Syllabus

Fall 2012

Instructor Contact

Instructor	Dr. Houman A. Sadri Instructor's Web site
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Course Information

Course Name	Middle East Politics
Course ID & Sections	CPO3403, Sections: ORV1 (Face-to-Face) & OV59 (on-line)
Credit Hours	3
Semester/Year	Fall, 2012
Section 1:	Section ORV1, Face-to-Face, Required Class Meetings (see schedule) Classroom 1 Building, Room 205
Section 2:	Section OV59, Online – No Class Meetings

Course Description & Objectives

This interdisciplinary course provides a foundation for understanding the complex socio-political, cultural, and economic structure of the Middle East, a vague term that includes the States of North Africa, the Persian Gulf, and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (or Near East). This class covers the major approaches, concepts, and methods, which are the necessary tools for analyzing and comprehending the social structure, governmental institutions, in addition to the formal and informal policies of this vital geographic region.

Another purpose of this course is to go beyond stereotypes, and to stimulate students' critical thinking by the analysis of events and issues from both comparative as well as cross-cultural perspectives. The next objective is to provide an accurate and unbiased recent picture of social, economic, legal, political, and security challenges of the Middle Eastern nations in the post-Cold War period. The Middle East is a significant region for the West, because it is the source of the three major monotheistic religions of the world, and many of its natural resources, particularly the fossil fuels, are vital for the survival of the West. In the post-September 11th, the West (especially the US) is amazed by the level of anti-Western and anti-American sentiments in the region. Many ask: Why do they hate us? In response, some argue that we cannot do anything about the situation, while others suggest that the problem could have been avoided by a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Middle Eastern cultures, societies, and politics. Still others call for a revision of the failed Western policies in the last century in the region. These are some issues that we examine.

Another purpose of this class is to stimulate critical analyses of events and issues in global affairs. It is not my place to train students to be **conservative or liberal people**, but I use our readings and my lectures to stimulate your minds. However, I have no political agenda, especially since I am an independent, who does not even belong to any real political party. More importantly, this course will also assist students to improve their written and oral communication skills, to gain an ability to translate knowledge from one context to another, and to apply theory to practice. Gaining this knowledge is important not only for students, but also for government and business employees and those who realize that we live in an increasingly global village.

Format

Our V-Course has two sections: a Face-to-Face and a Web (on-line) section. In the face-to-face section, students are required to attend our live weekly class sessions (on Tuesdays & Thursdays). In the Web section, there is no required in-class attendance, but students should still **think of our Web session like a Tuesday/Thursday class**, whose recorded sessions MUST be watched. Moreover, students should make sure that they are signed up for the right course session. In the past, a few Web students had unknowingly signed up for the face-to-face format, and assumed that they were in the Web section or thought that they do not need to attend. So they had no attendance record, and end up failing this class. It is the responsibility of the students themselves to make sure that they are in the right section. All our class sessions are recorded and available to both face-to-face and web students. After each class, the recorded session becomes available in an on-line digital format on the course website as soon as the UCF Instructional Resources Office staff complete their task.

For all students, every week, we start a new Reading Module (or lesson plan) on Tuesdays and we have assignments due on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Our three Exam Modules also start on Tuesdays: their Review Sessions are on Tuesday in-class and the Exams themselves are always on Thursday on-line. The three Exam Modules are modules numbers 4 (First Midterm Exam), 8 (Second Midterm Exam), and 12 (Final Exam). For on-line students, the class is videotaped that is available on-line.

I prepared **powerpoint lectures** to make sense of a **great deal of readings** that students must complete in our **text and website articles**. Moreover, we heavily rely on our diverse readings (which provide us with a variety of views) and use them as additional lecture materials. In this course, we cover 12 Modules or lessons (consist of 9 Reading Modules and 3 Exam Modules). Each Reading Module covers at least one chapter of **James Bill**'s text, and a few articles from our class website (linked into each Module).

