UBC UNIVERSITY BOOK CENTER ADELE H. STAMP STUDENT UNION
LARGEST SELECTION OF USED TEXTBOOKS

To print: Select **File** and then **Print** from your browser's menu.

This story was printed from **Diamondback Online.**
Site URL: http://www.diamondbackonline.com.

Ambassador Manuel Hassassian teaches a class on conflict resolution with an unlikely partner.

Instructors find friendship in divisive conflict

Students ponder Middle East solutions

By Alan J. McCombs
August 31, 2006

The likelihood that Manuel Hassassian and Edy Kaufman would ever meet was slim; the chance they would become friends, almost nonexistent.

Hassassian, after all, is the Palestinian ambassador to England while Kaufman is an Israeli professor from Hebrew University. The two first met while their lands were battling during the late 1980s. Kaufman invited Hassassian, then a professor at Bethel University, to a peace conference.

Many years and battles later, the two are unlikely friends who jointly teach a university summer term course on the conflict that has divided their homelands for decades.

Thatâ€™s not to say they developed an instant friendship or that both share the same views on the history of the conflict.

â€œBefore meeting Edy I was not open to Israel or Israeli, I came with bitter feeling. I saw all Israelis as soldiers and occupiers,â€Ì Hassassian said. â€œWe agree to the solutions we donâ€™t have to agree on the analysis of the past causes of the conflict but we agree on the peaceful solutions.â€Ì

Kaufman came to the universityâ€™s Center for International Development and Conflict Management in 1991. The following year he invited Hassassian to join him for a workshop, during which the two began to discuss teaching a course together. Since 1993 theyâ€™ve jointly taught a course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The partnership doesnâ€™t end in the classroom. The two men have lived together for all but two of the summers theyâ€™ve taught the class.

â€œBoth of us love to eat Middle East food ... we love to eat meat. We both love classical

[music]; he plays the cello, I play the guitar,â€İ Hassassian said. â€œSince we live together, we go to the gym every day together. We plan classes together, we brainstorm. Weâ€™re like a family after all these years.â€İ

The three-credit course, GVPT 309X: Conflict Resolution: the Israeli-Palestinian Experiment, presents the history of the conflict from both Israeli and Palestinian points of view.

The class not only focuses on the past but incorporates current events such as the recent Hezbollah-Israeli conflict.

â€œThe topic is incredibly interesting but the class itself, I donâ€™t know, you would think it would be more interactive, but it usually ends up being one of them giving a speech, then the other giving a speech,â€İ said David Bogorad, a business major from Tulane University.

â€œI think when itâ€™s just with one person it tends to be more focused but you donâ€™t get the diversity of presentation.â€İ said Michael Gaske, a political science major at Vanderbilt University.

Both lecturers see the class as not just a teaching arm but as part of the peace process.

â€œBecause these kids have nothing to do with the conflict, they can offer ideas completely out-of-the-box which can be taken back to Jerusalem,â€İ Kaufman said. Last Thursday night, the two lecturers held their last class of the term.

The final had been completed on Tuesday and the Tydings Hall classroom filled with more than 30 students. This class featured a role-playing exercise in which small groups discussed sovereignty issues surrounding Jerusalem, one of the thorniest issues in peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine because each country thinks the city is its capital.

Students actively discussed how to manage tourism, security, political administration and justice. Most ideas seemed to urge either unity of government and administration in the city or separate but equal systems of administrations in the city.

â€œThe more idealistic position is to say everything should be together; the more realistic is to allow some things to be separate,â€İ Kaufman said. â€œThe answer is in the middle.â€İ

On Friday, the two lecturers set out in two different directions â€” Kaufman for Israel, Hassassian for England. Even so, both men said they planned to come together again next year.

Until then, Kaufman said he hoped the university would offer classes on other conflicts.

â€œI wish it would be multiplied in other conflicts like Cyprus, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and Kashmir,â€İ Kaufman said. â€œWhat our dream is to have the university bring others like us, partners for peace.â€İ

Contact reporter Alan J. McCombs at mccombsdbk@gmail.com.

Note: Most newer browsers don't need a print-friendly version of this article. Just click **File**, then **Print** from your browser's menu at the previous page.

© 2006 Diamondback Online