

This July, over forty law students from across Canada participated in a new online course, “Decision Making in Times of Crisis.” The course was offered by the Rothberg International School of Hebrew University, in close cooperation with the Asper Chair in International Business and Trade Law.

The program explored the wider question of how individuals, groups and societies make decisions in times of crisis. In the first two weeks, live and interactive sessions delivered from Canada by Dr. Bryan Schwartz. They drew on insights that have had a major impact on modern legal thinking, including decision theory, behavioral economics and the social science literature on trauma and resilience. The next two weeks were delivered online from Israel, led by Dr. Daniel Ohana and a group of distinguished guest speakers. They focused on Jewish civilization and the modern state as a crucible for decision making in times of crisis.

Student participation was greatly facilitated by the support of the Asper Foundation, and specifically the Asper International Program in Israeli and International Law.

THE FOLLOWING IS A COMPILATION OF THANK YOU NOTES TO THE DONORS AND SUPPORTERS OF THIS INNOVATIVE PROGRAM.

I am a third-year law student at the University of Ottawa. I am writing this letter to thank you for your generous donation towards this course. I greatly enjoyed the Israel seminar “Mishpatim” program offered via the University of Manitoba to myself, and several other Law Students. I have never really visited Israel, nor do I have experience with any of its history. Having taken this course, I was able to extend my knowledge within the Israeli legal system and also compare, contrast and academically criticize or applaud some policies and procedures through the reflection exercises. The opportunity to be able to learn and grow via the online platform, especially through the guest lectures, provided for an opportunity to stay in Canada yet indulge in the Israeli society and culture. Again, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude, my experience would not be possible without your contributions.

Thank you,
Aqsa Nadeem

My name is Michelle Cielen and I am currently a law student at Robson Hall. I am writing today to thank you most sincerely for your contribution to the 2020 Asper International Program. Over the course of the past four weeks, I have had the chance to engage with topics and concepts that I have never experienced before.

As well, I really want to thank the coordinators for putting forth the effort to deliver this course online and accredited within our degree requirements. Since the lockdown has generally brought most things to a halt, the fact that this course is available truly shows how dedicated the Asper Foundation really is to the students of the University of Manitoba.

We were exposed to different perspectives on a wide variety of legal, political, and economic issues. The lectures from leading academic experts in their fields were both stimulating and thought-provoking. The course content demonstrated the challenges and triumphs of the Israeli society and its legal system, which helped me understand their nuanced differences compared to Canada. Yet, I was most intrigued to learn how similar our systems really are. Only through this course was I able to gain a better insight into Israel’s political diaspora, and how in many ways they have a more developed approach to decision-making in times of crisis.

Both Professors Brian Schwartz and Daniel Ohana were excellent guides to bridge the gap between my background in law and the interdisciplinary course material stemming from economics, political science, and the history of Israel. I am now inspired to take more courses within these areas and continue building on the foundation they have provided me.

I truly hope that this program continues to offer students online access so that other Canadian law students, without the freedom to travel abroad, will be able to participate. Thank you very much again. This was a rewarding experience and would not have been possible without your generous support.

Sincerely,
Michelle Cielen

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all the donors that have made this experience possible. Despite not being able to travel to Israel due to COVID-19, the faculty and staff has made this experience an unforgettable one. I really enjoyed the fact that the teachers encouraged me to form my own opinion by requiring four reflection papers throughout the program. Moreover, I feel grateful for having been given an insightful look at Israel's current situation, through different guest speakers that live in Israel at the moment. This experience could not have been more enjoyable and insightful considering the current situation! Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,
Rivka Bodokh

Thank you for your continued support of the Israel program. Your continued funding allowed a number of students to take part in a very interesting course, which among other things provided a look into the Israeli legal system. As a law student this was particularly insightful, and captivating.

Although the class wasn't able to make it out to Israel this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the various individuals involved did a fantastic job creating a well thought-out and engaging course. Without your support none of this would have been possible, and I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to partake in this learning experience.

