

Spring 2014
POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST
Dr. Mehrzad Boroujerdi

PSC 344.M001/MES 344.M001
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The use of headphones/laptops/smartphones is not allowed in class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The Middle East is a region that is often discussed in terms of its “traditional Islamic culture,” “oil-based economies,” “brutal authoritarian regimes,” and “bloody conflicts.” Particularly from the Western perspective, examples of political strife abound: the persistent Arab-Israeli conflict, the rise of political Islam, the September 11 attacks, the Arab Spring, and most recently the Syrian civil war. Consequently, this course addresses the following two questions: Is there anything unique or peculiar about the Middle East? Who are the agents of political change in the region? Our collective aim is to contemplate critically a wide range of perspectives on these questions.

With this aim in mind, we will begin by probing how and why we should study the Middle East and by exploring some of the salient economic, historical, social and religious features of the region. We will then scrutinize the nature of contemporary politics in the Middle East by analyzing such topics as the role of civil society, poverty movements, identity politics, gender politics, and Arab Spring. In the second part of the course, we will turn our attention to an examination of politics in nine countries.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY: A Chinese proverb says that “teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.” A Western sage (Karl Jaspers) supplemented this maxim by maintaining that “university life is no less dependent on students than on professors. The best professors flounder helplessly at a school where the student body is unfit. Hence, it is all up to the young people who are supposedly entitled to study. They must show themselves worthy of this privilege to the best of their ability.”

This course has been organized on the premise that you are worthy of this privilege and that the teacher only opens the door. The success of this course depends entirely on your continued and sustained participation. Therefore, I ask that you be agile participants and intervene as often as possible in class discussion. Please keep in mind that in this course you will be exposed to a wide range of alternative views, some of which may force you to question, rethink, and, if necessary, abandon your present "understanding" of Middle Eastern culture, history and politics. Who knows, by the end of the course you may feel that you have taken part in a serendipitous voyage of discovery!

REQUIRED TEXTS: (available at SU Bookstore)

Michele P. Angrist (ed.), Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East, 2nd ed. (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013).

Asef Bayat, Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East (Stanford University Press, 2009).

Ellen Lust (ed.), The Middle East (13th ed.) (Congressional Quarterly, 2013)

All the non-textbook readings listed under class assignments are available on the Blackboard site; there is no course reader.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance: Attendance in this class is mandatory! We will take attendance at the beginning of each class and you can be excused from having missed a total of three classes during the term. After that you will be penalized for any class you miss. Also, because my presentations will complement rather than reiterate the assigned readings, you will miss a great deal by not coming to class. Attendance is also mandatory for all exams, and make-ups will be given only for bona fide emergencies (i.e., severe illness documented by a physician).

Participation: In addition to being physically present, I expect you to be mentally present! Hence, you should complete all assigned readings *before* each class meeting so that you are familiar with the concepts, facts, theories, and controversies to be discussed. Furthermore, you can engage in discussion through the course page in Blackboard (<https://bbgroupa.syr.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>) and the course listserv (psc34401@listserv.syr.edu). Both you and the teaching staff will use these venues to (a) post interesting or informative e-mails about the subject matter of the course, and (b) respond to points and issues raised by the instructors or your peers.

Map Quiz: You will be given a blank map of the Middle East (**January 22**) and asked to identify various countries and capitals in the region. A list of items will be distributed in the first week of the course to help you prepare.

Mid-term Exam: You will have an in-class midterm exam on **March 5**. The exam will include short answer questions, and essays.

Op-Ed: Each student must write an original and thoughtful two-page Op-Ed about an issue dealing with Middle Eastern politics (due **April 7**). On how to write an Op-Ed see: http://theopedproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=79

Research/Reflection Papers: You can either write a research or a “reflection/opinion” paper (7 to 10 pages). In a research paper, students are expected to undertake an in-depth examination of an event, dilemma, or controversy concerning Middle Eastern politics and society in which they are interested. In a reflection/opinion paper, students are expected to

reflect critically on a topic of their choice, engaging in a dialogue with the concepts and ideas raised in films, class lectures, and assigned/recommended readings. Each paper should have a full bibliography (books, journal articles, newspaper articles, Internet sources, etc.) and follow the “Four C” rule: clear, concise, coherent, and creative.

The choice of subject for the paper should be first cleared in individual discussions with the instructor or the TA. Each student needs to provide us with a one-page outline of their papers no later than **March 3**. The outline should contain a title, the main argument/ finding, and a preliminary bibliography. The papers are due on **April 28**. Further guidelines on how to write the papers will be provided in class.

