CPO 4406-0001
Minorities and Majorities in the Middle East
3 credits
Spring 2026
Tu Th 9:00-10:15 AM

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Course Description

This course examines the social, economic, and political status of ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It analyzes how minority-majority relations have been shaped by state formation, nationalism, colonial legacies, and contemporary regional conflicts. Through a comparative framework, the course explores the experiences of major religious and ethnic minority groups—including the Druze, Alawites, Jews, Christians, Kurds, and Amazigh—across diverse national contexts such as Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Algeria, and Morocco. Particular attention is paid to patterns of exclusion and inclusion, political mobilization, identity formation, and state strategies for managing minority claims.

Instructional Method

This class is designated as entirely in-person. Students are expected to attend classes during the scheduled time to be awarded full attendance points.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Conceptualize state-minority relations in the Middle East and North Africa using comparative political frameworks.
2. Analyze the historical evolution and contemporary dynamics of state-ethnic and religious minority relations across the region.
3. Critically evaluate primary and secondary sources and articulate evidence-based arguments through written reaction papers.
4. Develop critical thinking skills and construct clear, persuasive arguments grounded in theory and empirical evidence.
5. Apply theories of ethnic conflict, political mobilization, and power-sharing to empirical cases in the Middle East.
6. Communicate sophisticated arguments effectively in both oral presentations and written work.

Course Evaluation Method

Examinations (70%): There will be five quizzes, each contributing 10 points to your overall grade, and a final exam for 20 points of your total grade. The quizzes will primarily consist of true/false, multiple-choice questions, although they may include short essay prompts. The final exam will consist of essay

question(s). Please note that failing to complete an exam by the designated deadline will result in an automatic score of zero.

Term Paper & Group Discussion (15 points): Each student is expected to participate in a class discussion and simulation toward the end of the semester. This exercise is designed to apply the concepts, theories, and case studies examined throughout the course to assess the prospects for inclusion, peace, and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The assignment has two components. First, the class will be divided into three groups, each representing a minority group (e.g., Kurds, Amazigh/Berbers, and Druze). Each group will prepare and present its case, outlining key historical grievances, political demands, and strategies for inclusion. Presentations will be followed by a structured discussion focused on how these minority claims might be integrated into existing or reformed political frameworks.

Second, each student is required to submit an individual written reflection (1–2 pages) that critically engages with the simulation, course readings, and class discussions. The written component should demonstrate the student's ability to apply theoretical frameworks to empirical cases and to evaluate alternative pathways toward political inclusion and conflict resolution.

The final grade for the "Term Paper" will be based on three criteria: (1) the quality of the individual written submission, (2) the student's level of preparation and participation within the group, and (3) the overall coherence and effectiveness of the group's presentation and discussion.

Class Participation (15 points): Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester. Repeated absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. Students who leave class before it officially ends will be counted as absent, without prior notice.
Class participation constitutes 20 percent of the final grade. Students are expected to arrive on time and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Effective participation requires attentiveness to lectures, active engagement in class discussions and exercises, and respectful interaction with classmates. Students are expected to respect diverse viewpoints and contribute constructively to the learning environment.
Disruptive behavior, including the use of cellular phones and laptop computers for purposes unrelated to class activities, is not permitted. Lectures and other class materials are intended to clarify, contextualize, and expand upon the assigned readings; therefore, students are expected to complete the readings in advance and develop a general understanding of the topics covered.
Students will be evaluated and rewarded based on the quality, relevance, and consistency of their contributions to class discussion.

Grading Scale: A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73; D+ 67-69; D 64-66; D- 61-63; F 0-60.

Academic Integrity
Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct at <http://osc.sdes.ucf.edu/process/roc>. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in

- Unauthorized assistance: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
- Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
- Commercial Use of Academic Material: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
- Falsifying or misrepresenting the student's own academic work.
- Plagiarism: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
- Multiple Submissions: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
- Helping another violate academic behavior standards.

