Politics of the Middle East (CPO 3403)

University of Central Florida
Spring 2018

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TTh 1:30 – 2:45 PM
CB1 O308
3 credit hours

Office Hours @ HPH 302F
TThu noon–13:30 and 16-16:30

I. Description

This course offers a thematic study of society and politics in the modern Middle East. It first discusses the historical formation of the Middle East, engages with the question of whether the Middle East can be considered as a coherent and unified sociopolitical, economic and cultural entity, surveys diversity in the region, and addresses how people of the region are represented and represent themselves. The initial sections aim to make students gain critical perceptions regarding widespread images of the Middle East. The remaining sections focus on themes central to Middle Eastern politics: the legacy of the U.S. involvement in the region, the effects of natural resource wealth, the persistence of ethnic and sectarian identities, the role of Islam in society and politics, popular mobilization and authoritarian resiliency, gender identities, political violence, and the intermingling of Middle Eastern and Western people.

The main objectives of the course are to

- Introduce students to the basic historical, geographical, and societal characteristics of the Middle Eastern countries.
- Increase students' ability to discuss contemporary events related to the Middle East in a more informed manner.
- Stimulate students' awareness of the complexity and diversity characterizing the Middle East.
- Help students develop an understanding of the multiple dimensions of the Western involvement in the Middle East.
- Provide students with a basic understanding of the causes of prosperity/poverty, peace/violence, political freedom/repression, and international cooperation/conflict in the Middle East.

A Note about Dr. T: Güneş Murat Tezcür (PhD. University of Michigan, 2005) has joined UCF in 2015. He is the inaugural holder of the Jalal Talabani Kurdish Political Studies, the first and only such academic position dedicated to the study of Kurdish issues in the United States. He also directs the Kurdish Political Studies Program at UCF, the first and only academic unit dedicated to the study of Kurdish issues in the United States. His scholarship exploring political violence, democratization, and identity politics have appeared in many leading scholarly outlets. He has also traveled widely for research purposes in the region and gives talks about Middle East politics in many different avenues across the globe.

II. Requirements

Assignments

The requirements for this course are:

1) 5%: Reflection paper
2) 40%: Four scheduled short exams (10% each)
3) 10% Short Paper
4) 10%: Tableau Graph
5) 25%: Final Exam (May 1, 1-2:30 pm)
6) 10%: Class participation & Extracurricular activities

1) Reflection paper: This paper is around 400-500 words and will offer a critical discussion of the following piece by Thomas L. Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/20/opinion/20friedman.html.

In this piece, Friedman identifies 15 "rules" and claims that they should guide the Middle East reporting and diplomacy. Choose at least three rules and write your own critical reflection. Do you agree/disagree with these rules? Make sure to explain your reasoning about each rule you choose.

2) Short exams: There are four of these exams that are composed of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and short answer questions. They are not cumulative. Questions come from both the lectures and required readings. See the table below for the exam dates.

3) Short Paper will be submitted electronically in WORD format via webcourses@UCF using the corresponding assignment by 5pm on **April 13**.

The second paper worth 10 percent of the final grade is due April 14. It should address one of the following questions about Middle Eastern politics in an analytic fashion and be between 900 and 1,000 words. Papers are evaluated according to five criteria: a) the quality and scope of research, b) the quality of writing and organization, c) the accuracy of knowledge, d) the coherence and consistency of the main argument, and e) grammar, style and format. As a rule, students should rely on sources that can legitimately claim some expertise on the topic. Sources that are usually considered legitimate include academic scholarship, well-established media outlets, information centers (e.g. NGOs), and primary documents. A paper should refer to **at least five such sources**. A good paper makes a credible argument and sustains that argument by relying on a variety of sources. Hence, it is conceptual and analytical, rather than being

purely descriptive. Search engines such as LexisNexis, Google Scholar, JSTOR, WorldCat, and Web of Science as well as the archive of major news sources as *The New York Times* are valuable tools for doing research. Electronic sources edited by anonymous users are not accepted as reliable sources. Papers should not rely on Wikipedia entries. Feel free to consult me when they are not sure what qualifies as a valid source.

- What factors explain the success or failure of popular mobilizations in the Middle East?
- Why are some Middle Eastern regimes more stable than others?
- What factors explain the pattern of US interventions in the Middle East?
- Under what conditions do parties and movements develop democratic commitments in the Middle East?
- What factors explain the success or failure of negotiations regarding international disputes in the Middle East?
- Why are some armed groups more successful than others in mobilizing mass support in the Middle East?
- Why do some armed groups employ terrorist tactics but not others in the Middle East?
- Why do ordinary people join political groups risking their well-being in the Middle East?
- What factors shape political attitudes of the Middle Eastern publics?
- What factors impede or foster gender equality in the Middle East?

4) Tableau software produces visually informative and appealing graphs that will boost academic presentations and writings. Each student should download Tableau for free at http://www.tableau.com/academic/students. There will be a training session in February. A cross-national dataset with a variety of indicators will be provided. Students will have the opportunity to collect additional data. The goal is to generate graphs that will offer informed and insightful comparative perspectives about the Middle Eastern countries. The Tableau graphs will be submitted in PDF electronically via webcourses@UCF by 5 pm, March 2.

5) Final Exam covers all topics of the class. It combines short-answer questions with multiple choices and fill-in-the-blanks.

6) Class participation & Extracurricular Activities grade will reflect physical attendance as well as active and meaningful contribution to class discussions. Bonus point opportunities may be offered throughout the semester.

