Honors Politics of the Middle East (CPO 3403-H)

University of Central Florida
Spring 2019

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TTh 3–4:15 PM
CB1 O113
3 credit hours

Office Hours @ HPH 302F
TThu 1-3pm

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 environmental issues.

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 a Professor of Political Science who is also 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, speak several Middle Eastern languages, and gives talks about Middle East politics in many different avenues across the globe. He has been teaching courses on the Middle East since 2005.

II. Requirements

Assignments

The requirements for this course are:

1) 5%: Reflection paper
2) 30%: Five scheduled short exams (6% each)
3) 20% Short Paper
4) 10%: Map Discussion
5) 20%: Final Exam
6) 15%: Class participation & Extracurricular activities

1) Reflection paper: This paper is around 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. The assignment will be electronically submitted in WORD format via webcourses@UCF by 5 pm on **January 14.**

2) Short exams: These five exams 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) Map Discussion: Borders of the Middle East remain highly contested. Yet, official border changes have been rare since the process of de-colonization. Identify a historical and contemporary map (or maps) from online or printed sources that challenge the extant borders in the region and offer alternative sociopolitical configurations. Write a short essay (between 500 and 750 words) discussing the logic and implications of the map(s) and the reasons for its (in)feasibility. The map and discussion will be electronically submitted in WORD format via webcourses@UCF by 2:30 pm on **February 7**. Each student will then present her/his map in class on the same day.

4) Paper will be submitted electronically in WORD format via webcourses@UCF using the corresponding assignment by 5pm on Friday, **April 12**.

This paper should address one of the following questions about Middle Eastern politics in an analytic fashion. It will be around 2,000 words (±250) excluding biography and references. 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. Hence, they are conceptual and analytical, rather than being purely descriptive. 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 eight such sources**. 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. 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 political groups develop democratic commitments in the region?
- What factors explain the success or failure of negotiations regarding international disputes in the Middle East?
- Why are some armed groups more successful in mobilizing mass support in the region?
- 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?
- How do environmental factors influence sociopolitical life in the region?
- What factors impede or foster gender equality in the Middle East?

5) Final Exam covers all topics of the class. It combines short-answer questions with multiple choices and fill-in-the-blanks. It will be on April 25.

6) Class participation & Extracurricular Activities grade will reflect physical attendance as well as active and meaningful contribution to class discussions, physical attendance in campus events, and virtual involvement in online activities throughout the semester.

Assignment	Weight (in %)	Date
Reflection Paper	5	Jan 14
Short Exam I	6	Jan 17
Short Exam II	6	Jan 29
Map Discussion	10	February 7
Short Exam III	6	February 26
Short Exam IV	6	March 19
Paper	20	April 12
Short Exam V	6	April 16
Participation & Extracurricular	15	Entire semester
Final Exam	20	April 25

Grade and Make-Up Policy

Due dates are absolutely non-negotiable. Students who fail to complete written 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.

The following grade scale is applicable in this class: A: 100-94, A-: 93-90, B+: 89-87, B: 86-84, B-: 83-80, C+: 79-77, C: 76-74, C-: 73-70, D+: 69-67, D: 66-60, F: 59-0. Grades are rounded to the nearest integer (e.g., 79.4=79, 79.6=80).

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. Title IX - No Discrimination Policy

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the sex (gender) of employees and students of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX's prohibition of sex discrimination includes prohibition of sexual harassment and sexual violence. UCF does not tolerate sex discrimination, sexual harassment or sexual violence of any kind. This prohibition is further explained in the University's Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence. Any student, faculty, or staff member with questions or concerns about the applicable University policies or who believes that he or she has been the victim of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence is encouraged to contact the University's Title IX Coordinator and visit the Let's Be Clear website.

V. 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.

VI. 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.

Week I (January 8 & 10) 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 15 & 17) 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.

