Politics of the Middle East

Course Objectives

For over three years, the Middle East has experienced an extraordinary period of upheaval and transition. What many in the West have come to call the “Arab Spring” (but what people of the region prefer to call the “Arab citizen revolts”) has 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 Syria and Bahrain and portions of the region that seem quiet but are not unaffected by events. As some states have tried to move on from the protests to the creation of 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 might have originally been anticipated. Why have these events arisen (and why did they seemingly catch so many, policymakers and regional specialists alike, by surprise)? How do the events in these different countries compare? What do they share in terms of similarities and differences? What do these events “mean” for the region and what kinds of futures might they forecast for the peoples who have played 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 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 the recent events in the region, attempts to differentiate dynamics in various 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 topical, not chronological, and will culminate with an analytical exploration of the region’s contemporary dynamics.

Course Content

This course will revolve around two sets of themes. The first set relates 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 topics and concepts 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 revolves 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 prognostications of the region’s future. This portion of the course will explore topics like ongoing efforts at social and economic development and reconstruction and the effects of an emerging “youth bulge” that is straining the area’s politics. Among the specific issue areas to be examined are the Arab-Israeli conflict; the effects of globalization on the region’s economies and politics; the perception that Islam in the Middle East poses an ominous challenge to regional prospects for freedom; and the Middle East’s participation in the global "spread of democracy" with an eye toward examining whether meaningful political change is now underway in the region.

Because this course also counts as an elective offering for the College’s Geography minor, there will be a significant emphasis on the role that space plays in the region’s politics. Portions of this focus will emerge throughout the course content, most notably in opening class discussions and deliberations over the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
Learning Objectives and Skills This Course Will Seek to Improve

This course contains several learning outcomes and objectives. After having taken this course, you will have a 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 an issue related to the region that is of particular interest to you. 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 attempt to challenge and improve a number of your skills that are considered vital for students of Political Science (and students of the Liberal Arts and Sciences more broadly) to master. These include:

** oral communication (through regular class participation and class discussions);

** reading comprehension (through regular reading assignments that will provide the basis for many class discussions, as well as questions on the term and final exams);

** critical thinking and analysis (through class reading, discussion of scholarly work about the region, concept application assignments, exam essays);

** effective, concise writing and development of critical analysis (through exam essays and concept application assignments);

** applying theories and concepts to new situations (through class discussions, concept application assignments and class exams);

** research, including literature reviews and testing of specific propositions (through concept application assignments);

** comprehending the views of others and articulating, defending one’s own position (through class readings, discussions and concept application assignments).

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. In addition, you should consider accessing the many underutilized 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, visit the office in the Lightsey Center, Room 216 or call (843) 953-5692.

Method of Presentation

One underacknowledged truism in education is that we all learn differently. Some of us are primarily visual learners -- we need to see information and we retain and retrieve knowledge through an elaborate mental notecard system. Others of us are more auditory learners -- we thrive on hearing material and we store and access facts and ideas through auditory tapes we play in our minds. Still others of us are more kinesthetic learners -- we need to feel and experience material and we draw upon those feelings and experiences when processing and recounting what we know. While most of us learn using all of these broad channels to some extent, each of us has a "favorite" channel through which we absorb, process, retain and apply knowledge best. Thus, we have our own individual reactions to different modes of communication and teaching techniques.

This class is designed, to the extent possible, to try to hit everyone's primary channels of learning as often as possible and to further develop your less preferred paths through the use of a variety of teaching techniques. Because I am an important source of learning in this course, sessions will tend to be more lecture oriented than some other courses I teach, with lecture material designed to complement the required readings. It is important to underscore that lectures will not be a rehashing of the information in the assigned texts. Simply coming to class and digesting the material discussed will not insure your success in the course. You must read to succeed.

While significant portions of the course will be devoted to the presentation of additional information and context, there will be time set aside in each session for discussion and there will occasionally be group exercises conducted to emphasize points. The interactive nature of the class can increase if you come prepared and are willing to take some initiative in this regard.

If specific techniques work best for you or if you know of additional methods that you've seen work well in other classes, feel free to suggest them and if they can be incorporated into the class, we'll try to do it.

Please note: In constructing this class, I do not assume that any of you have previous knowledge of the Middle East region, even though some of you may have had other courses in Middle East history or politics. I do presume, however, that we all have some general familiarity with broad concepts in comparative politics and international relations, as well as some analytical and comparative skills. If you sense you need supplementary help in order to enhance your understanding and performance in this course, do not hesitate to come by and we can talk about your needs and how to meet them.

Class Participation

Class participation is a vital component of this course and your active involvement in class sessions is therefore strongly encouraged. Participation in class discussions and group exercises is expected and will be considered in final course evaluations. Participation includes listening carefully and critically to the views expressed by classmates, as well as the expression of personal views. You should always be prepared during each class session to discuss current political events as they relate to the region and the specific themes under consideration.

The minimum level of class participation is class attendance. Due to the structure of the course, you should not expect to do well without regular class attendance. A general guideline is that any absence rate greater than fifteen percent (excused and unexcused) is excessive and will lower your grade for participation. If you do miss a class, you are still responsible for all materials covered.

Special Circumstances

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 disability, if you have a physical impairment of any kind, or if you are an athlete or club member who will travel, I need to know at the start of the semester in order that we can 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. If you are a student athlete who will miss class time due to away events, you must follow the procedures set out by the College in order to expect due consideration. In both cases, I will not guarantee granting your requests if I have not been given sufficient notice.

Office Hours

I have two sets of office hours scheduled that are for you to use. Do not be afraid to come by my office 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. If these hours conflict with your schedule, we can work out a mutually convenient time to meet. I'm around a lot--don't hesitate to come by and talk.

Course Groundrules

Attendance: Absence from more than fifteen percent of the scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive. (Note: an absence memo from Student Affairs is for my information only – it does not buy you an “excused” absence. I make no distinctions between “excused” and “unexcused” absences). Students missing more than three class sessions will lose one full letter grade from the participation portion of their total average for each additional absence.

Late Work: Late work will be severely penalized. Work that is turned in after the date and time due 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 at the time requested. A student who does not inform me of a missed exam within 24 hours and cannot produce a legitimate, substantiated reason for absence will fail the missed exam automatically and will have no opportunities for a make-up test.

Electronic Submissions: NO work may be submitted to me electronically for credit under any circumstances. You must have legible printed copies of work for me to collect and read when assignments are due.

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 an exam 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 of your texts, or your instructor. This is the stuff of Middle East politics. However, if this course is to prove rewarding for everyone (as it should), it is absolutely essential for each participant to respect and tolerate the ideas and opinions 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. By adopting such a posture, 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 Middle East politics. In keeping with courtesy, I will insist that all cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be turned off before class and remain OFF throughout the class session.

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 outside of class for every hour you spend inside the classroom, and 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.

