The U.S. in the Middle East IR503/PO503  
(Fall, 2016-17)  
Augustus Richard Norton (arn@bu.edu, webpage, blog)  
IRB 102, Tuesday/Thursday:  9:30-11:00 a.m.  
Office: Room 440, 152 Bay State Road  
Telephone: (617) 353-7808  
Blackboard  

Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:15 a.m.—12:15 p.m., Wednesday, 4:00--5:00 p.m., and at other times by appointment (tel.353-7808; email: arn@bu.edu ).  

Course Description: The Middle East has been a major focus for U.S. foreign policy since the Second World War. Over the past few decades, the Middle East has gained increasing salience for policymakers in Washington. The region receives the lion’s share of U.S. development and military assistance, and beneficiaries of U.S. aid include Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen. More arms flow into the Middle East than any other part of the world, and the United States is the leading arms provider in the region (and in the world). U.S. allies in Europe and Japan are heavily dependent upon oil from the Gulf and North Africa, American oil companies have an enormous economic stake in the area.  

Throughout the 1950s and the 1980s, the Middle East was the site for a Cold war struggle for influence and position between Washington and Moscow. Middle East wars in 1956, 1967, and especially 1973 quickly became major international crises. When the Cold war ended, the Middle East remained a region of enormous geopolitical significance. After the demise of the Soviet empire, the geographic dimensions of the region expanded to include the Muslim societies of Central Asia, which once again routinely interact with the Arab world, Israel, Turkey and Iran.  

Particularly since September 11, 2001, the U.S. has become acutely aware its leading role in the Middle East brings with it serious threats of violence, which stem in part from advocates of a radical Islamist worldview that is hostile to the presence of the U.S. (among others) in the region, as well as broader resentment of U.S. policies and actions, such as the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq and the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict.  

From the standpoint of U.S. foreign policy, there are four fundamental interests: access to Middle East oil, ensuring that the region does not fall under the sway of a hostile power, reducing if not eliminating terror-violence emanating from the region, and insuring the security of Israel.  

The United States, like its major European allies, avows a commitment to the promotion of democracy in the Middle East but this commitment has been inconsistent and has periodically been set aside in the service of other interests. This raises the question of whether the promotion of democracy is feasible or prudent. For many years, the “drug of choice” for U.S. policy was regional stability and the promotion of reform was viewed as a potential source of instability. That perspective was rethought since 9-11, but there remains an important debate about the merits of political reform.
Many observers argue that Islamist political forces pose a major challenge to U.S. interests in the region. Does the U.S. have a fundamental interest in seeing that Islamists do not come to power? Much of this debate was rendered academic by the stunning upheaval of 2011 that led to the toppling of dictators in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and Yemen. In all cases, save Tunisia, long entrenched elites have clawed back power with the massive support and encouragement of rich Arab oil producing states. The reverberations of the upheaval continue to destabilize a variety of states, not least Syria but also in many other countries in the region (e.g., Egypt and Yemen).

For more than four decades the U.S. has been concerned about nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Israel already has assembled a nuclear arsenal, notwithstanding its official posture. Other states, including Iran, Iraq and Libya, have pursued programs that might have led to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Should the U.S. support an Israeli monopoly on nuclear arms, or should it move for the establishment of the nuclear-free zone in the region?

For many years, Iran was a close U.S. ally, but with the revolution of 1979, a hostile regime came to power in Tehran. After much anguish and several foreign policy disasters fomented by Iran, the U.S. pursued—with mixed results—a policy aimed at isolating Iran. In recent years, as illustrated by the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1, U.S. policy has tacitly assumed that fostering a security regime in the Gulf must take account of Iran’s weight without sacrificing the interests of important allies such as Saudi Arabia.

After laying the groundwork with a discussion of U.S. foreign policy since the Second World War, we shall explore these questions with a view to understanding the underpinnings of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and thinking creatively about the dilemmas of present U.S. policy.

