

University of Utah
Political Science Department
Comparative Politics of the Middle East
POLS 3440-01
MID E 3644-01

Fall 2007

Tuesdays 6:00-8:30 PM OSH 134

Instructor: Kristian Alexander
Office: OSH 325
Office hours: Tues 4:00-6:00 PM
and by prior appointment

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Purpose and Objectives

The goal of this course is to enrich our understanding of contemporary politics in the Middle East. We will therefore concentrate on select topics that are pertinent to understanding politics in this region and are within the broader context of comparative and international politics. The course will first start by problematizing the way we study and learn about the Middle East and Islam in the West. That will be followed by a brief historic analysis outlining the conditions that shaped the formation and consolidation of what are mostly authoritarian regimes in the region.

Some of the questions that we will be exploring throughout the semester are:

Why are there so few democracies in the Middle East? Is Islam compatible with democracy and human rights? Can Islam and democracy co-exist? Can Middle Eastern countries deal with economic changes without political upheavals? Why have Islamic movements come to dominate the political landscape of almost all of the Middle East countries in the last few decades? Why have there been so many wars and other kinds of inter-state conflict in the Middle East since 1945? Is the Iraq War a major departure in American policy towards the Middle East, or is it simply the culmination of long-term trends? How is the status of women understood in Islam?

Whereas the first part of this course is organized thematically, the later part will look at several country studies such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. It should be noted, however, that participants will also gain some knowledge about less covered areas and countries of the region.

This course is designed to give students a more nuanced and complete/balanced understanding of the Middle East, its states, and peoples. Please keep in mind that you will be exposed to a wide range of alternative views, some of which may force you to question, rethink, and if necessary, abandon your present 'understanding' of the Middle East

Course Requirements

This is a lecture and discussion course, the success of which depends heavily on your preparation for each class meeting and your enthusiasm you bring to class discussion. Lectures and discussions will be supplemented by several Video/DVD documentaries. I will be asking you questions during each class and expect you to participate actively. Occasionally, I will ask you to form small groups and have you discuss certain pertinent concepts, issues or questions. Engage respectfully with your peers who may not share your opinions.

I reserve the right to make minor changes to the syllabus during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class in advance. This course will be taught once a week on Tuesdays from 6:00-8:30 PM with the exception of the first week of class when we will meet as officially scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00-7:20 PM.

Grading and Evaluation

Grades are based on the requirements below. Final grades are based on standard scoring.

- Attendance and Active Participation (10%)
- Short Writing Assignment (20%)
- Group Presentation (20%)
- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Final Exam (25%)

Attendance and Class Participation (10%): Your participation grade will consist of your active involvement in class discussion (thoughtful comments, answering questions posed by the instructor, raising critical questions) and in-class exercises (group discussions). In order to get the most out of this course, you must be prepared when you come to class. You are required to complete the readings prior to class meeting and to be ready to discuss them. Attendance will affect your participation, and excessive absences will result in a lower grade. An excused absence means you have a medical excuse or documented emergency.

Short Writing assignment (20%): You have the choice between option A and B. Pick one only.

Option A:

You will be asked to pick one of the issues/myths discussed by Fred Halliday in his book *100 Myths about the Middle East* and write a 3 page paper (double spaced, sources listed at the end of the paper) in which you will critically engage the validity of his argument. It will require you to conduct some basic research using the ML database or legitimate internet sources. You are free to pick any one of the 100 myths listed by Halliday. Your task at hand is to find one article/source that corroborates/supports Halliday's claim and look for an alternative one that challenges, contests or runs counter to the basic gist of his argument. In this short review paper, you will introduce the evidence presented in the article supporting Halliday's general claim and juxtapose it to the conflicting evidence that is provided in the alternative article. After having weighed the evidence of both authors, you will briefly state which of the two seems more convincing to you and why you have come to that conclusion.

After having briefly introduced the topic of discussion in an opening paragraph (half a page), I suggest you devote approximately one page to the supportive evidence, lay out the contradictory/alternative argumentation on the second page and wrap up your essay by dedicating the last half a page or so to your own assessment. The challenge of this assignment is to be as concise and succinct as possible. Do not exceed 3 and ½ pages!

Option B:

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been a contentious topic amongst regional and international scholars for many years. Scholars in the field have provided multiple and at times contradictory narratives of the various wars/conflicts. Depending on an analyst's political and ideological orientations, certain accounts of the various wars have been tainted by distinct 'historical biases'. Although there are multiple historical schools of thought that purport to provide a 'true'/'objective' account of the subject matter, one can broadly categorize the various views of the conflict into a 'pro-Israeli' and a 'pro-Arab' point of view. You will be asked to pick one of the Arab-Israeli conflicts (48', 56', 67', 73', 82', 05') and look at the major cause/underlying rationale for that particular conflict through the prism of opposite/contrasting points of view (i.e., pro-Israeli versus pro-Arab). It will require you to conduct some basic research using the ML database or legitimate internet sources. In a short three page essay (double spaced, sources listed at the end of the paper) you will present the essential argument bolstering the pro-Israeli account and juxtapose it to an account that favors the pro-Arab perspective of events. After having discussed the evidence of both sides, you will briefly state which of the two versions/stories seems more convincing to you and why you have come to that conclusion.

