Spring 2019
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST
Dr. Mehrzad Boroujerdi

PSC/MES/PAI 684.M001                        Class Time: Tu 9:30-12:15
Office: 310A Maxwell Hall                              Classroom: 209 Eggers
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-3:00                  Phone: (315) 443-5877

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The international relations of the Middle East are generally characterized as being driven by unending conflict and political tension. Competition over natural resources, external interventions, wars, local political upheavals, and sectarian tension anchor the region's history. These factors plus competing claims of nationalist and supra-identities complicates the assessment of historical and political causes. The main objectives of this course are to help students understand how International Relations theories and conceptual tools can be applied to the Middle East and what are the determinants of the foreign policies of states and non-state actors in the region. The course is divided into two parts. Part one will introduce students to the internal and external dimensions of the emergence of the Middle East state system. In part two we will examine a series of controversial case studies that are part of the landscape of contemporary Middle East. By mixing the analysis of issues and themes, the course aims to show students the interconnectedness of regional and international factors.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY: You should consider this seminar a collective exercise in critical thinking. My role is to steer class discussion and engender an informal participatory class environment where we can all search collectively for a broader understanding of the subject matter. The readings will introduce you to some of the more important scholarship on the subject, and they will form the springboard for class discussion. Please keep in mind that the present structure of the course reflects my interests and ideas about the key forces in the international politics of the Middle East. However, I welcome a broadening of aims and interests through your input.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: After taking this course, the students will be able to:

- Explore the contribution of theories and conceptual approaches to the study of the international relations of the Middle East
- Exhibit a familiarity with the structure and complexities of the international relations of the Middle East
- Critically contextualize the role of superpowers, wars and Islamic ideology in shaping the regional configuration of power
- Practice analytical thinking about the past and present in written mode
- Demonstrate an ability to organize ideas, create and defend an argument, and use and cite sources properly in writing papers

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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.

Debates: Any discussion of the "International Politics of the Middle East" is filled with controversial
minefields. Because of vigorous public advocacy and intense popular and scholarly interest, the arguments on different sides of various controversial issues are highly developed and refined. I have chosen several controversial topics that are intended to foster discussion and debate in our classroom. I chose these questions based on the belief that even though it is not necessary to agree with an opponent's point of view, it is always wise to understand it. In pairs, select one of the topics below. Decide who will argue which side and present your argument with supporting evidence to the class. The class will determine the winner of the debate based upon which argument is most compelling and provided the best evidence.

When you prepare to debate a topic, you need to do more than merely choose your initial and basic arguments. You need to become very familiar with the literature on the topic and become able to anticipate both your opponent's central arguments and how they will likely respond to your own. Remember that an argument is more than an assertion. Arguments are supported by evidence and include warrants that connect the evidence back to the central claim. Hopefully, you should be able to find substantial sources of evidence in your reading assignments. However, you should also feel free to do additional research through the Internet.

Book Reviews: Each student is expected to write a 5 to 6 page (double-spaced) review of a book dealing with the subject matter of the course. By February 5, students should send a note telling me what book they intend to review (a sample list of suitable books is provided at the end of the syllabus). The actual book reviews are due on March 5. Starting from March 19, we will hear one or two of these book reviews in each class. The purpose of these presentations is to enhance your classmates understanding of the scholarly literature in the area of international relations of the Middle East. You can use PowerPoint, handouts or any other tools to make your presentations.

Research paper or journal of notes: You can choose one of the following two options for the primary assignment:

(a) Turn in a "journal of notes" (a reading log with critical commentary and opinion) on seven weekly topics (this includes books and articles) mentioned in the syllabus on April 23. In your seven entries (each of which must be 3-4 double spaced pages), you are expected to analyze, compare, and contrast works read in the seminar by entertaining the following set of questions: (a) what is the author's thesis?; (b) what are the primary assumptions the author holds (and expects readers to accept) in arguing that thesis?; (c) what are some useful concepts s/he presents?; (d) how does the reading relate to previous readings?; (e) what are the major strengths and weaknesses of the argument?; and (f) what are the implications for academic research if the author's thesis and underlying assumptions are valid or true? You can pick one or more of the readings for each week for this assignment.

(b) Write one major research paper, 21-28 double-spaced pages long, focusing on a paradigm (i.e., Orientalism), concept (i.e., secularism), or problem/issue (i.e., state formation) examined in class. This paper, which should have a theoretical rather than a descriptive focus, is due on April 23.

Note to Undergraduates: Undergraduate students enrolled in the course to fulfill the senior seminar requirement for the Major in Middle Eastern Studies are expected to maintain the same attendance record, fulfill the same presentation requirements, and do the same amount of readings as the graduate students. However, their writing assignments will be somewhat
less demanding. Instead of writing a 21-28-page paper, these students will be expected to turn in a 15-18-page paper or alternatively if they decide to do the “journal of notes” assignment, instead of writing 3 to 4 pages on each topic, they will be asked to write 2 pages on each assignment.

