3328-001: INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FALL SEMESTER 2011
COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor: Brent E. Sasley
Class location: 25 University Hall
Office: 412 University Hall
Class time: Mon/Wed/Fri, 10:00-10:50am
Phone: 817-272-3980
E-mail: bsasley@uta.edu

Office hours: Monday, 11:00am-12:00pm, or by appointment
Please note: The best and fastest way to reach me is by email.

COURSE CONTENT AND DESCRIPTION:

Albert Einstein argued that the purpose of a university education is not to teach students just facts, but to teach them to think. To this end, this course will introduce students to the politics of the contemporary Middle East. It is divided into three sections: Section A explores the historical processes that have laid the foundations for the current order in the region, including political, social, economic, cultural, and security patterns. Section B discusses the struggle for self-determination; that is, efforts by regional actors to obtain independence from the colonial powers. Section C considers some of the contemporary challenges and issues facing Middle Eastern states and societies today. The course will not necessarily provide definitive answers to relevant questions. Rather, it will provide the skills and knowledge necessary for students to think creatively about their own answers.

It is advisable that students keep up with current developments in Middle East politics. Although this is not a course on current events per se, these will of necessity be part of the class discussions. Students can follow developments in all major media outlets—such as CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post, BBC, and so on—as well as regional media.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course students will be familiar with some of the various processes within and the norms of interaction between contemporary Middle Eastern states. To meet these goals the course has the following objectives:

- Identify key concepts used for investigating contemporary Middle East politics, and acknowledge some of the different ideas that shape the study of Middle East politics. This provides us with the appropriate tools for our exploration of the region.
Describe the basic shape of the contemporary Middle Eastern order and its component parts. This equips us with a range of necessary facts that are vital to informed discussion, such as when the various states became independent, what kind of political systems they utilize, and so on.

Understand why the current Middle Eastern order looks as it does. Building on the previous objective, this takes us into a deeper, more detailed examination of regional structures, processes, and actors.

Think critically about Middle East politics. It is easy to take a stance on a given issue, but more difficult to defend that stance in a logical manner that rests on a judicious, nuanced, and open-minded foundation of understanding. Learning to think critically allows us to do so.

Connect this knowledge to a better understanding of politics in general, in any region of the world. By sharpening our critical thinking and analytical skills, we can more effectively take on the problems faced by societies everywhere.

Format:
The course is conducted within a lecture framework. But class time will be used for general discussions and group work, in order to give students more time to discuss their own ideas and to understand the material through dialogue. Because this is a university course, students are expected to actively participate in class discussions, and are encouraged to question and debate with the instructor and each other on the various issues. This must be done in a productive and civil manner. Personal attacks and polemics will not be tolerated. The purpose of a freer flow of dialogue is to better understand and absorb the materials covered in class, and offensive actions and ideological or political agendas impede this process. Students who engage in such activities will have to leave the class.

PowerPoint will be used, but only to provide a skeletal outline of the lectures; students must pay attention to and take notes on what is said in class. Otherwise, they will not learn what is necessary for the course and the assignments.

The lectures are based in part on the readings, but will not necessarily directly discuss them; it will be assumed that students have done the readings.

Both the professor and the students have obligations and responsibilities in this course.

My responsibilities include making clear the objectives and material of the course; training students to think critically; returning assignments within a reasonable period of time with adequate comments and suggestions for improvement; treating students with respect and a willingness to hear their opinions and ideas; and keeping my own personal politics out of the classroom.

Students’ responsibilities include taking seriously the purposes and assignments of the course; preparing themselves adequately for the lectures; handing their assignments in
on time; treating each other and the professor with respect and a willingness to hear other opinions and ideas; and a readiness to think about the material with an open mind while keeping their own personal politics out of the classroom.

Students are also responsible for their own attendance and participation in class. Students who do miss class are responsible for obtaining the material discussed in class from their colleagues. I will not provide notes from lectures or discussions, but I am happy to discuss the material with a student who has already obtained the information. Poor attendance and poor participation will reflect on your final grade.

All cell phones, gadgets for listening to music, playing games, or contacting other people, and all similar devices must be turned off prior to the beginning of class. Students who engage in such activities will have to leave the class.

Please note that topics may change or may not be covered, and assignment structures might change as well, depending on unforeseen circumstances. Any such changes are at the instructor's discretion. If there are any changes, they will be announced in class; students then are responsible for knowing whether and when any changes have been made.

*Communicating by E-mail:*

Outside of class, email is the best way to reach me. Please use standard polite greetings and address me not as a close friend but as your professor. Please note that one-line comments or questions are not enough for me to know what you are trying to say: be sure your email provides enough detail and explains the context of your comment or question, including which course you are emailing about.