Method of Evaluation

Final course evaluations will be based upon class participation and involvement in class discussions, completion of several concept application assignments, two term examinations and a cumulative final exam. Examinations will be composed of three types of questions: identification of key terms, short answer and essay. The examinations will cover lectures, class discussions and required readings. A detailed study guide will be distributed prior to each exam containing terms to define and sample short answer and essay questions. Guidelines for the concept application assignment will be distributed in a separate handout and an example of the assignment will be distributed in class as well.

Grading will be based on the following distribution of credit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First term exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second term exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept application assignments</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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A numerical and literal translation of grades assigned is as follows:

- A – Superior (100-92)
- A minus – Excellent (91-89)
- B+ -- Very Good (88-86)
- B – Good (85-82)
- B minus – Promising (81-79)
- C+ -- Fair (78-76)
- C – Average (75-72)
- C minus – Acceptable (71-69)
- D+ -- Barely Acceptable (68-66)
- D – Marginally Passing (65-62)
- D minus – Barely Passing (61-59)
- F – Failure (58-0)

Opportunities for "extra credit" are not available.

If it appears the class is insufficiently prepared, I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes and the grades will be factored into your participation totals. However, quizzes waste a lot of everyone's time; it will be a measure of our collective success if we manage to avoid them.

Note: A failing grade will be given to any student who misses an exam and does not notify me within 24 hours (messages may be left in the Political Science office). A legitimate, substantiated reason for absence (medical excuse from a doctor) must be produced.

Reading and Texts

Specific reading assignments are listed in the course outline. Students are responsible for completing the assigned reading prior to the class period date for which it is assigned.

- Nathan Brown, When Victory is Not an Option (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012)
All required texts are available at the College of Charleston and University Bookstores. There are also any number of other ways to acquire these texts, including renting books, buying books on-line, or buying electronic versions. How you handle accessing this material is your choice – the only imperative is that you have access to all of these books throughout the semester. Additional course readings are indicated with a (*) in the course outline and will be made available through the course OAKS page.

It is also important for you to keep up with current events and developments in the Middle East as you take this course. Unfortunately, the Charleston Post and Courier will not be much help in that regard. I suggest reading The New York Times as often as possible. Discount subscriptions to The New York Times are available through the New York Times website. This arrangement allows you to purchase the paper on weekdays for a significant savings over the newsstand price. I highly recommend taking advantage of this opportunity if you do not already have regular access to one of the newspapers listed below. The additional resources listed below are also helpful in keeping up with the pressing issues and debates in Middle East politics and are strongly recommended:

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<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>TV/Radio</th>
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<tr>
<td>-- The New York Times</td>
<td>-- National News (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN)</td>
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<td>-- The Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>-- Nightline (ABC)</td>
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<td>-- The Washington Post</td>
<td>-- The PBS News hour (PBS)</td>
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<td>-- The Economist</td>
<td>-- This Week (ABC)</td>
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<td>-- Meet the Press (NBC)</td>
<td>-- All Things Considered (NPR)</td>
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<td>-- Face the Nation (CBS)</td>
<td>-- Weekend Edition (NPR)</td>
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<td>-- 60 Minutes (CBS)</td>
<td>-- Wide Angle (PBS)</td>
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<td>-- The World (BBC/PRI)</td>
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<td>Journal of North African Studies</td>
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<td>-- Arab Studies Journal</td>
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<td>-- Israeli Affairs</td>
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<td>-- Israel Studies</td>
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<td>-- International Journal of Middle East Studies</td>
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<td>-- Journal of Palestine Studies</td>
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<td>-- Middle East Report</td>
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<td>-- Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies</td>
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<td>-- Mediterranean Quarterly</td>
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<td>-- Iranian Studies</td>
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<td>-- Contemporary Arab Affairs</td>
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<td>-- Arab Studies Quarterly</td>
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<td>-- Journal of Middle East Media</td>
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<td>-- Iran Review</td>
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<td>-- Turkish Studies</td>
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<td>-- Journal of Arabian Studies</td>
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<td>-- Middle Eastern Law and Governance</td>
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<td>-- Mediterranean Politics</td>
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<td>-- Review of Middle East Economics</td>
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<td>And Finance</td>
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Council on Foreign Relations
[www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)

Carnegie Endowment
[www.carnegieendowment.org](http://www.carnegieendowment.org)

Center for Strategic and International Studies
[www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org)

U.S. Institute for Peace
[www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)

International Crisis Group
[www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org)
In addition, blogging has become a significant communication and political activity inside the region and outside the region among some scholarly commentators. The scholarly blogs you might peruse during the term include those maintained by the University of Michigan’s Juan Cole (www.juancole.com), George Washington University’s Marc Lynch (http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com), the University of Oklahoma’s Joshua Landis (www.joshualandis.com/blog/), and independent journalist Helena Cobban (http://justworldnews.org). These blogs all have links to many other blogs from and about the region. The Foreign Policy website also hosts “The Middle East Channel” which contains posts from journalists and scholars from throughout the region writing on topics often neglected by the mainstream media. A useful journalistic blog about the region called “Babylon and Beyond” can be found on the website of the Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com). Take note that while the narrative content of these blogs is typically heavily opinionated, the views of individual bloggers are often informed by scholarly work and they do periodically provide roadmaps to scholarly research and primary source materials originating with others inside and outside the region.

Hints for Reading and Writing -- Survival Tips

When seeking to understand the Middle East and its place in the world, it is important to wrestle with the region's complexities and appreciate the many key events and facets of life that help define the region's political, social and economic experience. We will be reading several books and articles through the semester that will help us in this endeavor. At times, the reading may prove to be difficult for some of you and reading assignments will quickly become burdensome if you choose to procrastinate and leave them to just before the exam. Thus, I have some suggestions to help you in your reading.

First, do the assigned reading before you come to class on the day 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 class, you will find that our discussions 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 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 will have often vanished.

Second, after you read an article or chapter for the first time, consider going back and taking some notes as well. 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 writing assignments. The notes you take on readings need not be extensive or recount every detail. You might simply seek to identify what the major themes and key points of a reading are, identify and try to define new terms used in the work, and think about why the material is important and how it relates to other topics we have already discussed in the course.

Third, 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 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 in order 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.

To succeed in this class, it will also be important for you to hone your writing abilities. During the semester, you will complete several concept application paper assignments 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 on, 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 you allow yourself to create, rethink and rewrite, the stronger your 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.

