

Political Reform in the Middle East

IR 707 / PO 750

Semester II—2012-3

Professor Augustus Richard Norton

Monday, 1:00-4:00 p.m., IRB 102

Office Hours: M 4:30-5:00; T 1:30-3:00; and by appointment.

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Course overview: This seminar is designed to foster a rethinking of Middle East politics, and, especially, to explore the strategies of political reform. If crises of governance are a general phenomenon of the political condition in the contemporary world, these crises may be especially acute in the Middle East. After September 11, 2001, the theme of reform became popular in many U.S. policy circles, even among erstwhile skeptics who adopted reform as something of a panacea. The Bush administration's efforts at promoting reform were not marked by much success, suggesting that an evaluation of recent failures is in order, as well as a fresh assessment of the prospects for reform. We will take a critical look at U.S. efforts to promote democracy and political reform.

For their part, scholars have not established a reputation for prescience in predicting radical political change, such as revolution, but perhaps scholarship offers better tools for assessing the prospects and dynamics of political reform. In this seminar, we shall examine the origins of the contemporary state system in the Middle East, analyze the changing dimensions of state-society relations, weigh the claims and goals of oppositional forces, and attempt to gauge the prospects for reform. We will give some attention to civil society, including Islamists, and weigh the political relevance of civil society.

We shall look several intriguing Arab cases in order to gain a clearer picture of regime dilemmas and strategies. Although some regimes will experiment not only with liberalization but with democratization, there is no justification for expecting that democracy will be the outcome of reform strategies. Indeed, authoritarian regimes seek avenues for buttressing autocratic rule rather than democratizing. Nonetheless, in some instances governments may purposefully or unintentionally pursue democratization. In such instances, it is particularly important to assess the strength and durability of social forces (secular or Islamist) that may sustain or undermine open political systems. Although the seminar is focused on the Middle East, we shall have occasion to examine seminal writings from other regions with a view to testing hypotheses that have proved robust or, at least, intriguing elsewhere.

Since the Arab Awakening began in December 2010, in Tunisia, the Arab world has been rocked by turmoil and by demonstrations, many of which have been led by youths. There is no question that the Awakening has already left a deep mark on the political culture of the region, and the "wall of fear" that kept large populations intimidated has been breached. A long thwarted and widespread quest for dignity is underway but hopes for better life conditions often remain unfulfilled. We look at four cases in detail: Bahrain, Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia. In addition, we

focus on Turkey in order to discover to what degree the Turkish exemplar is relevant to other Middle Eastern cases.

Requirements: The major seminar requirement is an original research paper due not later than April 30, 2013, except for those presenting their papers on April 29th who may turn in their papers by May 3rd. The paper must deal with the seminar theme of political reform in the Middle East, though the methodologies to be adopted will vary from one paper to another, as will the conceptual approaches. Whether adopting the perspectives of political culture, political economy, class analysis, normative theory, group analysis or the framework of civil society, the writer should be sensitive to the merits as well as the shortcomings of the approach or approaches she is developing.

The body of the papers should not exceed 4,000 words. Appendices may be used for additional material such as supplementary tables, and charts. No later than February 22nd, each seminar member must submit a statement of his or her research topic, along with an annotated bibliography of scholarly references. All submissions are to be in typescript, double-spaced, carefully proofread and should conform to accepted scholarly standards. (Electronic submission of the topic and bibliography as PDF attachments is encouraged.) Footnotes, which are more convenient to the reader than endnotes, are required, unless parenthetical references are used (e.g., Boren 1982, 3-4) The basic guide is the Chicago Style Manual, or the more accessible handbook by Kate Turabian.) Late submissions, except under exigent circumstances, will be docked one third of a letter grade per two weekdays.

In addition to the writing of the research paper, each seminar participant will make three presentations. The first presentation is an analytical summary and critical evaluation of a recommended course reading, accompanied by a two page handout summarizing the salient points of the reading. The presentation will be no more than fifteen in length, to be followed by questions and discussion.

The second presentation is a ten-minute update on a realm of reform in a particular Middle East country, namely: Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, or Yemen.

The third and final presentation is a summary of the main arguments and findings of the in-progress research paper.

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. Since plagiarized work is the work of another, any paper determined by the Academic Conduct panel to be will normally receive a grade of zero.

Finally, the professor preserves 10% of the course grade for participation. Since there are only thirteen class meetings, attendance is essential. Unexplained and unjustified absences will result in a deduction of a point (out of 100 points) per absence. Thus, the course grading will be distributed as follows:

Seminar Paper:

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| Topic statement and annotated bibliography | 10%, |
| Paper | 35% |
| Presentations (15%, 10% and 15%) | 40% |
| Participation | 15% |

Required Texts (available at BU bookstore, or on-line):

- Jenny B. White, *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks* (Princeton , Princeton University Press, 2012), ISBN 9780691155180
- Amaney A. Jamal, *Of Empires and Citizens: Pro-American Democracy or No Democracy at All?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), ISBN 9780691149653.
- Caryle Murphy, *A Kingdom's Future: Saudi Arabia Through the Eyes of its Twentysomethings* (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 2013). [Free download.](#)

Reserve: items on reserve are noted on a weekly basis (see below).

Recommended:

- Louise Fawcett, ed., *The International Relations of the Middle East*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), reserve. ISBN 9780199215539.
- Beatrice Hibou, trans. Andrew Brown, *The Force of Obedience: The Political Economy of Repression in Tunisia* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), reserve.
- Adel Iskandar and Bassam Haddad, eds., *Mediating the Arab Uprisings* (Tadween Publishing, 2012) ([E-book or paper](#)).
- Hisham Matar, *In the Country of Men* (New York: Dial Press, 2007). ISBN 0385340435
- *Middle East Report*, Summer 2011, vol. 4, no. 2 0899-2851
- Augustus R. Norton, ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996, 2005), reserve. ISBN 9789004145931 .

