

POL S 3440/MID E 3644
COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST
SUMMER 2005

Instructor: Joana Odencrantz
Phone: 581-4262
Office: OSH 323
Office hours: T, H, 11-12 and by appointment
Email: joana.Odencrantz@poli-sci.utah.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW

The analytical lens of ‘the fundamentalist threat’ monopolizes Western discourse—especially in the media—of the phenomenon known as Political Islam. Emphasis on a ‘fundamentalist threat’ hinders political analysis and any real understanding of the diversity and relationships of Islamist movements with modernity.

Burgat and Yavuz both call attention to the role that Political Islam plays in vernacularizing modernity for the Muslim masses. A vernacular is a common language and the language of Islam provides an indigenous vocabulary through which Muslims come to understand and aspire to democracy, a distinct civil society, modern capitalism, and, even, women’s rights.

This course will examine the relationship between Islamist movements and modernity. Previously expressed in Western terms, the West has held a virtual monopoly on modernity and ‘universal’ values expressed through a Western discourse. Is modernity solely the property of the West? Is Westernization the only path to modernization? Political Islam contests these notions and suggests that the analytical lens of ‘the fundamentalist threat’ obscures the emergence of an Islamic modernity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Three analytical paradigms dominate the study of comparative politics of the Middle East. M. Hakan Yavuz discusses these analytical paradigms as essentialism, contextualism, and constructivism. Elsewhere they may be known as cultural, structural, and constructivist approaches. This class aims to acquaint students with these methods of studying Middle East politics.

Our approach to the comparative politics of the Middle East will be topical. Rather than relying upon in-depth case studies of a few particular countries, we will examine various issues or themes that interact with Political Islam in the current political systems of the Middle East. It is useful to keep our analytical paradigms in mind when we examine these themes or issues. The overall goal of this class is to acquaint you with the major themes and issues that characterize modern politics in the Middle East while giving you the analytical tools to approach these issues in a more methodical and systematic manner.

COURSE TEXTS

The following books are available at the University Bookstore:

Burgat, Francois. *Face to Face with Political Islam*

Yavuz, Hakan M. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Other readings will be on reserve at the Marriott Library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Presentation | 50 pts. |
| Midterm (June 7) | 50 pts. |
| Video Reviews | 5 pts ea. (20 total) |
| Final Paper (June 25) | 100 pts |
| Participation | 25 pts. |
| Total: | 245 pts. |

PRESENTATION:

You are required to make a presentation to the class discussing an Islamist movement. What are the strategies and goals of the movement? What are its views with regard to democracy, civil society, women, or economics (pick one of the preceding to discuss in context of your chosen movement). You may not pick Al-Qaeda.

VIDEO REVIEWS:

A short one-page review (double-spaced) of videos shown in class is due at the beginning of the next class.

PARTICIPATION:

Attendance is mandatory as is participation in discussions and the presentations of others. You are expected to pay attention and ask relevant question of the presenters. Completing the reading in a timely manner will improve your ability to participate.

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM

You will be given a take-home midterm that requires you to write essays in response to questions.

FINAL PAPER:

Using one of the analytical paradigms covered by Yavuz (essentialism, contextualism, or constructivism) write a 7-8 page paper that analyzes an issue area for a Middle Eastern country of your choice. Issue areas include:

Colonialism
Nationalism
Political Islam
Women
Political Economy
Democratization
Liberalization
Civil Society

Persons with Disabilities:

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. In order to establish the existence of a disability and/or request reasonable accommodation for this class, you should contact the Center for Disabled Student Services (in Olpin Union Building at 581-5020, voice or TDD). Accommodations can then be made with reasonable prior notice to the instructor.

Plagiarism Policy:

Cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to relevant university authorities and may result in severe consequences. If you are concerned about unintended plagiarism and would like to avoid it, please consult to various sources that describe how to cite references. There are also good online resources that describe ways to avoid internet plagiarism. If you have any further questions, please see me for clarification

CLASS SCHEDULE

May 17: Introduction

May 19: Read Burgat, xiii-ch.1

Yavuz, vii-ch.1

Robert W. Hefner, "Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age" (R)

**VIDEO: BILL MOYERS, THE ARAB WORLD
PARTS 1 & 2**

LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

May 24: **VIDEO REVIEW DUE**

Read Yavuz, ch. 2

Burgat, ch. 2

May 26: Read Burgat, ch. 3 and 4

DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

May 31: **VIDEO: EDWARD SAID ON ORIENTALISM**

Read Yavuz ch. 3

Burgat, ch. 10

June 2: **VIDEO REVIEW DUE**

Yavuz ch. 4

Timur Kuran, "Islamic Economics and the Islamic Subeconomy" (R)

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM HANDED OUT

CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN

June 7: **TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE**

VIDEO: MUSLIMS

Read Yavuz ch. 5

Burgat, ch. 12

June 9: **VIDEO REVIEW DUE**

Read: Burgat, ch. 11

Valentine Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate" (R)

MOVEMENTS AND PARTIES

June 14: Read Burgat, ch. 6-9

June 16: **VIDEO: TOMORROW'S ISLAM**

Read Yavuz, ch. 6-8

June 21: **VIDEO REVIEW DUE**

Read Yavuz, ch. 9-Conclusion

Final Paper Due in the Political Science Dept. (OSH 252) June 25 by 4:00 p.m.