THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY

CAS IR 511

Fall Semester 2016

Instructor: Mr. Gregory Aftandilian

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Wednesdays

Classes held in room 220, 152 Bay State Rd.

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Course syllabus

The Middle East is in the midst of one its most unstable periods in its modern history. The so-called Arab Spring, which led to the ouster of several autocratic leaders, has led to new conflicts within these countries, sometimes between secularists and Islamists, sometimes between sectarian and tribal forces, and a reversion to authoritarianism in some other cases. Hopes for a new democratic order emerging in the region have been dashed. Meanwhile, the ongoing Syrian civil war has exacerbated Sunni-Shia tensions in the region and has created conditions where the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL) has threatened the regional political order. Although ISIL has lost some territory in Syria and Iraq over the past year, a number of like-minded extremist groups in other countries have pledged loyalty to it, which has challenged the stability of various countries in the area. Sectarianism has also been exacerbated by the civil war in Yemen and Gulf Arab concerns about the nuclear deal between the P5+1 countries and Iran, with the Saudi Arabia in particular worried that a sanctions-free Iran would be in an even stronger position to engage in so-called proxy wars in the region. In addition to these crises and conflicts are the deflated hopes for a resolution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the peace process remains moribund. Given the tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians, that situation could erupt again into a violent confrontation.

The goal of the course is to expose students to the complexities of the region and help them understand the profound changes that are taking place therein. Students will learn about the development of the state system, why authoritarianism has lasted so long, the causes of the Arab Spring, why democratization has failed to take root for the most part, ideological struggles between Islamists and secularists, and sectarian divisions and conflicts. In addition, the course will also examine gender and minorities issues. Finally, the course will examine the policy of the United States in today’s Middle East, and the controversies surrounding the role it and other outside powers like Russia have played and are playing in the region.
Course requirements

Each student will prepare a graduate-quality research paper (15-20 pages double-spaced) on a subject of his or her choosing, with the approval of the instructor, related to a particular aspect of Middle East politics. A hard copy of the paper will be due in class on December 7. There will be a mid-term exam on October 19 and a final exam on December 21. Class participation will be mandatory. The basis for a student’s final grade is explained below:

- Mid-Term Exam: 30%
- Final Exam: 30%
- Research Paper: 30%
- Class Participation: 10%

All students are expected to complete reading assignments in the syllabus before each class and to hand in their research papers on time. The instructor reserves the right to drop a student’s grade, for example, from a B+ to a B, if a student fails to complete the assignments on time.

Because the course meets one day a week, class attendance is mandatory. Students will only be excused because of a religious holiday, illness or a family emergency. An unexcused absence from class will result in a lower, overall grade.

Required texts

2) Nicola Pratt, Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Arab World (Lynne Rienner Publishers)
3) Shadi Hamid, Temptations of Power (Oxford University Press)

Other required readings: Some articles listed in the class readings are accessible via the Internet or through the e-journal libraries available for BU students. Others will be placed on reserve in hard copy in the Mugar library or through electronic library copy. Some press articles will be handed out in class. As classroom participation is mandatory, and as the title of this course is “The Middle East Today,” students will be expected to keep up with current Middle East developments by reading one major newspaper on a daily basis, in hard copy or online, such as: New York Times, Washington Post, International New York Times, Boston Globe, Christian Science Monitor, the Guardian, or the Financial Times.
Academic Conduct Code

Boston University’s Academic Conduct Code is designed to assist in the development of a supportive and productive learning environment. It is both a description of the University’s ethical expectations of students as well as a guarantee of students’ rights and responsibilities as members of a learning community. The Code provides clarity related to policy and procedure regarding academic conduct.

For students, the Code establishes an environment of integrity and professionalism that helps to assure each individual of receiving appropriate recognition for his or her work. The ethical decisions that students face in an academic environment are similar to those they will encounter routinely in the professional world they will enter upon graduation or where they are currently employed. The Code allows faculty to conduct a fair and accurate evaluation of student performance and to maintain a supportive and just learning environment. Academic integrity is a critical component of such an environment, giving faculty the freedom to extend their role as educators to include serving as mentors and colleagues as well as instructors. For administrative staff, the Code gives them the ability to deal more effectively with students, and to work on a student’s behalf both within the University and outside it. This respect for universally recognized ethical values affects the University’s reputation in both the academic and professional communities of which it is a part. This reputation is essential to the success of not only the current generation of students, but previous and future generations as well.

All Boston University students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. It is the responsibility of every undergraduate student to be aware of the Academic Conduct Code’s contents and to abide by its provisions. The Academic Conduct Committee of the individual School or College, which is composed of students, faculty and staff, has jurisdiction over all charges of academic misconduct brought against students.

In all charges of academic misconduct against a student, the student is entitled to full procedural fairness in any disciplinary proceedings. The Academic Conduct Code details the guidelines governing disciplinary proceedings. It also articulates the University’s philosophy of discipline, defines violations of the code, and enumerates penalties applicable under the code.

