UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE EAST

Course Syllabus

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Class Meetings: MW, 6:00-7:30 P.M.; in CAS 323A

Office Hours: MW: 3:30-5:00, after CAlass, by Appointment

Course Description:

Drawing on sources from a number of academic disciplines, this course is designed to provide an introduction to the peoples, cultures, and contemporary issues in the region called the Middle East. For purposes of this course and the readings assigned for it, this region is defined to include the states located in the area bounded in the west by the Arab Republic of Egypt and in the east by the Islamic Republic of Iran; on the north by the Republic of Turkey and in the south by the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen. Some attention to states and peoples living adjacent to this region, in North Africa and Central Asia, will be included as appropriate for comparative and analytical purposes and because the history, socio-economic, political, and religious life and experiences of these regions have often been closely linked and interactive with the states and societies of the Middle East.

The course is intended to provide an introduction that is comprehensive in scope and interdisciplinary in approach, providing historical, geographical, social, and cultural background and context for a deeper and more detailed appreciation of the region’s societies, political systems, and international relations in the twentieth century. It is organized in part to explore general themes of long-term and contemporary significance for the region generally and in part to profile individual nation states in the region. Hence, the course will address themes that involve the entire region such as the “Arab Spring”, the quest for economic development, the achievement of a just and lasting peace between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states, the struggle for gender equality, the factors which have produced and sustain religious revivalism, and militant radicalism, throughout the region, the fragility of civil society, the persistence of authoritarian regimes and the quest for more democratic systems of government. It will also treat these themes as they have evolved and have had impact in individual states there.
In exploring these general themes and the experiences of individual countries, students will be able to develop a critical and well-informed understanding of the region’s rich and complex patterns of complementariness and shared experience, as well as its enduring specificities and divergent trends and interests. How these local interests and concerns interact with the interests, goals, and policies of states outside the region will also be given extensive consideration.

The course will focus as well on how understanding the Middle East is not simply a matter of access to more reliable and consistent data. It also involves political and cross cultural dynamics which often contrive to constrain or distort understanding more than facilitate it. Readings and films used in the course will be evaluated and discussed for the way in which they present the people, culture, and politics of the region, as well as for the specific data they convey. Through the analysis of specific works and issues, students will be provided with an opportunity to discuss and assess some of the cultural assumptions which have for a long time underlain academic writing, travel reporting, and the production of visual media on the region—both by local authors and by authors from other parts of the world, especially Western Europe and the United States.

Individual country profiles will focus on contemporary issues and trends with particular emphasis on how these reflect and/or depart from the broader themes elaborated in the course, providing students with specific cases for demonstration, evaluation, and comparison.

**Required Texts:**


**Recommended:**


**NOTE:** Any additional assigned readings will be found on reserve at the Mugar Library Reserve Service.
Assignments, Examinations, and Projects:

a) Readings – As indicated in the syllabus

b) Examinations – Two quizzes on the readings (short answer format); Final examination

c) Map Exercise


This paper should be 1,250 to 1,500 words in length (typed, double-spaced).

e) Research Assignment – Research proposal and project on topic of your choice with an annotated bibliography containing at least ten (10) sources.


This paper should be 3,000-3,500 words in length (typed, double-spaced).

WORK NOT RECEIVED ON THE DUE DATE WILL BE PENALIZED ONE FULL GRADE FOR EACH DAY IT IS LATE (Allowances made, of course, for excusable delay).

ALL QUOTATIONS, PARAPHRASES, OR OTHER USAGE OF PUBLISHED SOURCES must be identified with page and source citations. The style guides cited above provide guidelines for the form and content of footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographical entries. Choice of format style is at your discretion, but once chosen, use this style consistently.

