Middle East Politics

Course Logistics

Officially, this course is being taught as an “in-person” hybrid offering, which means it will have components of direct classroom contact among students and instructor (when these are now scheduled to begin on September 14 and for as long as they can be safely sustained) and components of work that will be posted and completed remotely. In-person sessions will convene in Maybank 307 or outside when weather permits. When in-person meetings are not possible, the course will begin by running online asynchronously – but we will also experiment with synchronous small group meetings over video during the semester once we know better exactly what we will be able to do during the term, how much in-class time we will actually have to use.

If any enrolled student wishes to have the entire course delivered online, you MUST make me aware of that immediately upon entering the course. While I have constructed a course that can be delivered entirely online, it will only be conducted that way for a student who explicitly requests it at the start of the term. Any other shifts in mode of delivery for a student (due to health or safety issues) during the semester MUST be discussed directly with me as soon as the need arises.

In reality, much of the course’s actual construction is modeled on the European university course structure: You will be engaging directly with material, me and classmates through various formats over the semester. Most of the course substance will be delivered online and consumed remotely by students. There will not be any in-person lectures – you will receive all the substance through reading and online resources, commentary from me.

Each class period within each week is reserved for discussion of what you are encountering outside the classroom. Each class session is organized around a specific question and reading related to that question. These questions will provide the focus for class discussion (whether in-person or remote) throughout the semester.

You will be assigned to a group (A, B or C) of approximately 10-12 class members in the introductory segment of class. You will attend in-person class and discuss questions with this group during the semester. The groups will be reshuffled once or twice during the term so that you will connect with different people during the semester.

On days when you are in the classroom (when your group is scheduled to attend an in-person session as indicated in the syllabus), you will discuss the day’s question with me and classmates. Notes of these discussions will be posted later on OAKS for those not attending your session. If we reach a point where in-person class sessions are suspended or are otherwise untenable, we will experiment with synchronous video meetings of scheduled small groups – or rely on the OAKS discussion board asynchronously.

On days when you are not scheduled to be in the classroom (or if you are compelled to miss a discussion due to illness), you will be exchanging views on the day’s question remotely through the OAKS discussion board with me and classmates on the day that class would typically meet.

One way or another, there will always be two discussions happening on each class session around the question of the day (assuming in-person or video sessions are happening) – one in the classroom with the designated group and one on the OAKS discussion board – and notes from the in-person discussion will be merged with the online exchange. Each group will attend an in-person discussion once every week (days per week will vary so groups are discussing sometimes at the start of a “chapter” or the middle or the end).

* Office hours may not be held in my actual office – pay attention to my guidance on where I can be found during these hours as the semester progresses. I will be VERY explicit about where I can be located to meet.
If we lose the capacity to hold in-person class sessions, all discussions will revert to the OAKS platform and/or video (Zoom) formats— the day’s designated group will be expected to take the lead and be the most active participants for the day’s question -- everyone is always welcome to discuss the day’s question on the OAKS thread with me and classmates.

You will not be expected to be active in every discussion all semester long. However, your weekly meaningful presence in these exchanges is expected – at the very least when you are in-person/live video – and the more active you are, the more your grade for participation and engagement will reflect that activity. Participation and engagement will constitute 20% of your course grade.

In addition, you will be completing three other assignments over the fifteen-week semester for course credit. First, you will be completing four subject essays. Each essay has two options (all included in the syllabus) that you will choose from to write on. Each essay will also diminish in length – you will begin with an essay that has a seven-page maximum and will conclude the semester with a two-page maximum for your final essay. These essays will be worth 40% of your final grade. More information about them can be found in the Method of Evaluation section of the syllabus and in the course outline.

Second, you will be completing ten exercises over the course of the semester, with each exercise corresponding to a different section of the course. Typically, these will be 500-word narratives (maximum) that respond to a specific set of prompts (all listed in the syllabus) and they are designed to help you see and develop some of the central points to a week’s topics. These narratives in total will be worth 25% of your course grade. More information about them can be found in the Method of Evaluation section of the syllabus and in the course outline.

Your final essay, based on your reading of Gilles Kepel’s After the Chaos, will be a maximum of two pages in length and will be worth 15% of your grade at the end of the term. More information about them can be found in the Method of Evaluation section of the syllabus and in the course outline.

One final logistical caveat to begin with – upon entering my classroom (and enrolling at the College more broadly), you have agreed to abide by the COVID-19 provisions of the Student Code of Conduct. For your safety and the safety of everyone else enrolled in the course, I expect you to strictly follow those rules. If you are feeling unwell or believe at any time you have potentially been exposed to the virus (whether symptomatic or not), I do not want you attending class until you have been certified healthy and are no longer potentially contagious. I will expect everyone in the classroom to wear masks and maintain social distance with one another (inside and outside the classroom), as well as follow all safety and sanitizing procedures for the classroom. I will not allow ANYONE to jeopardize the health of others – and I will take any measures necessary to assure everyone’s safety. Bottom line, I expect you to be responsible and vigilant in protecting yourself to assure that others remain safe – if you have questions about what that entails, feel free to ask before you act.

There will be no exams in this course – and thus, no need for online proctoring arrangements

OAKS

OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

Continuity of Learning

Due to social distancing requirements, this class will include a variety of online and technology enhanced components to reinforce continuity of learning for all enrolled students. Before the drop/add deadline, students should decide whether the course plan on the syllabus matches their own circumstances.

Course Objectives

For more than a decade, the Middle East has experienced an extraordinary period of upheaval and transition. What many in the West came to call the “Arab Spring” (with all its misnomers – people in the region have preferred to call
it the “Arab citizen revolts”) featured popular protests demanding change in countries across the region: the departure of long-standing rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen; violent political standoffs between regimes and populations in countries as diverse as Bahrain and Syria; and portions of the region that seemed quiet but were affected all the same by the dynamics. As some states have tried to move on from protests to create new political processes and structures (from “revolution” to “reform”), other systems and elites have doggedly resisted the impulses for change, prompting observers to suggest the period following turmoil has been far less inspiring than the hopes which spawned it – and that these aftermaths share more with the preceding period than some originally anticipated they might. Why have these events arisen? How do these events in different countries compare? What do these events “mean” for the region and what kinds of futures might they forecast for the peoples who have played such integral roles in their emergence?

This course is designed to help you gain an understanding of the nature and content of Middle East politics with a particular eye toward seeking to comprehend these recent regional events. We will strive for a synthesis of knowledge about Middle East politics rather than a detailed and descriptive survey of individual states and societies, although when thinking about recent regional dynamics, attempts to differentiate what has happened in specific states will be part of the task. Though historical information will be provided, emphasis will be placed on the post-World War II period. Overall, the discussion will be conceptual and topical, not chronological, and it will culminate in an examination of the region’s contemporary turmoil and its implications for the future.

Course Content

This course will revolve around two sets of themes. The first set related to the enduring dynamics of Middle East politics and includes the historical and cultural setting of politics, as well as social, economic and political institutions and processes. In this context, we will be examining concepts and topics such as nationalism, imperialism, authority, modernization, class, civil society, the military, the clergy and social liberation movements as they relate to the region.

The second set of themes revolved around patterns of continuity and change present in contemporary Middle East politics, patterns that are derived from the dynamics of the area and which today give rise to conflicting assessments of the region’s future. This portion of the course will explore topics like the ongoing social and economic reconstruction underway and the effects of an emerging “youth bulge” that is straining the area’s politics. Among the specific issues to be examined are the Arab-Israeli conflict, the effects of globalization on the region’s economics, the perception that Islam poses an ominous challenge to regional prospects for freedom; and the Middle East’s participation in the “spread of democracy” (and its subsequent decline) with an eye toward examining the nature of political continuity and change underway in the region.