Thank you again,
Aaron Vallance

Thank you for contributing to a great program that allowed students to continue our studies over the course of the summer in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The course was fascinating and it was interesting to learn about the legal system in Israel as well as various perspectives on the impact COVID-19 has had on different cultural groups in Israel.

Sincerely,
Justin Gertenstein

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for your donations to the Asper International Law Program, “Decision Making in Times of Crisis”, that took place over this summer. It was a great opportunity to be able to attend this program virtually, even though I was not able to physically travel to Israel. Throughout the course, I was able to learn about Israeli society and culture, and how this plays a tremendous role in the way that the country has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. I enjoyed getting to hear from various guest speakers and being able to converse with students from other law schools across Canada.

This course gave me the chance to not only learn more about the Canadian legal system, but also the Israeli system and how the two compare. I enjoyed learning about the challenges that the country of Israel currently faces, such as integrating immigrants, and the ways the legal system is moving forward in solving them.

Thank you for helping to provide a dynamic learning experience for myself and the other students that attended the program.

Sincerely,
Jill Klassen

I wanted to thank the Asper Foundation for their generous contribution to the summer 2020 program being offered through Hebrew University. It is because of this contribution that I was able to take this course and learn about a host of interesting topics. Through this opportunity I was able to both to learn and provide myself with more time to devote to the community in my final year of law school.

I am extremely grateful to the Asper Foundation for this opportunity, and their continued support of the Robson Hall Faculty of Law.

Sincerely,
Eric Penner

Thank you very much for your generous donation towards the Israel and International Law Program. I found it meaningful to learn about how Israel was established and better understand the current conflict with Palestine. It was also beneficial to relate what we were learning in class to the situation of COVID. The pandemic is something that is impacting everyone and to be able to compare course material to a such a relatable event made it easier to comprehend. This course was very engaging, and I appreciate having the opportunity to attend.

Thank you very much,
Melina Venuto

This summer was a trying and difficult time for people around the world. I am so happy that I got the opportunity to take part in this class during such turbulent times. With the benefit of technology, I connected with students from around the world in a unique environment. I was amazed by how captivating the lectures were. While it was great to have Dr. Schwartz start of the class with his lectures, the second half of the class with the guest lectures was even better. Each guest lecturer had a unique set of expertise and real-life experience. I cannot believe that such a great online experience was put together on a whim's notice. While the coronavirus has created new barriers and distancing between people, this learning experience brought me closer to the unique lives of lecturers and students from around the world. I am very thankful for the funding support of donors who made this amazing experience possible.

Thanks,
Muhammad Riaz

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation of your generous donation to the Asper International Program. While obviously this year was different and we were unable to go to Israel itself, I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to take this class. This course offered me the opportunity to learn about Israel itself, and about decision making and times of crisis – in particular, our present crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. I very enjoyed being able to learn about the history and background of Israel, as it is so different from that of Canada.

The ability to study the COVID-19 pandemic from an academic viewpoint was also very interesting as there is so much information and misinformation about it.

Without your generous donation I would not have been able to participate in this class which offers a very different opportunity than my other classes at Robson Hall. I have greatly appreciated the inter-disciplinary approach this class took and allowed me to use some of the knowledge I gained in my undergraduate degree in History and Political Science.

Sincerely,
Victoria Nash

This course provided a unique opportunity when the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic made many student's summer plans alter greatly. This online course was put together quickly but the experience was still valuable and unique to anything in a Canadian law classroom. This experience would also not be possible without the donations that make the program more affordable for students.

Many law students have loans or are otherwise on a tight budget, and the fact that taking a valuable course from an international school on unique topics is less than my normal per-course tuition rate is remarkable. I know I would not have been able to financially take part in this course if not for the reduction in tuition that was only possible because of the donations by supporters of the program. I hope to one day find ways to give back in a similar way to students learning the law in the future.

I would recommend this course to any student looking to enhance their regular law school classroom experience and dive into unique interdisciplinary questions. While the experience in Israel would have been unforgettable, the online version of related topics did not disappoint.

