The aim of this course is to provide students with a general understanding of how the history, geography and sociology of the Middle East shape current politics, war and conflict. General factors include the region’s history of colonialism and decolonization, the politics of oil and oil dependency, and the interplay of Arab, Muslim and other identities in steering the politics of modern nation-states, especially regarding challenges to authoritarianism and the so-called “Arab Spring”. Through this interdisciplinary “area studies” approach, we will then consider the emergence of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, its origins and impact, and how conflict resolution is impeded by long-standing rivalries, including western interests, in the Middle East as a whole.

READINGS

BOOKS TO PURCHASE


Additional articles and book chapters will be posted on D2L.
REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements: This advanced course requires that you integrate TWO sources: (1) the reading assignments for each week, and (2) your notes from class discussions. One source does not substitute for the other; they must be combined. You are expected to read all the assigned readings in full, whether or not you write a reaction paper on them, and come to class prepared to discuss them. Your informed and thoughtful class participation and in your papers is expected.

Specific requirements:

1. Participation and Attendance: Attendance to all class sessions is expected. Two unexcused absences are allowed, but every additional two unexcused absences will incur a 1/2-grade penalty off your final grade. (Excused absences are those that receive prior approval from me. Approval will be granted only for illness, emergencies or events beyond your control. Independent documentation of these situations is required.) Because arriving late disrupts the class and results in your missing important announcements, every 3 latenesses will incur the same half-grade penalty. Participation in class discussion is not quantified, but your active participation, reflecting your genuine and serious engagement with the material under debate, will weigh favorably in cases of borderline grades.

2. Map Quiz. A quiz covering the countries, capital cities and major geographic features of the modern Middle East and North African (MENA) region. 10 percent.

3. Reaction Papers: one-page papers on each week’s reading, which you will post on D2L each week before the Tuesday discussion. Ten of twelve possible papers are required. If you do more than ten, I’ll take off the lowest grade/s. Because papers must draw from your own reading of the assignment and not our in-class discussion of it, no late papers are permitted. Guidelines will be provided. Note: Plan your week to ensure you have time to do these papers carefully, with time to think about them and edit your first drafts. 50%

4. Mid-Term. An in-class exam consisting of multiple choice, short IDs and a short essay, covering material in the first half of the course. 15%

5. One 10-12-page paper on a topic of your choice in consultation with me. Due on 12 May at midnight. 25%.

Other Matters:

Note for students with disabilities: if you need special conditions to fulfil course requirements, I’m glad to accommodate you, but you must notify me two weeks in advance.

NOTE on academic honesty: I take academic honesty very seriously and will fail work that shows any evidence of plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the use of other people’s writing or work without attribution and representing it falsely as your own.) Repeated cases of plagiarism or plagiarism on your final paper will earn a failing grade in the course. It’s your responsibility to know the rules of citation. If you have any doubt about them, SEE ME! I’m glad to help - that’s what I’m here for.

Please see the Syllabus Attachment for general University policies.
WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS (DRAFT: Note that readings may change. Reading assignments and PDF articles will be posted on D2L.)

I. Introduction to the Middle East – Where is it? What is it?
II. The Modern Middle East: empires, colonialism and decolonization
   RP 1. Goldschmidt & Davidson, Concise History of the Middle East, chapters TBA
III. Modern Arab State Formation: The Case of Libya
   RP 2. Dirk Vandewalle, A History of Modern Libya, chapters TBA
   THURSDAY: MAP QUIZ
IV. Gender/Orientalism
V. Political Dependency
   RP 4. Kapuscinski, Shah of Shahs, pages/chapters TBA
VI. The Politics of Oil
   RP 5. Yergin, The Prize, chapters TBA
VII. The Problem of Palestine
   RP 6. Goldschmidt & Davidson, Concise History of the Middle East, chapters TBA
VIII. Cold War Politics and Dictatorships: The Case of Syria
   RP 7. Seale, Asad, chapters TBA
   SPRING BREAK
IX. Post-9/11: Al-Qaida
   TUESDAY: MIDTERM EXAM
X. Afghanistan and the Taliban
   RP 8. Chapters/Articles TBA
XI. The US Invasion of Iraq
   RP 9. Chandrasekaran, Imperial Life in the Emerald City, chapters TBA
XII. The Arab Spring: The Case of Egypt
   RP 10. Chapters/Articles TBA
XIII. The Arab Spring: The Case of Syria
   RP 11. Special articles TBA
XIV. The Islamic State
XV. Concluding Analysis

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Tuesday, 10 May 2015 at midnight.