Governments and Politics of the Middle East

The continuing U.S. occupation of Iraq, the goal of spreading democracy in the Middle East, the question of two-states, Israeli and Palestinian, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, are just some of the current conflicts and issues that characterize Middle East politics. How do we think about these and other developments? What is the current nature of governments in the region? This course is a comparative study of governments in the Middle East, with special emphasis on countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, and Iran. Using different theoretical approaches, the course looks at governmental structures and considers issues of political stability in the face of internal opposition and external pressures on states in the region. Instruction places the current state system in the context of historical, political, and ideological forces that led to its formation after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

This course will be organized as follows: The first through the third week will consist of lectures and power point presentations serving as a general introduction to the politics of the region. The historical background for understanding Middle East politics is covered by the first chapter in Mehran Kamrava’s *The Modern Middle East* and power point presentations, a Middle East Time Line handout from the birth of Prophet Muhammad to the present. The remaining major part of the course will present both the historical context in which the modern Middle East emerged and the various critical issues facing the region today, such as the state system, political and military conflicts, economic development, dictatorships, and the prospect of democratization.

**STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE:** Each class meeting will be divided between lectures, discussions on contemporary issues in Mideast politics, and occasional documentaries and films. Discussion will be based on handouts of articles on Mideast politics from leading publications to be distributed in class at no cost to you. There will be three in-class examinations, including the final, two take-home written assignments (three pages each). The first in-class exam is objective (multiple choice & true and false), worth 25 points; the second is objective and subjective (short essays and definitions), worth 30 points; the third, a final, is both objective and subjective, worth 35 points. The first take-home written assignment is a research essay worth 5 points; the second, part of the final, is an essay based on the assigned readings. This brings your total up to 100 points. The grading system for this class is as follows: the grade of A begins at 87.5; B at 77.5; C at 67.5; and D at 57.5. The course also provides you with the opportunity to earn an additional 10 points over the 100. This opportunity is in the form of 5 unannounced quizzes (each is worth 2 points; they are multiple choice & true and false) which can be given at anytime during the course (or the period during which the class meets) and will cover the materials discussed up to and including the day of the quiz. Since these quizzes are not part of the basic course assignments, there will be no makeup or substitute assignments if they are missed. **(Attendance is a must in this class).** In-class exams require a SCANTRON form #882 and a No. 2 pencil. **DROPPING THE CLASS REMAINS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.**

The two take-home written assignments differ from each other. The first is in the form of a research essay. For the paper to be accepted and graded, a one-page statement about the topic, thesis, and sources to be used is required. Only when the statement is approved, you can start writing the three-page research essay. A guideline handout on how to write the assignments will be distributed in class. The second take-home
assignment, which is due in the last week of class, will be part of the final examination. More about it will be discussed as we approach the last week of classes.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK**


**Background Readings:**


Roy Anderson et al. *Politics and Change in the Middle East* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2001)


**WEEK ONE**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE REGION**

*Defining the Middle East*

*The Literature on Studying the Middle East*

*How much of our knowledge of the Middle East a product of Orientalist discourse*

**Readings**

Middle East Time Line handout

Power Point fact sheet of individual Mideast states

*Introduction in The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 1—“From Islam to the Great War”

**WEEK TWO**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE REGION**

Middle East Time Line handout

Power Point fact sheet of individual Mideast states

*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 1—“From Islam to the Great War”


http://www.aljadid.com/interviews/AnInterviewwithCharbelDagher.html
WEEK THREE
THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN STATE SYSTEM— THE COLONIAL STATE

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 2— “From Territories to Independent States”

WEEK FOUR
NATIONALISM—ARAB NATIONALISM AND ZIONISM

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 3—“The Age of Nationalism”

WEEK FIVE
FIRST EXAMINATION

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT I

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 4 —“The Arab-Israeli Wars”

WEEK SIXTH
THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 5 —“The Iranian Revolution”

WEEK SEVENTH
THE GULF WARS

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 6 “The Gulf Wars and Beyond”
http://homepage.smc.edu/chalala%5Felie/documents/IranIraqWarMay2508.pdf
--“Iraq’s Invasion of Kuwait and Socio-Political Contradictions in the Arab World,” *Middle East Focus*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 1991).*
WEEK EIGHTH
THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT II

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 7 —-“The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict”

WEEK NINE
SECOND EXAMINATION
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 8—“The Challenge of Economic Development”

WEEK TEN
STATE AND OPPOSITION

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 9—“States and Their Opponents”

WEEK ELEVEN
STATE AND OPPOSITION (PART II)

Elie Chalala “Iraq and Syria: Dictatorships in Crisis,” *Middle East Focus*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer 1991)*
OR Elie Chalala, “Arab Dictatorships: The Long and Winding Road Toward Democratic Reform in Baathist Syria and Iraq” in *Essays on Arab Culture and Politics* by Elie Chalala.
http://homepage.smc.edu/chalala%5Felie/reading/Arab%20Dictatorships%20May%2025%2008.pdf
-- “Algeria’s Intellectual Exiles” in *Free Inquiry* magazine, Vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring 1999). Or
-- “Many Causes Underlie Assassinations of Algerian Journalists and Intellectuals; Why Death of a Nation’s Conscience Has Met With Cold Indifference” http://aljadid.com/features/0424chalala.html

WEEK TWELVE
THE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

Readings
*The Modern Middle East*, Chp. 10—“The Question of Democracy”
WEEK THIRTEEN
THE QUESTION OF COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

Readings

WEEK FOURTEEN
THE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST PART II
AND THE CHALLENGES FACING THE MIDDLE EAST

Readings
The Modern Middle East, Chp. 11--The Challenges Facing the Middle East

WEEK FIFTEEN
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST

Readings: To be distributed in class

WEEK SIXTEEN
FINAL EXAMINATION

*These readings will be distributed in class