Dates to Remember

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, February 7</td>
<td>First Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, February 12</td>
<td>First Term Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, February 17</td>
<td>Second Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<td>Friday, February 21</td>
<td>Third Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<td>Friday, February 28</td>
<td>Fourth Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 14</td>
<td>Fifth Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 21</td>
<td>Sixth Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 24</td>
<td>Second Term Exam</td>
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<td>Friday, April 4</td>
<td>Seventh Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<td>Friday, April 11</td>
<td>Eighth Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<td>Friday, April 25</td>
<td>Ninth Concept Application assignment due (4:30 in my office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, May 2</td>
<td>Final Exam Take-Home Essay Due (4:30 p.m. in my office)</td>
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*Must have passed in three conceptual applications by this date to receive full credit*
Course Outline and Required Readings

Along with a listing of topics to be covered in the course and due dates for reading and assignments, you will notice that there are study guides for each of the topic areas which include key questions, key concepts and key terms. These are specifically designed to help you as you read and attend class sessions – if you are able to begin to answer questions, recognize and start defining concepts and terms after you read, you are adequately preparing yourself for class sessions and pointing yourself in a promising direction for exams. Material should be that much more familiar to you once you have attended class, although we will not work through questions and terms listed below in any conscious or explicit fashion. The questions below are not exactly the same as those you will encounter on exams, and you will not be expected to know all the concepts and terms listed below. However, you will notice some overlap between exam study guides and the material below – hopefully again in ways that allow you to feel more prepared to study for exams by keeping up with assignments and using these aids effectively. If you are interested in obtaining more background on particular topics for your own intellectual curiosity – now or in the future – some suggested further readings have been included under each course heading. These are not required for the class and you will not be expected to have accessed any of them – they are simply there for you to consult as you desire.

(*) denotes reading located on course OAKS page

I. (January 8) Course Introduction – This portion of the course provides a broad overview of the region and begins to compare the popular images of the region with the realities that prevail. It also begins to introduce material related to the dramatic shifts underway in the region that “began” in December 2010.

Key Questions: How do common images of the Middle East typically represent the region? Where do many of these images come from? Why are many of these images distortions or oversimplifications? What do they potentially conceal about the region? How do people of the region identify with one another? Where has the region made progress and what persistent problems remain? How are the region and its member states classified politically and economically? Why were so many caught by surprise at the upheaval which struck the region in 2011? What are some of the factors that people are now starting to focus on as potential causal or contributing factors to the regional upheaval? What did scholars assume about the region and its politics that must be rethought in the wake of the 2011 events?

Key concepts: durable authoritarianism, pan-Arabism, “Arab Spring”, ruling bargains, revolution

Key terms: Orient, Shirin Ebadi, Edward Said, clash of civilizations,

Readings:  “Introduction” in Schwedler, pp. 1-8;

Further Reading: There are any number of basic texts and introductions to the region that you can consult if you are interested. One wide-ranging work on the Arab world by an author who has directed Arabic language training for the United States Foreign Service that contains practical cultural as well as political information is Margaret Nydall, Understanding Arabs: A Contemporary Guide to Arab Society 5th edition (New York: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2012); another is Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn Early, eds. Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).
II. (January 13) Where Is the Middle East? – 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 region. This course component begins to explore the conceptions of a “Middle East” region, its origins, evolution and relationship with other world regions like Central Asia, South Asia and southern Europe. It also introduces a number of spatial and temporal elements of the area, including its demography, languages, cultures and geostrategic importance.

Key questions: Where did the term “Middle East” come from? How is it distinguished from “Near East” and “Far East”? How is the region described geographically? What are its prevailing geographic features? What are some of the region’s key cities, rivers and landmarks? Where are they located and what are their defining features? Who are the peoples of the region? What factors influence population growth and distributions in the region? What are the socioeconomic consequences of high population growth rates? How have natalist policies in the region changed? How are they similar and different in terms of demographics, language, culture? Why is the Middle East considered an area of geostrategic importance? What has made it so and continues to make it so? How have geographical, environmental factors shaped the Middle East’s ancient and more contemporary history? How has water in particular influenced the region?

Key terms: Arabs, Muslims, Mashriq (Levant), Maghreb, Northern Tier, the Nile River, the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, the Shatt al-Arab, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Ottoman Empire, colonialism, the Western Sahara, Cyprus, Arab Gulf vs. Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Jordan River, Copts, Maronite Christians, Berbers, Iranians (Persians), Kurds, Turks


Further Reading: Dan Smith’s The State of the Middle East: An Atlas of Conflict and Resolution, updated edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) provides a broad geographic overview of the region, although in keeping with the theme of this course component, Smith does not consider states like Turkey or Sudan to be a part of the region and therefore leaves them out of his short topical narratives. Colbert Held and John Thomas Cummings Middle East Patterns: Places, Peoples and Politics 6th edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2014) offers biophysical, ethnographic, economic and geopolitical insights into the region broadly and has chapters that focus on particular states as well.

III. (January 15) Classical Islam – 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 the area today. 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 seeks to introduce you to the fundamentals of Islam and allows you to see how the initial evolution of the faith was deeply connected to the politics and economics of the day.

Key questions: What existed in the Middle East religiously, economically and politically before the rise of Islam? What does it mean to be Muslim? What are the origins of Islam? How did Islam respond to the prevailing conditions of the time in the Middle East? What is Islam’s initial and historical relationship with the other monotheistic and polytheistic religions of the world? What are the five pillars of Islam and why are they important? Why is Islam considered a “political” religion? How do issues of political succession influence the direction of Islam? What are the key differences between Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims? What are other important sects, branches of Islam and how do these groups relate to one another?

Key concepts: prayer, almsgiving, pilgrimage, jihad, martyrdom, occultation, shari’a, caliphate

Key terms: Mecca (Yathrib), Medina, Muhammad, hijra, ummah, caliph, imam, Hajji, Ramadan, Rightly Guided Caliphs, Ali, Kharijites, Umayyads, Karbala, Ashura, Sunnis, Shi’ites, Husayn, Mu’awiya, shari’a,
Qur'an, sunnah, Druze, Alawis, Sufism

Readings: Aslan, pp. xiii-xxvi; 3-75;
Introduction to the Muslim World (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999),
pp. 12-51.

Further Reading: The number of books in English on the origins and fundamentals of Islam has proliferated over
the past decade or more, especially in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Any work authored by John Esposito is
worthy of consideration – he is one of the country’s foremost authorities on Islam and he has written many books, as
well as edited a multi-volume encyclopedia on Islam published by Oxford University Press. Other recent important
surveys of the evolution of Islam include work by Karen Armstrong – Islam: A Short History (New York: Modern
Library, 2000) and Akbar Ahmed Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society revised edition
(New York: Routledge, 2003). Biographies of Muhammad include work by Karen Armstrong, Muhammad: A
Press, 2002).

Monday, January 20 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (no class – consider engaging in service)

IV. (January 22) Religion, Society and Politics – Relatively soon after Muhammad’s return to Mecca,
the Islamic community began to grow rapidly and it eventually controlled a swath of territory extending
from portions of the Iberian Peninsula to beyond the borders of what is today Iran. In particular, the
Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties of this period are not only historically important, but elements of their
times still resonate in the politics of the region today. This course module examines the spread of Islam and
the politics of this dynamic, as well as the elements of this history that remain in the forefront of Middle
Eastern Islamic politics today.