After having briefly introduced the topic of discussion in an opening paragraph (half a page), I suggest you devote approximately one page to the supportive evidence, lay out the contradictory/alternative argumentation on the second page and wrap up your essay by dedicating the last half a page or so to your own assessment. The challenge of this assignment is to be as concise and succinct as possible. Do not exceed 3 and ½ pages!

This short writing assignment is due on Thursday September 20th, 2007 in my office (OSH325) or in my mailbox at the main Political Science Department (OSH252) by 5:00PM! I do not accept electronic submissions; it is the student's responsibility to provide me with a paper copy of all work. No late papers will be accepted!

Group Presentation (20%): Country Expert

For several of the country studies (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq) I will ask you to form groups of four to five. You and your fellow students will get together and work on a Policy Brief that will deal either with *political/economic issues* (**Group A**) or with *cultural/social issues* (**Group B**) that one of the countries mentioned above has been having to deal with in the recent past. Your job will be to put together a 6-7 page report (double spaced) of the most relevant issues that each of these countries has been facing and present your findings to class as well as provide the rest of the class with copies of the policy brief (the handouts for your fellow students need not be longer than a one to two page bullet point summary of your presentation). Try to incorporate concepts and theories we have discussed in class when relevant. Do not regurgitate information that has been presented in the Roskin/Coyle textbook. Your task is to update your fellow students on events, incidents, or policies that have taken place or have been introduced in the respective country of your choice since the beginning of 2007. For example, you might want to update us on a recent election (results/implications) that has taken place, explore a major riot/protest in a respective country or analyze a new policy that has been implemented by a particular state (process of ratification/potential consequences). While describing actors and sequences of events is important, it should not make up the core of your policy brief. The emphasis should be on explaining the causes and consequences of a given event(s). I suggest you focus on no more than two to maximum three issues given the time constraints and the fairly brief nature of the policy brief.

You will be allotted 20-25 minutes to present your findings after which your classmates will be allowed to ask questions to the presenters. I will leave it up to the individual group as to how they want to go about their presentation (format, style, assigning individual responsibilities) but I do require all members of the group to be present and ready to answer potential questions raised by students in class.

You can use web sources, information you might have gathered through an academic journal or book, or weekly political magazines (e.g., The Economist, Newsweek, Current History, etc.). Make sure to provide me with at least 4 references that should be listed at the end of your policy brief. You are free to choose the reference system (e.g. (Owen 2004: 111-134) or footnotes at the bottom of the page) but make sure you cite your sources ! Be careful with web sources which are not always reliable and can be partisan.

A sign up sheet with the said countries that you can choose from will be handed out at the beginning of the first week of class. I will compile a list of all group participants and hand out the final schedule with names and e-mail addresses for your convenience. It is the groups' responsibility to meet and coordinate the activities that will lead to a successful completion of this project. The final draft will be due the day following your in-class presentation (which is a Wednesday) by latest 3:00 PM either in my office (OSH325) or in my mailbox in the main POLS department (OSH252). One letter grade will be assigned to the group as a whole. It will be based on the in-class presentation and the final draft of your policy brief.

Presentation days:

Tuesday, November 6th: Turkey (Group A and B)

Tuesday, November 13th: Iran (Group A and B)

Tuesday, November 20th: Saudi Arabia (Group A and B)

Tuesday, November 27th: Iraq (Group A and B)

Midterm Exam (25%): The in-class midterm exam will consist of several short answer questions as well as a couple of essay questions that deal with concepts, issues and authors that we have discussed throughout the first part of the semester. The midterm exam will cover the assigned readings and classroom discussions/lectures. A review sheet containing important terms and sample exam questions will be handed to students a week prior to the midterm. Don't forget to review the map of the Middle East. The in-class midterm is set for Tuesday October 2nd, 2007.

Final Exam (25%): The in-class final exam that will be held the week prior to finals week contains several short answer questions as well as a couple of essay questions that deal with issues and countries that we have discussed throughout the semester. A review sheet containing important terms and sample exam questions will be handed to students a week prior to the final exam. Don't forget to review the map of the Middle East. The in-class final exam is scheduled for Tuesday December 4th, 2007.

