Politics of the Middle East
Political Science 357  Fall 2015

Instructor: Quinn Mecham

Office: Spencer W. Kimball Tower (SWKT) 770
E-mail address: qmecham@byu.edu
Phone: 801-422-5317
Office hours: Tuesday 1-4:00pm (203 HRCB) and Wednesday 3-4:00 pm (770 SWKT)

Teaching Assistant: Jacob Coakwell

E-mail address: jacob.coakwell@live.com
Office hours by appointment

Introduction:

This course is an introduction to important themes, concepts, and cases in the study of the Middle East and North Africa, with particular attention to the domestic and international politics of the region. The course examines social and political issues in the region from the early 20th century to the present, focusing primarily on issues of contemporary relevance. For the purposes of this course, the region is defined as the countries of the Arab world, Israel, Turkey, and Iran. The first half of the course introduces major themes in Middle Eastern history and politics. These include state development, nationalism, revolution, authoritarian rule, the petro-state, the Arab-Israeli conflict, conflicts in the Persian Gulf, civil society, civil conflict, human rights, the rise of Islamism, and attempts at liberal reform. The second half of the course examines how these themes have affected political development in a number of key cases, and how the Middle East has changed since the Arab uprisings of 2011. Primary cases include Egypt, Israel, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. Students will have the opportunity to individually assess other countries of personal interest in the region through a research-based case study.

Required texts:


2) Mark Gasiorowski, ed., The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa, 7th edition, Westview, 2014 (we will read parts of this and other parts may be helpful as reference).

Required texts are available at the college bookstore and are on reserve in the Harold B. Lee Library (for two-hour checkout). Additional readings for the course are available to view or download on Learning Suite. These readings are indicated on the syllabus using the term “reserve.”

Requirements:

Regular attendance in class and the reading of all assigned materials is expected. In addition, a map quiz, weekly informal writing assignments, a mid-term essay, a research-based case study, and a final exam are required.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Map quiz: 5%
Informal writing and course participation: 20%
Mid-term exam 15%
Mid-term essay 15%
Case study: 20%
Final exam: 25%

Map quiz: A map quiz is required in the first week of class.

Informal writing: Each student will post a short response (1-2 paragraphs) to a discussion question on the course website twice each week. The discussion question is based on the course readings for the week, and may be further discussed in class. These postings should be thoughtful personal responses to the discussion question, which incorporate your learning from the weekly readings. Additionally, there are five opportunities to view and respond to films about the Middle East. The films and designated screening times are included in the reading schedule below. To receive full credit, you are required to post 15 total responses (including both reading and film responses) to the course website. Writing assignments should be posted to the course website by noon on Wednesday of each week. Film responses should be posted by the date they are assigned in the syllabus.

If you do not already have an account at wordpress.com, you will need to register in order to use the primary course website. Connect to the course website at the web address: plsc357.wordpress.com. Writing assignments will be posted under the tab titled “Weekly Responses.” Each participant is assigned to a specific working group, and you should post your response under the section designated for your working group. The course website also includes the syllabus, reading schedule, and course requirements for your reference.

Case study: The case study is due by 5pm on Friday, December 11. The case study is limited to 10 double-spaced pages in length. Select one of the political themes from the
first half of the course, and apply it to a country case that is not directly addressed in the second half of the course. The case study should be oriented around an original argument and assess how the chosen theme has played out in your country case, using scholarly references and research materials. Further details on writing the case study will be provided in class.

- **Themes** (choose only one): a) Authoritarianism, b) Political Economy, c) Arab-Israeli conflict, d) Conflict in the Gulf, e) Civil Society, f) Civil Conflict, g) Human Rights, h) Islamism, i) Attempts at Liberal Reform, j) Arab Uprisings, k) Contemporary Political Transitions.

- **Cases** (choose only one): a) Algeria, b) Tunisia, c) Libya, d) Sudan, e) Lebanon, f) Palestinian Territories, g) Syria, h) Jordan, i) Yemen, j) Oman, k) United Arab Emirates, l) Qatar, m) Bahrain, n) Kuwait, o) Morocco.