Each Reading Module is divided into seven parts:

1. Reading Modules begin with required readings that must be completed **before** Tuesday class without exceptions.

2. Students are required to discuss the content of readings in our **on-line required** Weekly Reading Discussion (**due every Tuesday by 9am**), which involves every student **replying directly to instructor**'s text-centered analytical questions by using the **Reply Button** inside Instructor's Posting. This means that students MUST read ALL materials before the discussions begin; and they MUST refer to **ALL** weekly readings in their posting. Your arguments in the Reading Postings must be well-documented (in text) by using the author and the page numbers of ALL weekly readings. **Please remember that the UCF WebCourses System does not automatically accept any late posting**. Moreover, I do not accept any gradable assignment or exam by e-mail or Course Mail.

3. Students are also **required** to participate in the class discussion in the **on-line required** Weekly Current Events Discussion (which is also **due every Tuesday by 9am**) by **replying to instructor**'s analytical current events question (related to weekly topics) for class discussion. To answer the question, students must conduct an Internet Search of Reliable sources (**not Wikipedia, or website of an unknown person**); and they MUST well-document their argument with their own Internet Sources. **Again, remember that the UCF WebCourses System does not automatically accept any late posting**. Moreover, I do not accept any gradable assignment or exam by e-mail or Course Mail.

4. Students should first read the Chapter Outlines, Summaries, and Key Concepts in each module to better understand the detailed text readings and before on-line discussions begin, and coming to class. More importantly, the instructor uses an interactive teaching style (known as the **Socratic Method**), which means he constantly asks questions about the reading materials from students during his lectures. Those who cannot answer his questions will automatically **lose one point** directly from their final Participation Score (as a disengaged student) for every question that he asks.

5. Moreover, there is an **Optional Question** Forum for those students who may have additional questions about the reading materials or current events. Our goal is to answer all questions and clarify any vague points in the readings. This way, we can make sure that the materials are clear for all students, so this Forum should help students with their preparation for the quizzes and tests. Thus, we use the Question Forum for the question/answer period by students, for students, and via students themselves. Serving as a monitor, the instructor interjects in the Question Forum only when the students' answers to the questions are not correct (or complete) or he may play the role of the devil's advocate for providing students with different perspectives.

6. For reading modules, the next step is a **quiz** that **covers all reading materials** of that particular module. There are 9 reading modules, and thus 9 quizzes. You are required to take at least 5 of these 9 quizzes.

However, I suggest that students take all 9 quizzes, so I can drop their lowest 4 quizzes scores. I add up their top 5 quizzes for their final total quiz score.

7. The final step in any module is the Weekly **Optional Survey**, which is available if you click on the Quiz Button, then scroll down to Survey Section. These surveys are setup to be **anonymous** to provide privacy to students who are too shy to ask a direct question from the instructor (via **Course Mail**) or have a criticism of the course or the instructor during a particular module. These Surveys include two parts: the first covers the material highlights, but you may just say **OK** here, and move to the more important second part, where you **place your question or criticism**. Since the surveys are anonymous, students should feel free to express themselves, ask any questions, and make constructive criticism of the lectures, readings, and/or format. As the instructor will not know the identity of the students in survey, then he answers their question/criticism in the Question Forum. If you have no question or criticism, you are **NOT required to use these Surveys**. Of course, you are also welcome to provide any positive input, if you like any aspect of the class to help us maintain the more effective and useful parts of this course. Your input is certainly appreciated, even though you remain anonymous.

As necessary, we may utilize audiovisual resources to further our understanding of the materials, if the WebCourses technology allows us. All students MUST fully participate in the required course discussions and the question/answer forums. Our course materials (except for our required texts) are available on-line.

Teaching Philosophy

Education is a tool for improving the quality of life. Education is not an end in itself but a process. My teaching philosophy is to encourage critical thinking, innovative problem-solving, practical application of theory, and tolerance of diverse ideas and cultures from an international perspective. To achieve these goals, I employ an interactive teaching style, which empowers students by encouraging them to contribute to the ongoing discussion of both familiar and unfamiliar topics and materials. My teaching goals are both to share my academic knowledge and experience with my students and to inspire and help them to become life-long learners.

