

# POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This course offers an overview of modern Middle Eastern politics with the intention to create a more nuanced understanding and deeper knowledge of the current events in the region. Breaking away from the one-dimensional tradition of “Middle Eastern exceptionalism” the course takes a closer look at the states and societies of the Arab and non-Arab countries, and uses the concepts, methods and theories of the comparative politics to examine and explain the political institutions and practices of the region.

After a brief introduction to the historical foundations of the Modern Middle East, the course first explores the identity-formation and state-formation in the region, with a particular emphasis on the clash of national identities with the ethnic, religious and tribal identities. The Arab-Israeli conflict, the role of major powers in this context and main obstacles to its resolution provide the link between the state-oriented theme of the course and the second, social movements-oriented, one. This second part of the course covers a wide variety of topics, ranging from the rise of political Islam and ethnic and sectarian fragmentation in the region to the contested issues of secularism, socioeconomic inequality and political violence in a broader perspective. In the light of current political events and recent changes in political institutions, the third and final part of the course deals with the forces of –seemingly- resilient authoritarianism, prospects of regime change and democratization in the Middle East; and raises various questions on the compatibility of Islam and democracy as well as the future of the region after the 2011 uprisings.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance:** In order to comprehend the intricacies of the politics in the Middle East, it is important to follow the class material from beginning to the end. More than three unexcused absences will lower your attendance and participation grade. All students begin with an A; upon the fourth absence, this grade drops to an A-; the fifth, to a B+, the sixth, to a B, and so on. If you have a legitimate excuse, please let me know as soon as you can and provide documentation in order for your absence to be excused.

**Readings:** There is no single textbook for this class, but a collection of book chapters and articles from scholarly journals. The course readings can be found through library sources or at the class website. Remember the classes will not simply go over the readings but rather build on them through debates and discussions on the answers they provide and questions they raise.

**Current events:** As a part of the class, you are expected to follow day-to day events and keep up with the political analyses about the region throughout the semester. Events and issues covered on the Middle East pages of respectable news outlets will be assumed to be common knowledge and may appear on assignments and class discussions. Please be advised that every analysis or report you read may not fully reflect the reality, or may be biased towards one view or another. Since the class aims to develop a more sophisticated

understanding of the events in the Middle East, it is your responsibility not to take them at the face value and evaluate them by using the concepts and tools you learn in your political science courses.

**Participation:** Because class will consist of a dynamic mix of lecture and discussion, students must attend and actively participate in the class. This requires you to come to class having read the assigned texts for that week and looked at any additional material (news, policy analyses etc.) relevant to that week's readings. In addition to the in-class discussions, you will be expected to participate in an online discussion throughout the week, where you can voice your ideas on the readings, raise topic-related issues and engage in a substantive dialogue with your peers. There will be a starter question posted by me every Monday, and you will respond to that question or comments by your classmates by using the concepts and cases you learned in the class, until 5 PM every Friday. Online discussions can be a continuation of the class discussions, or they can take a different route -as long as your responses reflect an understanding of the readings, previous lessons and your peers' observations and comments. Participation grades depend more on the quality than on the quantity of contributions to the learning environment, which involves the critical engagement with the class material. It is my duty to provide a comfortable environment for everyone to take a part in class discussions, but if you have problems expressing yourself in front of your classmates, please inform me so that we could find the most suitable learning methods for you.

**Map Quiz:** During our third meeting in the first week, you will have an in-class closed-book/notes/electronic equipment's map quiz, in which you will be asked to identify various countries, regions and capitals on a blank map. The purpose of this exercise is to familiarize you with the geography and state boundaries in the region, so that our later discussions about conflicts and peace-processes will make more sense to you.

**Midterm Exam:** A closed-book in-class mid-term examination will consist of short answer questions and essays. The short answer questions will evaluate your ability to identify the main arguments, and the essay questions aim to teach you to make an argument, support your argument with evidence and write clearly before the writing assignments are due. An optional review session will be held prior to exam outside of scheduled class time.