Thank you,
Katherine Peterson

I am writing to you to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for giving Canadian students the opportunity to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Your generous contributions enable us to take the course without worrying about the financial burden of doing so. The course is taught in a manner which allows students to garner a better understanding of Israel more generally, as well as Israeli politics, institutions, and culture. The content of the course is fascinating, and Professor Schwartz provide us with a curriculum that perfectly balances the Jewish narrative, perspective, and experience with Israel as a modern country.

As a Jewish student I think it is remarkable that my fellow students and colleagues can experience Israel and learn about a country that is so near to my heart. Thank you again.

Best regards,
Samantha Morry

Thank you for your generous financial support of this outstanding program, which makes it possible for students like me to participate.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to take this course during this global COVID-19 crisis. Not only was I able to learn about decision making during crisis and the history of Jewish civilization, but also meaningful perspective and hope for how communities can grow and adapt when faced with great challenges.

Learning about the history, values, and experiences of the Jewish people, including the lead up to and aftermath of the Holocaust, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the challenges and successes in recent years has been truly enlightening. I have been personally struck by learning about the power of community in both resiliency and striving to do better, that is clearly demonstrated in both historical and modern context of Israeli and Jewish communities around the world. Thank you again for your support.

Best,
Natasha Ellis

Thank you so much for your incredible ongoing support for the Mishpatim program. Be it at home, or abroad, the time, efforts and funding you provide to support memorable student experiences is greatly appreciated. I very much enjoyed the course and my time in Israel last year and am looking forward to another great virtual program this summer.

Having been able to take the course previously and learn about the Israeli culture and society first-hand has provided an excellent foundation of the legal system and history which I am sure will be a foundational and integral element of this new course on decision making during times of crisis.

I am anticipating that my time spent dedicated towards this course, as it was in Israel, will be a rewarding and unforgettable experience. Thank you again for your generous support. Without it, this program and my experience would not have been possible.

Sincerely,
Devon Molloy

Thank you so much for your contribution and continued support toward the Asper International Program on Israeli Law: Decision Making in a Time of Crisis this year. Even with the unexpected change of events and cancellation of the in-person class, the course was enriching and rewarding. Without donors like you, this program cannot exist, and individuals like me cannot get this great experience. Hopefully, next year's program can return to its original form and take place in Israel.

During these unprecedented times, this course gave me unique and extremely relevant information about making decisions in times of crisis. I really appreciate your generous support and thank you again for allowing this program to take place!

Thank you again,
Keith Murkin

Thank you very much for your generous sponsorship and scholarship which enabled me to take the course "decision making in times of crisis" at the Rothberg International School. I found this course informative and learned a great deal about the challenges involved in government decision making and Israeli society.

One part of the course that really stood out to me was how complex decision making can be in Israel. Firstly, the differences between the different social groups that live in Israel such as the Arabs and Ultra-Orthodox leads to unique challenges in making decisions for Israel. The government may make a decision which is best for the country, but this may come in conflict with religious beliefs held by these groups. Second, the imminent threat of war and attacks. I was fascinated to learn how fast decisions need to be made during war or when there is a targeted killing.

I hope to use the information I learned from this course to be an active advocate for Israel when I hear anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic comments in the future. Thank you again for helping to give me the ability to take this class.

Kind regards,
David Tobis

I am writing this letter to express my deep gratitude for your immense generosity and support that allowed me to participate in the novel opportunity held by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem this summer. Over the summer, I was able to learn a plethora of current legal issues in Israel and cherished the opportunity to do so from such distinguished guest speakers as were made available through the course. Your donation has allowed me to better my understanding of a country with such a bountiful and unique history, and it was a privilege to be able to do so. Once again, thank you.

Sincerely,
Emily Lisi

I would like to offer a whole-hearted thank you to the Asper Foundation and to all of the supporters of the Asper International Program.

