

Political Science
[semester]
[course time]

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[office hours]

Introduction to the Politics of the Middle East and North Africa

Course Description: Why have modern Middle East and North African states proven to be comparatively poor providers of security, services, and the conditions for economic growth? Why have the region's political regimes so rarely operated according to democratic procedures? Why did recent popular uprisings take so many observers by surprise and what were their effects? What role have political culture, resource endowments, and the international community played in Middle Eastern politics? In this course, we will study the questions that have attracted the interest of Middle East-focused political scientists and critically evaluate the answers they have offered.

Course Goals: Through this course, you should gain a deeper understanding of the political problems that have characterized the modern Middle East, the answers scholars have offered to explain them, and the methods they have used to draw these conclusions. One benefit of the course should be to put you in a position to critically evaluate the explanations offered by the popular press for the political problems of the region. Another is to develop frameworks for comparison that allow you to learn about the politics of other regions. Finally, this course should give you the skills to better evaluate a social scientific argument, whether it addresses a political problem or not.

Assignments: The assignments of this course are designed to put you in the position of a professional scholar, which requires you to comment and write about others' work and how it can be improved.

- *Participation* (20 percent): I intentionally list this first because it is extremely important. The advantage of taking a course, rather than just reading a set of books on your own, is that you get to participate in a learning community. Through studying this material together, we have the opportunity to each learn more than we might have on our own. This requires that each of us do what we can to make this an optimal learning environment for each other. At a minimum, this means preparing the course materials before class, coming to class ready to discuss them, listening to each other, and respecting each other.
- *Two Response Papers* (15 percent each): Response papers give you the opportunity to critically evaluate and reflect upon a reading or set of readings from the course. The purpose of your reflection should be to evaluate the question the author has posed, the argument the author offers, and the support upon which this argument is based. The goal is neither to summarize nor to "take down" the author. Rather, it is to think about how we as social scientists can better answer the research question. Being able to respond to the existing literature is the first step to building

upon it. The first response paper, which should cover a reading or set of readings from the first 5 weeks of the course, is due at the end of Week 5. The second is due at the end of Week 10. Each response paper must be approximately 2 single-spaced pages composed using Georgia or Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins.

- *Term Paper* (45 percent): For those of you who plan to conduct further academic study of the materials covered in this course, the term paper can be the start of your research agenda or a chance to develop it further. For those of you who do not plan to do so, the assignment will serve as an opportunity for you to compose a writing sample, which will be useful in job applications.
- *Annotated Map* (5 percent): Some students enter this class with little background knowledge about the region. This is an ok place to start, but evaluating the arguments in this course will require developing your knowledge of the region. With this goal in mind, you will be required to draw a map of the region by hand and annotate it by drawing in major cities, geographical features, and political borders. You will also be expected to annotate it with information about each country's demographic makeup, political regime, oil wealth, and any other information that you think is pertinent.

Week 1:

Introduction: What do we mean by modern and by Middle East? What is the purpose of studying one region of the world?

- Michael Gasper, "The Making of the Modern Middle East" in Ellen Lust, ed., *The Middle East*, 14th ed. (CQ Press, 2016).

Recommended:

- Eric Davis, "10 Conceptual Sins in Analyzing Middle East Politics" 28 January 2009: <http://new-middle-east.blogspot.com/2009/01/10-conceptual-sins-in-analyzing-middle.html>
- Lisa Wedeen, "Scientific Knowledge, Liberalism, and Empire: American Political Science and the Modern Middle East" in Seteney Shami and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Middle East Studies for the New Milenium: Infrastructures of Knowledge* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

Weak States and Political Violence: Why have many of the states in the region proven to be ineffective in fostering economic development, providing services, and guaranteeing security and order?

- Nazih Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 1–37.
- Human Development Report: Challenges to Security, select chapters.

Recommended:

- Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1988, 177–206.

Week 2:

Authoritarianism: Why have the vast majority of the political regimes in the Middle East been nondemocratic?

