

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: POL 372: Comparative Middle East Politics
Credits: 3 Credits
Instructor: Dr. Fatma Sayed



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OFFICE HOURS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers students an overview of contemporary Middle East politics with a comparative perspective. The course will cover the period starting from the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the close of World War I and will emphasize the historical, political and economic roots of contemporary events. We will focus on the processes of state building and struggles for self-determination across the region and look into the domestic, regional, and international factors shaping the foreign policies of the Middle East states. Class discussions will cover the following topics: the emergence of the state system in the modern Middle East; the influence of colonialism and nationalism in its development; the military in state and politics; party systems and the growth of democratic politics; the politics of religion (the challenge of political Islam); women in the Middle East political life; and the impact of major conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and other regional conflicts.

The Middle East is taken to comprise Iran, Israel, Turkey and the Arab states, but discussions will also cover countries that take part of the “Greater Middle East” such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia. The general approach of the course gives considerable latitude to students to focus on the countries that most interest them.

We will always keep an eye on current political developments in the region and will include these in the course itself to invite participants to actively follow up the news coverage about the Middle East. The course organization will allow the student to concentrate on whichever period of Middle Eastern contemporary history most interests them.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aim is for participants to become familiar with the region as a whole, and to better understand selected case studies that present the constitutive elements listed above. We will focus mostly on Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Turkey, but participants will also gain some knowledge about less covered areas and countries of the region. Participants have a clearer understanding of the origins of the conflicts that constantly undermine the stability of the region. Moreover, the participants

should acquire through this course a more nuanced and complete understanding of Middle East, its states, its political cultures and its peoples.

Course Organization

We will explore and debate on many issues about the politics of the region (or the implications that politics in the region may have on the rest of the world, in particular the USA and Europe), there will be a weekly 'Question Time' suggested by the instructor but could also change according to the interests of the students, as they are invited to share their thoughts, doubts and/or questions about current (or past) political development. For that matter, I invite students to get acquainted with the BBC World Service website whose coverage of the Middle East should provide a good starting point for this part of the class (available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/default.stm, or <http://news.bbc.co.uk>. For more websites about the Middle East, see below). It will be very interesting to also look at the websites of Al-Jazeera (www.aljazeera.com) and the Jerusalem Post (<http://www.jpost.com/>).

In the second part of the course (after mid-term exam), each participant will be asked to make a short presentation (not more than 5 minutes) about a past event listed at the end of this syllabus, or to choose a current news from the BBC website and introduce the topic to the rest of the class (more on the format of the presentation will be explained during the course itself). On top of assigned readings, the course will also be based on taught lectures, the analysis of a variety of audiovisual documents and open discussion with participants.

Course Requirements:

- Active and regular class attendance;
- REGULAR reading of assigned documents and selected writings (about 50 pages per week);
- Presentation (alone or in a team of max. two) about the assigned readings;
- One small presentation about current or past news development (see supra);
- One term paper (2000 to 3000 words) about one of the questions suggested for each course in the syllabus below;
- Two in-class exams (essay-type).

Course Grade

This course is graded on a 400-point scale that breaks down as follows:

- 100 points for the Mid-Term Examination;
- 100 points for the Final Examination;

- 100 points for the Term Paper;
- 40 points for the news presentation;
- 40 points for the readings presentation
- 20 points for the effective participation.

Deadline for the Term Paper:

The term paper should be between **2000 to 3000** words incl. footnotes and a short bibliography. You are free to choose the reference system (Harvard quotation system, *e.g* (Owen 2004: 111-134) or footnotes at the bottom of the page), but make sure that you QUOTE YOUR SOURCES.

Be careful with web sources which are not always reliable and can be partisan. Instead, the assigned weekly readings should provide a good basis for a term paper. The GIF Library also has good books on the topic that students are invited to consult.

Please send your term paper to the instructor via email (**fatimahassan@yahoo.com**) at the LATEST by **Monday March 30, 2009**. Make sure that your assignment is in a standard and unlocked electronic version [.doc or .rtf format].

Feel free to consult the instructor for questions relating to the term paper (form and content).

Bibliography:

Participants are invited to purchase the fully revised (3rd edition) and updated (up to 2004) version of Owen's *State, Power & Politics*. It is a classic and it covers 95% of the course, so you can consider it as a textbook. Halliday's 2005 book is also an excellent buy for anybody interested in the region (at the crossroads of politics and IR). Students are free to order it/them over Internet or at the Paperback Exchange down town. (Anglo-American Bookshop, via Fiesolana 31 r -Florence - Italy www.papex.it)

OWEN Roger (2004) *State, Power & Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 3rd edition, Oxon & New York: Routledge.

HALLIDAY Fred (2005) *The Middle East in International Relations. Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge & al.: Cambridge University Press.