Requirements: There will be three scheduled quizzes in the course. Each quiz will be comprised of short essay questions that require the student to draw upon the assigned readings, lectures, films, as well as class discussions. There is also a mid-term examination in this course. The mid-term will be based on an essay question, chosen from a set of three questions provided the week prior. Students in this course are expected to do all the readings for this course in advance of class. At the beginning of each class session one or students will be asked to address material from the assigned reading. Each participant is required to make a presentation about an assigned article or book chapter. A grade for course participation will take account of attendance as well as the student’s contributions to the classroom discussion, especially when called upon to comment. Two concise graduate-quality papers are required. Each class member will be assigned to a working group that is responsible for a professional quality presentation, including audio-visual aids, reference handouts and an oral presentation. N.B., the quiz and exam dates are fixed. There are no make-up exams offered except in bona fide emergency situations; exams missed due to scheduled travel, job interviews, meetings, etc., do not qualify for make-ups.

Using a maximum attainable total of 100 points, the requirements are as follows:

- 3 quizzes: October 4, October 27 and December 1 (each worth 10 points), 30 points.
- Article/chapter presentation, 10 points.
- Midterm, November 10 (75 minutes), 20 points.
• Two papers: A 1-page, succinct statement of U.S. policy, 5 points; due
November 3 (250 words). The policy statements will be posted on the
Blackboard so that all class members may benefit (see “Course Information”
section of Blackboard for samples). A 5-page terse and rigorous analysis of a
policy question worth 15 points (sample will be provided), due December 14
(1,500 word).
• Working group presentation with two components: Individual task (e.g., visuals,
maps, reference handout, or oral presentation), 5 points; and, Working Group
overall performance, 5 points.
• Class attendance/participation is valued at 10 points.

Grade scale: A (95 points or above), A- (92 or above); B+ (88 or above),
B- (82 or above), C+ (78 or above), C (75 or above), C- (72 or above), D (65 or above), F
(64.9 or below). There are no extra credit options.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Unexcused absences and lateness will be
considered in calculating the grade for participation. An attendance sheet will be
circulated with an addendum for late arrivals. As noted above, and barring
documented emergency situations, make-up quizzes and exams will not be offered.
Please note the scheduled exam dates and plan accordingly.

Academic integrity: Please read the Boston University Academic Conduct Code.
Handing in someone else’s work or ideas as your own (even if you worked on it
together as a group) constitutes plagiarism, as does using someone’s ideas without
attribution. You must give a citation when you use an author’s ideas in your paper,
even if you do not quote the text word-for-word. I will go over in class the correct
procedures for quoting and referencing the work of other authors. If you miss that
class or if you have any questions, please ask. Any infraction MUST be reported to the
Dean for resolution by the Academic Conduct Committee. Be informed and be careful.
Also consult the following official sources, as appropriate: graduate students,
undergrads.

Please note: The syllabus, course descriptions, and handouts created by Professor
Norton, and all class lectures, are copyrighted by Boston University and/or Professor
Norton. Except with respect to enrolled students as set forth below, the materials and
lectures may not be reproduced in any form or otherwise copied, displayed or
distributed, nor should works derived from them be reproduced, copied, displayed or
distributed without the written permission of Professor Norton. Infringement of the
copyright in these materials, including any sale or commercial use of notes,
summaries, outlines or other reproductions of lectures, constitutes a violation of the
copyright laws and is prohibited.

Students enrolled in the course are allowed to share with other enrolled students
course materials, notes, and other writings based on the course materials and
lectures, but may not do so on a commercial basis or otherwise for payment of any
kind. Please note, in particular, that selling or buying class notes, lecture notes or
summaries, or similar materials both violates copyright and interferes with the
academic mission of the College, and is therefore prohibited in this class and will be
considered a violation of the student code of responsibility that is subject to academic
sanctions.
**Communication**: The [Blackboard](#) page is an excellent device for conveniently providing course materials, schedules, grades and announcements. Access is limited to enrolled students in the course. Class members are urged to check the page twice weekly using the Boston University user name and password.

**Routine communications and announcements will be made by email and often posted on Blackboard**. If you use an email address other than your __@bu.edu address, please be sure to provide that email address to the professor (by email to [arn@bu.edu](mailto:arn@bu.edu)).

**Books (except electronic books, many items are on reserve or on Blackboard):**


**Recommended:**

**Other books, articles, documents and papers are on-line, on Blackboard or on reserve.** Here are some of them:


Iraq Study Group Report, December 2006. [Blackboard](#)


6.


__________, “Breaking Through the Wall of Fear in the Arab World,” *Current History* (January 1992): 37-41


Obama, Barack H., *Oslo speech*

__________, “A New Beginning” (Cairo, June 4, 2009). Background and video.


**Schedule of Classes:**

**Week 1: (September 6/8) Introduction**

Topics: Purposes, goals, organization and requirements of the course; reflections on
the salience of the Middle East for U.S. foreign policy.

