

The Modern Middle East

Comparisons and Connections

Instructor:
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Course Description

What exactly is the “Middle East”? Does it exist unto itself – is there something “essential” about it? Or is it entangled in global events and historically contingent? Does “it” even exist? This course will encourage students to contemplate this and other questions while we study developments in the region over the past approximately 150 years. We will read about the regional “core” of North Africa, the former Ottoman territories, and Iran, in addition to less commonly considered areas like the Persian Gulf. Readings will cover themes of imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, secularism, postcolonialism, religious modernism, and the environment. We will consider how the contingencies of past events, personalities, and ideas have helped shaped current realities. Other important subjects include the global and cross-regional ties, the formation of nation-states, post-WWII development, Israel-Palestine issues, Islamist movements, and 21st century social upheaval.

Readings

All readings are located in the Canvas Files section. There is no need to purchase any books for this class.

If you are interested in learning more on your own time, please see the following:

Podcasts

Abbasid History Podcast (<https://abbasidhistorypodcast.libsyn.com/>)

Afghan Affairs (<https://afghanaffairs.com/podcast/>)

Ajam Media Collective (<https://ajammc.com/category/podcast/>)

Akbar’s Chamber (<https://akbarschamber.podbean.com/>)

History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps
(<https://historyofphilosophy.net/series/islamic-world>)

New Books in Islamic Studies (<https://newbooksnetwork.com/category/religion-faith/islamic-studies>)

New Books in Middle Eastern Studies
(<https://newbooksnetwork.com/category/middle-eastern-studies>)

Ottoman History Podcast (<http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/>)

Status/الوضع Audio Magazine (<http://www.statushour.com/en/home>)

Voices of the Middle East and North Africa (<https://kpfa.org/program/voices-of-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/>)

Grades

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 (0-59)

Four Reading Responses: 20% (each reading response is 5% of your total grade)

Four Discussion Session attendances: 20% (each attendance is 5% of your total grade)

One Short Essay: 25% - 4-5 pages (due March 12, the Friday before Spring Break)

Final Essay: 35% - 10 pages (due May 7)

Reading Responses

We have nine discussion session class days planned on the syllabus. To receive full credit for the reading response grade, you must submit a reading response of at least 3-5 sentences to a set of readings before the discussion session following them on the syllabus. You must submit your response by 7pm the day before the discussion session. You only need to respond four times over the course of the semester, not for every discussion session.

For example, we have a discussion session on Friday, March 5. You may submit a response to any lecture or reading material covered between Feb. 17 to Mar. 3 for this discussion session. You must submit your response on the Canvas Discussions page before 7pm on Thursday, March 4.

Responses may cover points in the readings or lectures which you want more clarification on, arguments that you remain unconvinced by, something you were surprised by or found particularly interesting, or any other point informed by a close reading of the material you want to make. The best responses will identify similarities or differences between readings. What do certain authors take as a

given for their arguments? How might they have approached their subject differently?

You must also attend the **four** discussions sessions for the responses you submit. So, if you submit a reading response for the March 5 session, you must attend that session to receive attendance credit. I encourage you to attend as many discussion sessions as possible to strengthen your comprehension of the material but your attendance will only be graded in those discussion session for which you submit reading responses.

This is intended as a positive activity. Even if we disagree with an author, we might find something in their work that benefits our own understanding (and it may be something the author did not intend). It is often much easier to tear down a piece of work than find its useful elements.

This class is a positive space. There is no room for racism, sexism, transphobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, or any other sort of hateful speech. If we disagree with each other on a point, we should keep discussion from devolving into personal attacks. If you have any concerns at any point, please email me.

Discussion session dates

Feb 1	Apr 7
Feb 8	Apr 14
Feb 15	Apr 26
Mar 5	May 7
Mar 26	

Short Essay: Ties that Bind (due Friday, March 12)

Discuss the “internal” and “external” aspects of Middle Eastern history and how they relate. On one hand, what is specific to a particular historical time and place? On the other hand, how does it relate to or resemble broader trends? Example topics: constitutional movements of the early 20th century, Israel/Palestine, post-WWII development projects, anti-colonial movements, Islamically-focused movements, etc.