Key questions: What were the three major Islamic dynasties and how did they develop? What factors
precipitated the rise and decline of each dynasty? What is each known for having creating in the Middle
East and left as a legacy? To what extent is that legacy visible in the region today? How did the European
powers influence the region in the 19th century? What are the limitations of America’s characterizations of
its struggle with Islam as one over values? What are the various sources of conflict between political Islam
and the West? What is jihadist Islam’s view of the struggle between Islam and the West and what are the
dangers of generalizing from that view? What are the trends in perceptions between America and the
Islamic world today? Why is knowledge of history so important for evaluating contemporary trends in the
region?

Key terms: Umayyads, Abbasids, Ottomans, caliphate, Samuel Huntington, clash of civilizations, jihad,
“soft power”, democratization, Crusades, Jerusalem, Mongols, Safavids, Ottoman Empire, first and second
fitnahs, Sasanian Empire

Readings: Goldschmidt, “The Historical Context” in Schwedler, pp. 41-88;
Aslan, pp. 76-198.

Further Reading: The growth in popular interest about Islam overall has spurred renewed attention to the dynastic
periods of the religion. The recent work of Hugh Kennedy – When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise
and Fall of Islam’s Greatest Dynasty (New York: Da Capo Press, 2004; and The Great Arab Conquests: How the
Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In (New York: Da Capo Press, 2007) is both scholarly sound and
readily accessible. Another useful work of this time period is Amira Bennison, The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age
of the Abbasid Empire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Although it receives less direct treatment in this
component of the course, work on the Ottoman Empire is certainly relevant to this module as well. Key recent
resources on this topic include Donald Quataert, The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922 2nd edition (New York:
Cambridge University Press, 2005); Karen Barkey, Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective
(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and M. Sukru Hanioglu, A Brief History of the Late Ottoman
Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). A popular rendering of the Ottoman time was Caroline
V. (January 27-February 3) Modernization and Political Development – The Case of Iran – the quest to become “modern” was one that gripped the region for some time in the wake of 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 illustrates many of the issues raised through an investigation of the Iranian experience from the end of World War I to the present.

Key questions: What are the broad recent economic trends visible in the region? What are the key drivers of political change in the MENA region? What are the three enduring theories of political change? How are these illustrated in the region’s politics? What future research opportunities present themselves in these areas? What is modernization and how is this idea different from political development? What are the connections between the two concepts? What is the controversy underway today in the region over issues of development? What happened in Iran in the early 1960’s? How did the Shah attempt to change the country? What were the results of his reform efforts? How were these efforts tied to changes in the political economy of oil underway at the time? How have oil and money altered the calculations of regimes in the region regarding modernization and political dynamics? What impact did changes in the politics of oil have on the dynamic of reform underway in Iran during the period of the Shah? What arguments had the Ayatollah Khomeini made about the Shah’s reforms? How did the Shah react? What ultimately led to the Shah’s ouster from power and the return of Khomeini to Iran? How do the concepts of modernization and development help shed light on explanations for the dynamic of the Iranian revolution and its evolution? What do Bill and Springborg argue complicates the pursuit of political development in the Middle East? To what extent are these outside factors evident in the evolution of the Islamic Republic? How has Iran become a clientalist state and how has the government become militarized? How have the factions within the Iranian political system evolved since 1979? How have matters of political economy, gender relations, culture and religion changed? What were the results of the 2009 presidential election and why are these results considered to be so important? Why might it be said that the Islamic Revolution has not yet ended? How does such an interpretation clash with many accepted conceptualizations of the revolutionary phenomenon? What roles are played by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iranian politics today? How has their involvement in the political system changed the balance of power in the country and altered the course of political development?

Key concepts: modernization, political development, tradition, human development, populism, clientelism, nationalism, revolution, solidarity, creeping authoritarianism, fragmented elites, civil society, factionalism, masquerade coup d’etat, subcontractor state


(* )Said Amir Arjomand, “Has Iran’s Islamic Revolution Ended?” Radical History Review 105 (Fall 2009), pp. 132-138;

Friday, February 7 – First Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office)
“How does modernization and development apply to your case?”

VI. (February 5-10) Political Ideology and the Middle East – The Cases of Israel, Egypt and Syria – the period following World War I brought a great deal of soul searching to the region and resulted in the emergence of a number of ideological movements that would seek to guide portions of the region’s politics and structure its decision-making institutions and processes as states gained their independence. This course module investigates three of the most important ideological directions of the time period and illustrates their evolution and lasting impacts on the politics of the area.

Key Questions: What are the key identity groups and categories that characterize the region? What multiple identities do people of the region possess and how do these identities align with the states they live in? Why are these identities politically important? What is an ideology? What purposes do ideologies serve? How do they differ from opinions? What roles do ideologies play in state formation? What are the key tenets of Ba’athism and how do they compare with interpretations of Arab nationalism espoused by the Egyptian regime of the 1950’s? What are the key tenets of Zionism and how are divisions within the Zionist camp reflected in contemporary debates in Israel today? How has ideological struggle shaped the evolution of state institutions and how has it influenced relations between and among states in the region? What roles have the armed forces of the region played in shaping the formation and cultivation of state structures and nation-building? Where has the delicate balance emerged between professional militaries and civil authority? How does this balance vary across countries in the region?

Key concepts: identity, ideology, nationalism, pan-Arabism, socialism, Zionism, political liberalization, nation-building, state patriotism, primordialism, clientalism

Key terms: Ba’athism, Arab nationalism, Zionism, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, Michel Aflaq, Free Officer’s movement, Gamal Abdul Nasser, United Arab Republic (UAR), Hafez Asad, Theodor Herzl, Mainstream Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, Labor movement, Likud movement, civil-military relations, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), shadow military power, paramilitary forces, militias, millet system


Further Reading: The literature on ideologies of the region is vast and varied. Many of the important works on the ideological movements of the Arab world are written in Arabic; likewise, many influential works in Zionism are written in Hebrew. Among the significant works on Arab nationalism written in English are Albert Hourani, Arabic

Wednesday, February 12 – First Term Exam

Monday, February 17 – Second Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office)

“How does ideology apply to your case?”

VII. (February 17-24) Primordial Groups and the Genes of Politics – The Case of Lebanon – 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 if one is careful not to overstate their uniqueness (or inevitability) to the area. Here, the critical elements 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 (and also overemphasizing them) are underscored.