Topics and Schedule:

(N.B., the readings and links will be updated periodically, so take a moment to make sure you have the most up-to-date version of the syllabus. The “Information” of section of the course Blackboard page will always have the most recent version of the syllabus.)

Weeks 1 and 2: First scheduled class meeting is week 3

Week 3 (January 28): **Course introduction**

Read: Syllabus; Hudson article, Blackboard; and Norton and Kazemi, “Middle Eastern Political Reform”, <http://people.bu.edu/arn/Kaz-Nor5ESA%205-27-07.pdf> .

Peruse: 2002 UNDP report, Blackboard or Portfolio, <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/543734/IR707%20PO750%20Public/portfolio1.pdf> .

View: Frontline on Egypt, <http://video.pbs.org/video/1810338755> .

Week 4 (February 4): The Modern Origins of the Middle Eastern State: The State and Society in the Post-World II Period

Read: Fawcett, The International Relations of the Middle East, chaps. 1-4; Iliya Harik, "Democracy, "Arab Exceptionalism" and Social Science", Middle East Journal 60, no. 4 (2006): 666-84. Blackboard.

Peruse: Nazih Ayubi, Over-Stating the Arab State (London: I.B. Taurus, 1995).

Presentation: Lisa Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East," Political Science Quarterly 106, no. 1 (1991).

Week 5 (February 11): Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Democracy as Compromise and Rational Choice Perspectives

Read: Jamal, Of Empires and Citizens, chap. 1; Norton, Richards and Ibrahim chapters in CSME I, reserve; HC244.P8.1991]; and Stephen Heydemann, Upgrading Authoritarianism (see [Portfolio](#)). John Waterbury, "Democracy without Democrats? The potential for political liberalization in the Middle East," in Ghassan Salame, Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 1994), chap. 1 [reserve].

Recommended: Adam Przeworski, Democracy and Markets: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), reserve; Alan Richards and John Waterbury, A Political Economy of the Middle East, chap. 10-11, reserve.

Presentation: Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy," Comparative Politics 2, no. 3 (1970): 337-63 [Reserve];

Week 6 (February 18—no class; meet February 20): Democratization and Reform as a Great Power Project

Read: Amaney A. Jamal, Of Empires and Citizens; Yahya Sadowski, "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate," Middle East Report, no. 183 (July-August 1993): 14-21 & 40, reserve.

Presentation: James Turner Johnson, "Does Democracy 'Travel'? Some Thoughts on Democracy and Its Cultural Context," Ethics & International Affairs 6 (1992): 41-55 [Reserve].

Week 7 (February 25): Waiting in the Wings: Youth

Read: Murphy, A Kingdom's Future; and Chloe Mulderig, Adulthood Denied, download at <http://www.bu.edu/pardee/publications-library/iib-21-youth-arab-spring/> .

Presentation: Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, "Choosing Both Faith and Fun: Youth Negotiations of Moral Norms in South Beirut", **Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology** (2012): 1-22, Blackboard.

Week 8 (March 4 No class): Reading Period in compensation for April 24 out-of-class lecture event.

Week 9 (March 18): The Arab Awakening--Tunisia

Read: S. V. R. Nasr, "Democracy and Islamic Revivalism," Political Science Quarterly 110, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 261-85; Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy and the "Twin Tolerations",," Journal of Democracy 11, no. 4 (2000): 37-57; Hebou, The Force of Obedience, preface, reserve;

Peter J. Schraeder and Hamadi Redissi, Ben Ali's Fall, Journal of Democracy 22, no. 3 (2011): 5-19; and, Schwedler, "Can Islamists Become Moderate?" (see [Portfolio](#)).
Recommended: Iskandar and Haddad, Mediating the Arab Uprisings.

Presentation: TBA.

Week 10 (March 25): The Arab Awakening--Egypt

Read: Norton, "Thwarted Politics: The Case of Egypt's Hizb al-Wasat." In *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, ed. R. W. Hefner (Princeton: Princeton University Press), reserve; Shadi Hamid, "The Rise of the Islamists" (see [Portfolio](#)); Yoram Meital, "The Struggle over Political Order in Egypt: The 2005 Elections," *The Middle East Journal* 60. 2 (Spring 2006): 257-279. (Proquest); Dan Tschirgi, Walid Kazzuha, and Sean F. McMahon, editors, Egypt's Tahrir Revolution (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2012), reserve.
Recommended: Iskandar and Haddad, Mediating the Arab Uprisings.

Week 11 (April 1): The Arab Awakening—Bahrain

Read: Bahrain's Rocky Road to Reform, [free download](#); and additional items to be added.

Week 12 (April 8): Turkey with Professor Jenny White as guest speaker.

Read: White, Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks.

Week 13 (April 15—no class; meet April 18): The Civil War in Syria

Read: ICG, "Syria's Mutating Conflict", download at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/syria.aspx> ; additional items to be added.

Watch: "Syria Undercover", <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/syria-undercover/> .

Week 14 (April 22): Paper presentations

Also note: Soli Ozel, "A New Honeymoon: Turkish-American Relations in the Age of Arab Awakening, NATO Weakening and the Asian Pivot", at the Castle, April 24 at 4:30 p.m.

Week 15 (April 29): Paper presentations and final thoughts

Seminar Dinner: TBD.