Please use either MLA, APA, or Chicago citation styles for your papers. More important is that you choose a style and stick with it consistently throughout the paper. Personally, I use Chicago style. (For information on these styles, see <https://uwc.utexas.edu/services/resources/>) If the document you’re citing has page numbers, you *must* cite the page number. Cite the document page number, not the PDF file page number if you’re citing from a PDF.

Final Paper (due May 7)

Describe the rise of political Islam, debates around it, and its relevance in the 21st century.

You may choose to write on another topic based on class reading materials and lectures but you must come speak with me about it first and receive permission in writing.

Late Assignments

If you believe you will need extra time to finish an assignment, please contact me before the assignment is due and we will work on accommodations. If you contact me *after* the due date, I will not be as flexible.

Attendance

You will be graded for attending the four discussion sessions related to the reading responses you write.

I will not be taking lecture attendance in this class but because the lectures will offer much needed context and clarity for the readings, I highly encourage you to attend. For example, your reading for the Six Day War in 1967 will discuss Black American activists' conceptions of Israel, Palestine, and the Six Day War, and the lecture will discuss, among other things, the events and consequences of the conflict itself. In another way, much of the readings in the first half of the class discuss "core Arab countries" such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, but in the lectures we will extend our analysis to Turkey, Iran, the Maghreb, etc. (likewise, lectures will devote more attention to the non-Muslim and non-Arab communities of the region)

I will be recording lectures for the benefit of any students who must miss a session.

We may occasionally move into Zoom breakout rooms during the semester for smaller group discussions. Please come to class having read the material so you're not caught unprepared for small group discussion.

Office Hours

If you cannot attend my regular office hours because of a scheduling conflict, please let me know and we can schedule another time to meet, as needed. Additionally, I hold regular office hours via Zoom, but if you prefer to use Skype, Google Hangout, WhatsApp, or other media, I will do my best to accommodate.

Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Academic Integrity

Students should maintain a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholarly work. All work handed in by students should be their own work, prepared without unauthorized assistance. All cases of academic dishonesty will be treated with due seriousness. For further information visit the Student Judicial Services website at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/history/about/academic-integrity.php> or call 471-2841. On avoiding plagiarism, see <https://uwc.utexas.edu/services/resources/>.

Reporting Sexual Harassment

Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor and TAs for this course are required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also requires reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the Title IX Office.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Wed, Jan 20 - Introduction

- Lecture: What is the Middle East? Why study the Middle East?

Fri, Jan 22 – Lecture 1: The Ottoman and Qajar Realms in the 19th Century

Week 2

Mon, Jan 25 – Lecture 2: Turn of the Century (Great Game and European Imperialism, Age of Steam and Print)

- Reading
 - Khuri-Makdisi, “Fin-de-Siecle Egypt: A Nexus for Mediterranean and Global Radical Networks,” 78-95.
 - Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 15-24.

Wed, Jan 27 – MENA Environments at the Turn of the Century

Fri, Jan 29 – Lecture 3: Secularism, Democracy, and Constitutional Governance

- Reading
 - Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 143-157.
 - Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 31-34. (to the end of the paragraph at the top of 34)

Week 3

Mon, Feb 1 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Jan 20 – Jan 29

Wed, Feb 3 – Lecture 4: The Middle East in World War I: the Birth of Nations

- Reading
 - Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 93-99; 133-141;
 - Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 208-216.

Fri, Feb 5 – Lecture 5: The Middle East in World War II

- Reading
 - Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 141-172.
 - Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 197-210.

Week 4

Mon, Feb 8 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Feb 3 – Feb 5

Wed, Feb 10 – Lecture 6: Establishing the State of Israel / 1948 War of Independence / The Nakba

- Reading
 - Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 217-226, 228-230 (Herzl, “A Solution of the Jewish Question” and the Balfour Declaration)
 - Ha'am, “Truth from Eretz Israel,” 160-179.

Fri, Feb 12 – Lecture 7: Post- WWII Democracy, Secularism, and Modernity, Pt I

- Reading
 - Pursley, *Familiar Futures*, 127-150.