Because the course is an elective offering for the College’s Geography minor, there will be a significant emphasis on the role that space and place plays in the region’s politics. Portions of that focus will emerge throughout the course content, most notably during deliberations over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Foreign Language Alternative

This course has been approved to satisfy Category 3 of the Foreign Language Alternative program. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to contextualize and analyze artifacts, practices and perspectives from cultures in the Middle East region (program learning outcome 3).

Learning Outcomes and Skills This Course Will Seek to Improve

This course contains several learning objectives and outcomes. In conjunction with the program outcomes of the Political Science Department, upon completion of the course, you will be able to contextualize and analyze artifacts, practices and perspectives from the cultures of the Middle East. This means in part that after having taken this course, you will have a demonstrably stronger and more informed perspective on the Middle East region, its politics, economics, cultures and societies. This includes seeing elements of continuity and change in the region’s politics and recognizing the fallacies of prevailing myths about the region and its political relationships. At the end of the semester, you should be conscious of your understanding and be able to better and more substantively articulate to others the appreciation of the region you have acquired. In addition, this course will push you to comprehend the specific nature of comparative political inquiry and you will know how to begin applying concepts and theories comparatively in order to deepen your knowledge of issues in the region. As part of this effort too, you will emerge with an understanding of how geography – and particularly the concepts of place and space – can meaningfully influence the politics of a region like the Middle East.
This course will seek to challenge and improve a number of skills that are considered vital for students of Political Science (and students of the Liberal Arts and Sciences more broadly) to master. These include:

** contextualizing and analyzing artifacts, practices and perspectives from the cultures of the Middle East (through required reading, exercises and essay assignments);

**oral communication, listening and presentation abilities (through class discussions; in-class and out-of-class discussions and activities);

** reading comprehension (through regular reading assignments that will provide the basis for daily class sessions as well as questions for exercises and essays);

**effective writing and the concise development of arguments, critical analysis (through exercise and essay narratives);

** posing effective questions and strategizing pathways to answer questions (in-class and out-of-class discussions)

**critical thinking and analytical capacities (through class reading, discussion of scholarly work on the region, exercise and essay narratives);

** applying theories and concepts to explain human behavior, account for new situations (through class reading, exercises and essay narratives);

** comprehension of other’s views and capacity to formulate, defend one’s own position (through class reading, discussions and exercises);

** cooperative work and active learning (through in-class and out-of-class discussions, activities);

** time management and personal responsibility (through set-up of the entire course, specific exercises in class).

**Intended Long-Term Impact of the Course**

Beyond helping you learn about the Middle East, this course seeks to make a more lasting impact on your professional development in anticipation of your transition to the workplace. As one employer of college graduates recently observed, young employees “are very good at finding information but not as good at putting it into context … they are really good at technology, but not at how to take those skills and resolve specific problems” (emphasis added). Skills and abilities that employers repeatedly say they most value in their young employees include: written and oral communication skills, adaptability and flexibility, the ability to deal with ambiguity and complexity, managing multiple priorities, collaboration and interpersonal skills, the capacity to make decisions and the ability to creatively solve complex problems. Firms want graduates with “soft skills” – those who can work well in teams, write and speak clearly, engage in critical thinking, adapt quickly to changing conditions, solve problems on the fly, handle pressure effectively, interact with colleagues from different countries and cultures. As another employer said “soft skills tend to differentiate good college graduates from exceptional college graduates”.

This course seeks to work on many of those “soft skills” both directly and indirectly and it offers you space to improve in many of these areas. Additionally, you should consider accessing the many resources available through the College of Charleston’s Career Center as you begin to think about and plan for life after college. For more information, consult the Career Center’s website at [http://careercenter.cofc.edu](http://careercenter.cofc.edu), visit the office in the Lightsey Center, Room 216 or call (843) 953-5692.

**Method of Presentation**

Given the necessities posed by COVID-19, the methods of presentation for the course have been altered accordingly. Virtually all of the substantive material you will encounter and utilize in the course will be presented to you online. There is reading aligning with each concept of comparative politics we will employ in the first half of the class and
I will provide supplemental materials whenever necessary.

Class sessions are reserved for discussing and expanding upon the material you are encountering online. These sessions (whether in class or online by video if in-person instruction is suspended) will be student driven in response to the organizing question of the day; they are opportunities for you to pose questions, explore different interpretations of material—all with an eye toward critically evaluating and assessing the arguments being made by various authors. I will be playing a more facilitative role during these discussions, reacting to rather than directing your inquiry.

The totality of the course structure is designed to allow students with different learning styles to flourish—and while the circumstances surrounding the semester limit how much improvisation we can muster, I am open to doing whatever possible to enhance your learning. *Always know that you can email me or schedule time with me in-person or remotely to get questions resolved or accomplish what we cannot always finish or achieve in class sessions.*

**Class Participation**

Class participation is a vital component of this course and your active involvement in class sessions (be they in-person or virtual) and your willingness to engage with material remotely are necessary keys to success. Participation in all forms of class discussion is expected and will be considered in final course evaluations. Participation include not only the expression of your own insights but listening and carefully considering, critically assessing the views of others. You should always be prepared during each class session to discuss current political events in the region as they related to the specific themes under consideration.

Given the nature of the COVID-19 challenges, there is not a formal attendance expectation for this course. However, your failure to be actively and consistently engaged with material and the learning of others will reflect negatively on your class participation. Give the course your best effort ... the rewards will pay off for yourself and others in the course.

**Honor Code and Academic Integrity**

“Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: [http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php).”

**Special Circumstances -- Disability/Access**

This College abides by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see an administrator at the Center of Disability Services/SNAP office (843.953.1431) so that such accommodation may be arranged.

If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should know about, please make me aware right away. For example, if you have a diagnosed (or undiagnosed) learning challenge, if you have a physical impairment of any kind, or if you have challenges that make attending in-person or video-based class sessions difficult under the current circumstances, I need to know at the start of the semester in order to make certain that your needs can be met. It may be
infinitely more difficult to accommodate you sufficiently if you delay in disclosing your needs. In addition, if you are a student who has problems writing, taking exams, or taking class notes, etc., there are many resources and programs you can take advantage of to improve your class performance. All you have to do is ask.

Please Note: If you are a SNAP student eligible for accommodations, you must provide me with a copy of the notification letter you have been given by the SNAP office well before the need for any accommodation arises. I will not guarantee granting your requests if I have not been given sufficient notice.

Mental & Physical Wellbeing

At the college, we take every students’ mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at http://counseling.cofc.edu or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit http://counseling.cofc.edu/ect/index.php, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

Food & Housing Resources

Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support (http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php). Also, you can go to http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php and learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please also consider reaching out to me if you are comfortable in doing so and believe that I can be of help finding you help.

Office Hours

I have designated office hours scheduled that are for you to use. Do not be afraid to schedule an appointment with me at these times, especially if you have questions that are left unanswered from class or if you are experiencing any difficulties or uncertainties in the course. We can meet in-person (preferably outside) on campus during these hours or schedule time to discuss issues remotely. If these hours conflict with your schedule (or if I am unavailable remotely because I am on campus outside my office), we can work out a mutually convenient time to connect. As a general rule of thumb, I will be available to students Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and also some time over weekends. If you email me, you can typically expect a response within 24 hours.

Note: I am likely to be spending very little time in my designated office in JC Long while the virus is an issue – so if you are looking for me outside of class, it is best to schedule time with me in advance or follow the cues I provide in class as to my whereabouts on campus where we can meet in person.

Course Ground Rules

Attendance: Given the unpredictable nature of the virus and its impacts on our semester, I will not have a formal attendance policy for class. I expect that if you are forced to miss class for health or other virus-related issues that you will keep me informed of situations – and wherever possible, I will do my best to accommodate circumstances, assuming you have responsibly kept me apprised. What I will insist upon is that you are regularly engaged with class dynamics and that you participate regularly (at least weekly) in class discussions, no matter where they are occurring (in-person or online). If I notice that your engagement is lacking, I will give you ample warning of my concerns – but really, if there are issues, you should be taking responsibility and letting me know before I express any worries.

