to guests of the Israeli government, diplomats and foreign officials, academics in different levels, Birthright undergrads, postgraduates and young professionals, delivering critical analysis about current politics of the region. Iftah also acts as the director of foreign, senior level missions to Israel, of officials responsible for national security and policy, in the fields of the Iranian threat, the Arab-Israeli conflict and counter terrorism. Iftah has been a successful educator for the last 13 years, aiding with a nonpartisan, objective approach in his teaching methods, and promoting a wider understanding of the world of Middle Eastern politics.

Iftah serves as an army reserves platoon sergeant in an IDF infantry unit that is active in the area of counter terrorism.

The Middle East Learning Academy offers a variety of seminars and workshops on Middle Eastern topics. The study process is modular and can be adapted to the needs of the audience as an individual program. The subjects of the academy include: The Israeli – Palestinian conflict, The Arab – Israeli relations, The Arab Spring, New Media and Social Networks in the Middle East, Understanding the News from the Middle East – the Truth is in the Camera Angle, The Iranian – Western Clash, Islamist Organizations in the Middle East, Suna and Shia in Modern Politics.



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The Academy offers modular programs of the following sessions:

The Initial Level – Learning Session

The first level in the program is a learning session, which is the stage of acquaintance with the subject in question. This stage enables an overall understanding of the topic, by learning various aspects and context, as well as the timeline of the subject. The session is divided into two parts: In the first part, the speaker gives an overview of the topic, utilizing a multimedia presentation that combines maps, videos, pictures, as well as timeline and context visualizations. During the overview, the participants write down keywords of topics they wish to expand on or ask about. In the second part the speaker opens the session to questions about the topics of interest or ones that needed clarification, while assisting with the multimedia presentation. This part is critical for those who need to understand the subject in a different way, or need more examples. This part also helps facilitate a firm understanding with participants that were already acquainted with a certain aspect of the subject at hand, and need to confront their knowledge with the information given to them.

This method makes use of photos, videos, soundtrack, and visualizations of timelines and context, which allows for a multisensory reception of the subject in question, and facilitates better perception. Also, the separation between the overview and the questions segment enables a better understanding of the subject as a process and its occurrence in time and space.

From here the program can move in different directions depending on individual needs.



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Active Learning: Discussion and Advanced Learning Session

This session debates at length a number of key issues that were presented during the learning session. This is a second stage in the learning process, and it allows a more in-depth analysis of the subject, as well as further learning about important details, through an active learning process. The advantage of this session is the ability to drill down into aspects that are not common knowledge and the option to discover the inner workings of the topic through critical thinking. The speaker will introduce the main issues with detail and would then engage the students in active study through Q & A and an open debate. For illustration purposes the speaker uses maps, videos, and pictures which are projected on a screen. As the session progresses the speaker adds more detail on the subject which adds more and more layers to the participants' understanding.

The advantage of this learning method is the ability given to the participants to deepen their knowledge of a subject in which they are interested and to do so while expressing their opinion and listening to the opinion of others. Through balanced guidance, the speaker creates a dialogue between the participants, as well as between them and himself. This raises the difficulties within the different issues and allows them to be dealt with based on knowledge acquired. By deepening on key issues from the general subject, the participants receive a more thorough comprehension of the entire process and the different factors that affect it.



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Experience Decision Making: Simulation Session

This session introduces the participant to situations and examples on a particular topic through case-based study in a cooperative learning environment. During the session, the speaker will simulate one or more paradigms, and guide the participants in managing those under rules and procedures that emulate the reality on the ground. The speaker will assign roles for each participant or group of participants according to the situation, and will accompany them towards proper management of the paradigm at hand. Chosen situations will show the complexity of the subject studied in previous sessions, and enable profound understanding of the various conflicts that are involved in the management of those, through a hands-on experience.

Simulation is an effective way of creating unmediated encounters between the participant and the complexity of each topic and subject, as well as a deep understanding of the difficulties that accompany the various aspects when dealing with those. In addition, the simulation allows the participant to step out of his or her positions and to experience the ones of others through the need to act in their stead in the simulation.

Broad Understanding: Learning session of another subject corresponding to the first topic

Some subjects have a corresponding relationship, and there are those that contain or are contained in other subjects. In these cases, the participants would benefit greatly from a second learning session of the corresponding topic, which will allow a more wide scope perspective. After participating in two learning sessions, the participants can be engaged in an expansion and discussion session or a simulation session of higher complexity which will deal with both subjects and their correspondence.



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These modules are incorporated into the different optional seminars:

Option 1 – Introduction Seminar – two hours, one session:

The Initial Level - Learning Session

Option 2 – Advanced Seminar – four hours, two sessions over one day:

The Initial Level - Learning Session

Discussion and Advanced Learning Session

Option 3 – Advanced Seminar no.2 – four hours, two sessions over one day:

The Initial Level - Learning Session

Simulation

Option 4 – Advanced Seminar no.3 – six hours, three sessions over two days:

The Initial Level - Learning Session

Discussion and Advanced Learning Session

Simulation

Option 5 – Wide Scope Seminar – six hours, three sessions over one or two days:

Two learning Sessions about corresponding subjects

Discussion and Advanced Learning Session

Option 6 – In-Depth Seminar – 8 hours, four sessions over two days:

Two Learning Sessions about corresponding subjects

Discussion and Advanced Learning Session

Simulation

MELA's most popular choice: Initial level presentation on the Israeli – Palestinian Conflict.

For more details please contact Iftah Burman.