

**MODERN MIDDLE EAST**  
**IDS4930/POS4931/ASH3931**  
**FALL 2025 – 3 Credits**

**Course Information**

Instructor: Onursal Erol, PhD  
Email: [oeerol@ufl.edu](mailto:oeerol@ufl.edu)  
Course Time & Location: T (10:40AM-11:30AM) – WEIL 0273  
Th (10:40AM-12:35PM) – PUGH 120  
Office Location: Pugh 236  
Office Hours (in person, walk in): W (1PM-2:30PM)  
Remote Office Hours (by appointment): T (3:30PM-5PM)  
Appointment Link: [calendly.com/oeerol](https://calendly.com/oeerol)

**Course Objectives**

The Middle East and North Africa is a vast region that spans across three continents, includes countries from Morocco to Iran and from Turkey to Yemen, and stretches from the Atlantic 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. The course explores topics like 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 Eastern countries, consider questions around authoritarianism, democracy, and hybrid regimes, and explore how those systems interact with other dynamic sociocultural factors such as religion, identity, gender, media, and activism.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

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

**Email Policy:** Please include the course information in the subject line so I can better assist you. Please be aware that I can only answer emails from your official UFL account. If your email includes a question, please allow up to 2 business days for a response.

**Selection of Course Materials:** The materials in this course are selected not to be endorsed, but to be debated. This means that we will not passively “learn from” or “agree with” these materials. Rather, we will engage with them. We will develop a diverse array of agreements and criticisms vis-à-vis these materials in a respectful but lively intellectual environment.

**Materials and Supplies Fee:** N/A.

**UF Policies & Resources:** This course complies with all UF academic policies, including those on grading, evaluations, honesty, cheating, plagiarism, the recording of class lectures, and the recording or publishing of class lectures without the instructor’s consent. It also works in tandem with UF academic and health and wellness resources. For details on these policies and available resources, please see [this link](#).

### Grading:

<b><i>Grade Distribution</i></b>	
Participation	15%
Reading	15%
Self-Reflection Memos	15%
Group Project: “Contemporary Middle Eastern Culture”	25%
Final Paper	30%

<b><i>Grading Scale</i></b>
(A) 94-100 (A-) 90-93 (B+) 86-89 (B) 82-85
(B-) 78-81 (C+) 74-77 (C) 70-73 (C-) 66-69
(D+) 62-65 (D) 58-61 (D-) 54-57 (E) 53 & below

### Participation (5%x3) = 15%

This grade reflects the overall 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 are present for the overwhelming majority of our meetings, 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 15, and posted on Canvas with feedback. This way students periodically get a clean slate and can adapt as necessary. The participation grading rubric is attached at the end of this syllabus.

**Reading Engagement (5%x3) = 15%**

This grade reflects the quality of your engagement with the course materials. My expectation is *not* that every student reads every word of every piece of assigned material. Rather, I expect us as a group to make an honest and sustained effort throughout the semester to spend quality time with an overwhelming majority of the assigned materials before class. This way, when we do get too busy or tired and miss certain things here and there, there is reliably someone else to close the gaps for us when we discuss it in class. Reading will be measured in Perusall and graded in three separate installments at the end of Weeks 5, 10, and 15. Students are required to access all course materials on Perusall (linked on Canvas), read/watch a majority of the assigned materials before class, add thoughtful comments on two separate occasions in each grading period (a total of six comments throughout the semester).

**Self-Reflection Memos (5%x3) = 15%**

These are brief, informal check-ins that ask students to reflect on their path to success in some aspect of the course in a few sentences. They are meant to be a quick and stress-free way for students to reflect on their learning and knowledge-production strategies. The memos will be available on Canvas on the specified dates and should be submitted within a week.

**Group Project: “Contemporary Middle Eastern Culture” (5%+5%+15%) = 25%****I. Material Selection (5%)****II. Outline (5%)****III. Presentation (15%)**

“Contemporary Middle Eastern Culture” is a scaffolded group assignment with three graded components, in which students will select extracurricular cultural materials (a song, video clip, short film, story, art collection, graffiti, TV-excerpt, social media content, etc.) that is non-academic, but can be discussed in relation to any of the themes and concepts we have studied in class. Each group, will ultimately present their interpretation of their selected material, making these connections and highlighting what they found interesting/worthy of discussion. The selected materials will have been assigned to the rest of the class prior to your presentation, so you can expect an audience who knows the main material you’re dissecting in your presentation.