General Policies

Based on the UCF's rules and standards, the instructor will pursue the following general policies:

1. The instructor **reserves all rights to modify** the content of syllabus, class schedule, and/or the course.

2. Students with extended absences either fail our course, or their Final Grades are significantly decreased.

3. With no exception, students **MUST only use Course Mail,** to contact the instructor.

4. If you receive no reply from the instructor within **48-hours** (during regular business days) when he is **not** out-of-town, it means that he did not receive the message. Please re-send your message.

5. Respecting students' **privacy**, the instructor provides student's record only to the student himself/herself on a one-to-one basis on-line, on phone, or face-to-face. He will not discuss one student's case in a public forum. Students must directly contact the instructor, if they have questions about their record.

6. The instructor encourages and **welcomes questions** and comments from all students, but he will not allow any particular student to dominate the class discussion or intimidate other students.

7. Your Participation Score is automatically penalized a point for any question whose answer is already in the syllabus, class schedule, or course forums.

8. The instructor respects **religious holidays** & may modify a deadline. With our drop policy, there is usually no need for any change. Inform the instructor, if your religious holiday is not listed at UCF.

9. Since our course materials are on-line, all students MUST check **Course Mail**, class **Web Forums,** and their e-mails at least once a day for new class announcements, news, and/or updates.

10. ALL written **(gradable) assignments** (quizzes and exams) **MUST be submitted to our Website**. The format requirement is single-spaced format, black color font, New Times Roman font, and 10-point font size. You are responsible for grammar and spell checking your work.

11. The Instructor uses students' e-mail addresses from the UCF e-Community. Update your e-mail address at the Polaris (UCF Registration) system otherwise you do not receive his regular messages.

12. If you have a name change during the term, you must inform the instructor immediately, since UCF does not do that.

13. Students should regularly check our Website Assignments Deadline page and avoid submitting assignments to Website at the last minute. The Website clock may be different from your own time, and that may lead students to miss a deadline. Late assignments are considered missed. **No gradable assignment, quiz, or exam is accepted by e-mail or Course Mail.** It is your responsibility to submit assignments before the Website deadlines, Eastern Standard Time (**EST**).

14. **Any grade (or score) dispute** or participation discrepancy must be resolved within a week from the day when scores are posted or the discrepancy occurred. No late (or last minute) appeals are considered.

Make-Up Policy

Theoretically, **there are no make-ups for our quizzes, exams, or Weekly Required Discussion Postings**. However, I drop 4 (out of 9) required quizzes, one (out of 2) required midterm exams, one Weekly Required Reading Discussion Posting, and one Weekly Required Current Events Discussion Posting for each student throughout the term. Thus, many students consider my "drop system" as a very generous make-up policy. Remember that the First and Second Midterm Exams can be a replacement for each other only. However, the First and/or the Second Midterm Exams are NOT a replacement for the Final Exam. Also, there is no make-up for the Final Exam or the optional Extra Credit Quiz.

Text

The following books and materials are **required** for our class:

Bill, James A. & Robert Springborg. *Politics in the Middle East*. **5th ed**., New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2000. (ISBN: **0-321-00537-6**)

Esposito, John L. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 (ISBN: **0-19-516886-0**).

Additional reading materials will be available at our Website. You may access them via our Class Website inside each Module.

Rules of Conduct

One of the University of Central Florida's most enduring academic traditions is its Rules of Conduct code. The instructor will carefully follow the code and expects all students to do the same. As The Golden Rule handbook clearly states, failure to comply with university rules may subject violator(s) to appropriate action by university authorities and/or appropriate civil authorities. Serious violations of university rules will be recorded in the record of the student(s).

UCF Disability Statement

The university if Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center, Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.