**Writing Assignments:** Writing assignments include an Op-Ed, one analytical paper (~1000 words); a research proposal for the final paper (complete with the research question, annotated bibliography and research methods/outline) and the final paper itself (15-20 pages).

**1) Analytical Paper and Presentation:** Your first assignment will ask you to discuss the ways in which democracy can be promoted in a country of your choice in the Middle East. While doing that you need to explain what conditions may hinder the democratic process and what others may contribute to a successful democratic transition and consolidation in the region, and present it in front of your peers. Please try to focus on the domestic factors while formulating your answer, but if you have to offer a direct involvement of a foreign power, do not forget to examine the potential problems (credibility, military failures, backlash, radicalism) this option may create.

**2) Op-Ed:** As the second class assignment, you will be writing a clear, coherent and original Op-Ed about an issue that is of interest to you concerning the Middle Eastern politics. Your ideas and arguments should contribute to the conversation on the topic of your choice, and you should convince your leaders that 1) the issue is important enough for everyone to care, 2) your argument is based on evidence and that even the readers who disagree with you can find you credible. I will be distributing guidelines on how to write an Op-Ed piece a month before the assignment is due.

**3) Research Paper:** Finally, as a part of the course, all students are supposed to produce a research paper on a topic chosen by you in consultation with me (the instructor). The goal of the final paper is to give you an opportunity to formulate and pursue independent research by reviewing the literature, translating your knowledge on the subject to persuasive arguments and supporting your argument through right research methods. There is no expected length for research papers; however, 15-20 pages (Times New Roman, 12-font, 1-inch margins, double spaced) are average size. Remember that grading will be based more on how argument has been developed than the length of the paper. Throughout the semester we will devote time to discuss research techniques as well as steps to write a scholarly comparative politics paper, yet please also consult “How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper” by Charles Lipson if you want to polish your skills in this area.

**Late Assignments:** All assignments are submitted before the class, and late assignments will not be accepted. If there is a situation beyond your control that prevents you from finishing the assignment on time, you need to notify me as soon as you can and get my permission. Please be warned that depending on your circumstances, your grade may be downgraded 10 percent for each day after the submission deadline.

## GRADING

Attendance and Participation	15 %
Map Quiz	5 %
Op-Ed	10 %
Midterm	20 %
Analytical Paper Presentation	20 %
Research Paper Proposal	10 %
Research Paper	20%

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES:

- As students in this class, you are responsible for reading the syllabus thoroughly so that they are familiar with all policies and the consequences for violating these policies.
- As the instructor, I reserve the right to make changes to the course and syllabus as deemed necessary. Remember that syllabus is a working document, and depending on the events and ongoing issues we may have to change the topic and readings for particular weeks, or I may ask you to complete additional assignments.

- My goals in this class are to provide assistance to students and to create the best learning environment for them, so I encourage you to make an appointment with me during the first few weeks to discuss how to best address your needs and interests. If you have any difficulty understanding the course material, or if you have questions or concerns in general, please come and visit me during my office hours or send me an e-mail. Remember I am here to help.
- It is the policy of the university to excuse student absences that result from religious observance and to provide for a rescheduling of exams and course work that may fall on a religious holiday. I would appreciate if tell me at least a week in advance of your intended absence due to religious observance so that the necessary accommodations may be made.
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. If you do not know what constitutes plagiarism, please come and talk to me and look for online sources. Remember all the written assignments you submit for this class will be checked by an online plagiarism tracker (Turnitin).
- Behavior such as arriving late, leaving early, browsing the Internet, texting, napping, etc. is considered rude to the extreme and not acceptable in this class. Phones and other electronic devices have to be turned off during class. The use of computers and tablets is permitted only to take notes.
- I value the perspective of all students in my class and I look forward to the productive discussions we will have throughout the semester. It is your duty as students to engage with your classmates respectfully and help each other to understand the politics in one of the most volatile regions in the world.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1 / Issues, and Questions