Follow the below steps to complete this assignment:

- 1) **Sign up as soon as possible**, here, for one of the available slots. Be mindful of the deadlines you are committing to as indicated on the sign-up sheet. The first person to sign up in each group is the “group leader,” who will make Canvas submissions on behalf of the group.
- 2) **Get in touch with your group and select your top three materials**. These materials can be audio/video (max 15 minutes), image/collection of images (max 15 images), or text (max 1000

words). If you must choose a longer material, it is your responsibility to edit or designate a portion of the material to comply with these guidelines.

3) **Submit your top three materials** on Canvas by your group's deadline. You cannot submit more than three materials.

4) I will choose one of your materials for your presentation and let you know. Although I will, of course, try to choose your top-ranked item, I might have to choose the second or third for pedagogical reasons.

5) **Draft a one-page outline** for a 20-min class presentation. Your outline should specify: the number of slides you plan to present; the approximate content and purpose of each slide; as well as expected time allocation for each slide. Submit your itemized outline on Canvas by the assigned deadline. Feedback will be provided to help you refine your presentation.

6) **Prepare a slide-deck** for your in-class presentation based on your approved outline and the feedback you will have received from me. You may use PowerPoint, Google Slides, or Canva as your presentation medium. Submit your finalized presentation slides on Canvas by the group's due date.

7) **Deliver your max. 20-minute in-class presentation.** Your main task with these presentations is to tell an interesting and relevant story that relates to your chosen theme. Successful teams will bolster the telling of this story with appealing and informative visuals, and engaging and dynamic presenters, while articulating connections to key concepts discussed in course materials. You can divide tasks like research, slide preparation, rehearsal as you see fit, but all team members must participate in the active presentation on the day. Full presentation grading rubric is attached at the end of this syllabus.

8) After the presentation, each team member will **complete an anonymous survey** to assess whether all teammates pulled their weight working on the project.

### **Final Essay = 30%**

Multiple prompts and detailed instructions will be circulated on the morning of Dec 3. Please write a short essay (max. 1000 words) responding to one of them (due on Canvas by 11:59pm, Dec 10). 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 penalty for every 8-hour period and for four days. All generative AI use is allowed and should be cited. A detailed grading rubric is attached at the end of this syllabus.

## ***Course Schedule***

### **WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION**

Aug 21          Introduction (No Reading)

### **WEEK 2 – ORIENTALISM**

Aug 26          Said, Edward W. “Introduction.” In *Orientalism*, First Vintage books edition., 1–15. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Aug 28          Mitchell, Timothy. “The World as Exhibition.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–36.

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

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

Sept 2          Sartre, Jean-Paul. “Preface.” In *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon. New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Sept 4          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.

\*\*\*          Self-reflection Memo#1 will be online by Sept 7. It is due in one week.

### **WEEK 4 – ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE (I)**

Sept 9          No Class (Instructor at conference)

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.

### **WEEK 5 – ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE (II)**

Sept 16          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 18      Bartov, Omer. "I'm a Genocide Scholar." The New York Times, July 15, 2025.
- Speri, Alice. "Defining Genocide: How a Rift over Gaza Sparked a Crisis among Scholars." US News. The Guardian, December 20, 2024.

\*\*\*            Self-reflection Memo#2 will be online by Sept 21. It is due in one week.

### **WEEK 6 – NATIONALISM**

- Sept 23      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 25      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.

### **WEEK 7 – AUTHORITARIANISM**

- Sept 30      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.
- Oct 2        Sassoon, Joseph. "The Personality Cult of Saddam Hussein." In *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 162–92. Cambridge: University Press, 2011.

### **WEEK 8 – SECULARISM**

- Oct 7        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 9        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.

### **WEEK 9 – RELIGION AND POLITICS**

- Oct 14 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 16 Dalsheim, Joyce. “Fundamentally Settlers.” In *Unsettling Gaza Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project*, 1–25. New York ; Oxford University Press, 2011.

### **WEEK 10 – GENDER & SEXUALITY**

- Oct 21 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 23 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.

\*\*\* Self-reflection Memo#3 will be online by Oct 26. It is due in one week.

### **WEEK 11 – ENERGY**

- Oct 28 Mitchell, Timothy. “Carbon Democracy.” *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (August 1, 2009): 399–432.
- Oct 30 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.

### **WEEK 12 – RESISTANCE**

- Nov 4 Dabashi, Hamid. “The Arab Spring: The End of Postcoloniality.” In *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, 1–16. London, England: Zed Books, 2012.
- \*Optional: Khondker, Habibul Haque. “The Impact of the Arab Spring on Democracy and Development in the MENA Region.” *Sociology Compass* 13, no. 9 (2019).

