5333-001: Identity and Politics in the Middle East

University of Texas at Arlington, Department of Political Science
Fall Semester 2011
Course Outline

Professor: Brent E. Sasley                               Class location: 455 University Hall
Office: 412 University Hall                               Class time: Monday, 7:00-9:50pm
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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:

Given Albert Einstein’s argument that the purpose of a university education is not to teach students just facts, but to teach them to think, 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. To this end, the course will investigate specific aspects of contemporary Middle East politics, including an examination of relevant historical processes. It is not designed as an introductory course: students unfamiliar with the Middle East are strongly advised to first read through a general history of the region.

The course seeks to advance our understanding of: how we study the Middle East, and the debates and controversies this engenders; processes of state building and political development; authoritarianism (in the Arab world) and prospects for change in the context of the Arab Spring; oil and economic systems; Islamist politics; Arab nationalism; the role of transnational ideas in shaping state development; and political and economic reform. Underlying all of these topics is an emphasis on identity, and how it shapes contemporary politics.

Students should keep up with current development in the Middle East; these will be part of the general discussions and used as examples to highlight particular points or issues. Students can follow developments on-line in all major media outlets—such as CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post, BBC, and so on—as well as regional outlets (see the course’s library guide for links to these).

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students will be familiar with the organization and various processes of Middle East politics. To meet these goals the course has the following objectives:
Identify key concepts and theoretical frameworks used for investigating the development of Middle Eastern states, institutions, and politics, and acknowledge some of the different ideas that shape the study of the region. These provide us with the appropriate tools for our exploration of this 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 the issues that are at stake, who the relevant actors are, 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.

OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

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 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, 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 four 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).
- Book excerpts in pdf format on e-reserve at the library. Library reserve readings will be referred to as (e-reserves).

**Assignments and Grade Distribution:**

*Participation.* Because this course is a seminar, students are expected to: (1) Actively prepare for class by thinking about and evaluating the assigned readings, and (2) Actively participate in class discussion and debates; in fact, students should do most of the talking in class. Without students’ vigorous participation, the course will simply not work and everyone’s time will be wasted. Participation is **worth 30% of the final grade.**

*Critical review essay.* Students will write one critical review essay, **3-6 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. (The topic will be assigned in the first class). The essay should only discuss the readings for a particular class/topic. Students should not repeat or summarize the readings; everyone else will have read the material. Rather, students should focus on drawing out general themes and common (or disparate) threads, taking a position on a major point raised in the readings (and be prepared to defend that position), highlighting strengths or weaknesses of the readings, and so on. In short, the essay is meant to be a critical-analytical evaluation of the material and how it relates to that class’s topic and the course materials more generally. The review essay is worth 15% of the final grade. In order to facilitate the critiques of these essays, critical review essays must be emailed to the professor by 10:00pm on the Friday before the scheduled class/topic on which the essay is based. The professor will then post the essay to the course Blackboard, with the expectation that everyone will read and be prepared to discuss it.

Students will also present their essay to the class, in the form of an oral presentation, about 10-12 minutes long, on the day of that topic. Students should feel free to be as creative as they wish in presenting their material—including the use of short films, websites, slides, charts, fictional dialogue, or any other format they wish to use to impart their analysis.

There is no deferral or make-up presentation; students who do not hand in their essay on time and present on their scheduled day will receive a zero on this assignment.

Essays 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. Papers must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted. 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.

Essay critique. Students will critique one critical review essay (to be assigned in the first class). Similar to the critical review essay, this assignment is composed of both a presentation and a written element. The essay critique should be 3-4 pages in length (excluding title page and bibliography). The critique is based only on the critical review essay it is addressing; outside research is not necessary, though it can be incorporated. In the critique students must analyze and assess a critical review essay. The critique should point out problems, weaknesses, flaws, inconsistencies, implications, and so on in the essay’s arguments. It should not summarize the essay or highlights its strengths; the assignment is meant to be a critical evaluation. The essay critique should focus on the critical review’s writing style, essay structure, grammar, or anything like that: it should focus only on the substance of the review’s evaluation. The essay critique should engage directly with the readings as it does so.
Critiques must be emailed in before the beginning of the class in which they will be presented—hard copies will not be accepted. Students will present their critique after the critical review essay is presented, and should take no more than 10 minutes. The essay critique is worth 15% of the final grade. There is no deferral or make-up presentation; students who do not email in their critique on time and present on their scheduled day will receive a zero on this assignment.

Critiques 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. Critiques 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.

Movie report. Students will write one movie report, worth 10% of the final grade, on the film shown in class on October 24. The report is to be 3-4 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. It is due by Monday, October 31, 7:00pm.

The movie report must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted. 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.

The report does not require research, though students may include and cite research if they wish. The report must explain how the film ties into the course readings and class lectures/discussions. An assignment sheet with some questions for consideration will be posted on the course Blackboard before the day of the film. 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. Reports must be emailed in—hard copies will not be
accepted. Students should also be sure to keep a copy of their reports 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.

**Short research project.** Students will write and present one short research project, 12-15 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. The research project is **worth 15% of the final grade**, and **must be emailed in**—hard copies will not be accepted.

