

History of the Modern Middle East

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The objective of this course is to provide a basis for understanding historical processes (both global and local) within the Middle East and North Africa in the modern period. Focusing on the transformation of state and society under the impact of a changing world economy and European imperialism, this course has four interrelated themes. The first is the transformation of multiethnic world empires in the sixteenth century to nation-states in the 20th century. Second, we trace the transformation of the Middle East economy, once a self-sustaining system at a central node of world trade, into a marginal economic region dubbed part of “the Third World.” Third, we examine the currents of social change wrought by these political and economic transformations, focusing particularly on the rise of new social and political movements and the new sorts of identities, social categories and notions of personhood they were based upon. Fourth, we trace the changing relationship of the Middle East to Europe and later, the United States. At the heart of our discussions will be questions about the nature of the interrelationship between “East” and “West,” Middle East exceptionalism and the political, contested nature of historical sources.

The Course's Five Main Goals

- 1) Curiosity:** This course aims to spark your interest in Middle Eastern history and encourage long-lasting curiosity about the world’s past and your place in it.
- 2) Knowledge:** This course aims to broaden and deepen your knowledge of some of the most important events, people, developments, and issues in the Middle East
- 3) Discernment:** This course aims to sharpen your intellectual discernment, especially when confronting the many claims people and politicians make about the Middle East as the source for contemporary problems.
- 4) Point(s) of View:** This course aims to help you develop your own point(s) of view on the region and its history and learn how to recognize, understand, and critique other points of view.
- 5) Relevance:** This course aims to improve your ability to see how the past has shaped present forms of everyday life, politics, social ordering, and cultural expression in the Middle East and beyond.

Required Texts:

James Gelvin: *The Modern Middle East*
Tayib Salih: *Seasons of Migration to the North*
Marjane Satrapi: *Persepolis*

Supplementary materials:

Other required readings are available on T-Square. These are indicated as an asterisk (*) on your syllabus.

Grading

Map Quiz: 5%

Mid-term: 25%

Final: 25%

Book Reports: (On *Seasons of Migration to the North* and *Palestine*): 20%

Participation: 25% (includes reaction papers, simulations, in class activities, introductory essay and final essay).

Book Reports

You are required to write two book reports for this class, one on *Seasons of Migration to the North* the other on *Persepolis*. They should be from three to five pages, double spaced using 12 point font with one inch margins. I will hand out guidelines for the assignments in class at a later date. They are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated on the syllabus. **Note: These books are in addition to your regularly assigned classroom readings. Make sure you allow plenty of time to read them in order to complete the reports by their due date.**

Response Papers

Over the course of this class you are required to write **five** response papers, of approximately 300 words in length typed (1page, double spaced) in response to questions which I will provide you with. In most cases, the assignments are listed on the syllabus. These papers are designed to do several things:

- 1) to give you an opportunity to reflect on particular historical sources within the context of the wider issues we'll be discussing in class.
- 2) to prepare you to participate effectively in class discussions.
- 3) to help you practice the writing and thinking skills you will need on the midterm and the final.

I will grade them on a pass/fail basis but they should display some evidence of thought and effort. One way you can do this is by **providing specific examples and quotes**

from the readings and primary source materials in all of your papers. Note that there are seven class sessions (not five) listed on the syllabus in which a response paper is due. This means that you are allowed to “opt out” of two response papers. Which papers you chose to complete and which you chose to opt out of is up to you, so plan ahead and chose wisely.

Late Paper Policy

Papers submitted at the end of or after class on the due date will lose half a grade. Papers submitted the next day will lose a full grade. Another full grade will be taken off for ever subsequent day the paper is late.