CLEVELAND William L. (2004) *A History of Modern Middle East*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge MA: Westview Press

RICHARDS, Alan & WATERBURY, John (1996) *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 2nd edition, Boulder CO: Westview Press.

TAPPER Richard (ed.) (1992) *Some Minorities in the Middle East*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Occasional Paper.

BRYNEN Rex, KORANY Bahgat & NOBLE Paul (1995) *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, 2. vols. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers

EICKELMAN Dale F. (1998) *The Middle East and Central Asia. An Anthropological Approach*, 3rd edition, Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice-Hall

EICKELMAN Dale F. & PISCATORI James (1996) *Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

HOURANI Albert (1991) *A History of the Arab Peoples*, New York: MJF Books

HALLIDAY Fred (2003) *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, London: I.B. Tauris

SAID Edward W. (2004) *From Oslo To Iraq and the Road Map*, New York: Pantheon Books.

SELA Avraham (ed.) (2002) *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

SIDAHMED Abdel Salam & EHTESHAMI Anoushiravan (eds.) (1996) *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Boulder CO: Westview Press

For a comparison with other 'developing countries', see the very good textbook of:

CAMMACK Paul, POOL David & TORDOFF William (1993) *Third World Politics: A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd edition, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (a new edition was announced for 2004 at Basingstoke Book. Not out yet).

Web resources:

As stressed in the course objectives, course participants are invited to become at ease with interpreting current political developments in the region. There are many ways to do so. One is by reading the coverage of good international printed press (*The Economist*, *Le Monde*, *Financial Times*, *the Guardian*, *The Independent*, etc.).

Another is by a frequent browsing of Internet. For that matter, the website of the **BBC** World Services is very important:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/default.stm. See also the dossier at:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/themes/conflict_and_war/middle_east/default.stm

Other very useful sights to look at are:

www.aljazeera.com

www.jerusalempost.com (<http://www.jpost.com/>)

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/index.htm>

Other good analyses can be found on the web at:

MERIP (Middle East Research and Information Project): www.merip.org. This Washington-based research centre publishes the bimonthly *Middle East Report* (with a selection of articles online),

shorter and quick articles (*Report Online at*, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero.html>) and Op-Eds, available at http://www.merip.org/newspaper_opeds/newspaper_opeds.html)

MERIA (Middle East Review of International Affairs) offers alternative points of view. More academic in its outreach, the advantage of MERIA (hosted by an Israeli university) is that most of its articles are free to consult online. Check <http://meria.idc.ac.il/>

MEI (Middle East Institute): <http://www.mideasti.org/index.html>. Based in Washington DC, this research institute is home of the acclaimed *Middle East Journal*. You will find useful background information on the Middle East in general, on Islam (check, *e.g.* for the following link <http://www.mideasti.org/indepth/islam/schools.html>), and good interactive maps on countries of the region with key dates and useful indicators about the level of socio-economic development (http://www.mideasti.org/countries/countries_main.html).

POGAR The Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in early 2000. The website provides resources and information on governance reform in the Arab states, including general and country-specific essays on the themes pertaining to each concept, related publications, empirical studies, statistics, searchable databases and valuable Web links.

www.pogar.org

Finally, have a look at the very interesting and funny website of the Centre for the Study of Cartoons and Caricature (hosted by the University of Kent at Canterbury). It has a catalogued database of over 90,000 images accessible at <http://library.kent.ac.uk/cartoons/> (you'll have to register (for free) at: <http://opal.ukc.ac.uk/catalogue/ccc.pl>).

A quick search with the entry 'Middle East' gives access to more than 700 **political cartoons** from the early 1930s until present day.

Course Schedule

PART ONE: Historical & DIACHRONIC PRESENTATION

Course 1: Wednesday 7 January 2009

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

What is the Middle East? What are its limits?

A brief history of MENA since the foundation of Islam

The Ottoman Empire up to 1900

THEMES

The populations living in the Middle East

The religions coexisting in the region

Question (for term paper):

1. Does it make sense to speak of the Middle East as a whole or should one qualify her/his statements when generalizing about the politics of the region?

Course 2: Wednesday 14 January 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 1-4 and 5-22) '1 - The end of empires'

Halliday (2005: 75-96) '3 - The modern Middle East: state formation and world war'

HISTORICAL FOCUS:

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire (1900-1918)

The late colonial period (1920-1950)

THEMES:

Nahdhah, or the rise of Arab Nationalism

Colonial influence and creation of long-lasting imbalances in national systems.

Questions:

2. Is the emergence of nationalisms in the Middle East of a particular kind or can they be set on an equal analytical footing with, say, European nationalisms?
3. How have French and British colonial policies contributed to undermine the legitimacy of modern Middle Eastern states over the long run? Illustrate your answer with possibly more than one country.

