Politics of the Middle East (CPO 3403)

University of Central Florida
Fall 2019

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TTh 12:00 – 1:15 PM
ENG 1 O227
3 credit hours

Office Hours @ HPH 302F
TTh 9:55–11:55 AM

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) came to UCF by the way of Chicago in 2015. He is 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

travels regularly for research purposes in the region and gives talks about Middle East politics in many different avenues across the globe. Watch his brief introduction.

A note about **Doreen Horschig**, Teaching Assistant: Doreen is a PhD Candidate in the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs. She is working on her dissertation that focuses on public and elite opinion on weapons of mass destruction and the chemical and nuclear weapons taboos. She explores the factors affecting Israeli and US public support for the use of nuclear weapons as well as leader's positioning on nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War period.

II. Requirements

All papers and exams are submitted electronically via UCF's webcourses except for final exam, which is a paper-pencil exam to be taken in classroom. There will be also an ungraded survey in the first week of the semester.

1) 5%: Reflection paper
2) 35%: Four exams
3) 15% Short paper
4) 15%: Three discussion board participations (out of five boards)
5) 20%: Final exam (May 1, 1-2:30 pm)
6) 10%: Class participation & Extracurricular activities

Assignment	Percent Points	Date
Reflection Paper	5	September 2
Exam I	8.5	September 13
Discussion Board I	5 of 15	September 16
Discussion Board II	5 of 15	September 23
Exam II	9	October 4
Discussion Board III	5 of 15	October 7
Exam III	9	October 25
Discussion Board IV	5 of 15	October 28
Short Paper	15	November 18
Exam IV	8.5	November 22
Discussion Board V	5 of 15	November 25
Final Exam	20	December 5
Participation & Extracurricular	10	Throughout the semester

1) Reflection paper (due September 2): 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.

2) 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 above for the exam dates.

3) Short Paper (due November 18) will be submitted electronically in WORD format via webcourses@UCF using the corresponding assignment by **November 18**.

This paper should address one of the following questions about Middle Eastern politics in an analytic fashion. It will be around **1,250 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 six 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?

4) Discussion Boards: There are five online discussion boards . Each student is expected to contribute to three of these boards. Contributions will involve reflections informed by two readings for each topic as well as reactions to other student comments. Each contribution is worth 5% of the final grade. See the course schedule below for their topics.

5) Final Exam on December 5 covers the entire semester. 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, and physical attendance in campus events. Bonus point opportunities may be offered throughout the semester.

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 UCF's webcourses. Additional news reports and visuals about contemporary events will be made available during the semester. There may be some changes in required readings throughout the semester.

James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* 4th ed., Oxford UP, 2015.

Week I (August 27 & 29) 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 (September 3 & 5) 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 (September 10 & 12) 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.

Discussion Board I: Fanon vs. Camus on the Algerian Question

Week IV (September 17 & 19) 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.

Discussion Board II: Obama vs. Trump on the Iran Nuclear Deal

Week V (September 24 & 26) 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.

Week VI (October 1 & 3) 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.

Discussion Board III: Oil and Authoritarianism in the Middle East

Week VII (October 8 & 10) Islamic Politics

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

Jillian Schwedler. "Can Islamists become moderates? rethinking the inclusion-moderation hypothesis?" World Politics 62 (2011): 347-376.

Week VIII (October 15 & 17) Arab-Israeli Conflict

- What are the basic dimensions and issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict?
- Why is the conflict so intransigent?

Gelvin. *The Modern Middle East*, chps.14 & 18.
Sammy Smooha. "The model of ethnic democracy: Israel as a Jewish and democratic state," *Nations and Nationalism* 8 (2002): 475-503.
Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia UP, 2010), chp. 2.

Week IX **(October 22 & 24)** *Gender Relations*

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

Deniz Kandiyoti. "Bargaining with patriarchy." *Gender & Society* 2 (1988): 274-90.
Valentine M. Moghadam. "Modernising women and democratisation after the Arab spring." *The Journal of North African Studies* 19 (2014): 137-142.

Discussion Board IV: Gender Inequality and Islam

Week X (*October 29 & 31*) *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.

Week XI (November 5 & 7) Arab Uprisings – II: Backlash & the IS

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

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 (November 12 & 14) Political Violence in the Middle East

- Is the Middle East more prone to violence than other regions?
- Why do ordinary individuals risks their lives and fight for political goals?

Nils P. Gleditsch and Ida Rudolfsen. "Are Muslim countries more prone to violence?" *Research & Politics 3* (2016).

Gómez, Ángel, et al. "The devoted actor's will to fight and the spiritual dimension of human conflict." *Nature Human Behaviour* 1 (2017): 673-9.

Güneş Murat Tezcür. "A Path out of Patriarchy? Political Agency and Social Identity of Women Fighters." *Perspectives on Politics* (2019).

Week XIII (November 19 & 21) 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.

Attending Kurdish Forum on November 21.
Discussion Board V: The Kurdish Referendum

Week XIV (November 26 & December 3) 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 (2011): 599-627.

Colin P. Kelley, Shahrzad Mohtadi, Mark A. Cane, Richard Seager, and Yochanan Kushnir. "Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112 (2015): 3241-6.