Late Work: Late work is severely discouraged and will be penalized after a short grace period of 24 hours past a due date. Work that is turned in after the due date and grace period have expired will lose five points off the total
automatically (i.e. a paper with a numerical grade of 75 becomes a 70) and an additional five points will be deleted for every subsequent extra day. Work is considered late (and the clock begins ticking) if it is not handed in within 24 hours of the due date listed in the syllabus.

**Electronic Submissions:** All work will be submitted to me electronically for credit via email as Word document attachments. Do not use the OAKS drop box or other mechanisms – send assignments directly to me via email and you will get an acknowledgment from me that your assignment has been received. All assignments should come to me as Word documents that can be easily edited on my end.

**Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction:** If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

**Academic Dishonesty:** When you enrolled in the College of Charleston, you were bound by an Honor Code. I expect you to abide by that code. If you are found to have cheated on a quiz or plagiarized any of your written work, you will fail this course and be turned over to the Honor Board for further disciplinary action. If you have any doubts about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, ask before you act.

**Courtesy and Tolerance:** As this course progresses, you will doubtlessly find that your ideas about Middle East Politics do not always match the views of your fellow students, the authors you read, or your instructor. This is the stuff of studying the Middle East. However, if this course is to prove rewarding for everyone (as it should), it is absolutely essential for each participant to express your own ideas respectfully and demonstrate openness to the ideas and interpretations of others in the class. It is equally important for everyone to discuss issues on the basis of information and analysis rather than emotion and volume. The point of this course is neither to “win” arguments nor to “passively” receive information. By adopting these guidelines, you will hopefully find the class to be a challenging and enlightening experience where you will have many opportunities to rethink what you know or believe to be true about politics in the Middle East.

**Time Spent Outside of Class:** I have high expectations for you in this course and have crafted it with that thought in mind. I envisage that to successfully complete the work in this course, you will need to consistently spend two to three hours working independently for every hour you spend engaged with the “classroom”, be it in-person or online. There may be occasional periods where more time is required. Students who are not committed to spending that kind of time studying and preparing for class should expect to struggle. It is important to note, as well, that time alone does not automatically ensure success — the kind of time you devote to studying and how you approach the endeavor may be just as critical. You can devote time to preparing and studying that is effective and ineffective. If you ever wish to discuss these kinds of issues with me, feel free. We will be working in some of these skills (reading, writing) over course of the semester.

One underutilized student resource is the Center for Student Learning (CSL), which offers academic support services for assistance in study strategies, including tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills consultations and workshops. All of their services are available to students remotely. For example, the Writing Lab is staffed with trained consultants offering one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information on what help is available to you for free as students, visit the CSL website at [http://csl.cofc.edu](http://csl.cofc.edu), call (843) 953-5635 or email the office, which is located on the library’s ground floor.

**Method of Evaluation**

Final course evaluations will be based upon the following components:

**Class Participation and Engagement (10%):** Class participation and demonstration of engagement with material are vital components of this course and your active involvement in class sessions (whether in-person or online; face-to-face or remotely) is required. Participation in class discussions is expected and will be considered in final course evaluations. Participation is not simply about being present or sharing your opinion with others, although you will be expected to offer your ideas regularly in class discussions wherever they are occurring. Quality participation involves demonstrating that you have read and engaged with the texts under consideration, that you have thoughtful questions to
ask about material, and that you have considered how a text relates to contemporary issues in world politics. **A stellar contribution is one that develops your opinion into an argument rooted in evidence from the course texts or other verifiable sources.** Quality participation also involves listening carefully, considerately and critically to the views expressed by classmates and helping one another build insights and understanding. Your participation will suffer if you are not actively and consistently involved in discussions or if you are not engaged with material and classmates during class sessions.

**You will be given regular feedback on your class participation and you will also have opportunities to assess your own participation efforts in written comments to me.**

Considering how we all learn, it can be challenging for some of us to engage in face-to-face or online discussions because we are easily intimidated by others or shy about sharing views visibly in public. These are obstacles to learning that become important to overcome. If you are someone who feels intimidated or can experience shyness, please talk to me about strategies you can use to become more comfortable sharing with others.

**Essay Assignments (50%)**: Four times over the course of the semester, you will write essays responding to specific prompts related to a week’s theme in the course. You have two options for each essay, based on prompts from two consecutive weeks. You select which of the prompts to write on and compose an essay response, with due dates for each essay listed in the syllabus. The essays will gradually increase in credit – the first essay is worth 5% of your grade; essay #2 is 10%; essay #3 is 15% and essay #4 is 20%). You will have an optional fifth essay you can write to replace one of the grades essays or to count as extra credit.

You will also notice that each essay diminishes in length. You begin with a seven-page maximum and by the 4th essay, the page number has dwindled to four (the optional essay is three pages maximum). This is to explicitly work on your skill of writing concisely and making maximum use of the space you have available to communicate ideas effectively. All essays will be expected to meet page requirements; failure to do so will diminish an essay grade. All essay narratives will be double spaced, twelve-point font and have one-inch margins across all sides of the page. Only electronic submissions of these essays will be accepted – emailed directly to me as Word document attachments. You will receive additional guidance before you write your first essay.

**Exercises (20%)**: There are twelve exercises described in the course outline, one coinciding with each week’s class theme up through Thanksgiving break (when class is expected to revert to online). You are expected to complete at least ten of these twelve exercises over the course of the semester. You may do eleven or all twelve and the extra narratives will be considered extra credit. Each exercise entails composing a 500-word maximum response to the questions in the prompt. Only electronic submissions of these essays will be accepted – emailed directly to me as Word document attachments.

**Final Essay (20%)**: You will complete a take-home final essay (due by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 14) based on your reading of Gilles Kepel’s *After the Chaos*. The prompt for the essay is included in the course outline. The final narrative will be a 2-page paper – as is the case with other essays over the course of the semester, all other paper proportions apply and failure to adhere to the paper maximum will result in a diminished grade. Only electronic submissions of these essays will be accepted – emailed directly to me as Word document attachments.

A numerical and literal translation of grades assigned is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>100-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>A minus</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>91-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>85-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B minus</td>
<td>Promising</td>
<td>81-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>75-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C minus</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>71-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Marginally Passing</td>
<td>65-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D minus</td>
<td>Barely Passing</td>
<td>61-59</td>
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**Reading and Texts**

There are three books assigned for this version of the course. Each is listed below and available at the College of Charleston Bookstore.

All required texts are available at the College of Charleston Bookstore. There are any number of other ways to acquire these texts, including renting books, buying books online, or buying electronic versions. How you handle accessing these materials is your choice – the only imperative is that you have access to these books when they are needed for the course. Reading beyond the texts is indicated with a (*) in the course outline and will be available through the course content page on OAKS, the College’s online learning system. Students are responsible for completing the assigned reading prior to the class period date for which it is assigned so that you are able to discuss the question based on that reading on the day assigned.

It is also important for you to keep up with current events and developments in the world as you take this course. I suggest reading a national newspaper as often as possible. The College now provides students with free access to The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal; try to read one or more of these papers as often as possible.