Course 3: Wednesday 21 January 2009

READINGS:

Cleveland (2004: 239-271) '13 - The Palestine Mandate and the birth of the State of Israel'

Owen (2004: 56-72) '4 - Arab nationalism, Arab unity and the practice of intra-Arab state relations'

HISTORICAL FOCUS:

Creation of Israel and Birth of the Palestinian Question

THEMES:

Political and religious Zionisms

From Arab nationalism(s) to Pan-Arabism

Struggle for hegemony amongst Arab States

Questions:

4. Explain how and why Great Britain, which was at first a supporter of the creation a Jewish state in the western shores of the Mediterranean Sea, became gradually an opponent to Israel and explain why the USA became subsequently the new protector of Israel.

5. Explain why Arab political leaders became disillusioned with western powers. How can this fact in turn explain the rise of pan-Arabism as the leading ideology for Arab states from the 1950s onwards?

Example of presentation of a historical news development:

26 January 1952: British killed in Cairo Riots

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/26/newsid_2506000/2506301.stm

Course 4: Wednesday 28 January 2009

READINGS:

Halliday (2005: 97-129) '4 - The Cold War: global conflict, regional upheavals'

Owen (2004: 23-38) '2 - The growth of state power in the Arab world'

HISTORICAL FOCUS:

The long-lasting impacts of the Cold War in the Middle East

THEMES:

The growth of State power:

- State apparatus to control
- Politics in authoritarian states

Questions:

6. Illustrate (with reference to at least two countries) how the context of the Cold War did **not** contribute to the creation of a democratic order in the Middle East.
7. The Middle East used to be the sphere of influence of European powers. How was the situation evolved up to the 1970s? Do European still have some influence in the region?

Example of presentation of a historical news development:

1 February 1979: Exiled Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/1/newsid_2521000/2521003.stm

Course 5: Wednesday 4 February 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 90-109) '6 - The remaking of the Middle Eastern political environment between the two Gulf Wars'

Halliday (2005: 130-164) '5 - After the Cold War: the maturing of the Greater West Asian Crisis'

THEMES:

The end of the Cold War and profound changes in the Middle East.

Understanding the 'Greater West Asian Crisis' in contemporary terms.

Questions:

8. Why has the question of democracy and democratization become so important in the agenda of the Middle East since 1990?
9. Why does Fred Halliday speak of 'Greater West Asian Crisis' (2005)?

Course 6: Wednesday 11 February 2009

READINGS:

Halliday (2005:167-192) '6 - Military conflict: war, revolt, strategic rivalry'

THEMES:

Understanding national, regional and international conflicts in the Middle East.

Questions:

10. How have wars and conflicts served and been instrumental(ized) to reinforce fierce and ruthless regimes in the region?

11. Can we understand regional conflicts and civil wars in the Middle East without making reference to historical factors?

EXAM Course 7: Wednesday 18 February 2009

Mid-Term EXAM

PART TWO: COMPARATIVE PART

Course 8: Wednesday 25 February 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 178-199) '10 - The military in and out of politics'

THEMES:

Military regimes and military *coups*.

Modernization and ideologies of progress

Questions:

12. Is military leadership still an important contributor to power strength in the region?

13. Explain why socialism has gradually replaced Arab nationalism for most of Arab countries. Has socialism succeeded in promoting social equality?

Course 9: Wednesday 4 March 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 113-130) '7 - The politics of economic restructuring'

Halliday (2005: 261-299) '9 - International political economy: regional and global'

THEMES:

The Political Economy of the Middle East

Rise of state bureaucracy and the *rentier* State

Questions:

14. Why can it be said that oil has been a curse for the Middle East?

15. Considering the scarce venues for political participation in the Middle East, is it enough to absorb large segments of the population in the administrative apparatus of the State like in Egypt? Reflect on the shortcomings of bureaucratic solution.

Course 10: Wednesday 11 March 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 131-153) '8 - Parties, elections and the vexed question of democracy in the Arab world'

Owen (2004: 200-215) '11 - Some important non-state actors'

THEMES:

Political parties and one-party systems.

Democracy or only qualified democracies?

Questions:

16. Why the system of political parties makes it difficult for most of the Middle Eastern countries to reach a democratic condition?

17. Do non-state actors really have the possibilities to enhance the quality of democratic life in the region? Illustrate with two contrasting cases.

Course 11: Wednesday 18 March 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 154-177) '9 - The politics of religious revival'

TRIPP Charles (1996) 'Islam and the Secular Logic of the State in the Middle East', *in* SIDAHMED Abdel Salam & EHTESHAMI Anoushiravan (eds.), *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 51-69

THEMES

Religious revivalisms

Understanding political Islam

Questions:

18. Explain the historical roots and phases of political Islam in Egypt.

19. Is Islamism (or political Islam) really hostile to the modern (western) State or is it an ally for its quest for power?