**Required Texts:**

There are three sources of mandatory readings for this course:

- A coursepack of readings, available for purchase at the UTA Bookstore. Coursepack readings will be referred to in the reading list below as (Coursepack).

- Specific URLs available on the course Blackboard. To access these, log in with your UTA NetID and password at <https://elearn.uta.edu/webapps/login/>. Blackboard readings will be referred to as (Blackboard).

- Journal articles (in PDF form) available on e-reserves at the library. To access these, log in with your UTA NetID and password to the library's website (“Catalog,” then “Course Reserves”). Library reserve readings will be referred to as (Library).

**Assignments and Grade Distribution:**

*Movie reports.* Students will write three movie reports, one per movie shown during the course, each worth 10% of the final grade. Movie reports are due on Wednesday,
September 7, on Wednesday, October 12, and on Wednesday, October 31. Each report is to be 2-3 pages in length, excluding title page and bibliography; going under or over this range will result in a penalty, as the purpose is to learn how to make an argument in a specified amount of space.

Movie reports are due at the beginning of class and must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted. Each movie report is due at the beginning of class; a report that is emailed in after class begins will be considered late. Late reports will not be accepted without penalty, unless there is a valid medical excuse and doctor’s note or evidence of another serious and unavoidable reason. Common but invalid excuses include (but are not limited to): computer, printer, or car troubles; being sick the day the assignment is due; visiting friends or relatives; having other work. Documentation is always required and is subject to verification. Reports handed in after class begins, but on the same day the assignment is due, will be penalized one percentage point per day off the mark received out of the total worth of the assignment, with an additional percentage point taken off for each additional day the report is late (i.e., 1% per day off whatever grade is given out of 10%). Any requests for an extension must be made before the due date of the assignment. Reports will not be accepted after 3 calendar days after the due date; students will then receive a zero on the assignment.

Movie reports do not require research, though students may include and cite research if they wish. Each report must explain how the relevant movie ties into the course readings and class lectures/discussions. An assignment sheet with some questions for consideration will be handed out before each movie. These questions will serve as the basis/framework for the report, but the report will also include your own perceptions and critical analysis.

Reports must be typed or word-processed, with normal font, spacing, and margins. Reports must have the standard format required of a university paper, including title page and page numbers. Students should also be sure to keep a copy of their assignments for themselves. Reports will be returned to students by email, with comments in the text through the Track Changes feature in Word as well as an attached page of remarks. Note that all reports will be reviewed by a plagiarism-detection program: this is not due to a presumption of guilt but rather is used as a teaching tool. Reports must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted.

Writing assignments. Students will write two short papers, each worth 20% of the final grade. Papers are due on Monday, September 28 and on Friday, December 2. Each paper is to be 5-8 pages in length, excluding title page and bibliography; going under or over this range will result in a penalty, as the purpose is to learn how to make an argument in a specified amount of space. Each paper is due by the beginning of the class on the due date. Papers must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted.

All papers are due at the beginning of class; a paper that is handed in after class begins will be considered late. Late papers will not be accepted without penalty, unless there is a valid medical excuse and doctor’s note or evidence of another serious and unavoidable reason. Common but invalid excuses include (but are not limited to):
computer, printer, or car troubles; being sick the day the assignment is due; visiting friends or relatives; having other work. Documentation is always required and is subject to verification. Papers emailed in after class begins, but on the same day the assignment is due, will be penalized one percentage point per day off the mark received out of the total worth of the assignment, with an additional percentage point taken off for each additional day the report is late (i.e., 1% per day off whatever grade is given out of 20%). Any requests for an extension must be made before the due date of the assignment. Papers will not be accepted after 3 calendar days after the due date; students will then receive a zero on the assignment.

The papers will be based on the themes and topics of the course. The specific nature of the assignments will be posted on Blackboard well in advance of the due date. Examples of assignments could include: analysis of a reading or comparison of two readings; a particular question about a specific topic studied in a section; a policy memo; and so on.

Papers must be typed or word-processed, with normal font, spacing, and margins. Papers must have the standard format required of a university paper, including title page, proper and consistent citation style, bibliography, and page numbers. Regardless of the style used, page numbers must be included in the citations and bibliography. Students should also be sure to keep a copy of their assignments for themselves. Papers will be returned to students by email, with comments in the text through the Track Changes feature in Word as well as an attached page of remarks. Note that all papers will be reviewed by a plagiarism-detection program: this is not due to a presumption of guilt but rather is used as a teaching tool. Papers must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted.