Policy on Attendance

You may have noticed that this syllabus does not include a grade for attendance. It is my feeling that you have made a choice to be in this class. It is up to you to take responsibility for being here or not, as the case may be. If you decide to attend, I expect you to adhere to the guidelines for participation and classroom conduct as well as the student responsibilities listed below. If you chose (or are unable) to attend certain class sessions, you are responsible for finding out what you missed during that class period. Outlines of the lectures and handouts will be posted on T-Square, but the content of the lectures will not. **Note: I am not responsible for giving you lecture notes.** This should be an incentive to become more friendly with your fellow students, who may be persuaded to help you out in such a situation.

Honor Code

Students in this class will be expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code and avoid any instance of academic misconduct, including but not limited to the substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals; false claims of performance or work submitted by the student; possessing, using, or exchanging *improperly* acquired written or verbal information in preparation for, or in writing, an exam or paper. If you have any questions, please consult with me and read the Honor Code, which is available at:

www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Policy/code.in.sections.htm#AHC .

Participation and Classroom Conduct

You are expected to come to class prepared to contribute actively to classroom discussions and activities. This will not only enhance your own learning experience but the experience of your fellow students. Good participation entails not only speaking and sharing your thoughts on a regular basis, but also being considerate and respecting the views of others. To earn high points in the participation part of the final grade, students will have demonstrated their awareness of the different functions of classroom comments by:

1. varying their discussion strategies,
2. considering what they say before they say it,
3. taking intellectual risks, and

4. always respecting the feelings of peers by not interrupting classmates while speaking and acknowledging interesting ideas.

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the student and the instructor. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to others' behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

Instructor responsibilities:

- Start and end class on time.
- Treat all students with courtesy and respect.
- Be open to constructive input from students in the course.
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by all students in the course.

Student responsibilities:

- Come to class on time, and refrain from packing up belongings before class ends.
- Turn off all electronic devices that might create a disruption in class.
- Be quiet and give full respectful attention while either instructor or another student is speaking.
- When speaking, use courteous, respectful language and keep comments and questions relevant to the topic at hand.

I expect you to fulfill your responsibilities to me and to your fellow students. By the same token, if I am not meeting my responsibilities to you I expect you to let me know. In short, let's make our classroom a comfortable space for real intellectual dialogue, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1

Introduction

Jan. 12 (T): Introduction

Part I: Islam, Empire and Early Modern Society

Jan. 14 (Th): The Rise and Development of Islamic Society
Gelvin: Intro and Chapter 1

Introductory Essay Due (Mandatory for all) Reflect on the subject "The Middle East." Write a paper of **no longer than a page** outlining your impressions of the region, what the sources of those impressions are (media, personal travel, friends, novels etc) what your expectations of the course are and what you hope to learn over the course of the semester.

Week 2

Jan. 19 (T) The Gunpowder Empires: Ottoman and Safavid Rule
Gelvin Chapter 2

- *Concord and harmony among Ottoman provincial governors : a grand vizier's advice and warning : Abdullah Pasa, 1749-18
- *Negotiating the power of the sultan: the Ottoman Sened-i Ittifak (deed of agreement), 1808
- *A provincial treasurer reports, c. 1674
- *Six Ottoman documents on the power of guilds in the Balkans, 1760s
- *The barber of Damascus: Ahmad Budayri al-Hallaq's chronicle of the year 1749

Framing Questions: How centralized was the administration of the Ottoman empire? What are the advantages to a centralized, uniform administration? What are the disadvantages?

Jan. 21 (Th) Life in an Early Modern Empire: Ottoman Culture and Society

*Burke: Semisigul

Map Quiz

Response paper 1 Due: Think about the facts of Semisigul's case and its outcome. Do you think she received justice? Why/why not?

Week 3

Part II. Nineteenth Century Transformations: European Imperialism, Reform and Indigenous Responses

Jan. 26 (T) Defensive Development

Gelvin, Chap. 3,4, 5

- *Observing Mohammed Ali and his administration at work (Amin)
- *Creating new institutions: Clot Bey's organization of Egypt's first modern medical establishment, 1827-1837 (Amin)
- *Educational Reform in Qajar Iran
- al-Tahtawi: The Extraction of Gold (Gelvin, 160)

Response Paper 2 Due: How was defensive development a different approach to governing than previous Ottoman approaches? Was defensive development as a strategy successful? Why/why not?