Grading Criteria:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>When</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Participation	all the time	10%
Map Quiz	January 22	10%
Mid-term Exam	March 5	30%
Op-Ed	April 7	10%
Research paper	April 28	40%

Extra Credit Assignments: Students who wish to improve their grade in this course have the option of attending any Middle East-related event (speakers, films, conferences, concert, art exhibits, etc.) held on campus during the semester and writing a 1-2-page report afterwards. Each extra-credit assignment will replace 1% of the lowest grade students received in each individual assignment (midterm, final exam or research paper). Students can do up to five extra credit assignments.

Additional Notes: This class, which does not assume any prior knowledge of the Middle East, is the gateway course for those wishing to obtain a Major or a Minor in Middle Eastern Studies (<http://middle-eastern-studies.syr.edu/>).

Please take note of these policies:

- Turn off your Cell Phones. The professor reserves the right to ask students whose cell phones ring or who are texting to leave the class.
- The professor reserves the right to not admit students coming late to the class.
- Laptops may only be used in class for note taking.

Blackboard: Assignments, announcements, lecture slides, and PDF versions of assigned articles will be posted regularly to the Blackboard site. Please ensure you can access it.

Following news: You will be expected to monitor developments in the Middle East as they occur. Events taking place can help to further stimulate debate and reflection in the classroom. To keep abreast of developments, everyone is encouraged to visit (daily) the following dedicated Middle East pages:

Al-Jazeera English: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/>
BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/default.stm
New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/middleeast/index.html>
Foreign Policy: <http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/>

If you can read Arabic, Hebrew, Persian or Turkish, then feel free to follow a newspaper of your choice in that language (www.onlinenewspapers.com). Also, following a Middle Eastern blog for the duration of the semester can help provide material and inspiration for your various projects. Here are a few examples of blogs in those languages.

Arab World - http://blogs.aljazeera.net/ or http://www.dubaidebates.com/	Egypt - http://www.sandmonkey.org/ or http://www.arabist.net/
Iraq - http://iraqblogcount.blogspot.com/	Iran - http://balatarin.com/
Israel - http://israblog.nana.co.il/	Lebanon - http://www.beirutspring.com/ or http://mayazankoul.com/
Morocco - http://riadzany.blogspot.com/	Saudi Arabia - http://saudijeans.org/ or http://saudiwoman.wordpress.com/
Tunisia - http://tuniblogs.com/	Turkey - http://aegeandisclosure.blogspot.com
UAE - http://secretdubai.blogspot.com	Islamic World - http://www.islamicity.com
Bahrain - http://mahmood.tv/	Yemen - http://afrahnasser.blogspot.com/
Jordan - http://www.black-iris.com/	Gaza - http://livefromgaza.wordpress.com/

Students who wish to watch additional films and videos about the Middle East (available in the media section of Bird Library) should visit:

http://as-cascade.syr.edu/students/undergraduate/interdisciplinary/middle-eastern-studies/resources/SU_resources.html

Policy on Electronic Devices:

The use of all electronic devices is banned in the course. However, there are exemptions or special considerations to the policy for various reasons and that is done on a case by case basis. Students need to speak directly with me about these exemptions.

Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations:

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, [Office of Disability Services, http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/).

Academic Integrity Statement:

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy (<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>) and know that it is their responsibility to learn the instructor's expectations and the general academic rules with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>. Students found to cheat will receive an F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal.

Faith Tradition Observance Policy:

Syracuse University recognizes the diverse faith traditions represented among its campus community and supports the rights of faculty, staff, and students to observe according to these traditions. Any student who wishes to observe their religious holiday must notify the instructor by the end of the second week of classes. This notification has to be submitted through MySlice.

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you!"

-Pericles (430 B.C.)

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 13: **Introduction - The Nature and Structure of the Course**

- Syllabus review; questionnaire; orientation quiz
- Brian Whitaker, "Lost in translation." *The Guardian* (10 June 2002).
- Karim Sadjadpour, "The Cynical Dairy Farmer's Guide to the New Middle East,"
- Nikki R. Keddie, "Is There a Middle East?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, 3 (July 1973), pp. 255-271.
- Familiarize yourself with the map resources listed in Blackboard site.

Jan. 15: **The Making of the Modern Middle East**

- Lust, chapter 1
- Angrist, chapter 1
- Eric Davis, "10 Conceptual Sins in Analyzing Middle East Politics."
- Thomas Friedman, "Mideast Rules to Live By," *New York Times* (Dec. 20, 2006).