Map Quiz: You will be given a blank map of the Middle East and asked to identify several countries and their respective capital cities. The quiz will be part of your midterm and final exam and the score for this quiz will be factored into your midterm/final exam grade. The quiz will require students to pinpoint approximately 5-8 geographic locations and provide the names of various capital cities on a blank Middle East map. It is your

responsibility to familiarize yourself with the map of the Middle East. A variety of Middle East maps are available at:

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east.html

<http://www.mideastweb.org/maps.html>

<http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml>

<http://www.studystack.com/matching-6650>

Course Materials and Readings

Michael Roskin and James J. Coyle, *Politics of the Middle East: Cultures and Conflicts*, 2nd edition, Prentice Hall Publisher, 2007.

Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 2nd edition, Polity Press, 2006.

Fred Halliday, *100 Myths about the Middle East*, University of California Press, 2005.

These books are available for purchase at the University bookstore. In addition, several articles, necessary for assignments, will be placed on electronic reserve (as well as regular reserve) at Marriott Library. They can be viewed, printed or downloaded at (<http://ereserve.lib.utah.edu/webpac-1.2-bin/DoReserve>). To access material on e-reserve:

- Through the Marriott Library:
- Log-in to My.Utah.edu, or
- Click on Course Reserves on the Marriott Library home page and authenticate through the My.Utah.edu
- Directly through My.Utah.edu: Click on the *Academics* option from the left menu

Should you encounter problems logging on or accessing the online articles, please call the *Campus Help Desk* at 581-4000 or the *Reserve Desk* at 581-6049.

It is the students' responsibility to obtain a copy of these articles. They are indicated with an asterisk (*) in the course outline.

Student Academic Conduct: The University of Utah's policies pertaining to Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty will be carefully observed and strictly enforced in this class. This policy appears on pages 11-13 of the 2000-2002 General Catalog and in the electronic Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>

Plagiarism Note

Any instance of plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct, will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may also result in a failing grade for the course. The University's definition of plagiarism is as follows:

“Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing

as one's own, without attribution, any other individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.

ADA Statement: The University of Utah, Department of Political Science seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, <http://disability.utah.edu/> 162 Olpin Union Bldg, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. This information is available in alternative format with prior notification.

Class Schedule

Week 1: Tuesday, August 21st-Thursday, August 23rd, 2007

Topic: Introduction to the Course / Approaches to the study of the Middle East

Milton-Edwards, Chapter 1, pp.1-10 (only)

Halliday, see myths 1, 5, 12, 18, 19 (skim)

Joshua Teitelbaum and Meir Litvak (2006) "Students, Teachers and Edward Said: Taking Stock of Orientalism", *MERIA*, Vol.10, no.1, pp. 23-43*

Zachery Lockman (2004) "Behind the Battle over US Middle East Studies", *MERIP*, pp.1-14*

M. Hakan Yavuz (2003) "Approaches to the Study of Political Islam" in: *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Oxford University Press, pp. 16-21*

Recommended: Douglas Little (2002) "Orientalism, American Style" in: *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Chapter 1, pp. 9-42*

Week 2: Tuesday, August 28th, 2007

Topic: History and Background of the Region

Roskin and Coyle, Chapters 1-2, pp.1-41

Halliday, see myths 38, 76, 79, 86, 89, 93 (skim)

Akbar S. Ahmed (2001) "What is Islam?" in: *Islam Today. A short Introduction to the Muslim World*. I.B. Tauris, N.Y., pp.12-51*

Week 3: Tuesday, September 4th, 2007

Topic: Colonialism and the Modern State System

Milton-Edwards, Chapters 1-2, pp.17-72, see also pp.10-15

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 3, pp.42-56

Halliday, see myths 42, 47, 48, 68 (skim)

F. Gregory Gause III (2000) "The Persistence of Monarchy in the Peninsula: A Comparative Analysis," in: Joseph Kostiner (ed.) *Middle East Monarchies. The Challenge of Modernity*. Lynne Rienner Pub., pp.167-186*

MECA (Middle East and Central Asia) conference held on campus from Thursday September 6th-Saturday September 8th, 2007. I urge interested students to attend various lectures that are free and open to the public. For an updated conference schedule please go to <http://web.utah.edu/meca/>. Key note speakers are **Robert Olsen** (University of Kentucky) who is an expert on Kurdish nationalism, **Robert Pape** (University of Chicago) the author of 'Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism', and **Vali Nasr** (Tufts University) who has recently published 'The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future' (Reza Ali Khazeni Memorial Lecture).