Jan.28 (Th): European Imperialism and the Colonial Order

Gelvin Chap. 3, 4, 6

"Draft Treaty of Amity and Commerce Between the Ottoman Empire and France"
(Gelvin, pg. 60)

Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies (Gelvin, 61-62)

Treaty of Balta Liman (Gelvin, 147)

Algeria, The Poetry of Loss (Gelvin, 157)

*Al-Jabarti, *Napoleon in Egypt*

Framing question: TBA

Week 4

Feb. 2 (T): Class Cancelled: Work on Seasons of Migration to the North Paper

Feb. 4(Th): Class discussion: *Seasons of Migration to the North*

First Book Report Due

Week 5

Feb. 9 (T) Law, Citizenship and Identity in the Ottoman Empire and Iran

Gelvin, Chapter 10

"Hati Sharif of Gulhane" (Gelvin pg. 148)

"The Islahat Fermane" (Gelvin pg.150)

The Supplementary Fundamental Law of 7 October (Gelvin, 164)

Namik Kemal (Gelvin, 163)

*Baghdadi Jews React to the Modernization of the Ottoman Empire (Khater)

Framing questions: What parts of Ottoman reform and Iranian constitutionalism seem to be addressing people as citizens? What parts seem to be addressing people as subjects?

Feb. 11(Th) Social Impact and Popular Reaction to Imperialism, Colonialism

Gelvin Chap. 7, 8

* "On Gaulicized Egyptians"

* Assef: A Peasant of Mt. Lebanon

*Ahmed: "The Discourse of the Veil"

Round Table: "The Woman Question"

Week 6

Feb. 16 (T) Social Impact and Popular Reaction to Imperialism, Colonialism and Reform: Secularism, Modernity, Politics
Gelvin Chap. 9
The Theology of Unity (Gelvin pg. 161)
*Science in Religious Education: A fatwa from Cairo
* Jamal al-Din al-Afghani answers Ernest Renan's critique of Islam

Framing question: Were Islamic modernists entirely hostile to the spread of European influence in the region?

Response Paper 3 Due: Write a letter to the editor about the reform and social changes we've been discussing from the perspective of a historical protagonist (ex: member of the religious establishment, a Turkish bureaucrat, a Christian merchant, an Arab peasant etc).

Feb.18 (Th) How the middle east became "The Middle East": WWI and its Aftermath

Gelvin, pgs. 171-75, Chapter 11
Balfour Declaration (Gelvin 218)
The Resolution of the Syrian General Congress (Gelvin 215)
*Hussayn MacMahon Agreement

Part III. Nationalism and State Building in the Interwar Period

Week 7

Feb. 23 (T) State Building I
Gelvin, chapter 12, 13

Feb.25 (Th) State Building II
*Kemal Ataturk on the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate

Framing Question: Do nations make states or do states make nations?

Week 8

March 2 (T) Felafalstan Exercise

March 4 (Th) The Palestine Mandate
Gelvin 14
Theodore Herzl: A Solution to the Jewish Question (Gelvin, 217)
*A protest of the Jewish women workers of Palestine against the new municipal ordinance which deprives the women of Palestine of their civic rights, 1934
*The Arab Case for Palestine
*The Palestine Mandate
*British White Paper, 1939

Framing question: What were the guiding principles behind British policy in Palestine during the Mandate? Were these consistent throughout the period? Were there any guiding principles at all?

Week 9

March 9 (T) The Nakba and The Founding of Israel

*Shlaim: The Debate About 1948

*Declaration of the founding of the state of Israel

*Mahmud Darwish's Speech on the anniversary of the Nakba

Framing Question: The declaration of the founding of the state of Israel and Mahmud Darwish's speech present very different interpretations of the same event? What are their differences? More interestingly, what elements of the two are the same (if any)?