The additional resources listed below are also helpful in keeping up with the pressing issues and debates in Middle East politics.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers and Opinion Journals</th>
<th>TV/Radio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-- The Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>-- Nightline (ABC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- The Washington Post</td>
<td>-- The PBS Newshour (PBS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- The Financial Times</td>
<td>-- This Week (ABC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- Wall Street Journal</td>
<td>-- Meet the Press (NBC)</td>
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<td>-- The Economist</td>
<td>-- Face the Nation (CBS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- 60 Minutes (CBS)</td>
<td>-- 60 Minutes (CBS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- Middle East Journal</td>
<td>-- Washington Week in Review (PBS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- Middle East Studies</td>
<td>-- Morning Edition (NPR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- Middle East Quarterly</td>
<td>-- All Things Considered (NPR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- Middle East Policy</td>
<td>-- Weekend Edition (NPR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-- Middle East Review of Int. Affairs</td>
<td>-- Fareed Zakaria GPS (CNN)</td>
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<td>-- Middle East Affairs</td>
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9 | Page
Hints for Reading, Writing and Matriculating Through the Course – Survival Tips

When seeking to understand and explain Middle East politics, it is important to wrestle with its complexities and appreciate the many key events and facets of its make-up. We will be reading several works through the semester that will help us in this endeavor. At times, the reading may prove to be difficult for some of you; thus, I have some suggestions to help you in your reading.

First, complete the assigned reading before we are slated to discuss the topic. My purpose here is not to torment you. Rather, if you have even a vague familiarity with the subject matter upon entering a discussion, you will find that our exchanges will mean more to you. You will be able to more readily recognize important points and add context to what you have read. Our class discussions of thematic questions are also the perfect time to ask questions about readings and get clarification on issues or points you do not fully understand or feel comfortable with. If you wait and read later, you are unaware of what problems you might have and the opportunities to work them out sufficiently have often vanished.

Second, after you read work for the first time (not while you are reading), consider going back and taking some notes. Much of what we read we do not retain for very long. However, committing information to paper in our own words can help stretch our retention capabilities. Attempting to summarize what someone is saying in your own words can also be a useful way of discovering what you understand and do not understand. In addition, notes are a helpful study tool when you are reviewing for exams or considering ideas for papers. The notes you take on readings should not be extensive or recount every detail. You might simply seek to identify what the major themes and key points of an article or book chapter are, identify and try to define new terms used in the chapter, and think about why the material is important and how it relates to other topics we have already discussed in the course.

Lastly, once we have discussed a topic in class, you should consider reviewing the assigned readings and your notes to see that you have indeed identified the major points and that you feel you understand the material sufficiently. If the readings were very confusing when you read them before class or you did not feel you got much out of them, you might even reread the material after the class discussion to see if you understand it any better. There is an unstated (and faulty) assumption among many students that we should only read pieces once to gain a full appreciation of them; however, it often takes two or three readings to attain the full measure of what an author has to offer. We often see more if we give ourselves the opportunity of a second time around.

*** If you want more information on developing strategies for critical reading, please ask for the handout with examples which I am happy to provide you. We will be working on many of these components of reading, particularly in the early phases of the course.

To succeed in this class, it will also be important for you to hone your writing abilities. During the semester, you will complete a series of essays and exercises designed to help you develop your skills in synthesizing other’s ideas and constructing your own. Just as reading effectively is a process with many often-overlooked stages, so too is writing. As you prepare written work for this class, consider the following steps:

Invention: When you prepare to write, allow yourself ample time to think about what it is you intend to say, how you wish to say it, and who will be your intended audience. The process of invention is one that can and probably should begin long before you actually start writing your assignment. This is the time when you should be finding out about what it is you intend to write about, which strategies for writing you intend to employ to reach your audience effectively, and what tentative main point or thesis you hope to express and substantiate in your paper. As you make decisions and come up with ideas, it is useful to commit them to paper.

Drafting: Once you think you have some direction for your written work, begin setting more concrete goals of what you want or need your paper to say, what kind of opening you will use, what kind of end message you want your reader to walk away with. Plan the organization of your paper by constructing an outline of the entire work and then after refining that plan, write a rough draft. Allow yourself plenty of time before the due date to complete a rough draft. No narrative ever emerges from one’s head to paper in perfect form and most do not emerge in anything close to what we are finally capable of producing. The more opportunities we allow ourselves to create, rethink and rewrite, the stronger our final effort will be.
**Revising:** With a rough draft of your ideas committed to paper, it is infinitely easier to begin the process of recrafting your thoughts and words into a successful final version. Hopefully, you've given yourself time to allow your paper to sit idle (preferably for at least a day or two) before you go back to working on it. Getting a little distance and perspective on your ideas often helps you to see weaknesses, flaws and areas of new potential that otherwise go unnoticed. When you return to your paper, evaluate your work in terms of its **focus** (Am I saying exactly what I want to say?), **organization** (Is my paper structured appropriately to make my points?), **content** (Is my work complete and authoritative? Does it include all the necessary information but not too much?), and **readability** (If I were the reader and not the author, could I follow my points easily?). Revise your draft until you are satisfied that you have attained your goals.

**Proofreading:** Once you have finished making substantive changes in your draft, *always* proofread it for errors in spelling, usage and punctuation.

In both the case of reading and writing, allowing yourself plenty of time to do the work required is vital -- last minute efforts are always less successful and often reflect badly on your abilities and performance.

**The Value of the Writing Center in the Center for Student Learning:** Increasingly, students have challenges writing effectively – there are all kinds of reasons for this – but if you can learn to be a good writer, there are so many doors that open for you beyond your educational experience. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor) even if you think you are an effective writer. Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations (online during the pandemic) that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. To work with a consultant, visit [http://csl.cofc.edu](http://csl.cofc.edu), sign up for help, and, then, go right to a drop-in session with Writing Lab consultants. When is the Writing Lab open? Monday-Thursday 10 a.m.—9 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. —12 noon, and Sunday 4 p.m.—9 p.m. For more information, please call 843.953.5635.

**Dates to Remember (details in the course outline)**

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<td><strong>Monday, December 14</strong></td>
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All assignments will be emailed directly to me as Word document attachments. They are due by 11:59 p.m. on the date listed above. There is a 24-hour grace period for late work – then penalties for late work apply.
**Course Outline -- Required Reading, Assignments and Due Dates**

The schedule below outlines the progression of the course over the next four months. Each day of class is specifically designated with reading you are expected to complete by the date listed and a question which will be the topic of the in-person class session held on that day. If you ARE scheduled to be in class on that day (designated by the Group listed next to the class date), you should be prepared to discuss that question with classmates; if you are NOT scheduled to be in class on that day, you know what others are doing and can participate with classmates in the alternative online discussion posted on the OAKS discussion page. When discussions cannot be conducted inside of the classroom (as in the first three weeks of class), all exchanges will be conducted on the OAKS Discussion Board platform and you are expected to participate just as if it were your day to take part in class. We may also experiment with Zoom video sessions in place on in-person meetings if these class sessions become difficult to sustain.

At the end of each section of the course, there is a brief statement of what you should understand after having completed all the work of the section – and beginning with Part IV, there is a larger discussion question you have the option of answering as part of your graded work over the term along with the maximum number of double-spaced typed pages you have allotted to complete your response (more details on this above in the section under “Method of Evaluation”). You will also notice a series of exercises (one per course unit) with due dates that you will be expected to complete as part of your graded work during the semester (more details on this above in the section under “Method of Evaluation”).

(*) indicates reading posted on the OAKS content page for the course

**I. Course Introduction (August 26-28)**

*This portion of the course provides an overview of the semester’s work and begins to compare the popular images of the region with the realities that prevail.*

Reading: Jillian Schwedler, “Introducing the Middle East” in Jillian Schwedler, Understanding the Contemporary Middle East 5th edition (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2020), pp. 1-8;


**What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating:** how the logistics of the semester will go (regardless of whether we sustain in-person plans or not); what basic elements of the region’s politics we will take a deeper dive into over the fall term. You should also begin to have a sense of what images you hold in your head about the region – and how those may differ significantly from the realities of the region that we will uncover as the semester progresses.

**II. Where Is the Middle East? (August 31-September 4)**

*While people assume they know what part of the world is being discussed when the term “Middle East” is invoked, in reality the existence and boundaries of any such region are quite vigorously debated and contested among peoples in the region and scholars of the area. This course component explores conceptions of a “Middle East” region, including its origins, evolution and relationship to other world regions. It also*
introduces a number of spatial and temporal elements of the area, including its demography, languages, cultures and geostrategic importance.

