

Fall 2011
POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST
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PSC 344.M001/MES 344.M001
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The Middle East stirs emotion in the West more than any other region of the so-called “Developing World.” Particularly from the Western perspective, examples of violence and crises abound: the persistent Arab-Israeli conflict, the rise of political Islam, the September 11 attacks, the Gulf wars, and the Arab Spring. Consequently, this course addresses the following question: Is there anything unique or peculiar about the Middle East? Our collective aim is to contemplate critically a wide range of perspectives on this question.

With this aim in mind, we will begin by probing how and why we should study the Middle East and by exploring some of the salient economic, historical, social and religious features of the region. We will then scrutinize the nature of contemporary politics in the Middle East by analyzing such issues as the role of civil society, poverty movements, and youth movements, gender politics, and regional/international factors. In the second part of the course, we will turn our attention to an examination of politics in ten countries and end with an examination of the Arab Spring.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY: A Chinese proverb says that “teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.” A Western sage (Karl Jaspers) supplemented this maxim by maintaining that “university life is no less dependent on students than on professors. The best professors flounder helplessly at a school where the student body is unfit. Hence, it is all up to the young people who are supposedly entitled to study. They must show themselves worthy of this privilege to the best of their ability.”

This course has been organized on the premise that you are worthy of this privilege and that the teacher only opens the door. The success of this course depends entirely on your continued and sustained participation. Therefore, I ask that you be agile participants and intervene as often as possible in class discussion. Please keep in mind that in this course you will be exposed to a wide range of alternative views, some of which may force you to question, rethink, and, if necessary, abandon your present "understanding" of Middle Eastern culture, history and politics. Who knows, by the end of the course you may feel that you have taken part in a serendipitous voyage of discovery!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance: Attendance in this class is mandatory! We will take attendance at the beginning of each class and you can be excused from having missed a total of three classes during the term. After that you will be penalized for any class you miss. Also, in light of the fact that my presentations will complement rather than reiterate the assigned readings, you will miss a great deal by not coming to class. Attendance is also mandatory for all exams, and make-ups will be given only for bona fide emergencies (i.e., severe illness documented by a physician).

Participation: In addition to being physically present, I expect you to be mentally present! Hence, you should complete all assigned readings *before* each class meeting so that you are familiar with the concepts, facts, theories, and controversies to be discussed. Furthermore, you can engage in discussion through the course page in Blackboard (<http://blackboard.syr.edu>) and the course listserv (psc34401@listserv.syr.edu). Both you and I will use these venues to (a) post interesting or informative e-mails about the subject matter of the course, and (b) respond to points and issues raised by the instructors or your peers.

Map Quiz: You will be given a blank map of the Middle East and asked to identify twenty countries in the region. The quiz will be on September 8.

Mid-term Exam: You will have an in-class midterm exam on October 18.

Research/Reflection Papers: You can either write a research or a “reflection/opinion” paper (7 to 10 pages). In a research paper, students are expected to undertake an in-depth examination of a particular event, dilemma, or controversy concerning Middle Eastern politics and society in which they are interested. In a reflection/opinion paper, students are expected to reflect critically on a topic of their choice, engaging in a dialogue with the concepts and ideas raised in films, class lectures, and assigned/recommended readings. Each paper should have a full bibliography (books, journal articles, newspaper articles, Internet sources, etc.) and follow the “Four C” rule: clear, concise, coherent, and creative.

The choice of subject for the paper should be first cleared in individual discussions with the instructor or the TA. Each student needs to provide us with a one-page outline of their papers no later than **October 27**. The outline should contain a title, the main argument/finding, and a preliminary bibliography. The papers are due on **December 8**. Further guidelines on how to write the papers will be provided in class.

In writing your papers, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Choose a topic that interests you and encourages you to think deeply. Remember that you are not asked to write a book review and should develop your own thoughts and argument.
- A good paper has a clear structure with an introduction, a middle section elaborating an argument, and a conclusion. A good introduction guides your reader through the evidence which follows and informs him/her of the overriding

purpose of your developed points. I strongly suggest that you have a single sentence that clearly articulates your thesis. It can be as direct as: “The argument of this paper is...” Once you have posed the underlying question and offered a thesis, the body of the essay should be used to defend the thesis.

- Defending your argument means carefully choosing and analyzing specific evidence, not simply repeating unsupported generalizations with slightly different wordings again and again. For an argument to be convincing, it is necessary to evaluate all possible sides of an issue. You cannot ignore significant contradictory evidence or counter-arguments and will need to address them specifically. The presentation of evidence should not merely be a mindless catalog of facts but rather a selective and careful analysis of details relevant to your case. To decide what evidence to use, lay out the full array of potential evidence in advance of writing your essay. Then choose that which can be best developed.
- Do not repeat entire sections from books or articles. Quotations are occasionally effective, but you should not need the quotations to do the work for you. Quote only selectively, and quote only that which is particularly valuable as evidence. When using quotations you must always indicate them by the use of quotation marks or, if the quotation is fairly long and needs “block quotation,” by a single-spaced indentation and a specific reference with page number.
- Try to consult a variety of sources (books, periodicals, internet sources, lectures, etc.). If you need to do research on a particular country for your paper, you may wish to consult the Library of Congress Country Studies available at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>.

