

**POS 4931 / IDS 4930: CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST****FALL 2023****Instructor:** Dr. Onursal Erol**Email:****Phone:****Office:****Office Hours:****Class Hours/Location:** M/W/F – 10:40am – 11:30am / *CLASSROOM LOCATION*

**Course Description:** The Middle East and North Africa is a vast region that spans across three continents, and can include countries from Morocco to Iran, from Turkey to Yemen, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. This course examines the histories, politics, economics, and cultures of this expansive region, and analyzes the complexities and challenges of the area's past, present, and future. Specifically, the course will explore a range of topics, including colonialism, the rise of nationalism, the formation of modern states, and the region's integration into the global economy. In addition, students will learn about political systems and structures of Middle East countries, such as authoritarianism, democracy, and hybrid regimes, and how those systems interact with other dynamic cultural and social issues such as religion, identity, the role of women and youth, and the growth of social media in shaping public discourse and activism.

**Course Objectives:**

- To develop a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the factors that shaped MENA.
- To explore the diversity and complexity of MENA, including the perspectives, experiences, and struggles of different social groups and communities.
- To develop critical thinking skills applicable to a range of contexts beyond this class.
- To develop effective research and writing skills, including the ability to identify, analyze, and synthesize information from a variety of sources.
- To engage in constructive and respectful dialogue with classmates and the instructor, and to develop cross-cultural communication skills that are relevant to the study of MENA.

**Course Materials:** There are no required textbooks for this course. All materials are accessible online through Canvas.

***Grade Distribution***

Participation (x3)	15%
Discussion Lead	15%
Film Response	10%
Midterm Essay	20%
Final Essay	40%

***Grading Scale***

(A) 93-100 (A-) 90-92 (B+) 87-89 (B) 83-86  
 (B-) 80-82 (C+) 77-79 (C) 73-76 (C-) 70-72  
 (D+) 67-69 (D) 63-66 (D-) 60-62 (F) 59 & below

**Participation (x3) = 15%**

This grade reflects the overall level and quality of your participation in class. Please mind that, “participation” is not the same as “attendance.” Your attendance is not graded. If you are feeling unwell, have a job interview, or are pressed for time before an important exam, please feel free to miss a class or two as you see fit. But understand that you are missing out on your opportunity to establish a quality participation record. To establish a quality participation record, my expectation is that you come to class having read and contemplated on the required readings, voice your opinions, share your agreements/ concerns freely, raise questions, and uplift and engage with your peers in intellectually meaningful ways. Participation is graded in three separate installments at the end of Weeks 5, 10, and 16, and posted on Canvas with feedback. This way students get a clean slate every five weeks and can adapt as necessary.

**Discussion Lead = 15%**

Each student will sign up once to lead one of the designated discussion sessions. Discussion leads will choose an extracurricular piece (text/audio/video/images) that showcases an empirical case from the Middle East which could be analyzed with the concepts we studied that week. Below is a checklist to be a successful discussion lead:

- Sign up for one of the designated discussion lead slots, here. Be mindful of the deadline you are committing to as indicated on the sign-up sheet. These deadlines are always two days prior to the actual discussion session.
- Choose your extracurricular material. These materials cannot exceed 2000 words of text, 15 min. of video/audio, or 15 images.
- Email me your chosen piece by the deadline.
- Make a list of the most important/interesting issues you think the piece highlights. This is for your eyes only. Bring your list to class.
- On the day of the discussion, it is the class who will analyze the piece and discuss what it reveals. At the end of our discussion, we will check in with you to see if we missed anything that you hoped the discussion would touch on.

**Film Response = 10%**

On November 20, our class will not meet. Instead, you are required to watch **ONE** of the four designated films listed in the course schedule, all of which are accessible through Kanopy. After watching the film, you will write a short film response paper (max. 500 words). These papers are due on **Canvas by 11:59pm, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>**. Your paper should not be a summary of the film, but rather an analysis of its themes and social, cultural, and political implications. You might want to focus on a specific political issue or a socio-cultural theme that is explored in the film.

**Midterm Essay = 20%**

Two prompts and detailed instructions will be circulated on the morning of Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please write an essay (max. 1500 words) responding to **ONE** of them (**due on Canvas by 11:59pm, Oct 8<sup>th</sup>**). All academic integrity rules apply. Reference at least two readings from the syllabus. Any citation style can be used. There is no minimum word-limit for the essay. The bibliography does not count towards the word-limit. All late papers are accepted with a 1-point/day penalty and for five days. The essay grading rubric is attached at the end of this syllabus.

**Final Essay = 40%**

Two prompts and detailed instructions will be circulated on the morning of Dec 7<sup>th</sup>. Please write a short essay (max. 2000 words) responding to **ONE** of them (**due on Canvas by 11:59pm, Dec 12<sup>th</sup>**). All academic integrity rules apply. Reference at least two readings from the syllabus. Any citation style can be used. There is no minimum word-limit for the essay. The bibliography does not count towards the word-limit. All late papers are accepted with a 2-points/day penalty and for five days. The essay grading rubric is attached at the end of this syllabus.