Assignment	Weight (in %)	Date
Reflection Paper	5	Jan 15
Short Exam I	10	Jan 18
Short Exam II	10	Feb 15
Tableau Graph	10	March 2
Short Exam III	10	March 22
Short paper	10	April 13
Short Exam IV	10	April 19
Participation	10	Entire semester
Final Exam	25	May 1

Grade and Make-Up Policy

Due dates are absolutely non-negotiable. Students who fail to complete report and Tableau assignments on time automatically receive **0 points for the assignment**. Students who miss exams are given make-ups only if they are able to provide **proper documentation** for their unforeseen emergencies and subject to approval by instructor. Make-ups must be taken only within four days of the original short exam date. No more than one make-up for each student is given throughout the semester.

III. Academic Honesty

As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and so are very serious academic offenses. UCF's Golden Rule defines plagiarism as follows: "**whereby another's work is used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.**"

All acts of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, cheating, submitting false documents, and copying another student's work will be penalized by **an F for the course** without any exception and leniency. If you are not sure what constitutes as academic dishonesty while doing your research, you should consult me at once.

IV. Accessibility

The UCF 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 Dr. T.

V. Course Schedule & Readings

The following textbook is used in this class. Other required readings will be made available at webcourses@UCF. Additional news reports and visuals about contemporary events will be made available during the semester. There may be few changes in required readings throughout the semester.

- James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* 4th ed., Oxford UP, 2015.
- Fawaz A. Gerges, *ISIS*: *A History*, Princeton UP, 2016.
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Week I (January 9 & 11) A Geographical and Cultural Introduction

- What is the Middle East?
- How do we study and make sense of the Middle East?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, part I.

Michael E. Bonine, "Of Maps and Regions: Where is the Geographer's Middle East?" in Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper eds. *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2014), pp. 56-99.

Week II (January 16 & 18) The Making of the Middle East – I

- How did the Ottoman Empire collapse?
- How did the Europeans establish dominance over the region?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, part II.

Short Exam I on January 18.

Week III (January 23 & 25) The Making of the Middle East – II

- How did the European rule end in the Middle East?
- What have been the characteristics of ascendant nationalism in the Middle East?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, chapters 11-13.
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, excerpts.

Week IV (January 30 & February 1) US in the Middle East

- What patterns characterize the US intervention in the region?
- How is the US perceived in the region?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, chp. 17.
Fred Halliday, "'Orientalism' and its Critics," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1993): 145-163.

Week V (February 6 & 8) Authoritarian Rule in the Middle East

- Why are there so many authoritarian regimes in the Middle East?
- Why democratization remains stalled in the Middle East?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, chp. 15.
Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 1-31.
Raymond Hinnebusch, "Globalization, Democratization, and the Arab Uprising: The International Factor in MENA's Failed Democratization," *Democratization* 22 (2015): 335-57.

Week VI (February 13 & 15) Political Economy

- What are the sociopolitical effects of natural resource wealth in the Middle East?
- What factors contribute to economic underperformance in the Middle East?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, chp. 16.

Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World," in Giacomo Luciani ed., *The Arab State* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 85-98.

Adeel Malik and Bassem Awadallah, "The Economics of the Arab Spring," *World Development* 45 (May 2013): 296-313.

Short Exam II on February 15.

Week VII (February 20 & 22) Political Conflict in the Middle East

- Is the Middle East more violent than anywhere else?
- Why is the Arab-Israeli conflict so intransigent?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, chps.14 & 18.

Nils Peter Gleditsch, and Ida Rudolfsen, "Are Muslim Countries More Prone to Violence?" *Research and Politics* (April-June 2016): 1-9.

Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia UP, 2010), chp. 2.

Week VIII (February 27 & March 1) Islamic Politics

- What is an Islamic state? What is an Islamic revolution?
- What factors make Islamist parties and movements moderate?

Asef Bayat, "Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1998): 136-169.

Tableau Graph due March 2.

Week IX (March 6 & 8) Gender Relations

- Are Muslim women uniquely oppressed?
- How do Muslim women publicly express themselves?

Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2 (1988): 274-290.

Lila Abu Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" *American Anthropologist* 104 (September 2002): 783-790.

Valentine M. Moghadam, "Modernising Women and Democratisation after the Arab Spring." *The Journal of North African Studies* 19 (2014): 137-142.

Week X (March 20 & 22) *Arab Uprisings – I: People's Power*

- What underlying factors contributed to the uprisings?
- How did ordinary people mobilize and topple seemingly invincible regimes?

Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, chp. 19 & Conclusion.

Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution," *Middle East Report* 41 (2011): 2-13.

Watching *The Square* (2013)

Short Exam III on March 22.

Week XI (March 27 & 29) Arab Uprisings – II: Backlash & Jihadism

- What have been the results of the Arab uprisings?
- What factors explain different outcomes of the Arab uprisings?

Gerges, *ISIS: A History*, chps. 1-5.

Week XII (April 3 & 5) The Rise and Fall of the Islamic State

- What factors contributed to the rise and global reach of the IS?
- How unique is the violence and ideology of the IS?

Gerges, *ISIS: A History*¸ chps. 6-8.

Week XIII (April 10 & 12) The Kurdish Question in the Middle East

- What are the causes of the Kurdish question?
- What factors contribute to violent Kurdish mobilization?

Michael Eppel, "Historical Setting: The Roots of Modern Kurdish Nationalism," in Ofra Bengio ed., *Kurdish Awakening: Nation Building in a Fragmented Homeland*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014.

Güneş Murat Tezcür, "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Risks: Joining an Ethnic Rebellion," *American Political Science Review* 110 (May 2016): 247-64.

Second short paper due on April 13.

Week XIV (April 17 & 19) The Middle East in the West

- What does it mean to be a Muslim in Europe and United States?
- How does the Western societies deal with immigrants from the Middle East?

Jocelyne Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), part I.

Mucahit Bilici, *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam is Becoming an American Religion* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2012), chp. 3.

Short Exam IV on April 19.
Final Exam on May 1.