A. What Counts as the Middle East … and why? (August 31) – Group A


Exercise One: Without any aids or resources, try to fill in the blank map of the Middle East that is provided on the OAKS class materials page. See how much of the map you can fill in without help. Record how many and which states you correctly identify without help and turn that information in to indicate you have completed the assignment (by Wednesday, September 2). Then fill in the remainder of the map, using any resources you want. I will provide you with some context of how you have done relative to average undergraduate students learning about the Middle East.

B. Is there such a place (meaningfully) as the Middle East? (September 2) -- Group B


(*) Karen Culcasi, “Mapping the Middle East from Within: (Counter-) Cartographies of an Imperialist Construction” Antipode (September 2012), pp. 1099-1118.

C. Can the Middle East be “Remapped” toward peace? (September 4) – Group C


What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why the term “Middle East” is a highly debated and politically charged label; how and why it has been defined and employed very differently depending upon the accompanying political purpose. You should have a clear sense of the region’s common characteristics and vast differences – and begin to understand who the term is thought to “include” and “exclude” from its boundaries … and why.

III. The Roots of Islam (September 7-11)

Although Islam is not the religion of all the region’s peoples, it plays an increasingly important role in the politics and culture for all in today’s Middle East. Moreover, its core beliefs are quite familiar to the adherents of many other monotheistic faiths and its emergence is deeply intertwined with Judaism and Christianity in particular. This course component introduces you to the fundamentals of Islam through the lives of women, who are often lost in these stories, and it allows you to see how the initial emergence of the faith was deeply connected to the politics and economics of the day.
A. What was the region like before Islam? (September 7) – Group B


B. Why was Islam as much a challenge to prevailing political and economic beliefs as it was religious ideas? (September 9) – Group C

Reading: Kamaly, pp. 1-37.

Watch Part I of Islam: Empire of Faith (online)

C. Why were the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties so crucial to the maturation of Islam … and the world? (September 11) – Group A

Reading: Kamaly, pp. 39-91;


Watch Part II of Islam: Empire of Faith (online)

Exercise Two: In approximately 500 words, discuss why the messages Muhammad received proved to be such an important political and economic challenge to the prevailing region. What did these messages question? How did these messages compare with the prevailing norms and processes of the region at the time? Why were the messages initially rejected by most when they first encountered them? How would acceptance of the vision he was sharing potentially change life for those who became believers? Why did it become appealing for people to make those changes? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, September 14.

What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why Islam emerged in the Arabian Peninsula and then spread throughout the Middle East and into the Iberian Peninsula. You should understand the central tenets of the faith (and the links to other monotheistic religions), as well as the issues that led to the emergence of different interpretations of the faith – Sunni, Shi’a and others. The importance of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties and what they contributed to the “modern” world of the time is also essential. And, of course, all of this can now begin to be seen through the eyes of women as opposed to only men.
IV. Modernization and Political Development – the Case of Iran (September 14-18)

The quest to become “modern” is one that gripped the region for some time after the world wars and the emergence of oil as a critical resource fueling the industrial age. This portion of the course examines the political and scholarly controversies surrounding the concept of “modernization” and reveals assumptions about what political outcomes a process of pursuing modernity can produce. It differentiates “modernization” from “political development” conceptually and illustrates many of the important issues raised by this distinction (both politically and academically) through an investigation of the Iranian experience from the end of World War I to the present.

A. Why did the White Revolution fail to modernize Iran – and instead set the stage for revolution? (September 14) – Group C


B. Why did Iranians revolt (and how did they succeed)? (September 16) – Group A


Exercise Three: In 500 words, describe the new revolutionary political structure created by the Iranian Islamic Republic leadership. How did it compare with what had previously existed under the Shah? What is innovative about it and why are these innovations controversial among Islamic scholars? Why is it a misnomer to call the Iranian system entirely authoritarian? Why is it overstated to think of it as democratic? How would you assess this new system utilizing the concept of political development? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, September 21.

C. What are the modernization and political development challenges in today’s Iran and why are they present? (September 18) – Group B
What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why modernization and political development are different (yet related) concepts, with potential challenges in their definitions. You should then begin to understand why the Shah of Iran sought to “modernize” Iran through the White Revolution … and how those efforts sowed the seeds for the Islamic Revolution in part because of their consequences for political development. You should also appreciate the political and economic make-up of the Islamic Republic that emerges, what proved to be truly revolutionary about it, what it succeeded in accomplishing and what it has struggled to achieve (all in terms of modernization and political development). Today, as Iranians struggle with COVID-19 and other regional challenges, the shortcomings of the revolution have again come into focus for many inside and outside the country … but you should understand how and why Iranians do not agree on what those shortcomings may be or how to address them … and what the ramifications for Iran’s modernization and political development may be.

First Essay Option: Discuss how and why concepts of modernization and political development can explain the emergence and evolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. How has modernization proceeded in Iran since the time of the Shah and what was the relationship between modernization and political development in the run-up to the revolution? How can modernization and political development account for the evolution of the Islamic Republic of Iran to this day? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (7 double-spaced page maximum)

V. Ideology and Political Life – Arab and Israeli nationalism (September 21-25)

The period following World War I brought a great deal of soul searching to the region and resulted in the emergence of several ideological movements that sought to guide portions of the region’s politics, as well as structure its decision-making institutions and processes, as states gained their sovereign independence. This portion of the course investigates three of the most prominent ideological directions of the time and illustrates their evolution and lasting impacts on the politics of the area.

A. Why have regional politics proven to be so varied and what is particularly similar and different between what prevails in the region and other parts of the world? (September 21) – Group A

**B. Why was Ba’athism so influential in the region’s independence period ... and why has its vision proven so difficult to realize? (September 23) – Group B**


(*) Raymond Hinnebusch, “Failed Regional Hegemons: The Case of the Middle East’s Regional Powers” Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations (Summer/Fall 2013), pp. 74-88.

**Exercise Four: In 500 words, describe why the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) failed as a unity scheme among the Arabs. Given its aspirations and goals, why did it not realize its aims? How do the prevailing dynamics of competing Arab nationalist ideologies play into any explanation for the UAR’s failure? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, September 28.**

**C. What role has Zionism played in the development of Israel and why has it proven to be so controversial inside and outside Israel? (September 25) – Group C**

Reading: (*) Donna Robinson Divine, “Zionism and the Politics of Authenticity” Israel Studies (Summer 2014), pp. 94-110;

(*) Benjamin Acosta, “The Dynamics of Israel’s Democratic Tribalism” The Middle East Journal (Spring 2014), pp. 268-286;


What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why ideologies emerge – what purposes they play in the politics of societies. In the context of the Middle East, you should understand dynamics of Arab nationalism (and how Ba’athism fits into this as a specific ideological movement); likewise, you should understand the core elements of Zionism and its different forms. In both instances, you should emerge understanding how and why ideologies have been essential to the politics of the contemporary Middle East, even as some scholars have discounted their importance.

**First Essay Option: Discuss how and why ideology has been such a contested concept in contemporary Middle Eastern politics and what purposes ideologies have attempted to fill in the region’s politics. How have ideologies contributed to the failed efforts of many regional actors to assert power over the politics of the region? To what extent**
can contemporary politics in the region be understood as a “clash of ideologies”? Why might such a characterization prove more misleading than illuminating? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (2 double-spaced page maximum)

VI. Primordialism and the Politics of Groups – the Case of Lebanon (September 28-October 2)

Repeated assertions that politics in the Middle East are “different” from the west because they are characterized by the dynamics of family, clan and tribe are vastly overstated – there are not as many differences as the west may imagine. Nonetheless, the importance of non-associational, sectarian and primordial politics is vital to appreciating many of the dynamics of the region, even as one is careful not to overstate their uniqueness (or inevitability) to the area. Here, the critical dimensions of primordial politics are illustrated through the experience of Lebanon and its civil war – and the hazards of failing to appreciate the nature of such political dynamics (or overemphasizing them) are underscored.