*What do we mean by the term "Middle East?" What are some of the cutting-edge approaches to modern Middle Eastern studies today? Which countries are in the Middle East and why should we care about their political systems? What political problems do these countries face, and what solutions do they come up with to deal with these issues? Why is it particularly relevant to study this region at this moment? Why have most solutions failed so far, and what else can be done to overcome these challenges?*

Adelson, R. (2011). British and U.S. Use and Misuse of the Term, 'Middle East. In M. E. Bonine, M. Gaspar & A. Amanat (Eds.), *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (36-55). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Davis, E. (2009). 10 Conceptual Sins in Analyzing Middle East Politics. Retrieved from <http://new-middle-east.blogspot.com/2009/01/10-conceptual-sins-in-analyzing-middle.html>

Anderson, L. (1999). Politics in the Middle East: Opportunities and Limits in the Quest for Theory. In M. Tessler, J. Nachtwey & A. Banda (Eds), *Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle East Politics*, (1-10). Bloomington, IN: Indiana

University Press.

Lakoff, S. (2004). The Reality of Muslim Exceptionalism. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(4), 133-139.

Stepan, A. & Robertson, G. (2003). An 'Arab' More than 'Muslim' Electoral Gap. *Journal of Democracy*, 14 (3), 30-44.

\*For a detailed list of maps, check <http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml>

### **Week 2: Middle East– A Historical Perspective**

Blaydes, L. & Chaney, E. (2013). The Feudal Revolution and Europe's Rise: Political Divergence of the Christian West and the Muslim World before 1500 CE. *American Political Science Review*, 107 (1), 16-34.

Cleveland, W. L. & Bunton, M. (2012). *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 1-56.

Kuran, T. (2010). *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 279-302.

### **Week 3: The Ottoman Legacy**

Gaspar, M. (2011). The Making of the Modern Middle East. In Ellen Lust (Ed.) *The Middle East*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Cleveland, W. L. & Bunton, M. (2012). *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 57-103.

Barkey, K. (2008). *An Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 8.

Dawn, C. E. (2004). From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origin of an Ideology. In A. Hourani, P. Khoury & M. Wilson (Eds.), *The Modern Middle East: a Reader (375-393)*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

### **Week 4: European Intervention and Colonialism**

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books. (Excerpts)

Mitchell, T. (1991) *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Chapter 1.

Lustick, I. (1997). The Absence of Middle Eastern Great Powers: Political 'Backwardness' in Historical Perspective. *International Organization*. Vol. 51, No. 4, 1997, pp. 653-683.

Fromkin, D. (1991). How the Modern Middle East Map Came to be Drawn. *Smithsonian* 22.

Please refer to <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/> for a number of diplomatic and historical documents referred to in the articles, including the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the League of Nations Covenant, and the Balfour Declaration.

### **Week 5: Post-Colonialism and State-Building**

Kedourie, E. (1987). The Nation-State in the Middle East. *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 9 (3), 1-9.

Owen, R. 2004. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. 3rd Ed. London: Routledge. Chapters 1–3.

Kelidar, Abbas. (2009). States without Foundations: The Political Evolution of State and Society in the Arab East. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28 (2), 315-355.

Cleveland, W. L. & Bunton, M. (2012). *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 217-238.

Dodge, Toby. (2006). Iraq: The Contradictions of Exogenous State-Building in Historical Perspective. *Third World Quarterly*, 27 (1), 187-200.

### **Week 6: Israel and Palestine**

Bunton, M. (2013) *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Khalidi, R. (1997). *Palestinian identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, Chapter 3.

Zerubavel, Y. (1995). *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. xiii-xx, 3-36.

Pearlman, W. (2011). *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 1.

Pressman, J. (2010). Negotiating the Promised Land: The End of Innocence? *Israel Studies Forum*, 25 (1), 88-98.

Said, E. W. (1999). The One-State Solution: Why the only answer to Middle East peace is Palestinians and Israelis living as equal citizens under one flag,” *New York Times Magazine*, 36-39.