Week 5

Mon, Feb 15 –discussion about short essay (due March 12); Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Feb 10-12

- Reading
 - Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 9-35.
 - Shavit interview with Benny Morris, “Survival of the Fittest,” 37-51
[warning]: accounts of graphic murder and sexual violence, pages 39-40]

Wed, Feb 17 – Lecture 8: Post-WWII Democracy, Secularism, and Modernity Pt II

Fri, Feb 19 – Lecture 9: Anti-Colonial Movements

- Reading
 - Abou-El-Fadl, “Building Egypt’s Afro-Asian Hub,” 157-192.

Week 6

Mon, Feb 22 – Lecture 10: The Free Officers, Mossadeq, and Third Worldism

- Reading
 - Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution*, 68-78, 86-97, 109-112.

Wed, Feb 24 – Lecture 11: The Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party and Communist Parties, Qadhafi and Libya

Fri, Feb 26 – Lecture 12: the Arabian Peninsula

- Reading
 - Keshavarzian, “From Port Cities to Cities with Ports,” 1-19.

Week 7

Mon, Mar 1 – Lecture 13: Transnational Solidarities in the 1950s and 1960s

- Reading
 - Bier, "Feminism, Solidarity, and Identity in the Age of Bandung," in *Making a World after Empire*, 143-172.

Wed, Mar 3 – Lecture 14: The political rise of Saudi Arabia and emergence political Islam

- Reading
 - Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 199-211.
 - Qutb, "A Muslim's Nationality and Belief" (130-144).

Fri, Mar 5 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Feb 17 – Mar 3

Week 8

Mon, Mar 8 – Lecture 15: The Six Day War

- Reading
 - Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation*, 116-141.

Wed, Mar 10 – Lecture 16: The PLO, the Lebanese Civil War, and Israel

- Arafat, "The PLO Position," 171-174.
- Denkner, "Israel in Lebanon," 179-182.
- "PLO, History of a Revolution – Ep. 3 'Winds of Heaven'" (length 24:22) (<https://youtu.be/S3QdSI5IJHk>) **[warning]**: disturbing images at the following time stamps. Please skip over if you need.
 - 9:30-9:38
 - 9:58-10:10
 - 13:24-13:42
 - 17:18-17:23
 - 22:00-23:30

Fri, Mar 12 – short essay due; Lecture 17: American knowledge production

- Edward Said on Orientalism – 1998 Documentary (length: 40:31).
<https://youtu.be/3MYYDEj4fIU>. **[warning]** graphic content (36:31-36:51; 37:40-37:55)

Spring Break, March 15-20

Week 9

Mon, Mar 22 – Lecture 18: The Iranian Revolution

- Materials
 - Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 211-226.
 - Sternfeld, “The Revolution’s Forgotten Sons and Daughters,” 857-869.
 - Chelkowski and Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution*, 140-175.

Wed, Mar 24 – Lecture 19: The Iran-Iraq War

Fri, Mar 26 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from March 8 to March 24

Week 10

Mon, Mar 29 – Lecture 20: Economic Liberalization and Sanctions

- Reading
 - Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 244-271.

Wed, Mar 31 – Lecture 21: Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, and al-Qaeda

- Reading
 - Li, “Lies, Damned Lies and Plagiarizing ‘Experts’”
 - Stenersen, *Al-Qaida in Afghanistan*, 52-68.

Fri, Apr 2 – Lecture 22: The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin / The First Intifada / The Oslo Accords

- Reading
 - Remarks by PM Yitzhak Rabin at Signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, 13 Sep 1993.
<https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/mfadocuments/pages/remarks%20by%20pm%20yitzhak%20rabin%20at%20signing%20of%20dop%20-%2013.aspx>
 - Said, “The Morning After.”

Week 11

Mon, Apr 5 – Lecture 23: The Second Intifada

- Reading:
 - Allen, “Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal During the Second Palestinian Intifada,” 149-172.