I was fortunate not only to participate this past month, but also to participate in the program last year in Jerusalem. The theme of “decision making in times of crisis” is especially pertinent to current global events and the course has allowed me to examine it with a new perspective. Learning about the legal foundations of how decisions are made, and the psycho-social aspects of why decisions are made during times of emergency is something that will inform my perspective of current and future crises. Additionally, I was able build on what I learnt last year about Israel’s legal state and culture. My participation in this program has made my law school experience unique and I have gained so much insight. I would never have had this opportunity if it were not for the program and all the generous donors.

Thanks to each of you who made this possible!
Meghan Bjorklund

I want to express my sincere thanks for your continued support of the Mishpatim Program through Hebrew University. This year was certainly an outlier with COVID-19 cancelling travel plans, but it was really wonderful that the course was still able to be offered online, and that you decided to continue to provide us with subsidies for this course. Due to financial issues resulting from the pandemic, it would have been difficult for me to participate in the course without financial assistance, and I am grateful for your generosity. I was able to gain new and unique perspectives from this course on a variety of topics. It was incredibly useful and informative, and I am happy that I was able to have this opportunity this summer. Once again, thank you for your support. Robson Hall students are so lucky to have supporters like you.

With gratitude,
Allison Kilgour

I am writing to extend my gratitude for your generous contribution to the Mishpatim program. Many students and I were disappointed when the original course was interrupted by the first wave of the coronavirus. The ability to take Decision-Making in Times of Crisis as an alternative eased some of the disappointment of being unable to travel to Israel, as well as provide the opportunity to further my education during the summer.

Academically, the course piqued my interest in Behavioural Economics principles, and also grew my appreciation for Jewish social resiliency. I thoroughly enjoyed the array of guest lecturers and felt that was a huge benefit of the online format of the course. Overall, the course was extremely interesting and valuable to my education. Thank you so much for your generous support. Without it, my experience would not have been possible.

Sincerely,
Zoe Stevens

I am writing today to express my gratitude for your generous donations that allowed me to be a part of the Decision Making in Times of Crisis course offered this summer. Although things have been different, and everyone faced disappointment in not being able to travel to Israel, this course brought many of us excitement and the opportunity to learn more about the culture and nation of the Israeli people. I have always appreciated the value of education, and I believe that now more than ever it is important to continue to learn and to grow. Your donations to this program have given me (and many others who might not have been able to attend) the chance learn and grow during these unprecedented times. This course is something that has meant a lot to me, and I am extremely thankful for your help in allowing us to participate.

Sincerely,
Shawn Eisler

Under difficult circumstances your contribution was particularly noticeable. It made it possible for me to afford the unique opportunity this program provided to interact with experts from Israel, all while still in Manitoba. We had some particularly excellent presenters this year, thanks to the efforts of the program organizers. I hope you will continue your support in the years to come. I have confidence that, whatever our new normal is, the program will remain extremely worthwhile for those fortunate enough to attend.

Best,
Christian Balagus-Warren

I would like to extend my sincerest thank you for your donation in support of this program. I thoroughly enjoyed the Decision Making in Times of Crisis class. Furthermore, I have found the knowledge I gained to be very useful given the COVID-19 pandemic. This class would not have been doable without your generosity.

Sincerely,
Kelsey Thain

I would like to sincerely thank the Asper Foundation and other supporters of the Asper International Program for making this experience possible. Although this year's program was different than years past, many of us benefited from the greater accessibility of online learning. We are all very grateful for your continued support and desire to find new ways of connecting students with Hebrew University.

The Asper International Program was an extremely interesting educational experience. I gained a much better understanding of Israeli history and society. We had the opportunity to learn from fascinating individuals of various backgrounds and expertise. These lecturers helped me better understand how the start-up culture has developed in Israel and the work being done to promote small business in areas such as East Jerusalem. Likewise, discussing Israeli legal perspectives in matters of international and domestic law has given me an opportunity to approach issues from a different perspective. The breadth of this course was greater than I had anticipated and has allowed me to expand my understanding of this complex and fascinating country. I look forward to travelling to Israel one day.