For more information about Academic Integrity, consult the International Center for Academic Integrity <http://academicintegrity.org>.
For more information about plagiarism and misuse of sources, see "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices" <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9>.

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating
Students should familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule* <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/docs/goldenrule.pdf>. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and when necessary respond to academic misconduct. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension or expulsion from the university, and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/zgrade>.

Course Accessibility Statement
The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need disability-related access in this course should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone 407-823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

Campus Safety Statement
Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise during class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of their surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.
In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.

Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Students should make a note of the guide's physical location and review the online version at <http://emergency.ucf.edu/emergency_guide.html>.

Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.

If there is a medical emergency during class, students may need to access a first-aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those are located, see <http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/AEDlocations-UCF> (click on link from menu on left).

To stay informed about emergency situations, students can sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to <https://my.ucf.edu> and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the toolbar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on the Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert", fill out the information, including e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."

Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.

To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video (<https://youtu.be/NIKYajEx4pk>).

Make-Up Assignments for Authorized University Events or Co-curricular Activities
Students who represent the university in an authorized event or activity (for example, student-athletes) and who are unable to meet a course deadline due to a conflict with that event must provide the instructor with documentation in advance to arrange a make-up. No penalty will be applied. For more information, see the UCF policy at <http://policies.ucf.edu/documents/4-401.1MakeupAssignmentsForAuthorizedUniversityEventsOrCocurricularActivities.pdf>
In other cases, except medical emergencies, there will be no make-up assignments. For medical emergency cases, I will need documentary evidence.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID REQUIREMENT: RECORDING ACADEMIC ACTIVITY POLICY
UCF must comply with a federal financial aid regulation that states that in order to receive federal aid, students must be actively academically engaged (according to a federal definition) in each course in which they are enrolled. All faculty are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. Without verification of this engagement, students will not receive their aid.

In order to document that you began this course, please complete the Canvas assignment by the end of the first week of classes, or as soon as possible after adding the course, but no later than the end of the second week. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Diversity and Inclusion
The University of Central Florida considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events. Dimensions of diversity can include sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic class, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, political beliefs, cognitive style, and communication style. The individual intersection of these experiences and characteristics must be valued in our community.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu/
If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact Student Accessibility Services. Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services - http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/ & sas@ucf.edu

Writing Support
If you need assistance with writing, please contact UCF's Writing Center.
Writing Center, Trevor Colbourn Hall, room 105
407-823-2197
http://uwc.ucf.edu/

The University Writing Center (UWC) offers writing support to UCF students from first-year to graduate in every discipline. Trained peer consultants provide help at every stage of the writing process, including understanding assignments, researching, drafting, revising, incorporating sources, and learning to proofread and edit. The UWC's purpose is not merely to fix papers or to make better writers, but to teach writers strategies to navigate complex situations for writing, both in and outside the University. Consultations are available for individuals and small groups. To make the best use of the UWC, visit far enough before your due date to allow yourself time to revise after your consultation, browse the writing resources on our website, and arrange a regular weekly appointment if you'd like long-term help. You may schedule a 45-minute appointment by phone or by using the TutorTrac scheduler on our website; walk-in consultations are also available. In addition, the UWC seeks graduate and undergraduate tutors from all majors; contact the UWC to learn more about peer writing consulting and ENC 4275/5276: Theory & Practice of Tutoring Writing, our three-credit tutor-education course.

Religious Observances
Students must notify their instructor in advance if they intend to miss class for a religious observance. For more information, see the UCF policy at <http://regulations.ucf.edu/chapter5/documents/5.020ReligiousObservancesFINALOct17.pdf>.

Deployed Active Duty Military Students
Students who are deployed active duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Required Text(s)
There are no required books to purchase for this course. All required readings will be made available in digital format through Canvas.