I. Philosophy of Discipline
The objective of Boston University in enforcing academic rules is to promote a community atmosphere in which learning can best take place. Such an atmosphere can be maintained only so long as every student believes that his or her academic competence is being judged fairly and that he or she will not be put at a disadvantage because of someone else’s dishonesty. Penalties should be carefully determined so as to be no more and no less than required to maintain the desired atmosphere. In defining violations of this code, the intent is to protect the integrity of the educational process.
II. Academic Misconduct
Academic misconduct is conduct by which a student misrepresents his or her academic accomplishments, or impedes other students' opportunities of being judged fairly for their academic work. Knowingly allowing others to represent your work as their own is as serious an offense as submitting another’s work as your own.

III. Violations of This Code
Violations of this code comprise attempts to be dishonest or deceptive in the performance of academic work in or out of the classroom, alterations of academic records, alterations of official data on paper or electronic resumes, or unauthorized collaboration with another student or students. Violations include, but are not limited to:

A **Cheating on examination.** Any attempt by a student to alter his or her performance on an examination in violation of that examination’s stated or commonly understood ground rules.

B **Plagiarism.** Representing the work of another as one’s own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: copying the answers of another student on an examination, copying or restating the work or ideas of another person or persons in any oral or written work (printed or electronic) without citing the appropriate source, and collaborating with someone else in an academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution. Plagiarism can consist of acts of commission-appropriating the words or ideas of another—or omission failing to acknowledge/document/credit the source or creator of words or ideas (see below for a detailed definition of plagiarism). It also includes colluding with someone else in an academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution, using audio or video footage that comes from another source (including work done by another student) without permission and acknowledgement of that source.

C **Misrepresentation or falsification of data** presented for surveys, experiments, reports, etc., which includes but is not limited to: citing authors that do not exist; citing interviews that never took place, or field work that was not completed.

D **Theft of an examination.** Stealing or otherwise discovering and/or making known to others the contents of an examination that has not yet been administered.

E **Unauthorized communication during examinations.** Any unauthorized communication may be considered prima facie evidence of cheating.

F **Knowingly allowing another student to represent your work as his or her own.** This includes providing a copy of your paper or laboratory report to another student without the explicit permission of the instructor(s).

G **Forgery, alteration, or knowing misuse of graded examinations, quizzes, grade lists, or official records of documents,** including but not limited to transcripts from any institution, letters of recommendation, degree certificates, examinations, quizzes, or other work after submission.

H **Theft or destruction of examinations or papers** after submission.
I Submitting the same work in more than one course without the consent of instructors.

J Altering or destroying another student's work or records, altering records of any kind, removing materials from libraries or offices without consent, or in any way interfering with the work of others so as to impede their academic performance.

K Violation of the rules governing teamwork. Unless the instructor of a course otherwise specifically provides instructions to the contrary, the following rules apply to teamwork: 1. No team member shall intentionally restrict or inhibit another team member’s access to team meetings, team work-in-progress, or other team activities without the express authorization of the instructor. 2. All team members shall be held responsible for the content of all teamwork submitted for evaluation as if each team member had individually submitted the entire work product of their team as their own work.

L Failure to sit in a specifically assigned seat during examinations.

M Conduct in a professional field assignment that violates the policies and regulations of the host school or agency.

N Conduct in violation of public law occurring outside the University that directly affects the academic and professional status of the student, after civil authorities have imposed sanctions.

O Attempting improperly to influence the award of any credit, grade, or honor.

P Intentionally making false statements to the Academic Conduct Committee or intentionally presenting false information to the committee.

Q Failure to comply with the sanctions imposed under the authority of this code.

Course weekly topics and reading assignments (subject to change)

September 7: Introduction. Review of course requirements and student work responsibilities. Ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the Middle East region. An examination of the modern history of the region, starting with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Sykes-Picot agreement, dashed hopes of Arab delegations at the Paris Peace Conference, and the persistence of European imperialism through the mandate system and other mechanisms.

September 14: The emergence of the state system in the Middle East, post-World War II. The rise of Arab nationalism during the interwar period, the reinsertion of Western troops into the region during World War II, and anti-colonial independence movements after World War II. The rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and the appeal of pan-Arabism. Viewing of the BBC documentary, “The Other Side of Suez.”

September 21: The political economy of the Middle East region. Demographic challenges in the region and high youth unemployment. The implications of the “rentier state” on political development. Economic reform, crony capitalism, and their discontents.


September 28: Developments leading to the Arab Spring.


October 5: Conflicts within the Arab Spring countries, the role of Islamist groups and the backlash from secularists


October 12: Conflicts post-Arab Spring


October 19: Mid-term exam in the first half of class. The crisis in Syria.

October 26: Sunni-Shia divisions in the Middle East.


November 2: Iran, the nuclear issue, Saudi-Iranian rivalry, and the Yemen conflict.


November 16: The Arab-Israeli conflict and US peace process efforts.

November 23: No class because of Thanksgiving recess

November 30: Viewing of the documentary, Elusive Peace, in class

December 7: Research papers due. Women and minority issues in the region.


December 14: No class because of BU study period

December 21: Final Exam, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.