UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE EAST

Course Syllabus

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Class Meetings: MW, 6:00-7:30 P.M.; in CAS B20

Office Hours: MW: 3:30-5:00, After class, 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 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**

d) **Book review paper** that presents an analytical critique and evaluation of one (1) of the following titles: Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft*, OR Haas and Lesch, *The Arab Spring*, OR Bucar, *The Islamic Veil*, OR Peter Hahn, *Missions Accomplished?*, OR Arjomand, *After Khomeini*

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% “ “

Lecture Topics and Assignment Schedule:

- September 4  Orientation to Course, Readings, Assignments
  Schwedler, *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 1-39
- September 9   Historical Crossroads, Contemporary Directions
  Schwedler, *Understanding....*, 41-88; Haas & Lesch, *Arab Revolt....*, pp. 13-34
- September 11  The Middle East: Environment, Population and Land Use
  Schwedler, *Understanding....*, pp. 223-258
- September 16  Rural Economies and Societies in the Middle East in the Twentieth Century
  Pappe, *Modern Middle East*, pp. 61-113 (on reserve)
- September 18  Urbanization and the Urban Setting
  Schwedler, *Understanding....*, pp. 315-344; Pappe, *Modern Middle East*, pp. 115-163 (on reserve)
- September 23  The Political Economy of Petroleum Development
  Schwedler, *Understanding....*, pp. 259-286
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 25</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>MAP EXERCISE DUE</td>
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<td>September 30</td>
<td>Popular and Elite Cultures and Politics</td>
<td>Pappe, <em>Modern Middle East</em>, pp. 165-209; Schwedler, <em>Understanding...</em>, pp. 403-437</td>
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<td>October 2</td>
<td>The Media Revolution and Politics in the Modern Middle East</td>
<td>Pappe, <em>Modern Middle East</em>, pp. 211-223, 293-302</td>
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<td>READING QUIZ # I</td>
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<td>October 7</td>
<td>Islam in Middle Eastern Societies: Doctrines and Practices</td>
<td>Abou El-Fadl, <em>The Great Theft...</em>, pp. 113-125</td>
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<td>October 14</td>
<td>HOLIDAY – NO CLASS</td>
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October 16  The Role and Status of Women in Middle Eastern Societies and Economies


October 21  The Arab and Jewish Quests for Nationhood in Palestine Since World War I

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

October 23  The Arabs, Israel, and the Palestinians: On the Road to Oslo

Schwedler, *Understanding....*, pp. 139-173; Shenhav, *Beyond the Two State Solution....*, pp. 1-52

October 28  The Road from Oslo to Where?

Shenhav, *Beyond the Two State Solution....*, pp. 55-168

BOOK REVIEW PAPER DUE

October 30  From Secular Nationalism to a Sectarian Future? : Syria and Its Neighbors


November 4  Modern Turkey


READING QUIZ # 2

November 6  The Iraq War, 2003: Regime Change and Consequences

Peter Hahn, *Missions Accomplished ?*, book

November 11  The Iraq War, 2003: War Now Ending?

Peter Hahn, *Missions Accomplished ?*, book
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November 13  The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia


RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND FIRST DRAFT OF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

November 18  The Other Gulf States (Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman)

Cleveland, *A History*...., pp. 451-472

November 20  Arab Republic of Egypt Since Nasser’s Revolution


November 25  Egypt: The Fall of President Mubarak and After


November 27  THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS

December 2  Introduction to Modern Iran and Its Revolution


December 4  Iran Since the Revolution

Arjomand, *After Khomeini*....., pp. 90-211

December 9  The Arab Spring: New Challenges and Opportunities

Haas & Lesch, *The Arab Spring*....., 174-237

December 11  Wrap-Up, Evaluation, and Review


December 12-16  STUDY PERIOD

December 16  ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH REVISED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (Instructor’s Mailbox, International Relations Department): Paper copies preferred).
December 16-20  FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Date and Hour for IR/GE 382 Examination to be Announced