A. Why are the region’s politics so closely associated with primordial structures … and why must one be careful (analytically and politically) with such non-associational identities? (September 28) – Group B

Reading: Laurie King, “Kinship, Class and Ethnicity”, in Jillian Schwedler, Understanding the Contemporary Middle East 5th edition (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2020), pp. 295-324;


B. Why have confessional associations been so prevalent in Lebanese politics and how have they contributed to its recent civil strife? (September 30) – Group C


C. Why have the Lebanese struggled to change their political system and how might the struggle be affected by the pandemic and the accidental destruction of Beirut’s port? (October 2) – Group A
Reading: (*) Bassel Salloukh and Renko Verheij, “Transforming Power-Sharing: From Corporate to Hybrid Consociation in Postwar Lebanon” Middle East Law and Governance (2017), pp. 147-173;

(*) Carmen Geha, “Co-optation, Counter-narratives and Repression: Protesting Lebanon’s Sectarian Power-Sharing Regime” The Middle East Journal (Spring 2019), pp. 9-28;

(*) “Shattered Beirut after the Blast” and other pieces, The Economist (August 8, 2020) and other editions;


**Exercise Five:** In 500 words, describe how the Ta’if Accord was designed to alter the balance of political power in Lebanon after the civil war … and why it has failed to create a new functioning political system for Lebanon? How did Ta’if come to pass and what was it meant to accomplish? How and why have its goals not been realized?? Examining the chronology of Lebanon since Ta’if (located in class materials), what do you notice about the scope and depth of these failures? How have the failures of reform specifically contributed to the political and economic challenges facing the Lebanese today? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Friday, October 9.

**What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating:** how and why the Middle East is often associated with the politics of tribe and sect, and what analytical dangers accompany these characterizations (like the stereotype that Middle Eastern politics are “different” from other parts of the world). You will understand how to more effectively use primordialism to describe and explain the inner workings of the Lebanese system as it was constructed by outside powers and evolved since independence. The challenges confronting the Lebanese as they try to “reset” their political system after many years of political instability and outside manipulation will become evident, as will the most recent difficulties the coronavirus and August levelling of Beirut’s port have posed.

**Second Essay Option:** How have the politics of groups (non-associational politics) defined the Lebanese political experience since the end of the French Mandate? Why did the system of consociationalism emerge and what led to its downfall? Why has Lebanon struggled to reconstitute its political system since the end of its civil war in 1990? How do primordial politics help explain what has happened in Lebanon over the last 75 years – and why must people be cautious about using the labels of primordialism to account for Lebanon’s past, present and future? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (6 double-spaced page maximum)
First Essay Due Monday, October 5

VII. Patrimonialism and the Politics of Authoritarianism – the Case of Iraq
(October 5-9)

The enduring nature of leadership in the region, particularly since the 1970's, has been a topic of much scholarly debate, especially given the “weak” nature of so many of the region’s states. Until the Arab Uprisings, many leaders had remained in power for 30 years or more. This component of the course looks at the nature of leadership in the contemporary period and examines the idea of “durable authoritarianism” anew in light of patrimonial structures and ongoing regional leadership changes, with a focus on Iraq.

A. How are patrimonial systems constructed and why are patrimonial leaders so difficult to remove from power? (October 5) – Group C


(*) Eva Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective” Comparative Politics (January 2004), pp. 139-157;


B. Why was Saddam Hussein so difficult to overthrow and why might he be considered a quintessential patrimonial leader? (October 7) – Group A


Exercise Six: In 500 words, describe the patrimonial features of the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein (use the guide provided on the OAKS class materials page if it can be helpful). How was Saddam’s patrimonial system constructed to operate? What kinds of stresses did it withstand over time … and why might outsiders have (incorrectly) assumed that it would eventually fall of its own weight and flaws? What challenges did Saddam’s patrimonial system face at the end – and why might his eventual end be considered a classic example of how a patrimonial leader falls from power? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Wednesday, October 14.
C. Why has Iraq remained such an unstable regime after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein – and what lessons does it leave for changing other authoritarian systems in the region? (October 9) – Group B

Reading: (*) Daniel Brumberg, “Transforming the Arab World’s Protection-Racket Politics” Journal of Democracy (July 2013), pp. 88-103;


What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why the leadership of many states in the region has been so enduring, even as it has often been unpopular within its own societies. By engaging in the debates over durable authoritarianism and examining the structure of patrimonial leadership as it applies to Iraq, you should begin to have a deeper appreciation for why the regime of Saddam Hussein proved so difficult to change and why the challenges facing Iraq (and other states led by authoritarian systems in the region) to fundamentally alter the nature of leadership are so daunting.

Second Essay Option: The United States ostensibly invaded Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein and create conditions for democratization of the Iraqi political system … but that is obviously not what happened. Why did it not happen? What about the nature of authoritarianism and patrimonial politics in the region made the prospects for democratization at the hands of an external intervention dubious? What does an appreciation of authoritarian regimes in the region – and the structure of Saddam’s regime in particular – tell us about the enduring nature of these structures and the challenges facing efforts to alter the nature of leadership in the region going forward? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (6 double-spaced page maximum)

VIII. Rentier Economies in the Tiny Emirates (October 12-16)

The concept of the rentier state emerged partly to construct a political economy explanation for the seemingly enduring qualities of the oil producing states in the region – it later came to be applied to some of the non-oil producing states that appeared to exhibit similar characteristics, using other more modest forms of “rent” to perpetuate themselves. This portion of the course examines the make-up and evolution of the smallest so-called rentier states, while exploring the limitations of the “rentier” label for the political economy dynamics present in these places today.

A. Why did power shift in the oil markets in the late 1960’s and why has it shifted repeatedly since? (October 12) – Group A
Exercise Seven: In 500 words, describe how and why the dynamics of oil have shifted, beginning with the oil revolution in the late 1960’s and continuing to the present. Why did power pass from the Seven Sisters to the oil producing states in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s? How did oil consuming states respond to counter the revolution? How many more dramatic shifts have occurred since and why are analysts now projecting another oil revolution … with dramatic consequences for the region’s politics and economics? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, October 19.

B. Why have the small Gulf emirates reached different balances regarding opening their political and economic systems to more participation … and what interests do these differences serve? (October 14) – Group B


(*) Blake Hounshell, “The Qatar Bubble” Foreign Policy (May/June 2012);

(*) J.E. Peterson, “Oman: Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development” Middle East Policy (Summer 2004), pp. 125-137;


C. Why have some scholars begun to question the long-term viability of rentier states in the Gulf? (October 16) – Group C

Reading: (*) Sean Foley, “The Twenty-First Century Gulf” in The Arab Gulf States” Beyond Oil and Islam (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), pp. 133-165;

(*) Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Post-Rentier Economic Challenges” India Quarterly (June 2017), pp. 210-226;


What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why shifts in the oil regime made the emergence of “rentier states possible in the Middle East and how these
dynamics have perpetuated themselves since. Using the smaller emirate states as a foundation for assessment, you should understand how rentier states have operated, what social contract they have emphasized, and what the different political and economic balances being created in these states are meant to achieve. You should also be developing a keen sense of what economic and political challenges these small rentier states face in the future – they have not (yet) been the focus of popular uprisings evident elsewhere in the region but you should begin to have a sense of why they have already withstood significant economic and political challenges and why they face more hurdles in the future.