## *Course Schedule*

### **WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION**

Aug 23 Introduction (No Reading)

Aug 25 A Geographic and historical primer to the Middle East (No Reading)

### **WEEK 2 – ORIENTALISM**

Aug 28 Said, Edward W. “Introduction.” In *Orientalism*, First Vintage books edition., 1–15. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Aug 30 Mitchell, Timothy. “The World as Exhibition.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–36.

Sept 1 Makdisi, Ussama. “Ottoman Orientalism.” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–96.

### **WEEK 3 – COLONIALISM & MANDATE REGIMES**

Sept 4 Labor Day (No Class)

Sept 6 Sartre, Jean-Paul. “Preface.” In *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon. New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Sept 8 Sluglett, Peter. “An Improvement on Colonialism? The ‘A’ Mandates and Their Legacy in the Middle East.” *International Affairs (London)* 90, no. 2 (2014): 413–27.

### **WEEK 4 – ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE**

Sept 11 Üngör, Ugur Ümit. “Genocide of Christians.” In *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*, 55–106. Oxford: University Press, 2011.

Sept 13 Bashkin, Orit. "Friends, Neighbors, and Enemies: Fascism, Anti-Semitism and the Farhud." In *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*, 100–140. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Sept 15 DISCUSSION

Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

### **WEEK 5 – NATIONALISM**

Sept 18 Zürcher, Erik Jan. "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908–38." In *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey*, 213–35. London; I. B. Tauris, 2010.

Sept 20 Jankowski, James P. "The Nationalism of Gamal Abdel Nasser." In *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 27–39. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.

Jankowski, James P. "The Breakup of the United Arab Republic." In *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 161–78. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.

Sept 22 DISCUSSION

Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

### **WEEK 6 – AUTHORITARIANISM**

Sept 25 Wedeen, Lisa. "Acting 'As If': The Story of M." In *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*, 67–86. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Sept 27 Sassoon, Joseph. "The Personality Cult of Saddam Hussein." In *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 162–92. Cambridge: University Press, 2011.

Sept 29 DISCUSSION  
Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

**WEEK 7 – REVIEW & MIDTERM**

Oct 2 (Vicious) Jeopardy! – Midterm Review

Oct 4 Midterm

Oct 6 Homecoming (No class)

**WEEK 8 – SECULARISM**

Oct 9 Çinar, Alev. “Clothing the National Body: Islamic Veiling and Secular Unveiling.” In *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time*, 1st ed., 53–98. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Oct 11 Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. “Triumphs and Travails of Authoritarian Modernisation in Iran.” In *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah 1921-1941*, edited by Stephanie Cronin, 146–54. London ; Routledge, 2003.

Oct 13 DISCUSSION  
Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

**WEEK 9 – RELIGION AND POLITICS**

Oct 16 Arjomand, Said Amir. “Khomeini and the Islamic Revolutionary Movement.” In *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, 91–102. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Oct 18 Dalsheim, Joyce. “Fundamentally Settlers.” In *Unsettling Gaza Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project*, 1–25. New York ; Oxford University Press, 2011.

Oct 20 DISCUSSION

Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

**WEEK 10 – GENDER & SEXUALITY**

Oct 23 Lughod, Lila Abu. “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others.” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783–90.

Oct 25 Massad, Joseph. “Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World.” *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): 361–86.

Al-Shawaf, Rayan. “Desiring Arabs - Democratiya.” *Dissent Magazine*, Spring 2008.

Oct 27 DISCUSSION

Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

**WEEK 11 – ENERGY**

Oct 30 Mitchell, Timothy. “Carbon Democracy.” *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (August 1, 2009): 399–432.

Nov 1 Movahedi-Lankarani, Ciruce. “A Ghoul at the Gates: Natural Gas Energy and the Environment in Pahlavi Iran, 1960–1979.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 54, no. 1 (2022): 80–99.

Nov 3 Cantoni, Roberto, and Karen Rignall. “Kingdom of the Sun: A Critical, Multiscalar Analysis of Morocco’s Solar Energy Strategy.” *Energy Research & Social Science* 51 (May 1, 2019): 20–31.

**WEEK 12 – TRADE**

Nov 6 Shokr, Ahmad. “Cotton, Made in Egypt.” In *Global Middle East: Into the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, 318–39. University of California Press, 2021.

Nov 8 Quero, Jordi. "China's Impact on the Middle East and North Africa's Regional Order: Unfolding Regional Effects of Challenging the Global Order." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2020): 86–104.

Nov 10 Veterans Day (No class)

### **WEEK 13 – CULTURE**

Nov 13 Frishkopf, Michael. "Musical Journeys." In *Global Middle East: Into the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, 238–65. University of California Press, 2021.