Check Council on Foreign Relations’ *Interactive Guide to the Crisis* as needed. It can be retrieved from [http://www.cfr.org/publication/13850/crisis\\_guide.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13850/crisis_guide.html)

### **Week 7: Tradition and Modernity: Iran before and after Islamic Revolution**

*In class film: Persepolis.*

Cleveland, W. L. & Bunton, M. (2012). A History of the Modern Middle East, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 423-450.

Kurtzman, C. (2005). The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. pp. 163-174.

Arjomand, S. A. (1986). Iran's Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective. *World Politics*, 38 (3), 383-414.

Campbell, K. (2008). Analyzing Iran's Domestic Political Landscape. United States Institute of Peace, USIPeace Briefing.

### **Week 8: Rentier State, Economic Conditions and Political Development**

Smith, B. B. (2004). Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World. *American Journal of Political Science*, 48 (2), 232-246.

Ross, M. L. (2012) *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapter 1.

Peterson, J.E. (2009). Life after Oil: Economic Alternatives for the Arab Gulf States. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 20 (3), 1-18.

Kuran, T. (2004). Why the Middle East is Economically Underdeveloped? Historical Mechanisms of Institutional Stagnation. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18 (3), 71-90.

Shaban, R., Assaad, R. & Al-Qudsi, S. (1995). The Challenge of Unemployment in the Arab Region. *International Labour Review*, 134 (1), 63-81.

Tessler, M. (1997). The Origins of Popular Support for Islamist Movements: A Political Economy Analysis. In J. Entelis (Ed.), *Islam, Democracy and the State in North Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. pp. 93-126.

Gillespie, K. (2006). The Middle East's Corruption Conundrum. *Current History*, 105, 40-46.

### **Week 9: Authoritarian Resilience?**

Zartman, I. W. (1990). Opposition as Support of the State. In G. Luciani (Ed.) *The Arab State*. New York: Routledge. pp. 220-247.

- Bellin, E. (2004). The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Politics*, 36 (2), 139-157.
- Lucas, R. (2004). Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middle Eastern Regime Type," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (1), 103-119.
- Yom, S. L. & Gause, F. G. (2012) Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On. *Journal of Democracy*, 23 (4), 74-88.
- Hamid, S. (2011). Arab Islamist Parties: Losing on Purpose? *Journal of Democracy*, 22 (1), 68-80.
- Thiel, T.(2013). The Middle East Despot's 13-Point Guide to Longevity and Prosperity. *Middle East Report*, 269, 22-23.

### **Week 10: Radical Islam and Islamist Movements**

*In-class debate: The Rise of ISIS and new challenges in the region*

- Brown, N. (2011). How Do Scholars Study Islamist Movements and How Should We Be Studying Them? *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43 (1), 133-146.
- Sivan, E. (1990). *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 1-49.
- Iannaccone, L. R. & Berman, E. (2006). Religious Extremism: The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly. *Public Choice*, 128, 109-129.
- Qutb, S. (1964). Selections from *Milestones*.
- Bin Laden, O. (1996). Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places. Retrieved from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa\\_1996.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html)
- Rubin, E. (2004). The Jihadi Who Kept Asking Why. *New York Times Magazine* (7 March 2004).
- Cammett, M. (2015). Sectarianism and the Ambiguities of Welfare in Lebanon. *Current Anthropology*, 56 (S11), 76-87.

### **Week 11: Conflict in the Middle East**

- Cleveland, W. L. & Bunton, M. (2012). *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 473-499.



- Wright, L. (2007). *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Vintage.
- Diamond, L. (2004). What Went Wrong in Iraq. *Foreign Affairs*, 83 (5), 34-56.
- Wehrey, F. M. (2014). The Roots of Sectarianism. *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1-38.
- Dodge, T. et al. (2014). Iraq between Maliki and the Islamic State. *Project on Middle East Politics Briefing*.