Key questions: What is the range of political systems present in the contemporary Middle East? How do these align with prevailing political environments in the region? How has civil society evolved in the region? What factors have influenced the evolution of civic activism and protest activities? What roles do family and kinship groups play in Middle East politics? How do these roles intersect with, diverge from, the roles played by class and ethnicity? How do people in the US express their political interests and aspirations? How does this compare with how popular interests and aspirations are expressed in the Middle East? How does the distinction between associational and non-associational politics capture this distinction? What are the advantages and disadvantages of family rule in Middle Eastern states? How do these characteristics appear in different Middle East monarchies and republic states? What is the zu’ama system in Lebanon? How did it arise? What did it assume about the politics and demographics of Lebanon? When these assumptions proved incorrect in Lebanon, what happened? How did this affect the politics in Lebanon? How did the US get caught in the mix? What does the political system in Lebanon look like today? To what extent does the zu’ama system in Lebanon have parallels in US history? How did the system nearly collapse after the 2006 war with Israel and what expectations did the Doha agreement create? Why were western interpretations of the 2009 Lebanese parliamentary elections misleading and what was concealed in reports of the results? What issues of remembrance have emerged after Lebanon’s civil war and how have these affected Lebanon’s political system? How is Lebanese civil society attempting to challenge notions of sectarianism in the “democratic” system? How are welfare services used differently in the Middle East than in other regions of the world? Under what conditions do ethnic or religious groups seek to provide services to and beyond their own communities? What factors account for the similarities and differences in welfare allocation practiced by the Future Movement and Hezbollah?

Key concepts: associational groups, institutional groups, non-associational groups, civil society, maslahah, family, ethnicity, clan, tribe, class, semi-democracies, consociational democracy, institutionalized sectarianism, political mobilization, bricks and mortar clientalism,

Key terms: vertical vs. horizontal stratification, zu’ama system, za’ims, Ahmed Bay al-Asad, Lebanese National Pact, Maronite Christians, Ta’if Accord, Rafik Hariri, Emile Lahoud, Hezbollah, Fouad Sinoria, Shaykh Hassan Nasrallah, March 8 coalition, March 14 alliance, Future Movement, electoral game, regime game, in-group, out-group
Readings: King-Irani, “Kinship, Class and Ethnicity” in Schwedler, pp. 315-344;


Friday, February 21 – Third Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office)
“How do primordial politics apply to your case?”

VIII. (February 26) Patrimonialism and the Politics of Regime Change – The Cases of Iraq and Syria – the enduring nature of leadership in the region, particularly since the 1970’s, has been a topic of much scholarly debate, particularly given the “weak” nature of so many of the region’s states. This component of the course looks at the nature of leadership in the contemporary period and examines the question of “durable authoritarianism” anew in light of ongoing regional leadership changes occurring in Iraq and Syria.

Key questions: What were the key sources of Muhammad’s power as a political leader? How do these potentially illustrate the idea of charisma? What does patrimonial leadership consist of in the Middle East? What do patrimonial leaders seek to create in a leadership structure? What must a patrimonial leader do in order to assure success? To what extent is Saddam Hussein an example of a patrimonial leader in the region? How does the structure of the Iraqi state embody aspects of a patrimonial system? How does knowledge of Saddam’s leadership patterns begin to explain the failure of the world to oust him from power up until now? How have other leaders in the region displayed aspects of patrimonialism in their rule? Why is this sometimes seen in the west as evidence of a “Middle East Madman”? What kind of governing structure is emerging in Iraq after the overthrow of Saddam? How is that structure being superseded by the reconciliation work of tribal leaders? How are notions of hereditary succession being rethought in light of events in Syria? Why did Syrian elites accept Bashar al-Asad as president?

Key concepts: patrimonialism, charisma, “Middle East Madman”, hereditary succession, personalism, sulha, gumlukiya, durable authoritarianism, dynastic republicanism, monarchical presidencies


Friday, February 28 – Fourth Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office) “How does patrimonialism apply to your case?”

March 3-5 – Spring Break

IX. (March 10-12) The Rise of the Rentier State – The Cases of Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar – the concept of the rentier state was one that emerged partly to describe the seemingly enduring qualities of the oil producing states in the region – it later came to also be applied to some of the non-oil producing states that seemed to exhibit similar characteristics using other, more modest forms of “rent”. This portion of the course examines the make-up and evolution of so-called rentier states using the examples of some of the small oil and gas producing states of the region. It also explores the limitations of such a label for the political and economic dynamics underway in these places today.

Key questions: How have the political economies of the region been structured to support the continued rule of leaders and the socioeconomic privileges of their primary constituencies? What tensions have emerged with the coming of globalization? What kinds of natural resource bases exist in the Middle East and how are they distributed throughout the region? How has oil impacted the evolution of political economies in the region? What kinds of economic activities characterize different portions of the region? What is a rentier state? How have they arisen in the region? What has the rentier state created in terms of economic structures in places like Kuwait? What are considered to be the implications for democratic politics in rentier states? To what extent have the experiences of Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar exhibited these expectations for democracy to emerge in rentier states? How are these states changing and to what extent do these changes confirm or raise more questions about the nature of rentier states? What are the emerging relationships between political participation and economic diversification evident in rentier systems? How have the Gulf states sought to address imbalances in their societies that have emerged since 2000? How has the price of oil influenced these strategies? What unintended consequences have emerged from these actions? How did the global financial crisis of 2008 reveal some of these unintended
consequences? How did these dynamics alter thinking about the Dubai model of economic diversification? To what extent has the Dubai model begun the challenge rentier dynamics in the GCC? What might be unique about the Kuwaiti case when considering its recent evolution? What were the goals of the Orange Movement? What were its predecessors? How did it pursue its goals? What factors most influenced its success? What were the consequences of its accomplishments? What were the unintended consequences of its work and how might the surprising results that emerged from the 2009 Kuwaiti parliamentary elections reflect some of those consequences?

Key concepts: state, rentier state, strong vs. weak states, extreme rentierism, poor rentierism, autocracy, transparency, allocation states, production states

Key terms: labor remittances, expatriot workers, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Dubai model, vertical vs. horizontal integration, Suez Canal, pipeline politics, sovereign wealth funds, HADAS, Nabiha 5, Global Competitiveness Index, foreign direct investment


Friday, March 14 – Fifth Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office)
“How does rentierism apply to your case?”

X. (March 17-19) Economic Reform and the Middle East – The Case of Saudi Arabia – 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 in the advent of “globalization”. Here, the dynamics of economic change – and their political ramifications -- are explored, using the case of Saudi Arabia to illustrate the effects.