GRADING CRITERIA:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Debate Performance</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
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<td>Book Review Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper or journal of notes</td>
<td>50%</td>
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REQUIRED TEXT (available at SU Bookstore):
Louise Fawcett (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East, 4th ed.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

RECOMMENDED TEXT

All the articles mentioned below are available through Blackboard.

Academic Integrity: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy (https://bit.ly/2Mwz5ZR) 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. Students found to cheat will receive an F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal.

Disability-Related Accommodations: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 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/.

Electronic Devices: The usage of electronic devices for note taking is permitted in class. However, students are expected to use technology prudently and refrain from distracting themselves and others (texting, Facebook, etc.). Cell phones should be placed on silent or “airplane” mode (that is, no internet access) while in class. Technology privileges will be withdrawn if they are abused.

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.
Harassment: Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team at the Counseling Center (315-443-4715, 200 Walnut Place, Syracuse, New York 13244-5040). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to the University’s Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, titleix@syr.edu, 005 Steele Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University’s Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and crimes I learn about to help make our campus a safer place for all.

“The future is under no obligation to mimic the past.”
David Hume

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 15: Introduction - The Nature and Structure of the Course
- Course requirements and expectations, presentation sign-up
- Defining the Middle East geopolitical region & key themes of the seminar
- The question of relevance
- Lisa Anderson, “Scholarship, Policy, Debate and Conflict: Why We Study the Middle East and Why It Matters,” Middle East Studies Association Bulletin 38, 1 (Summer 2004), 1-12.
- Eric Davis, “10 Conceptual Sins in Analyzing Middle East Politics,” The New Middle East (January 28, 2009),

Jan. 22: IR Theory and the Middle East
- Fawcett, chapter 1
- Project on Middle East Political Science, International Relations Theory and a Changing Middle East, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University (September 2015), 1-79.

Recommended:
- Morten Valbjørn, “Towards a 'Mesopotamian Turn': Disciplinarity and the Study of the International Relations of the Middle East,” Journal of


Jan. 29: The Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire

- Fawcett, chapter 2

Feb. 5: Nationalism and State-Formation  
(tell me what book you intend to review)


Feb. 19: International Political Economy of the Middle East

- Fawcett, chapter 5

Feb. 22: Secular International Relations Theory and the Islamic Middle East

- Fawcett, chapter 8

Feb. 26: Identity, Alliances, Enmities and Regionalism in the Middle East

- Fawcett, chapters 7 & 9

Mar. 5: The (Post) Cold War Significance of the Middle East (book reviews are due)

- Fawcett, chapters 3 & 4

Mar. 12: No Class (Spring Break)

Mar. 19: The Arab-Israeli Conflict

- Fawcett, chapter 12 and 13
  https://archive.org/stream/PartitionOfPalestineALessonInPressurePolitics/Par
  tPale_djvu.txt

*Debate Questions:*

1) Has the pro-Israeli lobby successfully stifled Western debate about Israel's actions?
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N294FMDok98](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N294FMDok98)
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzXS3tmZrcU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzXS3tmZrcU)

2) Are bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations a viable way to reach a two-state solution?
3) Should the U.S. increase pressure on Israel to forge a “Land for Peace” agreement with the Palestinians?

Mar. 26: Iraq War and Its Consequences

**Debate Questions:**
1) Was the Iraq War justified?
2) Can/should Kurdistan become independent?

Apr. 2: Arab Revolutions and the West
- Fawcett, chapter 11
- President Obama’s Cairo Speech
  http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09
- *The Economist* on the Arab World (July 5, 2014 and May 14, 2016)

**Debate Questions:**
1) Should the West have kept out of the Arab world's revolutions?
2) Have the Arab uprisings changed the geopolitical realignments in the Middle East?

Apr. 9: The Iranian Nuclear Controversy

**Debate Questions:**
1) Does nuclear weapons proliferation by Iran increase stability in the Middle East?
2) Is the Iran nuclear deal a game changer for US-Israeli relations?
3) Is the world safer with President Trump’s withdrawal from JCPOA?
   - Debate: Iran nuclear deal a game changer for US-Israeli relations vs. Iran nuclear deal not a game changer for US-Israeli relations
Apr. 16: The United States in the Middle East

- Fawcett, chapter 16

Debate (entire class):


Apr. 23: The Syrian War

(Term papers are due)


Debate Questions:

1) Should the world be intervening militarily in Syria?
2) Because of the Syrian conflict, there is a marked rise in Sunni-Shiite sectarian sentiments in the Levant and the rest of the region. Can this sectarianism be contained?

- The West has abandoned the Syrian opposition after trying to support it
- The West never stood with the Syrian opposition

Apr. 30: Reflections on the Course
Sample Books for Book Review Project

Seth Anzika, Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo (Princeton University Press, 2018).


Christopher Davidson, Shadow Wars: The Secret Struggle for the Middle East (OneWorld, 2016).


Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond Hinnebusch, Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System (Routledge, 2002).


Henner Furtig, Regional Powers in the Middle East: New Constellations after the Arab Revolts (Palgrave, 2014).


Raymond Hinnebusch, The International Politics of the Middle East (Manchester University Press, 2013).


Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Beacon Press, 2005)