### **Week 12: Arab “Spring” and Regional Transitions**

*In class documentary: “The Square” and “Seeds of Revolution”*

- Saif, I. & Choucair, F. (2010). Status Quo Camouflaged: Economic and Social Transformation of Egypt and Jordan. *Journal of Middle East Law and Governance*, 2, 124-151.
- Gause, G. F. (2011). Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability. *Foreign Affairs* (July/August).
- Bayat, Asef. (2011). The Post-Islamist Revolutions: What the Revolts in the Arab World Mean. *Foreign Affairs* (April 26), Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-africa/2011-04-26/post-islamist-revolutions>
- Madawi, A. (2011). Sectarianism as Counter-Revolution: Saudi Responses to the Arab Spring. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11(3), 513-526.
- Brumberg, Daniel. (2014) Transforming the Arab World’s Protection-Racket Politics. In L. Diamond & M. F. Plattner (Eds.) *Democratization and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

### **Week 13: Democratization in the Middle East**

*In-class activity: Designing a democratic constitution*

- Sadowski, Y. (1993). The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate. *Middle East Report*, 183, 14-21.
- Kurzman, C. (1998). Not Ready for Democracy? Theoretical and Historical Objections to the Concept of Prerequisites. *Sociological Analysis*, 1(4), 1-12.
- Anderson, L. (2006). Searching Where the Light Shines: Studying Democracy in the Middle East. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9, 189-214.

Waterbury, J. (2003). Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institutions. *Foreign Affairs*, 82, 58-68.

Jamal, A. (2012). Of Empires and Citizens: Pro-American Democracy or No Democracy at All? Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 2 and 4.

Teti, A. (2012). Beyond Lies the Wub: The Challenges of (Post)Democratization. *Middle East Critique* 21(1), 5-12.

Sadiki, L. & Boubakri, A. (2014). Political Organization in the Middle East and North Africa. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 10 (1), 79-103.

#### **Week 14: An Islamist Alternative in Electoral Politics**

Masoud, T. (2008). Islamist Parties: Are They Democrats? Does it Matter? *Journal of Democracy*, 19 (3), 19-24.

Schwedler, J. (2011). Can Islamists Become Moderates? *World Politics*, 63 (2), 347-376.

Ghobashy, M. (2005). The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37 (3), 373-395.

Fradkin, H. (2014). Arab Democracy or Islamist Revolution. In L. Diamond & M. F. Plattner (Eds.) *Democratization and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Roy, O. (2014). There Will Be No Islamist Revolution. In L. Diamond & M. F. Plattner (Eds.) *Democratization and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Boduszyński, M. P., Fabbe, K., & Lamont, C. (2015). After the Arab Spring Are Secular Parties the Answer? *Journal of Democracy*, 26(4), 125–139.

#### **Week 15: Enduring Challenges**

*In class film: The Inner Tour*

Grobschmidt, M. & Tessler, M. (1995). Democracy in the Arab World and the Arab- Israeli Conflict. In David Garnham and Mark Tessler (Eds.), *Democracy, War, and Peace in the Middle East* (135-169). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Diamond, L. (2006). Iraq and Democracy: The Lessons Learned. *Current History*, 105 (687), 34-39.

Sayigh, Y. (2011). Rethinking the Study of Middle East Militaries,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 43 (3), 391-407.

Anderson, L. (2014). Rogue Libya's Long Road. *Middle East Report*, 241.

Lynch, M. (2014). The Empire Strikes Back: The Counterrevolution. Intervention and Civil War. *The Arab Uprising* (67-100, 161-192). New York: Public Affairs.

**Week 16: Wrap Up: "Conflict" or "Collaboration?"**

*In-class exercise/ debate: What needs to be done?*

Bartov, O., Elon, A., Foxman, A., Walzer, M. & Judt, T. (2003). An Alternative Future: An Exchange. *The New York Review of Books*, 50 (19).

Jamal, A. (2005). The Prospects of Democracy and Economic Reform in the Arab World. *Perspectives on Politics*. 3 (3), 545-547.

Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? *American Anthropologist* 104 (3), 783-790.