Wed, Apr 7 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Mar 29 – Apr 5

Fri, Apr 9 – Lecture 24: 9/11, Afghanistan, and the “War on Terror”

- Reading
 - Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?,” 783-790.
 - Mamdani, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim,” 766-775.
 - Bush, “Address to a joint session of Congress and the nation.”

Week 12

Mon, Apr 12 – Lecture 25: The Iraq War

- Reading
 - Giroux, “What Education Might Mean After Abu Ghraib,” 3-8.
 - Chandrasekaran, “Who Killed Iraq?”

Wed, Apr 14 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Apr 9 – Apr 12

Fri, Apr 16 – Lecture 26: The Green Movement in Iran

- Reading
 - Olszewska, “Classy Kids and Down-at-Heel Intellectuals,” 841-862.
 - Watch “What was Iran’s Green Movement of 2009?” (length 3:33)
<https://vimeo.com/332669470>
- Additional information, not required for class
 - *Voices of the Middle East and North Africa*, “Bread, Jobs and Freedom: a Conversation with Arang Keshavarzian.” 8 Jan 2018.
<https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/34978>
 - *Status/الوضع*, “The November Protests in Iran.” 26 Nov 2019. “The November Protests in Iran: An Interview with Historian Peyman Jafari.”

Week 13

Mon, Apr 19 – Lecture 27: The Arab Spring

- Reading
 - Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace*, 282-295.
 - Ghanem, *The Arab Spring*, 39-64.

Wed, Apr 21- watch *The Square* (1 hr, 44 min)

- This documentary has many **graphic images of violence and death**. I have not made time markers for violent clips, but if you would like me to, please contact me and I will. Alternatively, if you would prefer not to watch it, contact me and we will come up with an alternative assignment for you.
- Available on YouTube and Netflix

Fri, Apr 23 – watch *This is Life After Gezi Park Protests in Turkey* (~ 8 min)

- Watch
 - <https://youtu.be/aUYykmxgITA>
- If you are interested in more information on contemporary events in Turkey, see MERIP Fall 2018 issue
 - https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/19i7hhk/alma991057949744506011

Week 14

Mon, Apr 26 – Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Apr 16 – Apr 23; and final papers

Wed, Apr 28 – Lecture 28: The Syrian Civil War and the Islamic State

- Reading
 - Pursley, “Lines Drawn on an Empty Map’: Iraq’s Borders and the Legend of the Artificial State (Part 1). <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32140>
 - Selby, “On Blaming Climate Change for the Syrian Civil War.” 1-12.
 - Li, “A Jihadism Anti-Primer.” 12-17.

Fri, Apr 30 – Lecture 29: Libya and the War in Yemen

- Reading
 - Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 203-214.
 - Guesmi, “The slave auction in Libya,” 27 Nov, 2017. <https://africasacountry.com/2017/11/the-slave-auction-in-libya>
 - Berhane, “A nowhere space,” 5 Jul, 2020. <https://africasacountry.com/2020/06/at-sea-african-sovereignty-mediterranean-routes-and-covid-19>
 - Krakow, “Water Scarcity, Climate Change, and COVID-19 in Yemen,” 30 July 2020. <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41491/Water-Scarcity,-Climate-Change,-and-COVID-19-in-Yemen-An-Interview-with-Helen-Lackner>
 - Please either listen to this podcast interview with Dr. Shireen Al-Adeimi:
 - <https://currentaffairs.simplecast.com/episodes/jubilee-day-5-shireen-al-ademi-on-the-war-in-yemen-pAnZcBJJ>
 - or, read the transcript:

- <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2021/01/interview-shireen-al-adeimi-on-the-u-s-backed-war-in-yemen>
- If you want more information on contemporary Yemen, see MERIP Winter 2018 issue
 - https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/19i7hhk/alm_a991057949744506011

Week 15

Mon, May 3 – Lecture 30: Contemporary MENA Environments

- Reading
 - Fadaee, "Ecotours and politics of fun in Iran," 1276-1291.

Fri, May 7 – Submit and discuss final paper; Discussion session over readings and lecture material from Apr 28 – May 3; final thoughts on the semester

Final Exam TBD