Your paper will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- The strength of your basic position and its connection to the course and outside readings
- Coherence and persuasiveness of major thesis and arguments presented
- Ability to counter possible objections
- Form/style (spelling, grammar, and composition)

Papers will be graded down if they:

- Do not have a major thesis
- Are purely descriptive
- Do not show evidence that you have done the readings
- Suffer from sloppy/colloquial writing
- Are full of personal stories not related to the topic
- Rely on excessive quotations

Final Exam: There will be an in-class final exam on December 16 (8:00-10:00 am).

Grading Criteria:

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>When</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Attendance | all the time | 10% |
| Map Quiz | September 8 | 10% |
| Mid-term Exam | October 27 | 20% |
| Research paper | December 8 | 30% |
| Final Exam | December 16 | 30% |

Extra Credit Assignments: Students who wish to improve their grade in this course have the option of attending any Middle East-related event (speakers, films, conferences, art exhibits, etc.) held on campus during the semester and writing a 1-2 page report afterwards. Each extra-credit assignment will replace 1% of the lowest grade students received in each individual assignment (midterm, final exam or research paper). Students can do up to five extra credit assignments.

Following news: You will be expected to monitor developments in the Middle East as they occur. Events taking place can help to further stimulate debate and reflection in the classroom. In order to keep abreast of developments, everyone is encouraged to read a daily newspaper such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, or *The Washington Post*. If you can read Arabic, Hebrew, Persian or Turkish, then feel free to follow a newspaper of your choice in that language as well (for a list of Middle Eastern newspapers, visit www.onlinenewspapers.com). Also, following a Middle Eastern blog for the duration of the semester may also help provide material and inspiration for your various projects. Here are a few examples of blogs in Arabic, English, French, Hebrew, and Persian:

| | |
|---|---|
| Arab World http://blogs.aljazeera.net/ or http://www.dubaidebates.com/ | Egypt - http://www.sandmonkey.org/ or http://www.arabist.net/ |
| Iraq - http://iraqblogcount.blogspot.com/ | Iran - http://balatarin.com/ |
| Israel - http://israblog.nana.co.il/ | Lebanon - http://www.beirutspring.com/ or http://mayazankoul.com/ |
| Morocco - http://riadzany.blogspot.com/ | Saudi Arabia - http://saudijeans.org/ or http://saudiwoman.wordpress.com/ |
| Tunisia - http://tuniblogs.com/ | Turkey - http://aegeandisclosure.blogspot.com |
| UAE - http://secretdubai.blogspot.com | Islamic World - http://www.islamicity.com |
| Bahrain - http://mahmood.tv/ | Yemen - http://afrahnasser.blogspot.com/ |
| Jordan - http://www.black-iris.com/ | Gaza - http://livefromgaza.wordpress.com/ |

Additional Notes:

- This class, which does not assume any prior knowledge of the Middle East, is the gateway course for those wishing to obtain a Major or a Minor in Middle Eastern Studies (<http://middle-eastern-studies.syr.edu/>).
- The top two research papers in this course will be considered for the Middle Eastern Studies' Hasan Abdullah Yabroudi Prize which carries a \$500 stipend (see

<http://middle-eastern-studies.syr.edu/Awards.htm>). Winners will be announced at the end of the Spring 2011 semester.

- Students who wish to watch additional films and videos about the Middle East (available in the media section of Bird Library) can visit the following site:
<http://middle-eastern-studies.syr.edu/CampusResources.htm>

Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, [Office of Disability Services, http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/).

Academic Integrity Statement

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy (<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>) and know that it is their responsibility to learn the instructor's expectations and the general academic rules with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>. Students found to cheat will receive an F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal.

Faith Tradition Observance Policy:

Syracuse University recognizes the diverse faith traditions represented among its campus community and supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe according to these traditions. I am willing to accommodate for students' observance needs provided you notify me (in writing) no later than the end of the second week of classes.

REQUIRED TEXTS: (available at Orange Bookstore and SU Bookstore)

Michele Penner Angrist (ed.), Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010).

Asef Bayat, Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East (Stanford University Press, 2009).

Ellen Lust (ed.), The Middle East (12th ed.) (Congressional Quarterly, 2011)

Please note that Bayat and the Congressional Quarterly texts can also be “rented” from Orange Bookstore.

All of the course's articles are available through Blackboard. Please check your "MySlice" account.

"We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future."