Jan. 20: **No Class (MLK)**

Jan. 22: **Social Change in the Middle East (Map Quiz)**

- Lust, chapter 2

Jan. 27: **Political Economy of Development**

- Lust, chapter 3
- Angrist, chapter 4
- Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, 3 (2001): 325-361.
- Timur Kuran, "Why the Middle East is Economically Underdeveloped: Historical Mechanisms of Institutional Stagnation." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, 3 (2004):71-90.

Jan. 29: **Institutions and Governance**

- Lust, chapter 4
- Larry Diamond, "Why Are There No Arab Democracies?" *Journal of Democracy* 21, 1 (January 2010): 93-104.

Feb. 3: **Humorous Look at the Middle East**

- Video: *Comedy Middle Eastern Style* (VC12739; 56 min.)

- *Colbert Report: Norwegian Muslim Gunman's Islam-Esque Atrocity*
<http://www.iranian.com/main/2011/jul/norwegian-muslim-gunmans-islam-esque-atrocity>

Feb. 5: Actors, Public Opinion, and Participation

- Lust, chapter 5
- Various Authors, "Rethinking the Study of Middle East Militaries," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, 3 (August 2011), pp. 391-407.

Feb. 10: The Arab Spring I

- F. Gregory Gause, III, "The Middle East Academic Community and the 'Winter of Arab Discontent': Why Did We Miss It?"
- Various authors, "Reflections: Middle East Studies at the Barricades," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, 3 (August 2011): 383-390.
- Lisa Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs* 90, 3 (May 2011), pp. 2-7.
- Sadek J. al-Azm, "The Arab Spring: 'Why Exactly at this Time?'" *Reason Papers* 33 (Fall 2011): 223-229.

Feb. 12: The Arab Spring II

- Bayat, chapters 12-13
- Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism: Lessons of the Arab Spring," *Comparative Politics* 44, 2 (2012):127-149.

Feb. 17: Civil Society

- Angrist, chapter 5
- Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan." *Comparative Politics* 33, 1 (2000):43-61.

Feb. 19: Religion and Politics

- 100 Questions about Islam <http://vimeo.com/groups/100questionsaboutislam>
- Angrist, chapter 6
- Bayat, chapters 9
- Nathan Brown, et. al. "How Do Scholars Study Islamist Movements and How Should We Be Studying Them?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, 1 (February 2011): 133-146.

Feb. 24: The Poor and Social Movements

- Bayat, chapters 3, 4, 11
- Angrist, chapter 2

Feb. 26: Identity Politics

- Angrist, chapter 7
- Bayat, chapters 6-7
- Ted Swedenburg, "Imagined Youths." *Middle East Report* 245 (Winter 2007)

Mar. 3: Politics of Gender & Sexuality

(Paper outlines due)

- Angrist, chapter 8
- Bayat, chapter 5
- Woodrow Wilson Center's Middle East Program, "Is the Arab Awakening Marginalizing Women" (Summer 2012)
- Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" *American Anthropologist* (September 2002): 783-790.

Mar. 5: **MID-TERM EXAM**

Mar. 10-12: **No Classes (Spring Break)**

Mar. 17: **History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

- Lust, chapter 6
- Council on Foreign Relations Interactive Guide to the Crisis
http://www.cfr.org/publication/13850/crisis_guide.html

Mar. 19: **Politics of the Arab-Israeli Conflict**

- Edward W. Said, "The One-State Solution: Why the only answer to Middle East peace is Palestinians and Israelis living as equal citizens under one flag," *New York Times Magazine* (January 10, 1999): 36-39.
- Ethan Bronner, "Bullets in My In-Box," *The New York Times* (January 25, 2009).

Mar. 24: **Regional International Relations**

- Lust, chapter 7

Mar. 26: **International Politics of the Middle East**

- Lust, chapter 8
- Angrist, chapter 3

Mar. 31: **Film: "Where is the Friend's Home?"**

Apr. 2: **Guest Speaker: Filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami**

Apr. 7: **Iraqi Politics**

(Op-Ed articles are due)

- Lust, chapter 12

Apr. 9: **Israeli Politics**

- Lust, chapter 13

Apr. 14: **Egyptian Politics**

- Lust, chapter 10
- Project on Middle East Political Science, "The State of Egyptian Revolution"

Apr. 16: **Lebanese Politics**

- Lust, chapter 16

Apr. 21: **Iranian Politics**

- Lust, chapter 11

Apr. 23: **Turkish Politics**

- Lust, chapter 24

Apr. 28: **Syrian Politics**

- Lust, chapter 23

(Research Papers are due)