- Larry Diamond, “Why are there no Arab Democracies?” *Journal of Democracy* 21 (January): 93–104.
- Tarek Masoud, “Has the Door Closed on Arab Democracy?” *Journal of Democracy*, 2015

Political and Economic Development: The Long View: The Arab world was once one of the wealthiest regions in the world. What role do precolonial institutions and geographic features play in explaining the states and regimes that characterize the region today?

- Lisa Blaydes, “State Building in the Middle East,” *Annual Review of Political Science* (2017): 487–504.
- Timur Kuran, The Political Consequences of Islam’s Economic Legacy, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39 (2013): 395–405.
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Week 3:

Cultural Explanations: To what extent are state weakness and authoritarianism attributable to immutable cultural characteristics?

- Bernard Lewis, “Islam and Liberal Democracy: A Historical Overview,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1996, pp. 52-63.
- Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 3-17.
- Mark Tessler, “Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries,” *Comparative Politics* 34 (April 2002): 337–54.

Recommended:

- Abdellah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 10–32.

Colonial Legacies: One explanation for the weakness of the state system in the contemporary period is that colonial powers left the region with borders that were inappropriate. How have these colonial legacies affected modern-day states?

- Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 398–406.
- Robin Wright, “How the Curse of Sykes Picot Still Haunts the Middle East,” *New Yorker* 30 April 2016.

- David Siddhartha Patel, “Repartitioning the Sykes-Picot Middle East? Debunking Three Myths,” *Crown Center for Middle East Studies MEB* 103 (November 2016).

Recommended:

- Jacob Gerner Hariri, “A Contribution to the Understanding of Middle Eastern and Muslim Exceptionalism,” *Journal of Politics* 77 (April 2015): 477–90.

Week 4:

Political Economy: Oil: Does vast oil wealth help or hurt a country’s political and economic development?

- Michael Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53 (2001): 325–61.
- Stephen Haber and Victor Menaldo, “Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism? A Reappraisal of the Resource Curse,” *American Political Science Review* (February 2011): 1–26.

International Political Economy: Oil: What role has the hunger of great powers for oil played in the resource curse?

- Timothy Mitchell, “Carbon Democracy,” *Economy & Society* 38 (3, 2009): 399–432.

Week 5:

Authoritarian Institutions: Perhaps surprisingly, many authoritarian regimes in the region regularly hold elections and have a variety of civil society organizations. Do these organizations suggest that these regimes will transition to democracy or do they make this transition less likely to happen? In this lesson, we will focus on Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.

- Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak’s Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 48–63.
- Ellen Lust, *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 37–95.

Recommended:

- Quintin Wikotoriwicz

Surveillance: How have rhetoric, surveillance, and repression been used to maintain authoritarian rule? In this lesson, we will discuss two works that focus on Syria and Tunisia.

- Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1–34.
- Beatrice Hibou, *The Force of Obedience: The Political Economy of Repression in Tunisia* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), pp. 81 – 110.

Week 6:

International Meddling: To what extent have great powers prevented the rise of strong Arab states?

- Ian Lustick, “The Absence of Middle Eastern Great Powers: Political ‘Backwardness’ in Historical Perspective,” *International Organization* 51 (Autumn 1997): 653–83.

Recommended:

- Sean L. Yom, *From Resilience to Revolution: How Foreign Interventions Destabilize the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), Conclusion.

International Meddling II: Since at least the early 1980s, democracy promotion has been part of the program of every U.S. presidential administration. But some scholars of the region have argued that this intervention has been counterproductive.

- Amaney Jamal, *Of Empires and Citizens: Pro-American Democracy or No Democracy at All?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 103–142.
- Lisa Blaydes and Drew A. Linzer, “Elite Competition, Religiosity, and Anti-Americanism in the Islamic World,” *American Political Science Review* 106 (May 2012): 225–43.

Week 7:

Foreign-Imposed Regime Change: In this part of the course, we will begin to explore modes and prospects of regime change. In this lesson, we will explore theoretical arguments for why foreign-imposed regime change may or may not work.

- Alexander Downes and Jonathan Monten, “Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization,” *International Organization* 37 (4, 2013): 90–131.