Sincerely,
Patrick Gutowski

I want to give a sincere thank you for your support in helping to pioneer this valuable new initiative. Spurred on despite the flux of the current circumstances, it came together wonderfully as a rewarding, enriching look into not only how much of our world operates but also as a waypoint for navigating crises big and small, individually and as a society. It was a fantastic opportunity to widen my perspective and learn more about a universal part of our shared experience. It will certainly help shape my outlook and approach in professional and personal goings-on, and I am appreciative of the experience as made possible by the donors, professors, and guest lecturers.

Thank you,
Michael Badejo

A thousand thanks for your generous support to this year's Asper International Law Program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I am so glad I took part in this very timely and enlightening course, namely "Decision Making in Times of Crisis". I am truly grateful and appreciative of your donation and support.

Finally, receive my deep appreciation for your commitment to making knowledge accessible to younger generations. And thank you very much for your leadership in building better educated global citizens.

With sincere gratitude,
Amadou Sidy Diallo

I wanted to thank you for your donation to the Decision Making in Times of Crisis Course at Rothberg International School because this was truly an enriching opportunity. Having the chance to take a law course that was taught by passionate internationally recognized experts and local specialists really allowed me to gain interest and insight towards Israeli legal and political dynamics.

This opportunity to engage with open and available lecturers has certainly allowed me to develop a certain sensitivity and I am now even more eager to learn more about how the different historical backgrounds have helped framing the different legal systems around the world. As a matter of fact, discovering various local perspectives really helped me to better understand the criticality of issues, and will undoubtedly serve as a benchmark in the future, especially with regards to decision-making in times of crisis.

A personal highlight for me was learning more about the tensions that exist between Palestine and Israel from a local expert's perspective. I now understand better why the linguistic issues and the cultural gap contribute so strongly to the economic and social instability of the region. Thus, it was very meaningful to get different perspectives from the various guest lecturers.

Thank you,
Frederique Morin

Dear Asper Foundation and supporters of the Asper International Program,

I would like to express my deep gratitude for your generous donations that afforded me the opportunity to attend the Asper International Law Program. The opportunity to learn about Israel's legal system and society through the lens of many different lecturers held tremendous value for me. I would highly recommend this course to other students. Thank you again; this incredible program would not have been possible without your generous support.

Sincerely,
Andrew Fenwick

I am writing to thank the generous donors of the Asper International Law Program for the positive experience they contributed to this year. While this year's course was not able to take place in Israel, the experience and knowledge gained from the course was enriching and memorable. In particular, the juxtaposition of the challenges faced by Israel and by the global community during the COVID-19 pandemic was of particular interest to me. Thank you again for your support during this uncertain time.

Sincerely,
Devan Reid

This course was a unique opportunity to be able to study the law and legal concepts outside of the walls of typical Canadian law school. Although the pandemic made it impossible to travel to Israel and immerse ourselves in the traditional full experience of the course, it also offered an interesting lens at which to learn about and evaluate the many important decisions being made around the world amidst this crisis. I am thankful to all the donors that made this learning experience possible and hope that many more in the future will take advantage of this opportunity.

Sincerely,
Shayne Jackson

Thank you for your contributions and for allowing me to take a course which has greatly increased the diversity of my law education. If it weren't for your ongoing support to the Israel and International Law program, students like me would not have access to opportunities such as these. Being able to attend a class with students from around the world, and lecturers with such distinct backgrounds, has created an invaluable experience that I will always cherish. Thank you for contributing to this memorable class – I can't picture a better way of concluding my first year of studies here at Robson Hall.

Best regards,
Alexandra Broggy

My name is Dane Kingdon and I am a second-year student at University of Manitoba's Robson Hall Faculty of Law. During this turbulent year with COVID-19, I was lucky enough to take part in the Decision Making in Times of Crisis course. Because of COVID-19, all of my fall courses will be online, so it was extremely helpful to get to try an online course this summer – both to make this fall more manageable and to understand how to take an online only course. This experience will be beneficial come the fall semester.

On top of this, I got to look at the history of emergency decision making in Canada and Israel. This course allowed me to see the government's decisions during the pandemic in a whole new light. Without your generous donations I may not have been able to take this course, so I want to say thank you.

Sincerely,
Dane Kingdon