These are research papers, and so research must be based on scholarly sources, which means journal articles, books, and academic reports from well-known research institutes (some of the latter are listed on the library guide for the course). Students must use at least two books and two journal articles in their research for each paper (none of which can be on the course reading list). Dictionaries, lecture notes, encyclopedias (including Wikipedia), and many websites are not acceptable; students are strongly advised to consult with the professor first to find out if a source is suitable or not. Sources containing basic background information (e.g., the CIA World Factbook) and media reports are not scholarly sources; but they are useful for providing empirical evidence for an argument.

Although it is not mandatory, students are strongly encouraged to confer with the professor about their papers on a regular basis, including regarding the specific topic, the paper’s content, style/structure, bibliography, and so on. I am also happy to read over a draft or several drafts (however long or short) of the paper and provide comments, so long as the paper is given to me with enough time to go through it before the due date.

Students are expected to use proper format, structure, grammar, and citations in all of their assignments; how students make their arguments is as important as what they argue. If a student hands in an assignment that does not meet these
standard university requirements, she will be asked to re-submit the assignment with the requisite changes and a penalty. For technical material, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), sixth edition or later. Students may also consult the professor or the Writing Center for further help.

**Midterm test.** There will be one in-class midterm test, **worth 05% of the final grade**, written on **Wednesday, November 2**. It will cover everything studied from the beginning of the course up to and including the class on Monday, October 31 (lectures, class discussions, readings, films, and any other materials covered in the course). The format of the midterm test is a single essay section. It will reflect the structure and substance of the final exam; the purpose is to give students practice writing a critical analysis of the course material, obtain feedback, and get a better feel for the nature of expectations for the final exam. Students may not use books, notes, electronic devices, or anything else to help write their test, and they may not use the same exam booklet for the final exam. Students who are late to the test will **not** be given extra time to finish.

There will be **no** make-up test, barring a very serious development or illness. Common but invalid excuses include (but are not limited to): computer, printer, or car troubles; visiting friends or relatives; having other work. If there is an illness, students will have to provide a medical note—not one in which a doctor writes that the student confirms he/she was sick, but a detailed note explaining that the doctor knows for a fact that the student was sick on the day of the test and could not be expected to write. Documentation must be provided for a missed test within five calendar days after the missed test, regardless of the reason, and is subject to verification. Any requests for a deferral must be made **before** the date of the test in order to be considered, and are at the professor’s discretion. A missed test must be made up **within five school days** after the date of the original scheduled test. No make-up will be allowed after five school days, and a zero will be assigned for that grade.

**Final exam.** A final 2.5-hour exam, **worth 20% of the final grade**, will be written at the end of the course, during the university’s final exam period, on **Monday, December 12, 8:00 – 10:30am**. The exam will be **cumulative**, taking into account everything studied from the beginning of the course (lectures, class discussions, readings, films, and any other materials covered in the course). The format of the final exam is two essay sections. Students may not use books, notes, electronic devices, or anything else to help write their exams, and they may not use the same exam booklet used for the midterm test. Students who are late to the exam will **not** be given extra time to finish.

There will be **no** make-up exam, barring a very serious development or illness. Common but invalid excuses include (but are not limited to): computer, printer, or car troubles; visiting friends or relatives; having other work. If there is an illness, students will have to provide a medical note—not one in which a doctor writes that the student confirms he/she was sick, but a detailed note explaining that the doctor knows for a fact that the student was sick on the day of the exam and could not be expected to write. Documentation must be provided for a missed exam within five days after the missed exam, regardless of the reason, and is subject to verification. Any requests for a deferral must be made **before** the date of the exam in order to be considered, and are at the
professor’s discretion. A missed exam must be made up within five school days after the date of the original scheduled exam. No make-up will be allowed after five school days, and a zero will be assigned for that grade.

Please note that no extra credit work is provided or allowed, regardless of circumstances. Please also note that not completing an assignment (paper, midterm test, movie report, final exam) and instead re-weighting the worth of other course assignments is not an option.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Neither the professor nor the university has any tolerance for any form of academic dishonesty. Students who engage in such activities will face serious penalties, ranging from (among others) failure of the assignment, failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion from the university. According to the Regents’ Rules and Regulations, academic (scholastic) dishonesty “includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.”

**Students with Disabilities:**

The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation. As the professor I am required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. It is the students’ responsibility to inform me of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. You may contact the Office for Students with Disabilities for more information: (817) 272-3364, or www.uta.edu/disability.