**Third Essay Option:** To what extent is it true that the small states of the Persian Gulf have operated under the social contract of “no taxation, no representation” with their populations and why might that have been the case where it is true? What circumstances made the rentier model viable for these states and why have they seemingly used it so successfully up to this point, if success is judged on the basis of retaining sovereignty? What political and economic challenges have these states successfully navigated in the past and how have they comparatively done it? To what extent might the same strategies inherent in rentierism pave the way for their economies and political systems to endure? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. *(5 double-spaced page maximum)*

**IX. The Politics of Economic Reform – the Case of Saudi Arabia (October 19-23)**

The so-called “rentier states” are often characterized as resistant to economic reform and particularly to processes of economic liberalization that have been pushed on the region with the onset of “globalization”. Here the dynamics of economic change – and their political ramifications – are explored using Saudi Arabia to illustrate the effects.

**A. Why have states in the region been so resistant to economic changes meant to facilitate their joining the globalizing world? (October 19) – Group B**


**B. Why is the idea of “segmentation” so important to understanding the development of the Saudi state and its economy? (October 21) – Group C**


Exercise Eight: In 500 words, describe the central challenges facing Saudi Arabia as it contemplates economic reform. Why is economic change so daunting? What will need to be challenged economically for change to occur? What are the political challenges that accompany economic shifts in the country? Given what Saudi Arabia has been, what must it become? Leaving the particulars of MBS aside (for the purposes of this narrative), why will economic reform prove so difficult for the Saudi state? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Wednesday, October 28.

C. Why have younger Saudi leaders judged that the “segmented” Saudi state must change … and how does MBS appear determined to implement the change? (October 23) – Group A


(*) F. Gregory Gause, “Fresh Prince” Foreign Affairs (May/June 2018), pp. 75-86;

(*) Tarek Masoud, “The Prince” Journal of Democracy (July 2020), pp. 72-78;


What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why the economies of the region have evolved as they have since the end of colonialism – and how this evolution has affected the politics of the region. You should have a keen appreciation for the models of economic development employed by states in the region and what they have accomplished (and failed to accomplish). Specifically, you should understand how Saudi economic structures have influenced the development of the Saudi state – and why there is such an emphasis being placed on economic reform by the emerging younger leadership. You should also understand how politically and economically fraught this talk of reform and new visions is for the existing Saudi state and society.

Third Essay Option: Early assessments of Mohammad Bin Salman and his quest to reform the Saudi state were met with great promise and fanfare (see Ignatius in the class materials) ... but they have darkened considerably since (see more of Ignatius in class materials). Why? What has the Crown Prince proposed to do to Saudi Arabia and why has he judged it must be done? Why have his initial steps caused such divergent assessments (even from the same person) and what fundamental challenges must Saudi Arabia confront if the efforts at reform are to succeed? How does this compare with the other rentier states in the region and their prevailing situations? Be
sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (5 double-spaced page maximum)

Second Essay Due Friday, October 23

X. Population, Citizenship and Migration/Refugees in the Region (October 26-30)

As the politics and economics of the region have become more unstable, renewed focus on the demographic make-up of the region has emerged. This portion of the course examines these dynamics in terms of key processes of urbanization and employment, the establishment (and denial) of citizenship and the migratory movement of peoples throughout the region and beyond.

A. Why have informal economic sectors been growing in the region and what particular implications does this have for the “youth bulge” underway in states? (October 26) – Group C


B. Why has citizenship become such a controversial issue in the region and why is it increasingly key to determining “who belongs” vs. who is excluded? (October 28) – Group A


Exercise Nine: In 500 words, describe how one becomes a citizen in Qatar (see Babar article included in course materials – different from the one assigned above). Why is it so difficult to become a citizen in a state like Qatar? What are the purposes of making citizenship so exclusive? What are the primary political and economic ramifications of maintaining such rules of belonging – and to what extent has Qatar revisited these rules in the last several years? You may consult class and outside resources (beyond Babar) to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, November 2.

C. Why is migration central to the economies of Middle Eastern states … and why has it become something states can and cannot live without? (October 30) – Group B

(*) Nadia Eldermerdash, “Being and Belonging in Kuwait” Anthropology of the Middle East (Winter 2015), pp. 83-100;


Sample: The Halsey Institute’s virtual exhibit on Dis/Placements and Revisitations of Home http://halsey.cofc.edu/main-exhibitions/dis-placements-revisitations-of-home/

This is the work of ten artists, including three with a Middle Eastern focus, who reexamine the concept of “home” and the lasting effects of being displaced from one’s ancestral lands.

What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why the demographic features of the region are changing and why these shifts are central to the political, economic and geographic challenges the region faces. You should emerge from these discussions understanding how demographic shifts like the “youth bulge” are affecting economies in the region, including the growth of informal economies and the expansion of inequality among classes of people. Likewise, these demographic shifts are again changing the policies of states in terms of “who belongs” and who is welcome, who must leave and why in ways you should appreciate both historically and in a contemporary context when this section has concluded.

**Fourth Essay Option:** For over a decade, scholars have been pointing to an emerging “youth bulge” in the Middle East and warning of its impacts on prevailing politics and economics. Why is the bottom of the Middle Eastern population pyramid expanding and what central challenges does this pose for the region? What are states of the region doing comparatively to respond and why are these moves generating unintended consequences that potentially complicate the conditions states are looking to alleviate? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (4 double-spaced page maximum)

**XI. The Geography of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (November 2-6)**

No single conflict has more defined (or arguably influenced) the politics of the region more than the conflict between Israel and the Arab States. Certainly, no confrontation is more misunderstood than the Arab-Israeli conflict. Over time, this standoff has become far less central to the politics of the regional states and has become more and more a struggle between Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Geography is central to the contemporary conflict and this examination of the differences separating Israelis and Palestinians will emphasize the contributions geography as a discipline can make to understanding.

**A. Why has the Arab-Israeli conflict evolved into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what does this mean for the dynamics of the standoff? (November 2) – Group A**


B. Why has the Israeli occupation of lands claimed by the Palestinians shifted to a policy of separation ... and why has that change fundamentally altered the geography and outlooks on the conflict? (November 4) – Group B

Reading: (*) Neve Gordon, “From Colonization to Separation: Exploring the Structure of Israel’s Occupation” Third World Quarterly (February 2008), pp. 25-44;

(*) Irus Braverman, “The Tree is the Enemy Soldier” in Planted Flags: Trees, Land and Law in Israel/Palestine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 163-199;


Exercise Ten: In 500 words, describe the different approaches to occupation taken by mainstream vs. revisionist Zionism – and how these different approaches align with, diverge from dynamics of colonization vs. separation. How have different schools of thought in Zionism approached occupation since 1967 – and how are these differences reflected in the power dynamics present in Israel’s political system (Left vs. Right, Labor vs. Likud)? How would Israeli annexation of the territories change the dynamics further ... or would it? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Wednesday, November 11.

C. Why might the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be farther from a solution today than it has been in the last forty years? (November 6) – Group C

Reading: (*) Dag Tuastad, “The Violent Rise of Palestine’s Lost Generation” Middle East Critique (June 2017), pp. 159-169;

What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why the conflict involving Israel and the Arab states has evolved into the Israeli-Palestinian standoff—and how the geographic nature of the conflict has shifted simultaneously. You should have some sense of the prevailing myths about the conflict, as well as the many ambiguities that have characterized the occupation of lands by Israel since the 1967 war. As Israeli policy toward the occupation has changed in the last 15-18 years, it has further altered the geography of the conflict in ways you should see and be able to use to evaluate the most recent international effort to suggest a way forward for the parties toward resolution.