Week 4: Tuesday, September 11th, 2007

Topic: War and Conflict the Middle East

Milton-Edwards, Chapter 4, pp.102-133

Roskin and Coyle, Chapters 4-5, pp.57-101 (skim pp.221-256)

Halliday, see myths 3, 8, 26, 30, 45, 59, 60, 71, 72, 78, 83 (skim)

Morten Valbjorn and Andre Bank (2007) "Signs of a New Arab Cold War: The 2006 Lebanon War and the Sunni-Shi'i Divide." *MERIP*, Vol.242, pp.6-11*

Recommended: Jan Selby (2005) "The Geopolitics of Water in the Middle East: fantasies and realities." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.26, no.2, pp.329-349*

Week 5: Tuesday, September 18th, 2007

Topic: The Political Economy of the Middle East

Milton-Edwards, Chapter 3, pp.73-101

Halliday, see myths 25, 31, 32, 34, 40, 41, 61 (skim)

Robert B. Cunningham and Yasin K. Sarayrah (1994) "Taming Wasta to achieve development," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol.16, Issue 3, pp. 29-43*

Kate Gillespie (2006) "The Middle East's Corruption Conundrum," *Current History*, Vol.105, no.687, pp.40-46*

Ahmed Kanna (2007) "Dubai in a Jagged World," *MERIP*, Vol.243, pp.1-11*

SHORT REVIEW PAPER DUE ON THURSDAY, SEP.20th IN MY OFFICE OR IN MY MAILBOX (OSH252) BY 5:00 PM!

Week 6: Tuesday, September 25th, 2007

Topic: Understanding Political Islam

Milton-Edwards, Chapter 5, pp.134-159

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 16, pp.297-314

Daniel Byman (2005) "Hizballah," in: David G. Kamien (ed.) *The McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook*, New York, pp.195-206 *

REVIEW SHEET WILL BE HANDED OUT!

Week 7: Tuesday, October 2nd, 2007

*****In-Class Midterm Exam 6:00-8:30 PM*****

BRING BLUE BOOKS!

Week 8: Tuesday, October 9th, 2007

FALL BREAK! NO CLASSES!

Week 9: Tuesday, October 16th, 2007

Topic: US Policy in the Middle East

Roskin and Coyle, Chapters 14 and 17, pp.257-276 and pp.315-333

Halliday, see myths 27, 28 (skim)

John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt (2006) "The War over Israel's Influence," *Foreign Policy*, (July/August), pp.57-58 and responses by Aaron Friedberg, Dennis Ross, Ben-Ami Shlomo, Zbigniew Brzezinski, followed by a final response by Mearsheimer and Walt pp.59-66*

Timothy Mitchell, "American Power and Anti-Americanism in the Middle East," in: Andrew and Kristin Ross (eds.) *Anti-Americanism*, New York: NYU Press, 2004, pp.87-106*

Week 10: Tuesday, October 23rd, 2007

Topic: Prospects of Democratization in the Middle East

Milton-Edwards, Chapter 6, pp.160-188

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 15, pp.277-296

Jillian Schwedler and Laryssa Chomiak (2006) "And the Winner is...Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World," *MERIP*, No.238, Vol.36, no.1, pp. 12-19*

Recommended: Jon Alterman (2000) "The Middle East's Information Revolution," *Current History*, Vol.99, No.633, pp.21-26*

Week 11: Tuesday, October 30th, 2007

Topic: Women and Ethnic Minorities

Milton-Edwards, Chapters 7-8, pp.189-211 and pp.212-236

Roskin-Coyle, Chapter 8, pp.146-166

Halliday, see myths 15, 90, 91

Emile Sahliyah, "The Status of Human Rights in the Middle East," in: David P. Forsythe and Patrice C. McMahon (eds.), *Human Rights and Diversity: Area Studies Revisited*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, pp.*

Country Studies

Week 12: Tuesday, November 6th, 2007

Topic: Turkey: Secular Republic or rule of moderate-Islamic party?

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 7, pp.125-145

Soli Oezel (2007) "Turkey Faces West," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. XXXI, No.1, pp.18-25*

*****Group Presentations A and B*****

Week 13: Tuesday, November 13th, 2007

Topic: Iran: Islamic Theocracy or Quasi-Democracy?

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 9, pp.167-185

Bahman Baktiari (2007) "Iran's Conservative Revival," *Current History*, No.106, pp.11-16*

*****Group Presentations A and B*****

Week 14: Tuesday, November 20th, 2007

Topic: Saudi Arabia: Monarchy in decline or persistent rule of House of Saud?

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 10, pp.186-203

F. Gregory Gause III (2004) "Saudi Arabia Challenged," *Current History*, Vol.103, No.669, pp.21-24*

*****Group Presentations A and B*****

Week 15: Tuesday, November 27th, 2007

Topic: Iraq: Failed State or Democracy in the Making?

Roskin and Coyle, Chapter 11, pp.204-220

Christopher Parker and Pete W. Moore (2007) "The War Economy of Iraq," *MERIP*, No.243, pp.1-19*

*****Group Presentations A and B*****

REVIEW SHEET WILL BE HANDED OUT!

Week 16: Tuesday, December 4th, 2007

*****In-Class Final Exam 6:00-8:30 PM*****

BRING BLUE BOOKS!