**Exam dates:**
- Map quiz: **Wednesday September 9** (in class)
- Mid-term exam: **Thursday/Friday September 24/25** (at the testing center)
- Mid-term essay: **Tuesday November 3** (5 double-spaced pages, post on Learning Suite by 5pm)
- Final exam: **Wednesday December 16, 11am-2pm** (in class)

**Late policy:** Your mid-term essay and case study paper must be submitted on Learning Suite. No papers will be accepted by e-mail. All late papers will be docked a portion of the grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day that they are late. Exams will not be given at any other time than those scheduled except in extraordinary circumstances. No late papers will be accepted after the final exam on December 16.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**PART I: FOUNDATIONS**

**M Aug 31**—**Introduction: Political Geography and Current Events**

**W Sept 2**—**Pre-Colonial Political Legacies**

*Gelvin, Introduction, Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-68*

**M Sept 7**—**Labor Day Holiday (no class)**
W Sept 9—Colonialism and Empire
Gelvin, Chapters 5-7, pp. 69-116

**Map Quiz in Class**

M Sept 14—Early 20th Century Politics and Society
Gelvin, Chapters 8-10, pp. 140-187

W Sept 16—Foundations of the Modern State
Gelvin, Chapters 11-13, pp. 189-229

M Sept 21—Emerging Sources of Conflict
Gelvin, Chapters 14-16, pp. 230-299

W Sept 23—Resistance and Revolution
Gelvin, Chapters 17-19 and conclusion, pp. 300-372

Film: The Battle of Algiers

TH/F Sept 24-25—**MIDTERM EXAM** (in testing center)

PART II: KEY THEMES

M Sept 28—Varieties of Authoritarianism


W Sept 30—Political Economy and the Petro-State


Jill Crystal. 1990. “State Formation and Oil,” pp. 1-14 in Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar. Cambridge. (Reserve)


M Oct 5—The Arab-Israeli Conflict


W Oct 7—The Arab-Israeli Conflict (part 2)


M Oct 12—Conflict in the Gulf


W Oct 14—Civil Conflict


Film: Control Room

M Oct 19—Civil Society


**W Oct 21—Human Rights**


*Film: Wadjda*

**M Oct 26—Islamist Activism**


**W Oct 28—Early Attempts at Liberal Reform**


**M Nov 2—The Origins of the Arab Uprisings 2011-2012**

Lynch, Chapter 1


**T Nov 3—**MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE** (post on Learning Suite by 5pm)

**PART III: SELECTED CASES**

**W Nov 4—Egypt**


M Nov 9—Israel


Brent Sasley. 2015. “Built Bibi Tough: Why Netanyahu’s Coalition is More Durable Than You Think,” Foreign Affairs, May 19. (Reserve)

Film: Omar

W Nov 11— Saudi Arabia

Sebastian Maisel, “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” Chapter 4 in Gasiorowski.


Amélie Le Renard. 2008. “’Only for Women:’ Women, the State, and Reform in Saudi Arabia.” *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 4: 610-629. (Reserve)


**M Nov 16—Iran**

Mark Gasiorowski, “Islamic Republic of Iran,” Chapter 3 in *Gasiorowski*.


**W Nov 18—Turkey**

Henri Barkey and Omer Taşpinar, “Republic of Turkey,” Chapter 2 in *Gasiorowski*.


**F Nov 20**—Iraq


W Nov 25—Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)

PART IV: TURMOIL AND TRANSITION IN TODAY’S MIDDLE EAST

M Nov 30—Patterns and Explanations in the Arab Uprisings

Lynch, Chapters 3-6

Film: The Square

**W Dec 2**—Key Actors and Themes in the Arab Uprisings
Lynch, Chapters 8, 10-12

**M Dec 7**—The Middle East in 2015
Lynch, Chapters 13-16

**W Dec 9**—Case Study Research Roundtables (in class with case study drafts)

**F Dec 11**—FINAL CASE STUDY DUE at 5 pm (post on Learning Suite)

**W Dec 16** **FINAL EXAM** 11am-2pm (in class)