Key questions: What are the residual economic legacies of colonialism still present in the region? What economic sectors remain crucial to Middle Eastern states? What kinds of demographic and labor challenges face the region today? How is wealth distributed in the region? What kinds of economic changes have been underway in the Middle East since the early 1980’s? What has precipitated these changes? How have experiences of economic restructuring varied across the region? What features have been more common? How have these changes affected the nature of states and leadership in the Middle East? Why has the large working-age population that exists today in the Middle East not been able to
create better economic and social outcomes for the region? Why are youth in the Middle East falling behind their peers in East Asia and elsewhere? What is the relationship between education and employment in the region generally? How have educational systems in the region failed youth and why? Why are labor market outcomes for many young people unsatisfactory? How have these trends affected social aspects in the region like marriage and family formation? What are the factors that distinguish the Middle East’s three life courses? How do the factors that have “stalled the transition to adulthood” affect youth on each of these life courses? How have these factors especially affected women? Why are labor market outcomes for many young people unsatisfactory? How have these trends affected social aspects in the region like marriage and family formation? What are the factors that distinguish the Middle East’s three life courses? How do the factors that have “stalled the transition to adulthood” affect youth on each of these life courses? How have these factors especially affected women? How does the case of Saudi Arabia illustrate many of these dynamics? What has been different about the nature of economic reform in Saudi Arabia? What are the critical challenges facing the Saudi economy in the future? How are environmental factors connected to these concerns? What are the potential political ramifications of these challenges? How does the Saudi experience compare with reform efforts underway in the Mahgreb? How does economic reform impact prevailing gender relations in the region? How does the region move toward a new life course? What sectors of society have been most instrumental in shaping the region’s gender relations? How does Islam send mixed messages on gender issues? Where have women played significant roles in Middle Eastern societies? How do gender relations vary across states? Why is gender change difficult to foster or influence from the outside?

Key concepts: privatization, globalization, state capitalism, austerity, liberalization, urbanization, segmentation, state socialism, oligopolies, demographic transition, social exclusion, statism, social contract, human capital, authority, patriarchy, honor, ethnicity, feminism, equality

Key terms: import substitution industrialization (ISI), Washington Consensus, infitah, structural adjustment, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, ‘Abd al’Aziz, fiefdoms, Aramco, SAMA, Faisal, World Trade Organization (WTO), brain drain, allocation states, production states, food security, business-state models, youth bulge, birth cohort, traditional life course, welfare life course, post-welfare life course, demographic gift, university lottery, brain drain, formal vs. informal economy, structural adjustment, vocational training, underemployment, push vs. pull factors, tracking, Human Development index, social insurance, honor crimes, veiling, family law codes, family planning

Readings: Moghadam, “Population Growth, Urbanization and the Challenges of Unemployment” in Schwedler, pp. 287-313;


Friday, March 21 – Sixth Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office)
“How does economic reform apply to your case?”
XI. (March 26-April 2) The Geography of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict – no single conflict has more defined (or arguably influenced) the politics of the region than the conflict between Israel and the Arab states. Over time, this conflict has evolved to be far less central to the dynamics of many of the region’s 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.

Key questions: When did the Arab-Israeli conflict originate? How did it originate? What have been the critical issues the conflict has been fought over? What are the central myths that surround the conflict and what are the facts that puncture these myths? What is the nature of the Israeli state? What have been the stages of conflict between the Arabs and Israelis? How has the outside world played a part in fostering conflict among these parties? Why do many today regard the Israeli-Palestinian issue as the crux of what must be resolved? What key issues divide Israel and the Palestinians? How are these similar to, different from the issues that divide Israel from other states in the Arab world? To what extent are these divisions reflected in the political divides within the Israeli state and the Palestinian Authority? Where do matters currently stand between the Israelis and Palestinians? How have geographical aspects of the conflict shifted by virtue of war and the policies of occupation? How are space and security intertwined in today’s conflict and the search for peace? How specifically are they intertwined in the structure and evolution of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip? What is the practical and symbolic significance of the West Bank separation wall for Israelis and Palestinians? How do these aspects of the wall play out in the confines of East Jerusalem? How are aspects of space and security captured in the tree planting patterns of Israelis and Palestinians? Why does tree planting have political significance to both communities? How have the economic policies of the Israelis affected the recent evolution of the conflict? What impact does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have on politics around the region? Why has peace between the parties proven so elusive? What is the situation of Palestinians living in Israel? How does their status and condition impact the conflict today? How is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being reassessed by scholars today? Why are many more pessimistic outlooks on resolving the conflict being advanced among both Israelis and Palestinians and how does geography potentially inform these assessments?

Key concepts: national identity, land for peace, enclavisation, separation, two-state solution, one-state solution, naturalization, bifurcation, lawfare, Heisenberg uncertainty principle, convergence

Key terms: Hussein-McMahon correspondence, Balfour declaration, Sykes-Picot agreement, UN partition plan of 1947, Six Day War, UN Resolution 242, October War, Camp David Peace Accords, Oslo Accords, Palestinian Authority (PA), Fatah, Hamas, intifada, Sephardic vs. Ashkenazi Jews, Roadmap for Peace, Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLV), Marwan Barghouti, Annapolis Conference, Ehud Olmert, Beirut Summit Declaration, Ariel Sharon, treescaping, Article 78 of the Ottoman Land Code, legibility, legal visualization, Allon Plan (1967), Drobless Plan (1978), Operation Cast Lead, hilltop youth, price tag doctrine

Readings: Sharoni and Abu-Nimer, “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” in Schwedler, pp. 175-221;
(*) Neve Gordon, “From Colonization to Separation: Exploring the Structure of Israel’s Occupation” Third World Quarterly 29 (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
Further Reading: As vast as the literature is on aspects of Israel’s conflict with the Arabs and the Palestinians specifically, relatively little of that literature can be considered problem-free. Historical accounts are often tinged with the personal biases of their authors – and while having these judgments in such works is not always a detriment, it always bears watching. Solid historical works on the conflict’s scope and span include Mark Tessler, A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 2nd edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); David Lesch The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles D. Smith, Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents 7th edition (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009) and Alan Dowty, Israel/Palestine 3rd edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012). There are any number of particular aspects of this conflict that have sub-literatures attached to this history – the bibliographies in these works can be a good initial guide to exploring those conflict offshoots.

Friday, April 4 – Seventh Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office)
“How does the geography of conflict apply to your case”?

XII. (April 7-9) The Politics of Islam – Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Palestine – While the role of Islam in politics has been a focus (some might say an obsession) of the region and those who comment on it over the last thirty years, how Islamist actors have behaved in the region’s politics (and why) remains less well understood and appreciated. This course module seeks to empirically and critically examine how operating in regional politics has shaped Islamic movements and how Islamic actors today are affecting politics in Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Jordanian and Palestinian contexts.

Key questions: How has politics changed Islamic movements in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Palestine? What have been the political priorities of Islamist organizations in the region historically? How have such movements been politcized? What is theoretically and practically difficult about Islamist politicization in semi-authoritarian states? How have specific Islamist movements confronted these difficulties? To what ends politically and organizationally? How have Islamist movements been used by regimes? What have Islamist movements learned from the Egyptian experience? How have movements in Jordan, Kuwait and Palestine implemented and altered the Egyptian model? What key characteristics define Islamist politics ideologically and organizational in the region? What are the organizational and ideological effects of political participation on Islamist organizations and the political systems they operate in? How does all this influence how Arab political systems are today … and how they might be? Why is victory perhaps still not an option?

