

## GW Lecture Series Work Group Recommendation

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A LECTURE SERIES ON THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

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After several meetings, our committee has the following recommendations to make:

- There should be three events in the fall semester of 2024, preferably one in September, another in October, and a third in November. We think it wise to hold off on planning more events for the spring of 2025 until we see where the situation in the Middle East is headed and what the fallout is from the US election in November.
- These events should take place in the late afternoon, perhaps 5 pm, when most undergraduate students are done with their classes. Thursdays may be preferable because they are at the end of the week.
- The major challenge with these events is getting students to attend. They tend not to come to such events, even if they are about hot-button issues, unless attendance results in some form of credit for a course. Such events also compete with free lectures and podcasts students can get online at any time. But the chance of getting students is greatly increased if free food is offered. We therefore propose that each late-afternoon event be followed by a dinner that students can sign up for free of charge. It would also allow students to talk to one another after the event and process what they have learned.
- It is wise to consider having a Zoom option for each event for students and faculty who are unable to attend in person. It may also be good to record the event on Zoom so that it is available for viewing afterward to anyone unable to attend in-person or virtually.
- It may be helpful to call these events by a name that will attract attention, such as the “*Distinguished* Lecture Series on the Israel-Hamas War.”
- We recommend the following topics and speakers:
  - The first event should be a lecture given by **Professor Mark Tessler** of the University of Michigan, and it should deal with the topic of the Israel-Hamas in a general way. There are few people as qualified to do this as Tessler is. He has written widely on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades and has shown an ability to offer a fair, balanced, and insightful presentation of both sides of the conflict. Tessler has been contacted and invited to speak in September with an honorarium of \$1500, and he has accepted. (The invitation was issued before the committee understood that it should provide the Provost only with

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recommendations for speakers but not issue actual invitations. Our apologies for the misunderstanding, but *we ask that the Tessler invitation be honored.*)

Information about Tessler can be found here:

<https://lsa.umich.edu/polisci/people/faculty/tessler.html>

- The second event should be on the Israel-Hamas war in international law. We recommend here a panel discussion of several experts on the war in international law because few people are experts in all aspects of this issue. Fortunately, we have several experts at the GW Law School who can handle this topic. They include:

- **Sean Murphy**
- **Laura Dickinson**
- **Edward Swaine**

We should also add **David Scheffer** of the Council on Foreign Relations, who was recommended by two of three experts above. Information on Scheffer can be found here: <https://www.cfr.org/expert/david-j-scheffer>.

- The third event should be on the psychology of conflict and conflict resolution as it bears on the Israel-Hamas war. Dr. Sara Teichholtz, who is on our committee and is a psychiatrist at GW's med school, recommends that we invite **Dr. Vamik Volkan** to present on this topic. Volkan is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia, and is a pioneering and legendary figure in the field of conflict resolution. He has written 42 books, has engaged in active conflict resolution in major conflicts throughout the world over several decades, and has been nominated several times for a Nobel Peace Prize. He has been contacted and would be receptive to an invitation. Information about him can be found here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vam%C4%B1k\\_Volkan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vam%C4%B1k_Volkan)