

**POLS/JST 243 Politics and Government of the Middle East
Seminar in Comparative Politics:
Spring 2017**

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Course Description

Perhaps no other region has been perceived as one-dimensionally as the “Middle East.” Among dominant sections of public opinion, media, policy makers, and even academic scholarship, the region has been regarded as an ahistorical exception to the social and political transformations shaping other parts of the world: dominated by religion (essentially fundamentalist), backward in terms of social relations (essentially misogynist, tribal, and traditional), fundamentally undemocratic (essentially authoritarian, sectarian, and hostile to modernity), captive to its own petroleum resources (essentially a hostage to the “oil curse” of state corruption, misdirected welfare distribution, and inefficient economic development). Yet recent political upheavals in the region have thrown these stereotypes into disarray.

No one could have predicted the overthrow of apparently entrenched governments or the massive movement of populations. But Political Science in particular, which as a discipline emphasizes the study of formal politics and state institutions, was not well positioned to recognize the changing social realities that provided the foundations for unexpected political events. This course will attempt to challenge superficial or stereotypical assumptions about Middle East politics and societies. We will do so through studying critical contemporary analyses, from Political Science and other disciplines (Anthropology, History, Sociology, Cultural Studies) that attempt to demystify the complex and often contradictory dynamics of the changing political and social landscape of the contemporary Middle East.

Course Requirements

Course readings and classroom discussions are intended to provide you with some conceptual tools with which to analyze ongoing political issues in the region. The reading load for this course is moderate, but you are expected to do the reading fully and carefully before class, to raise questions and engage in discussion in class, and to supplement class reading and discussion with additional research to clarify unfamiliar issues and learn about the topics, consult with the instructor, and work collectively with fellow students.

-Attendance is required; two unexcused absences will lower your grade. Students are expected to do all **assigned readings**, **be prepared** to discuss them in class, and to **participate** in class discussions. All responsible contributions to discussion are welcome.

-Classroom Presentations of Readings:

Beginning February 14 all students will be required to work together in small groups to give a classroom presentation on an assigned reading. Each member of the group should also prepare a discussion question for the class, and as a group, will use those questions to lead that session's initial class discussion. Students should also prepare a short memo/outline/notes for their presentation, and are required to submit it to the instructor at the end of class. It is recommended NOT to present a powerpoint as part of the presentation, but to concentrate on presenting the main ideas and arguments of the text in person.

-Two in-Class Essay Exams:

Exams will focus on the required readings that have been focused on in class. Exams will be graded on content and presentation (clear writing, organization, good development and detail).

-Final Paper:

Every student will be required to select and read one additional book from a recommended list, and to write a critical analysis paper of that book, explicating the argument and relating it to the material collectively studied in the course. This final paper will be 5-7 pages, and will be due on the last day of class.

Extra Credit: There will be opportunities throughout the semester to receive extra credit by attending selected, recommended events, and writing and submitting a 1-2 page description of the event you attended. Events may include special lectures, museum events, film festival screenings, student organization activities, etc. If you are aware of an event which you think would qualify for extra credit, please bring it to the attention of the professor!

Grades will be calculated on the following basis: class participation 10%; group presentation 10%; individual write-up of group presentation 5%; two essay exams 25% each; final critical analysis paper 25%.

You are expected to behave with academic integrity: you can check the university policy on this at: <http://www.uic.edu/ucatalog/GR.shtml#qa>

Students with disabilities must inform the instructor of the need for accommodations. Those who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Disability Resource Center. Please contact ODS at 312/413-2183 (voice) or 312/413-0123 (TTY).

Students must notify the instructor within the first ten days of the semester of the specific dates on which they are requesting an absence for religious observance.

Required Readings

*Readings available electronically through the Blackboard course site.

°Journal articles available through the Daley Library.

°Mark Tessler, “Religion, Religiosity and the Place of Islam in Political Life: Insights from the Arab Barometer Surveys” in *Middle East Law and Governance*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2010), pp. 221-252

*Edward Said, “Islam Through Western Eyes” in *The Nation*, April 26, 1980/January 2, 1998

*Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1992), pp. 22-49

*Edward Said, “The Clash of Ignorance” in *The Nation*, October 4, 2001

*Mohammad Khatami, “Dialogue among Civilizations/Empathy and Compassion” in *The Iranian*, September 8, 2000

°Olivier Roy, “Breakthroughs in Faith” in *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter 2011-2012), pp. 7-13

°Mahmood Mamdani, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism” in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (September 2002), pp. 766-775

°Sami Zubaida, “Islam and nationalism: continuities and contradictions” in *Nations and Nationalism*, 10/4, (2004), pp. 407-420

°Lila Abu-Lughod, “Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others” in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (September 2002), pp. 783-790

°Waleed Hazbun, “A History of Insecurity; From the Arab Uprisings to ISIS” in *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Fall 2015), pp. 55-65

*Fawaz Gerges, “ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism” in *Current History*, Vol. 113, No. 767 (December 2014), pp. 339-343

<http://www.currenthistory.com/Article.php?ID=1189>

*Fawaz Gerges, “The World According to ISIS” in *Foreign Policy Journal*, March 18, 2016
<http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2016/03/18/the-world-according-to-isis/>