Nov 6 Butler, Judith. "Foreword." In *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi*, edited by Umut Özkırımlı, 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.

### **WEEK 13 – CULTURE (I)**

Nov 11 No Class (Veterans Day)

Nov 13 "Contemporary Middle Eastern Culture" Groups 1, 2, 3

### **WEEK 14 – CULTURE (II)**

Nov 18 "Contemporary Middle Eastern Culture" Groups 4, 5

Nov 20 "Contemporary Middle Eastern Culture" Groups 6, 7, 8

--- THANKSGIVING ---

### **WEEK 15 – CONCLUSION**

Dec 2 OnurGames



<b>Participation Grading Rubric (per grading period)</b>	
5	Student is one of the top contributors in class.
4	Student is a strong contributor in class with some room for improvement.
3	Student's contributions are at the level of class average.
2	Student's contributions are slightly below class average.
1	Student's contributions are significantly below class average.
0	Student has no participation record.

<b>"CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE" PRESENTATION GRADING RUBRIC</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>5 Points</b>	<b>4 Points</b>	<b>3 Points</b>	<b>2 Points</b>	<b>1 Point</b>
<b>Visuals</b>	Visuals are clear, engaging, and enhance the presentation. They effectively convey key information and support the overall narrative.	Visuals are clear and support the presentation. They convey key information but could be more engaging.	Visuals may lack clarity or relevance. They provide some support to the presentation but are not fully integrated.	Visuals are minimal, unclear, or poorly executed. They provide little support to the presentation.	Visuals are absent or do not contribute to the presentation in a meaningful way.
<b>Presenter Engagement</b>	Presenters are highly engaged, confident, and articulate. They do not read at their audience. They maintain eye contact, speak clearly, and engage the audience.	Presenters are engaged and articulate. They maintain eye contact and speak clearly, but occasionally break the flow by reading at the audience.	Presenters are somewhat engaged but may lack confidence or clarity. There is limited interaction with the audience, and they rely heavily on notes.	Presenters are minimally engaged, with noticeable issues in confidence, clarity, or audience interaction.	Presenters are disengaged, with significant issues in communication, confidence, or interaction with the audience.
<b>Connection to Course Readings</b>	Presentation makes strong and explicit connections to at least one course reading, clearly articulating how the case relates to a concept discussed in the readings.	Clear connections to a concept(s) discussed in a course reading, with good understanding shown.	Some connection to a concept(s) discussed in a course reading, but could be more explicit or thorough.	Minimal connection to a concept(s) discussed in a course reading, with limited understanding shown.	No clear connection to any concepts discussed in the course readings.

<b>FINAL ESSAY GRADING RUBRIC</b>					
	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>Format Compliance</b>	Assignment complies with all word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements <i>(6 points)</i>	Assignment mostly complies with word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements <i>(5 points)</i>	Assignment partially complies with word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements, with several errors <i>(4 points)</i>	Assignment complies with only one of the word-limit, citation, and bibliography requirements <i>(2 points)</i>	Assignment does not comply with any of the word-limit, citation, or bibliography requirements <i>(0 points)</i>
<b>Reference to Course Readings</b>	Assignment engages deeply with at least two course readings <i>(8 points)</i>	Assignment engages with two course readings, but slightly superficially <i>(6 points)</i>	Assignment engages with two course readings, but superficially <i>(4 points)</i>	Assignment engages with one course reading <i>(2 points)</i>	Assignment does not engage with any course readings <i>(0 points)</i>
<b>Quality of Writing</b>	Assignment features well-structured, clear, and sophisticated writing <i>(8 points)</i>	Assignment is well-structured and clear, but the writing may not be particularly sophisticated <i>(6 points)</i>	Assignment is somewhat clear and well-structured, but the writing is not particularly sophisticated or may have some errors <i>(4 points)</i>	Assignment is poorly structured and the writing is not clear or sophisticated <i>(2 points)</i>	Assignment is poorly structured, the writing is not clear or sophisticated, and there are numerous errors <i>(0 points)</i>
<b>Argumentation</b>	Assignment presents a clearly communicated convincing main argument <i>(8 points)</i>	Assignment presents a main argument that is mostly clear and convincing <i>(6 points)</i>	Assignment presents a main argument that is somewhat unclear or not fully convincing <i>(4 points)</i>	Assignment presents a main argument that is unclear or not convincing <i>(2 points)</i>	Assignment does not present a main argument <i>(0 points)</i>