Course 12: Wednesday 25 March 2008

READINGS:

Halliday (2005: 193-228) 'Modern ideologies: political and religious'

Halliday (2003: 107-132) 'Islam and the West: 'Threat of Islam' or 'Threat to Islam'?'

THEMES:

Variety of Islamisms

The clash of ideologies

Questions:

20. Can the resurgence of political Islam as a driving ideology be understood only as a reaction to the international context, or should one also look at domestic factors to understand this political phenomenon?

Course 13: Wednesday 1 April 2009

READINGS:

Halliday (2005: 229-260) '8 - Challenges to the state: transnational movements'

Halliday (2003: 107-132) 'Islam and the West: 'Threat of Islam' or 'Threat to Islam'?'

THEMES:

New challenges to the state?

Questions:

21. Reflect on the positive and negative impacts of Arabic satellite TV channels on the prospect for more democracy in the region.

22. Are transnational movements such a novelty to Middle Eastern politics?

Course 14: Wednesday 8 April 2009

READINGS:

Owen (2004: 219-240) '12 - America attempts to remake the Middle East'

Halliday (2005: 303-324) '10 - The Middle East in international perspective'

THEMES:

Which prospects for peace and democracy in the Middle East?

The road ahead

Final Exam Course 15: Wednesday 15 April 2009

Historical Moments

Each of these historical moments (taken out of the BBC website 'On This Day') took place during the period of our course, namely from January 9 until April 25, but many years or decades ago. Each of the participants will select one of these moments (or alternatively present a news item taken from the BBC Middle East website) and present it in a historical, regional and analytical context. Examples of presentation will be given during the first five weeks of the course by the instructor. Distribution will be done when class composition is definitive (after drop out day).

10 January 1996

1996: King of Jordan in historic Tel Aviv visit

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/10/newsid_4514000/4514536.stm

16 January 1979

1979: Shah of Iran flees into exile

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/16/newsid_2530000/2530475.stm

21 January 1981

1981: Tehran frees US hostages after 444 days

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/21/newsid_2506000/2506807.stm

2 February 1987

1987: Peace envoy imprisoned in Beirut

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/2/newsid_2524000/2524703.stm

3 February 1978

1978: Sadat in US for Mid East talks

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/3/newsid_2525000/2525341.stm

13 February 1991

1991: US bombers strike civilians in Baghdad

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/13/newsid_2541000/2541107.stm

14 February 1989

1989: Ayatollah sentences author to death

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/14/newsid_2541000/2541149.stm

19 February 1978

1978: Egyptian forces die in Cyprus gunfight

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/19/newsid_2565000/2565701.stm

22 February 1991

1991: Bush threatens Iraq with land war

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/22/newsid_2518000/2518911.stm

23 Feb. 1972

1972: Hostages freed by Lufthansa hijackers

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/23/newsid_2518000/2518731.stm

29 Feb. 1956

1956: Hopes for Mid East peace mission

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/29/newsid_2514000/2514607.stm

1 March 1973

1973: Palestinian gunmen hold diplomats in Sudan

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/1/newsid_4209000/4209239.stm

18 March 1974

1974: Violent border clashes at Golan Heights

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/18/newsid_2524000/2524915.stm

17 March

1978: Civilians flee southern Lebanon

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/17/newsid_2525000/2525067.stm

26 March 1979

1979: Israel and Egypt shake hands on peace deal

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/26/newsid_2806000/2806245.stm

25 April 1980

1980: Tehran hostage rescue mission fails

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/april/25/newsid_2503000/2503899.stm

22 May 2000

2000: Hezbollah makes gains in Lebanon

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/22/newsid_2504000/2504681.stm

30 May 1967

1967: Egypt and Jordan unite against Israel

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/30/newsid_2493000/2493177.stm

13 June 1978

1978: Israeli troops leave southern Lebanon

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/13/newsid_2512000/2512241.stm

30 October 1990

1991: Bush opens historic Mid East peace conference

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/30/newsid_2465000/2465725.stm

19 August 2003

UN envoy dies in Baghdad Bombing

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/19/newsid_3504000/3504255.stm

28 October 1994

Israel and Jordan make peace

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/26/newsid_3764000/3764162.stm

17 September 1970

Civil War Breaks out in Jordan

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/17/newsid_4575000/4575159.stm

1 February 1979

Exiled Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/1/newsid_2521000/2521003.stm

6 October 1981

Egypt's President Sadat assassinated

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/6/newsid_2515000/2515841.stm

17 September 1982

Refugees massacred in Beirut camps

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/17/newsid_2519000/2519637.stm

7 October 1985

Gunmen hijack Italian cruise liner

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/7/newsid_2518000/2518697.stm

22 July 1987

Cartoonist shot in London street

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/22/newsid_2516000/2516089.stm

14 October 1994

Israelis and Arafat share peace prize

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/14/newsid_3694000/3694744.stm