Foreign-Imposed Regime Change: Iraq, Libya: In this lesson, we will focus on two particular attempts at foreign-imposed regime change in Iraq and Libya.

- Zaid al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq’s Future: How Corruption, Incompetence, and Sectarianism Have Undermined Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 125–161.

Week 8:

The Arab Spring: What is the Arab Spring and how have political scientists studied it? The uprisings that took place in 2010 and 2011 will be the focus of our next three lessons. This lesson is designed to provide an overview of what happened before we analyze it.

- Scott Anderson, “Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart,” *New York Times Magazine* 10 August 2016.

Why do some protest? One way of studying the protests is to focus on why some participated and some did not. In this lesson, we will read about the uprisings in Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia.

- Adria Lawrence, “Repression and Activism Among the Arab’s Spring’s First Movers: Evidence from Morocco’s February 20th Movement,” *British Journal of Political Science* 47 (3, 2017): 699–718.
- Mark Beissinger, Amaney Jamal, and Kevin Mazur, “Explaining Divergent Revolutionary Coalitions: Regime Strategies and the Structuring of Participation in the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions,” *Comparative Politics* (October 2015): 1–21.
- Amin Allal, “Becoming Revolutionary in Tunisia, 2007–2011” in Joel Beinin and Frederic Vairel, eds, *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2nd ed (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Week 9:

Typological theory on the uprisings: Another method of studying the uprisings has been to use typological theory at the level of country, comparing what was different about Egypt and Tunisia from Saudi Arabia or Algeria, for example. In this lesson, we will discuss several papers that use this method.

- Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, “Why the Modest Harvest?” *Journal of Democracy* 24 (October 2013): 29–44.
- Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring,” *Comparative Politics* 44 (January 2012): 127–149.
- Gregory Gause and Sean Yom, “Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On,” *Journal of Democracy* 23 (October 2012): 74–88.

Diffusion of revolution and counterrevolution

- David Patel, Valerie Bunce, and Sharon Wolchik, “Diffusion and Demonstration” in Marc Lynch, ed, *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 57–75.

Week 10:

Challenges of Transition: The Algeria Experience

- Zoubir, Yahia. "The Painful Transition from Authoritarianism in Algeria," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, volume 15, number 3, Summer 1993, pp. 83-110.

Islamist movements in comparative perspective:

- Rolin Mainuddin, "Political Islam: Untangling the Conceptual Muddle" *Journal of Third World Studies*, volume 24, number 2, Fall 2007, pp. 109 - 128.

- Nathan J. Brown, *When Victory Is Not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 28–52.
- Stathis Kalyvas, “Commitment Problems in Emerging Democracies: The Case of Religious Parties,” *Comparative Politics* 32 (July 2000): 379 – 98.

Week 11:

Do Islamists Have an Advantage? Is that a problem?

- Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power: Islamists & Illiberal Democracy in a New Arab World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 167–89.
- Tarek Masoud, *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 155–82.
- Marc Lynch, Dean Freelon, and Sean Aday, “Online clustering, fear and uncertainty in Egypt’s transition,” *Democratization* 24 (6, 2017): 1159–77.

Contentious Politics Beyond Islamism:

- Bayat, Asef. 2010. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1–18.
- Bein, Joel. 2016. *Workers and Thieves: Labor Movements and Popular Uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 97–135.
- Abdelrahman, Maha. 2015. “In Praise of Organization: Egypt Between Activism and Revolution,” *Development and Change* 44 (May): 569–85.

Week 12:

Sectarianism:

- “The Sunni-Shia Divide,” Council on Foreign Relations:
<https://www.cfr.org/interactives/sunni-shia-divide#!/sunni-shia-divide>.

Violence:

- Lawrence, Adria. 2010. “Triggering Nationalist Violence: Competition and Conflict in Uprisings against Colonial Rule,” *International Security* 35 (Autumn): 88–122.
- Kepel, Gilles. 2017. *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 9–33.
- Roy, Olivier. 2017. “Who are the new Jihadis?” *Guardian* (April 13):
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis>.