Response Paper 4 Due: What's at stake in the debate about 1948 for Israelis and Palestinians? (ie: why is there such a passionate debate on this issue?) What's the big deal? Can you think of debates over history in other contexts which provoke similarly passionate responses?

March 11 (Th) **Midterm**

Week 10

March 16 (T) Anti-Imperialism and Popular Nationalisms

Gelvin pgs 223-247, Chapter 15

Speech Delivered by President Gamal Abdel Nasser (Gelvin 312)

"Tigers on the Tenth Day" (Gelvin 313)

*The program of Hasan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood, 1936

*Iraq's Saddam Hussein Proclaims History as a Tool for Educating the Masses and Comments on the Role of Women in the Revolution

Framing Questions: What was the most significant legacy of Nasser's rule 1) for Egypt 2) for the Arab world? Given how authoritarian post-war regimes were, why do you think people would have supported them?

March 18 (Th) Film: Umm Kulthum: A Voice Like Egypt

Response paper 5 (Due after spring break) In what ways does Umm Kulthum's life and career reflect the social, cultural and political changes which happened in Egypt over the course of the early and mid-20th century? Why, in your opinion, does Umm Kulthum remain such an enduring symbol for so many people in the region? What can one person's life tell us about history?

March 23 and 25: Spring Break. Your Mission.....Go Have fun!

Part VII: Struggles for the Present: The Contemporary Era

Week 11

March 29 (T) Oil

Gelvin Chap. 16

D'Arcy Oil Concession (Gelvin pg. 164)

*The Constitution of Saudi Arabia Bases the legitimacy of the Ruling house of Saud on Religion

*Ahmed: A Kuwaiti Pearl Diver

*A Syrian Engineer in the Gulf

Response Paper 6: Has oil been a blessing or a curse for the Arabian peninsula? For the region as a whole?

April 2 (Th): The Middle East in the Cold War

Gelvin Chap. 17

Week 12

April 6 (T) Israel, the Arab States and the Palestinians

Gelvin Chap. 18

UN Security Council Resolution 242

*A Palestinian Urban Villager

*A West Bank Settler

*Report on Arab Israelis: Braking the Stronghold of Alienation

*Palestinian National Charter

Framing Question: TBA

April 8(Th) Documentary: "Occupied Minds"

Response Paper 7 Due: Open topic: Write on any aspect of this week's readings that interest you.

Week 13

April 13 (T) The Iranian Revolution

Gelvin Chap. 19

Ayatollah Khomeini: Islamic Government (Gelvin, 319)

*The Iranian Constitution, General Principles

*Asadollah Alam's Diary Details some elements of the Shah of Iran's Rule

* From the Internet magazine, The Iranian, 25 January 2002: a debate on the legacy of the Persepolis celebrations of 1971

Framing Question: How "Islamic" was the "Islamic Revolution"? How "republican" (ie: pluralist, inclusive, democratic) is the "Islamic Republic"?

April 14 (Th): Discussion of *Persepolis*

Second Book Report Due

Week 14

April 20 (T): Islamist Movements

Gelvin Chap. 20

*Beinin and Stork, “On the Modernity, Historical Specificity and International Context of Political Islam,”

Sayyid Qutb: Milestones (Gelvin, 320)

*Sayyid Qutb: A New, influential vision of Jihad

April 22 (Th) TBA

The Middle East, Globalization and the War on Terror

Week 16

April 27 (T) TBA

April 29 (Th) Wrap-up

Gelvin: Conclusion

Final Discussion: Is the Middle East an “exceptional” region, or is it subject to the same social and political forces as any other?

Exit Essay: Mandatory for all: Due the day of the final exam. Go back and re-read your introductory essay to this class. Write a reaction to your initial “reaction” to the subject of the Middle East. What have you learned about the Middle East (and yourself) during this class? Were there things you wish you had learned but didn’t? Do you have lingering questions and/or issues?