Course Topical Outline
The dates listed for each topic are approximate and will depend on how quickly we move through the material. *Note that this is not a contract*. It is subject to change at my discretion.

Week 1 (January 13-15): Introduction/Minorities in the Middle East
First Week Assignment: January 13 (Canvas)

Week 2 (January 20-22): Minorities in Islamic Empires
Barkey, Chapter 8, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans.*

Week 3 (January 27-29): Politicization of Identities
Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab Empire*, pp. 1-67.
Kuran, 2004. "The economic ascent of the Middle East's religious minorities: the role of Islamic legal pluralism." *The Journal of Legal Studies*, *33*(2): 475-515.
Quiz 1: Due January 30 (Canvas)

Week 4 (February 3-5): Religious Minorities: Christians
McCallum, F., 2012. "Religious Institutions and Authoritarian States: church–state relations in the Middle East." *Third World Quarterly*, *33*(1), pp.109-124.
Tadros, M. 2009. "Vicissitudes in the Entente Between the Coptic Orthodox Church and The State in Egypt, (1952-2007)" IJMES.
Maggiolini, Paolo. 2021. Christians of the Emirate, P. Maggiolini and I. Ouahes (eds.), In *Minorities and State-Building in the Middle East*, Minorities in West Asia and North Africa
McCallum, F., 2007. "The political role of the patriarch in the contemporary Middle East." *Middle Eastern Studies*, *43*(6), pp. 923-940.
Quiz 2: Due February 6 (Canvas)

Week 5 (February 10-12): Maronites and Assyrians
Henley; chapter 7. Routledge Handbook of Minorities in the Middle East
Donabed, chapter 9.
February 12: Guest Lecture

Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods before Me: Why Governments Discriminate against Religious Minorities

Week 6 (February 17-19): Jews in MENA
Cohen
Toktas
Sahim

Week 7 (February 24-26): Yezidis and Zoroastrianism
Yezidis1
Yezidis2
Foltz (Richard Foltz. 2011. "Zoroastrians in Iran: What Future in the Homeland?" *Middle East Journal*, 65 (1): 73-84).

Week 8 (March 3-5): Druzes, Alawites, Palestinian Christians
Hazran (Hazran Yusri. 2019. *The Druze communities in the modern Middle East*-Routledge Handbook of Minorities in the Middle East).
Goldsmith, Leon. 2015. "Alawi Diversity and Solidarity"
Farouk-Alli
McGahern, Una. 2011. Chapter 3. "Profile of the Palestinian Christians in Israel"

Week 9 (March 10-12): Reflections on Religious Minorities in the MENA
Quiz 3: March 10 (in class)

Week 10 (March 16-21): *Spring Break*

Week 11 (March 24-26): Ethnic Minorities: Kurds in Turkey/Syria
Karakoc and Ozen
Tejel, Chapter 3

Week 12 (March 31-April 2): Ethnic Minorities: Kurds in Iraq/Iran
Romano, *Kurdish nationalist challenges to the Iraqi state*, chapter 6.
Posch, W., 2017. "Fellow Aryans and Muslim Brothers: Iranian Narratives on the Kurds." *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, pp.331-352.
Quiz 4: Due April 3 (Canvas)

Week 13 (April 6-9): Amazighs/Berbers

Maddy-Weitzman, B., 2001. Contested identities: Berbers,'Berberism' and the state in North Africa. *The Journal of North African Studies*, *6*(3):23-47.
Aïtel, F., 2013. Between Algeria and France: The origins of the Berber movement. *French Cultural Studies*, *24*(1), pp.63-76.
El Aissati, Abderrahman. 2001 "Ethnic Identity, Language Shift, and The Amazigh Voice in Morocco and Algeria." *Race, Gender and Class* 18(3):57-69
Quiz 5: Due April 10 (Canvas)

Week 14 (April 14-16): Group Discussions
Week 15 (April 21-23): Cont'd.

Final Exam Period (April 29-May 5)