Key concepts: semi-authoritarianism, victory avoidance, Social Democratic model, Christian Democratic model, nondomination, inclusion-moderation thesis, politicization, Muslim Brotherhood model

Key terms: Hasan al-Banna, boycott strategy, cross-ideological alliances, Hamas, Hizb al-Wasat, Salafi movements, Islamic Action Front, Sayyid Qutb, Hadas

Reading: Schwedler, “Religion and Politics in the Middle East” in Schwedler, pp. 377-401;

Friday, April 11 – Eighth Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office) “How does the politics of Islam apply to your case?”

XIII. (April 14-21) The Arab Spring – Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain -- The politics of the region seemed to take a dramatic turn toward unexpected change when protests in rural Tunisia quickly resulted in the departure of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and the start of regime change in Tunisia. Within weeks, a long-standing leader in Cairo had been pushed aside and soon political change was emerging in places as far apart as Tripoli and Sana. Once change occurred in these parts of the region, the assumption of some was that the contagion effects would result in protests throughout the Arab world (and beyond) that would sweep out any number of autocrats. Protests came to places like Dar’a in Syria and Manama in Bahrain but they evolved into something quite different and foreboding – and change did not automatically accompany popular pressure in other places that were seen as potentially “ripe” for revolution. This section of the course examines factors that have differentiated both the coming of popular unrest and the consequences of protests when they have emerged. It also begins to look a bit more closely at what accounts for the relative quiet present in many monarchies and their relative success at suppressing public unrest when it has emerged, as well as the aspirations of Islamic political parties present in some of these different systems.

Key questions: What were the common underlying conditions the region shared that contributed to the different uprisings? Why was Libya left out of the mix of insurrections under study? What was the backdrop to Tunisia’s revolt? How had the Tunisian population protested prior to Bouazizi’s self-immolation? How have the country’s politics evolved since Ben Ali’s abdication? How do these background events compare with the Egyptian experience? What role have traditional movements – secular and religious – played in Egypt’s dynamic? How has the Egyptian “deep state” responded to political change in the country? What was the nature of Yemen’s existential crisis? How have the multiple challenges facing Yemen influenced the direction of political change in the country? What accounts for the resilience of the Syrian regime in the three-year civil war? What awoke the population in Bahrain? How has the regime responded?

Key concepts: deep state, structural adjustment, trickle-down development, collective action, Al-Jazeera effect
Further Reading: Given the contemporary nature of events underway in the region, the literature on this set of regional events is still developing. Most of the best work is still emerging in scholarly journals at this point but there is a sample of published book length narratives which merit mentioning. Marc Lynch’s The Arab Uprisings: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East (New York: Public Affairs, 2012) and Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012) are the best early efforts to chronicle and understand what has been underway in the region. More recently, Mark Haas and David Lesch, The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013) and Rex Brynen, Pete Moore, Bassel Salloukh and Marie Joëlle Zahar, Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democratization in the Arab World (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012) seek to place the political unrest in larger contexts. Some voices from the insurrections have been collected in Layla al-Zubaidi, Matthew Cassel and Nemonie Craves Roderick, eds. Diaries from an Unfinished Revolution: Voices from Tunisia to Damascus (New York: Penguin, 2013). Although the outcome of these events is far from certain, some new assessments are already suggesting the region is irretrievably changed, including BBC Middle East correspondent Paul Danahar, The New Middle East: The World After the Arab Spring (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Paul Amar and Vijay Prashad, eds. Dispatches from the Arab Spring: Understanding the New Middle East (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); and Fawaz Gerges, ed. The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

XIV. (April 23) Conclusion – This final day of the course begins a process you will continue in your final exam take-home essay — putting the events of the last three plus years in the larger context of the semester’s course perspective.


Friday, April 25 – Ninth Conceptual Application assignment due (by 4:30 in my office) “How does political reform (and the Arab spring) apply to your case?”

Friday, May 2 -- Final Exam Essay due by 4:30 p.m. in my office.

Please don't throw away this syllabus -- RECYCLE IT INSTEAD
The Emergence of the Arab Awakening – Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen – The politics of the region seemed to take a dramatic turn toward unexpected change when protests in rural Tunisia quickly resulted in the departure of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and the start of regime change in Tunisia. Within weeks, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak had left office in favor of a military transitional authority and street protests for political change were emerging in places as far apart as Tripoli and Sana. Why did these seemingly unanticipated uprisings emerge and what were their social and political roots? Why did the different political dynamics in the four countries under examination here result in leadership changes of one form or another? This portion of the course will look at the assumptions about democratic evolution in the region and focus especially on the conditions that led to political upheaval in Egypt, with an eye toward comparing the Egyptian experience with what was observed in Tunisia, Yemen and Libya.

Key questions: What factors have accounted for the durability of authoritarianism in the Middle East? Why have incumbent regimes been so much more powerful than their secular and Islamic opponents? What are the primary explanations offered for the supposed “democracy gap” in the Middle East? Which are said to be more or less persuasive and why? What relationship does Islam potentially have with democracy? How do Islamic modernists and radicals differ? How have these differences played out in the Islamic Awakening? What factors influenced the rise and subsequent schisming of the Muslim Brotherhood? How might one regard political Islam as a modernizing force looking for change in the Middle East? How have Islamists performed in power? What are the limitations in reaching judgments under such circumstances? What have been the prevailing attitudes in the region toward democratic systems of government? To what extent have these been judged in line with, at odds with those in other regions of the world? What specific challenges, choices confront secular and Islamist movements as they have sought to promote political reform in various state settings? How have modernization and globalization processes impacted efforts of ruling establishments to shape political change prior to December 2010? What made the future of secular parties uncertain? What concerns arose about the participating Islamists inside and outside the region? What made Islamist’s decisions to participate in the elections of these authoritarian states such a complex calculation? What was the “new activism” in the region and why did it not hold out much hope for ushering in political reform prior to 2011? How was the political succession process underway in Egypt being managed before Mubarak’s ouster? What was the role of the military in this process? What kind of challenge was the Muslim Brotherhood able to mount to this process? What were the key characteristics of Mubarak’s rule in Egypt and how did these represent change, continuity with what had prevailed in Egypt during Nasser and Sadat? How do Marxists, neo-Weberians and neo-institutionalists each explain the evolution of state cultures and structures? How does each approach differ? Why are the sources and allocations of state revenues thought to be particularly important when accounting for the evolution of the Egyptian state since the time of Nasser? How did the Egyptian state move under Mubarak from being a rentier structure to a more predatory structure? How did efforts to liberalize the Egyptian economy contribute to these changes? When considering Mubarak’s fall from power in 2011, how would Soliman explain the changes in Egypt? What are the limits to what has changed in Egypt? How have others explained the emergence of protests in Egypt that ultimately toppled Mubarak? To what extent are these changes “revolutionary”? What transitory challenges does Soliman’s analysis suggest Egypt faces in the near and long-terms? How have these circumstances changed since the popular uprising that ousted Mubarak? What is the Islamist role in the Egyptian dynamics that followed Mubarak’s ouster? How have the events in Egypt compared with those in Tunisia, Libya and Yemen? How has the initial literature sought to explain the downfall of Ben Ali in Tunisia? What less visible socio-economic phenomena may be important to any understanding of the Tunisian case? To what extent did political openings prevailing in Yemen mask a system of patronage and control that kept Ali Abdullah Saleh in power? Why might change not represent a real alteration of prevailing patterns in Yemen? What factors were most influential in sparking change in Libya? What makes this case different from its neighbors? How do these variations potentially make the challenges facing Libya going forward different from the other cases under consideration here?
Surprises in the Regional Awakening – Algeria, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine – Once change began to emerge in the region, the assumption of some was that the contagion effects would result in protests throughout the Arab world (and beyond) that would sweep out any number of autocrats. Protests came to some places, like Dar'a in Syria – but change did not automatically accompany the popular pressure. Moreover, places that were seen as potentially “ripe” for change did not rise up – and signs of the status quo prevailing remain. This section of the course examines some of the factors that have differentiated both the coming of popular unrest and the consequences of protests when they have emerged. It also begins to look a bit more closely at some of the aspirations that Islamic political parties present in some of these systems that have been more quiescent.

