Politics of the Middle East
Political Science 357  Fall 2013

Instructor: Quinn Mecham

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Office hours:
Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-11:00 am or 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. 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.

Required texts:


Purchase at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/ebooks/revolution_in_the_arab_world

Recommended:


Required texts are available at the college bookstore and are on reserve in the library. 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 exam, 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 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. These films and their show times are included in the reading schedule below. To receive full credit, you are required to post 15 of 18 possible total responses (including both reading and film responses) to the course website. Weekly writing assignments should be posted to the course website by **10pm Wednesday** of each week. Film responses should be posted by **Saturday** of the week in which the film is viewed.

If you do not already have an account at wordpress.com, you will need to register in order to use the 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 6**. The case study should be no more than 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 reference and research materials.

- **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 and Current 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:*
- Mid-term exam: **Thursday October 3** (taken in class)
- Mid-term essay: **Wednesday November 6** (5 double-spaced pages, due at 770 SWKT by 5pm)
- Final exam: **Thursday December 19** (7-10am in class)

*Late policy:* Your mid-term essay and case study paper must be submitted in hard copy. 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.
COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

T Sept 3—Political Geography and Early History

Gelvin, pp. 1-11

TH Sept 5—Current Events in the Middle East

Map quiz in class

Read the September 4 issue of the New York Times for all Middle East and North Africa content. Also scan for this week’s Middle East headlines on the websites for BBC News, The Economist, and Al-Jazeera English.


T Sept 10—Pre-Colonial Political Legacies

Gelvin, Chapters 1-4, pp. 13-68

TH Sept 12—Colonialism and Empire

Gelvin, Chapters 5-7, pp. 69-109

T Sept 17—Early 20th Century Politics and Society

Gelvin, Chapters 8-10, pp. 133-179

TH Sept 20—Foundations of the Modern State

Gelvin, Chapters 11-13, pp. 180-216

T Sept 24—Emerging Sources of Conflict

Gelvin, Chapters 14-16, pp. 217-265
TH Sept 26—Revolt and Revolution

Gelvin, Chapters 17-19, pp. 266-306

T Oct 1—Working Group Breakouts

Film Screening: Battle of Algiers

TH Oct 3—**MIDTERM EXAM** (in class)

PART II: KEY THEMES

T Oct 8—Varieties of Authoritarianism


Film screening this week: The Syrian Bride (International Cinema)

TH Oct 10—Political Economy of the Petro-State


**T Oct 15—The Arab-Israeli Conflict**


**TH Oct 17—Conflict in the Gulf**


**T Oct 22—Civil Society**


Quintan Wicktorowicz, “Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan,” *Comparative Politics* 33/1 (October 2000) (Reserve)

James Zogby, “What Arabs Think: Values, Beliefs, Concerns,” pp.7-17, 33-42, 61-64. (Reserve)

Film Screening: *Control Room*

**TH Oct 24—Civil Conflict and Human Rights**


Isobel Coleman, “Are the Mideast Revolutions Bad for Women’s Rights?” pp. 242-246 in The New Arab Revolt

T Oct 29—The Rise of Islamism

Gelvin, Chapter 20, pp. 307-318


TH Oct 31—Early Attempts at Liberal Reform


Mohamed Talbi, “A Record of Failure,” pp. 3-12, in Islam and Democracy in the Middle East, Larry Diamond, Marc. F. Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg, eds., Johns Hopkins, 2003 (Reserve)


T Nov 5—The Arab Uprisings and Political Transitions in Tunisia and Egypt

Revolution in the Arab World, Chapters 1-3

Michele Penner Angrist, “Morning in Tunisia: The Frustrations of the Arab World Boil Over,” pp. 75-80 in The New Arab Revolt


Lisa Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya,” pp. 320-328 in The New Arab Revolt

W Nov 6 –MIDTERM ESSAY DUE, 770 SWKT, 5pm

PART III: CASES

TH Nov 7—Egypt


Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, “The Muslim Brotherhood After Mubarak: What the Brotherhood is and How it Will Shape the Future,” pp. 91-97 in The New Arab Revolt

Joshua Stacher, “Egypt’s Democratic Mirage: How Cairo’s Authoritarian Regime is Adapting to Preserve Itself,” pp. 98-103 in The New Arab Revolt


T Nov 12—Israel

David H. Goldberg and Bernard Reich, “State of Israel,” Chapter 11 in Long, Reich, Gasiorowski.


Nadav Ayal, “Tent Revolt in Tel Aviv: Will the Protests in Israel Bring Down Netanyahu?” Foreign Affairs, 8 August 2011 (Reserve).

TH Nov 14—Saudi Arabia

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


Michael Herb, pp. 87-108 in All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies. SUNY, 1995. (Reserve)


T Nov 19—Iran
Mark Gasiorowski, “Islamic Republic of Iran,” Chapter 3 in *Long, Reich, Gasiorowski*.


Film screening this week: *Offside* (International Cinema)

**TH Nov 21—Turkey**

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


Marvine Howe, Chapters 1, 2, and 19, pp. 1-22, 243-263 in *Turkey Today: a Nation Divided Over Islam’s Revival*. Westview, 2000. (Reserve)


Quinn Mecham, “The AKP’s Accountability Problem,” *Foreign Policy*, 7 June 2013 (Reserve).

**T Nov 26—Iraq**


Raad Alkadiri, “Rage Comes to Baghdad: Will Iraq’s Recent Protests Lead to Revolt?” pp. 193-199 in The New Arab Revolt

T Dec 3—Case Study Research Roundtables

Film screening: Iraq in Fragments

TH Dec 5—Individual Case Study Work

F Dec 6—CASE STUDY DUE at 770 SWKT, 5 pm

T Dec 10—Political Turmoil and the Challenges of Change

Revolution in the Arab World, Chapter 4


Michael Broning, “The Sturdy House that Assad Built: Why Damascus is Not Cairo,” pp. 200-204 in The New Arab Revolt


TH Dec 12—Causes and Legacies of the Arab Uprisings

Revolution in the Arab World, Chapters 5-6.
Ragui Assaad, “Demographics of Arab Protests,” pp. 236-241 in *The New Arab Revolt*


**TH Dec 19—FINAL EXAM (7-10am) in class**