Nov 15 Yalkin, Cagri, and Ekant Veer. "Taboo on TV: Gender, Religion, and Sexual Taboos in Transnationally Marketed Turkish Soap Operas." *Journal of Marketing Management* 34, no. 13–14 (2018): 1149–71.

Nov 17 DISCUSSION

Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

### **WEEK 14 – THANKSGIVING WEEK**

Nov 20 Students select one of the below films to watch in their own time (No Class)

All films are available through Kanopy.

Film response papers are due by 11:59pm, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>.

- Amos Gitai, *Rabin: The Last Day*
- Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*
- Ali Soozandeh, *Tehran Taboo*
- Talal Derki, *Of Fathers and Sons*

Nov 22 Thanksgiving (No Class)



Nov 24 Thanksgiving (No Class)

### **WEEK 15 – RESISTANCE**

Nov 27 Dabashi, Hamid. “The Arab Spring: The End of Postcoloniality.” In *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, 1–16. London, England: Zed Books, 2012.

Khondker, Habibul Haque. “The Impact of the Arab Spring on Democracy and Development in the MENA Region.” *Sociology Compass* 13, no. 9 (2019).

Nov 29 Butler, Judith. “Foreword.” In *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi*, edited by Umut Özkırmlı, vii–xvi. Palgrave Pivot. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Karakatsanis, Leonidas. “International Solidarity Perplexed: From the Certainties of Gezi Park to Post-Coup Complexities.” In *Erdogan’s ‘New’ Turkey*, edited by Nikos Christofis, 176–99. Routledge, 2019.

Dec 1 Bayat, Asef. “Is Iran on the verge of another revolution?” *Journal of Democracy* 34, no. 2 (2023): 19-31.

Guyer, Jonathan. “What’s Going on with Israel’s Massive Protests, Explained.” *Vox*, 27 2023. <https://www.vox.com/world-politics/23629744/why-israelis-protesting-netanyahu-far-right-government-judiciary-overhaul>.

### **WEEK 16 – CONCLUSION & REVIEW**

Dec 4 DISCUSSION

Discussion Materials will be circulated by email.

Dec 6 Wheel of Horrors! – Final Review

<b>MIDTERM ESSAY GRADING RUBRIC</b>					
	<b>Excellent (5 points)</b>	<b>Good (4 points)</b>	<b>Fair (3 points)</b>	<b>Poor (2 points)</b>	<b>Very Poor (1 point)</b>
<b>Format Compliance</b>	Assignment complies with all word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements	Assignment mostly complies with word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements	Assignment partially complies with word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements, with several errors	Assignment complies with only one of the word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements	Assignment does not comply with any of the word-limit, citation, or bibliography requirements
<b>Quality of Writing</b>	Assignment features well-structured, clear, and sophisticated writing	Assignment is well-structured and clear, but the writing may not be particularly sophisticated	Assignment is somewhat clear and well-structured, but the writing is not particularly sophisticated or may have some errors	Assignment is poorly structured and the writing is not clear or sophisticated	Assignment is poorly structured, the writing is not clear or sophisticated, and there are numerous errors
<b>Argumentation</b>	Assignment presents a clearly communicated and convincing main argument	Assignment presents a main argument that is mostly clear and convincing	Assignment presents a main argument that is somewhat unclear or not fully convincing	Assignment presents a main argument that is unclear or not convincing	Assignment does not present a main argument
<b>Reference to Course Readings</b>	Assignment engages deeply with at least two course readings	Assignment engages with two course readings, but slightly superficially	Assignment engages with two course readings, but superficially	Assignment engages with one course reading	Assignment does not engage with any course readings

<b>FINAL ESSAY GRADING RUBRIC</b>					
	<b>Excellent (10 points)</b>	<b>Good (8 points)</b>	<b>Fair (6 points)</b>	<b>Poor (4 points)</b>	<b>Very Poor (2 points)</b>
<b>Format Compliance</b>	Assignment complies with all word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements	Assignment mostly complies with word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements	Assignment partially complies with word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements, with several errors	Assignment complies with only one of the word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements	Assignment does not comply with any of the word-limit, citation, or bibliography requirements
<b>Quality of Writing</b>	Assignment features well-structured, clear, and sophisticated writing	Assignment is well-structured and clear, but the writing may not be particularly sophisticated	Assignment is somewhat clear and well-structured, but the writing is not particularly sophisticated or may have some errors	Assignment is poorly structured and the writing is not clear or sophisticated	Assignment is poorly structured, the writing is not clear or sophisticated, and there are numerous errors
<b>Argumentation</b>	Assignment presents a clearly communicated and convincing main argument	Assignment presents a main argument that is mostly clear and convincing	Assignment presents a main argument that is somewhat unclear or not fully convincing	Assignment presents a main argument that is unclear or not convincing	Assignment does not present a main argument
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