Fourth Essay Option: In January 2020, the Trump administration finally released its proposed “plan” for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (text included in class materials). Examining the plan and its accompanying maps from a geographic perspective, why might the plan be a non-starter for BOTH Israelis and Palestinians? How does the plan challenge the prevailing geography of the conflict as it points an ostensible pathway to resolution? What can be done to make the plan a viable proposal … or is its fate beyond rescue given the realities of the conflict on the ground? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (4 double-spaced page maximum)

Third Essay Due Monday, November 9

XII. Women, Human Rights and Islam in Contemporary Politics (November 9-13)

As the contemporary politics of the Middle East has evolved, it has brought new attention to the standing of women, human rights and religion (especially, but not exclusively Islam) in complex and often contending ways. This portion of the course returns to some previously discussed themes and examines their relevance to more recent political and economic developments, while highlighting the many divergent and contradictory ways the concerns for women, human rights and Islam influence what is being contested in today’s region.

A. Why have women’s roles in the region been so badly misunderstood over time … and what understandings emerge when women are viewed as subjects rather than constructs? (November 9) – Group B

Kamaly, pp. 93-103; 117-123; 135-153; 171-180;

(*) Valentine Moghadam, “Feminism and the Future of Revolutions” Socialism and Democracy (March 2018), pp. 31-53;

(*) Esther Hertzog, “Anthropological Perspectives on Two Documentary Films on Women in the Middle East” Anthropology of the Middle East (Summer 2019), pp. 142-150.

**Exercise Eleven:** In 500 words, discuss the most significant misunderstandings of the political roles played by women in the region ... and what the realities are instead. Where have stereotypes of women in the region most concealed their political significance? What have women been central to politically that has gone unrecognized or underappreciated? What are the greatest political challenges still facing women in today’s Middle East? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, November 16.

**B. What happens to human rights in the region when the world makes an issue of human rights in the Middle East? (November 11) – Group C**


(*) Shadi Mokhtari, “Human Rights and Power Amid Protest and Change in the Arab World” Third World Quarterly (June 2015), pp. 1207-1221;


**C. Why is religion both central and peripheral to an understanding of the region’s politics … and how do we distinguish when it is one or the other? (November 13) – Group A**


Kamaly, pp. 195-229;
What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: how and why the roles of women in the Middle East have been so misunderstood and underappreciated – and how these themes are connected to the debates over human rights in the region and the role of Islam in the region’s politics. In combination with previous discussions, the parts played by women in the region should be more evident to you. The controversies surrounding the definition and protection of human rights in the region should become clearer, as should the outlines of the forms political Islam is now taking in the region, including debates over what its appropriate roles should be and how Islam and democracy might coexist as goals for the future.

Optional (Extra Credit) Essay Prompt: In the case of women’s roles, human rights and the role of religion in politics, western standards and expectations are often imposed upon the rest of the world, which then become the basis for criticism of states and societies which fail to abide by these models. Choosing one of these three topic areas, to what extent is there a Middle Eastern example that is important to consider when assessing concerns about how the west sets standards and expects a region like the Middle East to upholds its standards? What can be learned from the Middle East in this topic area? What might the Middle East learn from the west in this topic area? To what extent can we talk usefully about a “universal” conception of these concerns (whatever you choose: women’s roles, human rights, religion in politics) without inviting cultural and ethical imposition? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (3 double-spaced page maximum)

XIII. After the Chaos – Jihadism, the Arab Uprisings and the Future of the Region -- Part I – The Barrel and the Koran (November 16-23)

What has sometimes been called the Arab Spring or the Arab Uprisings (what people in the region have often referred to as the Arab citizen revolts) has generated a great deal of debate since the world noted a start of protests in December 2010. For some, the events since the overthrow of leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya – and the failed ouster of leadership in Syria, Bahrain and elsewhere – have constituted a disappointment in that meaningful (often characterized as democratic) political change has not emerged. For others, the protests themselves have a longer history than what appeared in 2010 and the outcomes cannot be meaningfully assessed until a longer time span has played out. Gilles Kepel, a well-known French analyst of the region’s politics, falls in the latter camp – and his work is designed to put these recent political events in a larger context, while also suggesting that what they may yet help stabilize what today appears to be a very unstable (and un-stabilizable) part of the world.
A. Why was Sayyid Qutb so important to “The Islamization of the Political Order”? (November 16) – Group C

Reading: Kepel, chapter one

B. What lessons were learned from the failures to confront the near enemy? The Onset of International Jihad (November 18) – Group A

Reading: Kepel, chapter two

C. Why did Bin Laden and the next generation change the agenda to the distant (or far) enemy? The Second Jihadist Phase (November 20) – Group B

Reading: Kepel, chapter three

Fourth Essay Due Monday, November 23

D. What differentiates ISIS and the successors to al-Qaeda? The Third Jihadist Generation (November 23) – (lottery determines last group participation)

Reading: Kepel, chapter four

Exercise Twelve: In 500 words, distinguish the first, second and third generations of jihadists, in terms of their beliefs and goals for the region politically. Who influenced the origins of contemporary jihadist politics in the region and what change did they envision? How have subsequent generations of jihadist thinkers and proponents altered the political agendas and why? You may consult class and outside resources to answer these questions (cite outside sources used). This exercise is due to me by Monday, November 30.

What you should walk away from this section of the course appreciating: In the first portion of Kepel’s book, you should develop an understanding of how the Islamization of politics in the region has evolved and how jihadist thinkers of different eras and outlooks have influenced these processes. In addition, you should see how and why the 1973 Arab-Israeli war was an important triggering event, how states in the region began to position themselves in responding to the emerging Islamist challenges and why 1979 was a pivotal year in the region’s politics going forward.

XIV. After the Chaos – Jihadism, the Arab Uprisings and the Future of the Region -- Part II – From Arab Spring to Jihadist Caliphate (November 30-December 4 – work online—discussions end – finish reading Kepel)

The second part of Kepel’s treatment focuses on the dynamics of the Arab Spring – differentiating states where leaders were overthrown (Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) from states
where political change was thwarted (Bahrain, Syria) or devolved into chaos (Yemen). Why Tunisia managed to foster elements of political change that eluded Egypt and Libya becomes clear, as do the ramifications of failure in other parts of the region.

A. The Arab Spring in Context (November 30)

Reading: Kepel, chapter five;

(*) Sean Foley, “When Life Imitates Art: The Arab Spring, the Middle East and the Modern World” Alternatives: A Turkish Journal of International Relations (Fall 2013), pp. 32-46.

B. From the Fall of Despots to Societies in Turmoil (December 2)

Reading: Kepel, chapter six;

(*) May Darwich, “Creating the Enemy, Constructing the Threat: The Diffusion of Repression against the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East” Democratization (December 2017), pp. 1289-1306.

C. Sectarianism and Derailed Rebellions (December 4)

Reading: Kepel, chapter seven;


Optional Essay Due Monday, December 7

XV. After the Chaos – Jihadism, the Arab Uprisings and the Future of the Region -- Part II – After ISIS: Disintegration and Regrouping (Final Essay assignment)

As you now finish Kepel’s book in preparation for the final essay (prompt below), take note of his closing themes and emphases: the schisms within Sunniism after the defeat of ISIS (and signs of moderation among Shi’ā in Iraq and elsewhere); the twisted and everchanging relationships of outside powers with actors in the region; and the possibility that – after the chaos – some renewal of the region could replace the empty promises that have prevailed thus far.

Reading: Finish Kepel, chapters eight through conclusion;

(*) “An Unwanted Guest Returns” The Economist (June 13, 2020);

(*) Ranj Alaaldin, “COVID-19 Will Prolong Conflict in the Middle East” Brookings Doha Center, April 24, 2020

Final Essay Question: Michele Dunne issues a future forecast for the region that Kepel would largely agree with: “Stormy with a chance of democracy”. Given what you have learned this semester about the region’s political, economic and social challenges, how accurate do you believe this forecast is? Why? How might the onset of COVID-19 in the region change these calculations? Why? Be sure to substantiate your assertions with evidence from the course and reading. (2 double-spaced page maximum)

Final Essay Due Monday, December 14 by 6:00 p.m.