*Fawaz Gerges, “The new capitalists: Islamists’ political economy” in *Open Democracy*, May 10, 2012

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/fawaz-gerges/new-capitalists-islamists-political-economy>

*Olivier Roy, “The Islamization of Radicalism” (English available through Eutopia Institute website, January 14, 2016)

<http://www.eutopiainstitute.org/2016/01/the-islamization-of-radicalism/>

*Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, Ross Frenett, “Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS,” Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015

*Azadeh Moaveni, “ISIS Women and Enforcers in Syria Recount Collaboration, Anguish and Escape” in *The New York Times*, November 21, 2015

°Sami Zubaida, “The Fragments Imagine the Nation: The Case of Iraq” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*, Vol. 24 (2002), pp. 205-215

°Hayder Al-Mohammad, “‘You Have Car Insurance, We Have Tribes’: Negotiating Everyday Life in Basra and the Re-emergence of Tribalism” in *Anthropology of the Middle East*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 18-34

°Raymond Hinnebusch, “Syria: from ‘authoritarian upgrading’ to revolution?” *International Affairs* Vol. 88, No. 1 (2012), pp. 95-113

°Christopher Phillips, “Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria” in *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 36, No. 2 (2015), pp. 357-376

Recommended Reading and Resources

News Media

Regular discussion of current issues and events is part of this course. Follow the news through globally recognized sources with good international coverage, including internationally focused newspapers such as the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Financial Times*, or the *Guardian*, and online media such as:

BBC (UK) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Al-Ahram Weekly (Egypt) <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/>

AlJazeera (Qatar) <http://www.aljazeera.com/>

Analytical Resources

The most important scholarly journals include *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*; *Middle East Report (MERIP)*; *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (CSSAAME)*; *Middle East Politics*; *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies (JMEWS)*, etc. There are a number of important online forums that are good sources of well-informed analysis and debate. These include:

Foreign Policy (log in through UIC library to view!)

<http://mideast/foreignpolicy.com/>

This is a good mainstream US journal of foreign policy analysis that has developed an excellent online forum of discussion and analysis about the region.

International Crisis Group (ICG)

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

Analysis by field researchers on regional conflicts followed by policy proposals (look up entries for selected countries and regions).

Jadaliyya

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/>

This online journal is an outstanding source of scholarly and political analysis, primarily of the Arab world, by activists and academics, based in the region and in the West.

Middle East Report Online (MERIP/MERO) (log in through UIC library to view!)

<http://www.merip.org/>

Outstanding quarterly journal and online information network of academics and journalists. There is a print journal (MERIP) as well as online articles (MERO).

Recommended Books (initial list)

James Gelvin, *the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2011

Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics*, Stanford University Press, 2010

Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*, Yale University Press, 2011

Course Schedule

Tues. 1/10 Course Introduction,
Tessler, "Religion, Religiosity and the Place of Islam in Political Life"

Beyond the "Clash of Civilizations" Model: Religion and Politics

Thurs. 1/12 *Said, "Islam Through Western Eyes"
 Tues. 1/17 *Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations"
 Thurs. 1/19 *Said, "The Clash of Ignorance" and
 *Khatami, "Dialogue of Civilizations" and
 °Roy, "Breakthroughs in Faith"
 Tues. 1/24 °Mamdani, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim"
 Thurs. 1/26 °Zubaida, "Islam and nationalism"
 Tues. 1/31 °Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" and
 WATCH THE SQUARE
 Thurs. 2/2 *The Square* Discussion with Prof. Atef Said
 Tues. 2/7 Review (and discussion of Abu-Lughod!)
 Thurs. 2/9 **First Exam**

(In)Security and Violence: ISIS

(Presentations Begin)

Tues. 2/14 °Hazbun, "A History of Insecurity"
 Thurs. 2/16 *Gerges, "ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism"
 Tues. 2/21 *Gerges, "The World According to ISIS"
 Thurs. 2/23 *Gerges, "The new capitalists: Islamists' political economy"
 Tues. 2/28 *Roy, "The Islamization of Radicalism"
 Thurs. 3/2 *Hoyle et al, "Becoming Mulan?" and *Moaveni, "ISIS Women"
 Tues. 3/7 Guest Lecture, Prof. Aaron Tugendhaft
 (political appropriations of cultural heritage)
 Thurs. 3/9 Discussion
 Tues. 3/14 Review
 Thurs. 3/16 **Second Exam**

Tues. 3/21 & Thurs. 3/23

SPRING BREAK

States and Societies: Making Sense of Complexity

Tues. 3/28	Guest Lecture (Iranian Presidential election)
Thurs. 3/30	Guest Lecture (Iran)
Tues. 4/4	°Zubaida, “The Fragments Imagine the Nation”
Thurs. 4/6	°Al-Mohammad, “You Have Car Insurance, We Have Tribes”
Tues. 4/11	°Hinnebusch, “Syria: from ‘authoritarian upgrading’ to revolution?”
Thurs. 4/13	°Phillips, “Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria”
Tues. 4/18	Discussion
Thurs. 4/27	Course Conclusion Final Papers Due