Key questions: What are the factors that have made political change less salient in these cases given the impetus seen elsewhere in the region? How has the Algerian civil war experience potentially shaped portions of its response to the Arab Awakening in the region? What kind of political system has emerged in Algeria since the civil war and what challenges does it face? How did unrest begin in Syria and how did the regime respond? What have been the characteristics of social mobilization inside Syria and how have
the “early risers” been critical to shaping that mobilization? What social networks have been critical to the organization of protestors in Syria and to what extent are some of these ties evident in other cases? How has the nature of organization in Syria helped the resistance maintain pressure on the regime, even in the face of extraordinary violence? How is the conflict underway in Syria evolving and what challenges does it pose to the future of political rule in the country? To what extent are the events in Syria affecting the dynamics in Lebanon and the outlook of the Palestinian community? How are issues of dignity playing out in a Lebanese context? What factors might explain the emergence of violent vs. non-violent political responses to oppression and to what extent might those shed light on the future of Palestinian responses to occupation in the West Bank? What role does political Islam play in the dynamics underway in these different cases? Why does Aslan suggest that this is the start of the Islamic Reformation?

Key concepts: dependency, cliency, threats, opportunities, dignity, karame, mobilization, fragmentation, cohesion, social movement theory, networks, miscibility, anti-sectarianism, reformation

Key terms: early risers, Dar’a, Hama, Abu Zeids, Zu’bis, Free Syrian Army, Syrian National Council, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Jamal al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, intifada

Readings: Aslan, pp. 225-292;
Gelvin, pp. 93-112;
Wright, 57-90; 109-118; 137-154 (skim);
Schwedler in Angrist, pp. 111-131;
Baker in Sorenson, pp. 249-274;
Zoubir in Angrist, pp. 177-202;
(*) Reinould Leenders and Steven Heydemann, “Popular Mobilization in Syria: Opportunity and Threat and the Social Network of the Early Risers” Mediterranean Politics 17 (July 2012), pp. 139-159;

November 21-23 – Thanksgiving Break

XIV. (November 28-30) Whither the Regional Awakening? Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco – One of the notable trends thus far in the dynamics of regional awakening is that republican regimes have been much more susceptible to large-scale protests and sustained pressures for regime change than the monarchies of the region. But the monarchies have not been immune from the dynamics and outside of Syria, some of the most violent opposition to change has emerged in the island kingdom of Bahrain. What possibly accounts for the relative quiet present in many monarchies ... and the relative success at suppressing public unrest when it has emerged? Those are some of the questions this particular segment of the course examines.

Key questions: What has seemingly made the Gulf states more impervious to political upheaval than much of the rest of the region? How have the Saudis made it difficult for political protests to get started in the kingdom? To what extent have the Saudis exported elements of their strategy to Bahrain? What were the
dynamics of protest underway on the island and how were they shut down by the government? What are the challenges facing the Bahraini royal family a year into unrest? How have monarchies like Jordan and Morocco traditionally sought to deal with public dissatisfaction? To what extent are these steps the strategies being employed today or are there changes in their approaches?

Key concepts: monarchy, good governance, corruption, sectarianism, defensive democratization, pseudo-democracy, aspiring cosmopolitanism

Key terms: al-Khalifas, Day of Rage, Movement of Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA), Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), al-Wefaq, Pearl Square, Moroccanization


XV. (December 3) Reassessing the Awakening and Looking Forward – the question that seems to matter most to the rest of the world is how long will the “Arab Spring” last – and what will it ultimately produce in terms of outcomes? This final portion of the course reexamines the dynamics of change underway and seeks to understand why these processes have taken such different forms (with varying consequences) in different portions of the region and how this might be evolving for the future. While the focus here remains on change in the Arab world, this section will also examine the impetus for change present in non-Arab states of the region as well, most notably Israel and Iran.

Key questions: How are scholars of the region beginning to rethink the ideas surrounding durable authoritarianism in light of the “Arab Awakening”? What new insights are emerging about the role youth politics may or may not be playing in these dynamics? What are some of the key challenges facing the region politically and economically as it moves forward? How might the events underway today be understood as part of a much longer political evolution of the region? To what extent does the “Turkish model” seem to have responses to these challenges that other states in the region might consider? How are larger, climatic issues beginning to be seen as relevant to the political upheaval of the region in the last two years? Why might these be important to consider? What are the dangers of attributing too much explanatory value to such factors when seeking to explain the dynamics underway in the Middle East?

Key concepts: global warming, youth empowerment, consensus-building, consolidation, food security

Key terms: Justice and Development Party (AKP), Recip Tayyip Erdogan, neo-Ottomanism

Readings: Gelvin, pp. 141-158; Wright, 127-135; Patton in Angrist, pp. 435-459; Angrist in Angrist, pp. 463-469; (*) Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the
Further Reading: Feel like you haven’t read enough about the Arab Spring? Given the contemporary nature of events underway in the region, you have read most all the recent and best work on this topic … but there are a couple of other sources that have emerged which merit mentioning in conclusion. Marc Lynch’s The Arab Uprisings: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East (New York: Public Affairs, 2012) and Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012) are the best of what will surely be a new and extensive effort to chronicle and understand what has been underway in the region.

death revolution, demographic regimes, demographic momentum, inter-Arab labor migration, demographic sobriety, founding regimes, political Islam

What historical political realities have shaped its present? Why have the “founding” regimes of the region been such poor performers? How is a reexamination of Islam (in the region and from the outside) potentially obscuring the region’s abilities to see forward profitably? Why might citizens of the region believe they are trapped between memory and desire?

Why are such legacies particularly complex when thinking about Iran? What are the particular historical memories of Turks, Jews?