George Bernard Shaw

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 30: **Introduction - The Nature and Structure of the Course**

- Syllabus review; questionnaire; orientation quiz

Sept. 1: **Humorous Look at the Middle East**

- Video: *Comedy Middle Eastern Style* (VC12739; 56 min.)
- *Colbert Report: Norwegian Muslish Gunman's Islam-Esque Atrocity*
<http://www.iranian.com/main/2011/jul/norwegian-muslish-gunmans-islam-esque-atrocity>
- Karim Sadjadpour, "The Cynical Dairy Farmer's Guide to the New Middle East,"
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/15/the_cynical_dairy_farmer_s_guide_to_the_new_middle_east#.Tfzm4nuaiJw:email
- Familiarize yourself with the map, timeline, and glossary. A variety of Middle East maps, chronologies and background information are available at:
<http://teachmiddleeast.lib.uchicago.edu/>
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east.html
<http://www.mideastweb.org/maps.htm>
<http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml>
<http://worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/me.htm>
<http://www.addictinggames.com/MESAmap.html>

For chronology, see:

<http://www.nmhtthornton.com/mehistorydatabase/mideastindex.php>

Sep. 6: **The Making of the Modern Middle East**

- Lust, chapter 1
- Angrist, chapter 1
- Eric Davis, "10 Conceptual Sins in Analyzing Middle East Politics,"
<http://tabsir.net/?p=861> (Blackboard)
- Thomas L. Friedman, "Mideast Rules to Live By," New York Times (Dec. 20, 2006) (Blackboard)

Sep. 8: **Social Change in the Middle East** (Map Quiz)

- Lust, chapter 2

Sep. 13: **Political Economy of Development**

- Lust, chapter 3
- Angrist, chapter 4

- John Cassidy, “Prophet Motive: The Economies of the Arab World Lag Behind the West. Is Islam to Blame?” The New Yorker (Feb. 28, 2011) (Blackboard)

Sep. 15: **Institutions and Governance**

- Lust, chapter 4

Sep. 20: **Actors, Public Opinion, and Participation**

- Lust, chapter 5

Sep. 22: **Civil Society**

- Angrist, chapter 5
- Timur Kuran, “The Weak Foundations of Arab Democracy,” http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/opinion/29kuran.html?_r=1&emc=eta1

Sep. 27: **Religion and Politics**

- 100 Questions about Islam <http://vimeo.com/groups/100questionsaboutislam>
- Angrist, chapter 6
- Bayat, chapters 9
- Nathan Brown, et. al. “How Do Scholars Study Islamist Movements and How Should We Be Studying Them?” International Journal of Middle East Studies 43, no. 1 (February 2011): 133-146 (Blackboard)

Sep. 29: **The Poor and Social Movements**

- Bayat, chapters 3, 4, 11
- Angrist, chapter 2

Oct. 4: **Identity Politics**

- Angrist, chapter 7

Oct. 6: **Politics of Gender & Sexuality**

- Angrist, chapter 8
- Bayat, chapter 5

Oct. 11: **Politics of the Youth**

- Bayat, chapters 6-7

Oct. 13: **History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

- Lust, chapter 6
- Video: *Palestine: 1890-1990* (VC 9240; 34 min.)
- Council on Foreign Relations Interactive Guide to the Crisis http://www.cfr.org/publication/13850/crisis_guide.html

Oct. 18: **Politics of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

- Edward W. Said, “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 (January 10, 1999): 36-39 (Blackboard)

- Ethan Bronner, “The Bullets in My In-Box,” The New York Times (January 25, 2009) (Blackboard)

Oct. 20: **Regional International Relations**

- Lust, chapter 7

Oct. 25: **International Politics of the Middle East** *(paper outlines are due)*

- Lust, chapter 8
- Angrist, chapter 3

Oct. 27: **MID-TERM EXAM**

Nov. 1: **Egyptian Politics**

- Lust, chapter 10

Nov. 3: **Iranian Politics**

- Lust, chapter 11

Nov. 8: **Iraqi Politics**

- Lust, chapter 12
- Larry Diamond, “What Went Wrong in Iraq?” Foreign Affairs (September/October 2004) (Blackboard)
- New York University’s Center for Global Affairs, “Iraq: Post 2010” (Blackboard)

Nov. 10: **Israeli Politics**

- Lust, chapter 13

Nov. 15: **Politics in the Persian Gulf States**

- Lust, chapter 20

Nov. 17: **Lebanese Politics**

- Lust, chapter 16

Nov. 22-24: **Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)**

Nov. 29: **Turkish Politics**

- Lust, chapter 24

Dec. 1: **The Arab Spring I**

- Arab spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>
- Various authors, “The Arab Uprisings of 2011,” International Journal of Middle East Studies v. 43, no. 3 (August 2011): 383-390. (Blackboard)
- Jadaliyya Pedagogy: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/pedagogy>

Dec. 6: **The Arab Spring II**

- Bayat, chapters 12-13

Dec. 8: **Evaluations & Open Discussion about the Course** (*Research Papers are due*)

Dec. 16 (8:00-10:00 am): **Final Exam**