In order to facilitate the discussion of these projects, the papers must be emailed to the professor by **10:00pm on the Friday before the scheduled class** on which the paper will be presented. The professor will then post the paper to the course Blackboard, with the expectation that everyone will read and be prepared to discuss it.

The research project will be specifically about the Arab Spring. Each student will be assigned one Arab country. Each project **must answer four specific questions**: (1) When did the Arab Spring begin in your country? (2) Why did it begin? (3) What shape has it taken? (4) What are the implications, in your view, for the country and the region?

Although these are research projects, in the sense that students will conduct their own research, it should be written like a policy memo: that is, as though you are an advisor to a government, or an NGO, or any type of organization that has asked you to very succinctly describe and explain this issue. Keep the paper very condensed, explicit, to the point, and be sure to directly and only answer these four questions.

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.

All papers are due at the beginning of class; a paper that is emailed 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 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 15%). 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.

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**. Papers must be emailed in—hard copies will not be accepted. Students should also be sure to keep a copy of their assignments for themselves. Critiques 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.

Students will also present their research projects to the class on the day of that topic, in the form of an oral presentation. The presentation should be a **maximum of 12 minutes**. This is an opportunity for students to inform the rest of the class (including the professor) about the issue and its importance. Students should feel free to be as creative as they wish in presenting their material—including the use of short films, websites, slides, charts, fictional dialogue, or any other format they wish to use to impart their analysis.

These are research projects, 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 course’s library guide). **Students must use at least two books and two journal articles in their research for their paper** (neither 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.

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 Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), sixth edition or later; the course Blackboard also has links on citations and bibliographies. Students may also consult the professor for further help.

**Final exam.** A final **take-home exam, worth 15% of the final grade**, will be written at the end of the course. Students will have **one week** to write the exam: It will be posted on the course Blackboard and accessible at the end of the final class on December 5,
and due by **Monday, December 12, midnight**. The exam will be cumulative, taking into account everything studied from the beginning of the course (class discussions, readings, film, and any other materials covered in the course). The format of the final exam is one essay question. Students should not conduct any outside research; their focus should be on the course materials.

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 three 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 three school days after the date of the original scheduled exam. No make-up will be allowed after three 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 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/.

- **Participation:** 30% (Throughout the course)
- **Critical review essay:** 15% (Due the day of that topic)
- **Essay critique:** 15% (Due the day of that topic)
- **Movie report:** 10% (Due Monday, October 31, 7:00pm)
- **Research project:** 15% (Due the day of that topic)
- **Final exam:** 15% (Due Monday, December 12, midnight)

**GRADING SCALE:**

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

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

- **Monday, August 29:** Introduction to course
  
  *No readings.*
- **Monday, September 5:** *Labor Day—No class*
Monday, September 12: 

Politics in the study of Middle East politics


Lisa Anderson, “Scholarship, Policy, Debate, and Conflict: Why We Study the Middle East and Why It Matters,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 38, no.1 (June 2004). (Blackboard)


Campus Watch, “About Campus Watch.” (Blackboard)


Monday, September 19: 

State formation


David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999: Chapters 2 (19-52); 3 (53-73); 4 (74-94). (e-reserves)


**Monday, September 26:** Identity politics and state development


**Monday, October 3:** Legitimacy and authority


**Monday, October 10:** Explaining autocracy (in the Arab world)

Freedom House, *Country Reports*, 2011. [Skim reports on Middle Eastern states] (Blackboard)


Monday, October 17: Explaining autocracy (in the Arab world), cont.

Michael Herb, “Princes and Parliaments in the Arab World,” *Middle East Journal* 58, no.3 (Summer 2004): 367-384. (Library)


Alan Richards, “Democracy in the Arab Region: Getting There from Here,” *Middle East Policy* 12, no.2 (Summer 2005): 28-35. (Library)


Monday, October 24: Film: *Secret Ballot*

Monday, October 31: Movie report due

No class

Monday, November 7: Islamism and Islamist movements


Mark Tessler, “Religion, Religiosity and the Place of Islam in Political Life: Insights from the Arab Barometer Surveys,” *Middle Eastern Law & Governance* 2, no.2 (August 2010): 221-252. (Library)


Hamas, “The Hamas Charter.” (Blackboard)

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


**Monday, November 14:** Arab nationalism and permeability


Marc Lynch, “Beyond the Arab Street: Iraq and the Arab Public Sphere,” *Politics & Society* 31, no.1 (March 2003): 55-91. (Library)


**Monday, November 21:** Predicting reform in the Arab world(?)


Emma C. Murphy, “Agency and Space: The Political Impact of Information Technologies in the Gulf Arab States,” Third World Quarterly 27, no.6 (September 2006):1059-1083. (Library)


F. Gregory Gause, III, “Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring,” Foreign Affairs 90, no.4 (July/August 2011): 81-90. (Library)


Monday, November 28: The Arab Spring: Explanations and implications

Student papers; to be posted on Blackboard.

Monday, December 5: The Arab Spring: Explanations and implications, cont.

Student papers; to be posted on Blackboard.

Monday, December 12: Final exam due by midnight.