Week III (January 22 & 24) 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.
Albert Camus, *Algerian Chronicles*, excerpts.

Week IV (January 39 & 31) 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.
Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945,* chapter 2.
Mark Gasiorowski, The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 261-86.

Week V (February 5 & 7) 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 12 & 14) 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.

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

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

Week VII (February 19 & 21) 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.

Khaled Fattah and Karin M. Fierke, "A Clash of Emotions: The Politics of Humiliation and Political Violence in the Middle East," *European Journal of International Relations* 15 (2009): 67-93.

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

Week VIII (February 26 & February 28) Gender Relations

- What factors impede gender equality in the region?
- Are Muslim women uniquely oppressed?
- How do women seek agency and emancipation?

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.

Amy C. Alexander, and Christian Welzel, "Islam and Patriarchy: How Robust is Muslim Support for Patriarchal Values?" *International Review of Sociology* 21 (2010): 249-276.

Güneş Murat Tezcür, "A Path out of Patriarchy? Political Agency and Social Identity of Women Fighters," *Perspectives on Politics* (Forthcoming).

Week IX (March 5 & 7) Islamic Politics

- What factors make Islamist parties and movements moderate?
- What are the distinctive characteristics of Islamist political platforms?

Jillian Schwedler. "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis?" World Politics 62 (2011): 347-376.

Frédéric Volpi and Ewan Stein, "Islamism and the State after the Arab Uprisings: Between People Power and State Power," Democratization 22 (2015): 276-93.

Week X (March 19 & 21) ***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.

Wendy Pearlman, "Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings," *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (2013): 387-409.

Holger Albrecht, and Dorothy Ohl. "Exit, Resistance, Loyalty: Military Behavior during Unrest in Authoritarian Regimes," *Perspectives on Politics* 14 (2016): 38-52.

Watching *The Square* (2013)

Week XI (March 26 & 28) Arab Uprisings – II: Backlash & Violence

- What factors generated mass scale violence in the aftermath of the uprisings?
- What factors contributed to the rise and global reach of the IS?

Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35 (2013): 53-94.

Fawaz A. Gerges, "ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism," *Current History* 113 (2014): 339-43.

Fazil Moradi and Kjell Anderson, "The Islamic State's Êzîdî Genocide in Iraq: The Sinjār Operations," *Genocide Studies International* 10 (2016): 121-38.

Week XII (April 2 & 4) The Kurdish Question in the Middle East

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

Michael M. Gunter, "The Kurdish Question in Perspective," *World Affairs* 166 (2004): 197-205.

Güneş Murat Tezcür, "A Century of the Kurdish Question: Organizational Rivalries, Diplomacy, and Cross-Ethnic Coalitions," *Ethnopolitics* 18 (2019): 1-12.

Week XIII (April 9 & 11) Minorities in the Middle East

- What are the extent and limits of minority rights in the Middle East?
- Under what conditions do majority-minority relations turn violent?

Firuz Kazemzadeh, "The Baha'is in Iran: Twenty Years of Repression," *Social Research* (2000): 537-58.

Ceren Belge and Ekrem Karakoç, "Minorities in the Middle East: Ethnicity, Religion, and Support for Authoritarianism," *Political Research Quarterly* 68 (2015): 280-292.

Sammy Smooha, "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State," *Nations and Nationalism* 8 (2002): 475-503.

Week XIV (April 16 & 18) Politics of Environment

- How vulnerable is the Middle East to climate change?
- How do climate change affect socioeconomic and political life in the region?

Jeannie Sowers, Avner Vengosh, and Erika Weinthal. "Climate change, water resources, and the politics of adaptation in the Middle East and North Africa." *Climatic Change* 104.3-4 (2011): 599-627.

Janpeter Schilling, Korbinian P. Freier, Elke Hertig, and Jürgen Scheffran. "Climate change, vulnerability and adaptation in North Africa with focus on Morocco." *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment* 156 (2012): 12-26.