**Dropping the Course:**

Students are responsible for deciding whether or not they should drop the course, and for being aware of the consequences of doing so. The last day to drop classes is November 4, 2011. Students should see their respective departmental advisors for more information.

**Student Success Programs:**

The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of programs to help students connect with the University and achieve academic success. These programs include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at (817) 272-6107, or http://www.uta.edu/uac/studentsuccess-home/.
Movie reports (3): 10% each (Due: Wednesday, September 7; Wednesday, October 12; and Monday, October 31)

Writing assignments (2): 20% each (Due: Monday, September 28; Friday, December 2)

Midterm test: 10% (Wednesday, November 2, in class)

Final exam: 20% (Monday, December 12, 8:00-10:30am)

Grading Scale:

A  80-100%
B  70-79%
C  60-69%
D  50-59%
F  0-49%

Course Schedule:

Friday, August 26: Introduction to course

No readings.

Monday, August 29: What is the “Middle East”?

Efraim Karsh, “Cold War, Post-Cold War: Does It Make a Difference for the Middle East?” Review of International Studies 23, no.3 (July 1997): 271-291. (Library)

Wednesday, August 31: Film: Caramel

Friday, September 2: Film: Caramel, cont.

Monday, September 5: Labor Day—No class

Wednesday, September 7: Movie report #1 due

How to write a paper for this class

Purdue Online Writing Lab, “Avoiding Plagiarism.” (Read sections: Overview; Is it Plagiarism?; Safe Practices; Plagiarism Exercise; all linked on the left side of the page.) (Blackboard)
Section A: Historical Antecedents

Friday, September 9:   The rise of Islam


Monday, September 12:   The rise of Islam, cont.


Wednesday, September 14:   Divisions in Islam: Sunni and Shia


Friday, September 16:   The Ottoman Empire


Monday, September 19:   The Ottoman Empire, cont.


Wednesday, September 21:   World War One and its aftermath


Section B: The Struggle for Self-Determination

Friday, September 23:   Colonialism in the Middle East


Monday, September 26:   Colonialism and the Mandate system


*San Remo Resolution* (April 25, 1920). Council on Foreign Relations. (Blackboard)
The Palestine Mandate (July 24, 1922). The Avalon Project at Yale Law School. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, September 28: Writing assignment #1 due
Monarchies, notables, and foreign dependence


Friday, September 30: Rosh Hashanah—No class

Monday, October 3: The Arab struggle for independence


Wednesday, October 5: Film: Kilometre Zero

Friday, October 7: Film: Kilometre Zero, cont.

Monday, October 10: The creation of modern Turkey


Wednesday, October 12: Movie report #2 due
The rise of radical-nationalism


Friday, October 14: The rise of radical-nationalism, cont.


Monday, October 17: The decline of radical-nationalism

**Wednesday, October 19:** The decline of radical-nationalism, cont.


**Friday, October 21:** Dominant identity groups in the Middle East


**Section C: Contemporary Issues**

**Monday, October 24:** Film: *Secret Ballot*

**Wednesday, October 26:** Film: *Secret Ballot, cont.*

**Friday, October 28:** No class

**Monday, October 31:** Movie report #3 due

No class

**Wednesday, November 2:** Midterm test (in class)

**Friday, November 4:** Arab Human Development Report, 2009


**Monday, November 7:** Arab Human Development Report, 2009, cont.


**Wednesday, November 9:** Authoritarianism in the Arab world


Friday, November 11: Authoritarianism in the Arab world, cont.


Monday, November 14: An Arab Spring?


Wednesday, November 16: An Arab Spring?, cont.

Marc Lynch, “Why Libya Matters to the Middle East’s Future.” Interview at NPR, March 22, 2011. (Listen to the interview [44.5 minutes] or read the transcript.) (Blackboard)

Friday, November 18: US involvement in the Middle East


US President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Beginning.” Cairo, Egypt. June 4, 2009. (Blackboard)

Monday, November 21: US involvement in the Middle East, cont.


Wednesday, November 23: Petropolitics


Friday, November 25: Thanksgiving—No class

Monday, November 28: Petropolitics, cont.

Wednesday, November 30: Globalization and economic stress


Friday, December 2: Writing assignment #2 due

Globalization and economic stress, cont.


Monday, December 5: The rise of Islamist movements


Wednesday, December 7: The rise of Islamist movements, cont.


Hamas, “The Hamas Charter.” (Blackboard)

Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt), “Religion and Politics, Useful Correlation, Impossible Separation.” (Blackboard)

Friday, December 9: Review for final exam

No readings.

Monday, December 12: Final exam (8:00 – 10:30am)