Course Grade Value of Projects and Examinations:

- Map Exercise = 05% of Total
- Grade Attendance and Participation = 10% “ ”
- Two Reading Quizzes (@ 10% of grade each) = 20% “ ”
- Final Examination = 25% “ ”
- Research Paper = 25% “ ”
- Book Review Paper = 15% “ ”
Re: Academic Misconduct:

Academic Misconduct: All class members are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. You are expected to provide citations in papers for all quotations, paraphrases, and ideas taken from any source other than your own original thoughts. Boston University has very strict standards for intellectual integrity, and punishment for plagiarism is severe, and can include permanent expulsion from the university. For more on the definition of plagiarism and the standards to which you will be held, see the CAS Academic Conduct Code, available at http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/ or the GRS Academic Conduct Code: http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/

Lecture Topics and Assignment Schedule:

September 7  Orientation to Course, Readings, Assignments

Schwedler, *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 1-39; Then, for class discussion on September 12, read *The New York Times Magazine* (Sunday, August 14, 2016):

@ Everyone in the class should read pp. 10-14, (Of course, everyone is encouraged to read the entire piece, but especially the assigned parts. Then read as follows:

- Group 1 – pp. 15-20
- Group 2 – pp. 21-28
- Group 3 – pp. 29-42
- Group 4 – pp. 43-50
- Group 5 – pp. 51-58

September 12  Historical Crossroads, Contemporary Directions


September 14  The Middle East: Environment, Population and Land Use


September 19  Urbanization and the Urban Setting

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Manufacture, Trade, and the Challenges of Industrial Development in the Modern Middle East</td>
<td>Schwedler, <em>Understanding</em>..., pp. 287-313</td>
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<td>September 28</td>
<td>Popular and Elite Cultures and Politics</td>
<td>MAP EXERCISE DUE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>READING QUIZ #1</td>
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<td>October 10</td>
<td>COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY – No Class</td>
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October 12  Extremism and Its Counter-discourses (MONDAY SCHEDULE)


October 17  The Role and Status of Women in Middle Eastern Societies and Economies


October 19  The Arab and Jewish Quests for Nationhood in Palestine Since World War I

Schwedler, *Understanding*..., pp. 175-221

October 24  The Arabs, Israel, and the Palestinians on the Road to and from Oslo: the Challenges of Sustaining a Peace Process and of Finding Peace

Schwedler, *Understanding*..., pp. 139-173

October 26  The Origins and Consequences of the Syrian Civil War


BOOK REVIEW PAPER DUE

October 31  Modern Turkey: Islamism and the Secular Republic


READING QUIZ # 2
November 2  The Iraq War, 2003: Regime Change and Consequences

Peter Hahn, *Missions Accomplished? The United States and Iraq since World War I*, pp. 136-163

November 7  Iraq Since 2003: The Quest for Stability, Democracy, and Peace


November 9  The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft*, pp. 45-95

RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND FIRST DRAFT OF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

November 14  The Other Gulf States (Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman)

Cleveland, *A History....*, pp. 451-472; Brynen, *Beyond the Arab Spring....*, pp. 69-91

November 16  Arab Republic of Egypt Since Nasser’s Revolution


November 21  Egypt: The Fall of President Mubarak and After

Brynen, *Beyond the Arab Spring....*, pp. 147-172

November 23- 27  THANKSGIVING RECESS

November 28  Introduction to Modern Iran and Its Revolution

Cleveland, *A History....*, pp. 185-192, 288-300, 423-450

November 30  Iran Since the Revolution

Moghadam, *Modernizing Women....*, pp. 175-209

December 5  The Arab Spring: Regional and International Context and Responses

Brynen, *Beyond the Arab Spring....*, pp. 257-304; Aidi, *Rebel Music....*, pp. 221-257
December 7  The Arab Spring: New Challenges and Opportunities

December 12  Review and Evaluation

December 13-15  STUDY PERIOD

December 16  ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH REVISED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (Instructor’s Mailbox, International Relations Department, at 4:00 P.M. (Paper copies preferred).

December 16-21  FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD
Date and Hour for IR/GE 382 Examination to be announced