Reading: Syllabus; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapters 1 and 2.

**Week 2: (September 13/15) The Cold War in the Middle East**

Reading: *A World of Trouble* by Patrick Tyler, to p.175; Cottam, “United States Middle East Policy in the Cold War Era” requested for reserve; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapter 3.

**Week 3: Iran, Nationalism and Oil (September 20/22)**

Reading: *A World of Trouble* by Patrick Tyler, to pp. 210-248; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapter 5.


Recommended: *The Eagle and the Lion* by James A. Bill, to p. 315; CIA’s long-classified study of the 1953 coup (released in 2000); Slavin, Barbara, *Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies*.

**Week 4: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the U.S. as Peacemaker (September 27/29)**

Reading: Boston Study Group, *Israel and Palestine*; *A World of Trouble* by Patrick Tyler, pp. 176-209; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapters 13 and 14.

Recommended: *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace* by Kurtzer and Lasensky, on reserve.

**Week 5: Quest for Hegemony: Iran, Iraq and Israel (October 4/6)**

*October 4: Quiz I (covering all readings/reference materials/classes through September 29)*

Reading: *A World of Trouble* by Patrick Tyler, pp. 249-401; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapters 9, 12 and 15.


**Week 6: (No Class on October 11—MONDAY SCHEDULE); The Post-Cold War Middle East (October 13)**

Reading: *A World of Trouble* by Patrick Tyler, pp. 402-524; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapters 4, 16 and 17.

**Week 7: The Challenge of Political Reform (October 18/20)**

Reading: *A World of Trouble* by Patrick Tyler, pp. 525-54; Dale Eickelman “Culture and Identity”; *International Relations of the Middle East*, chapters 6 and 11.

Recommended: Norton and Muslih, *The Need for Arab Democracy*; Norton, *Breaking Through the Wall of Fear in the Arab World*. 
Week 8: The Rise of Political Islam (October 25/27)
*October 27: Quiz II (covering all readings/reference materials/classes through October 25)*
Reading: Hezbollah by Norton; Judith Miller, “The Challenge of Radical Islam,” Foreign Affairs, 72, No. 2, (Spring 1993: 43-56 International Relations of the Middle East, chapters 7 and 8.
View film: Berna Turam on the Gülen movement in Turkey.

Week 9: 9-11, Regime Change and the Consequences (November 1/3)
*Policy statement due by email attachment, saved as a rich text format (.rtf) document, NLT 5:00 P.M., November 3*
Reading: A World of Trouble by Patrick Tyler, pp. 525-54; International Relations of the Middle East ed. by Louise Fawcett, chapters 9 and 10; Bush at West Point, Rice in Cairo, and Cheney at the VFW; Robert Kagan, Power and Weakness; Mearsheimer and Walt. "Can Saddam Be Contained? History Says Yes;" Victor Davis Hanson, "Democracy in the Middle East: It’s the Hardheaded Solution." The Weekly Standard, October 21 2002.

Week 10: Mid-term (75 minutes); The “Arab Spring” and its Aftermath (November 8/10)
*November 10: Essay Exam (question provided 7 days in advance)*
View: “Benghazi in Crisis”

Week 11: The “Arab Spring” and its Aftermath (November 22)
Reading: Denis Sullivan and Charles Simpson, “Oasis in the Desert?”; other readings TBA.
Guest speaker on the Syrian refugee crisis.

Week 12: The Obama agenda in the Middle East: challenges, dangers and domestic determinants of policy (November 15/17)
*November 17: Quiz III (covering all readings/reference materials/classes through November 15)*
Terrorism”; additional readings to be added.

Half hour meetings with Professor Norton will also be scheduled for each of the four working group during this week.

**Week 13: Working Group Presentations and Wrap-up (November 29/December 1)**

Each working group will have ten minutes to set up. The strict limit for each group is 30 minutes for all presentations.

**Week 14: Working Group Presentations and Wrap-up (December 6/8)**

Each working group will have ten minutes to set up. The strict limit for each group is 30 minutes for all presentations.

*Hard copy of the policy analysis due by Wednesday, December 14 at 5:00 p.m.*