

PLSC 310/HIST 312 Politics of the Middle East SPRING 2022

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Office Hours: Monday from 3pm to 4pm (or by appointment)

Course Description

This course introduces students to various political aspects of the Middle East from a Comparative Politics and International Relations perspective. Rather than being a current events course, this course is aimed at undergraduate students interested in theoretical concepts and their applications. Throughout this course, students will learn about the theories behind important political phenomenon, such as regime type, democratization, revolutions, domestic politics, and foreign policy formation, all with a specific focus on the Middle East. No prior knowledge of the Middle East - or its political phenomenon - is required to take the course, although other pre-requisite courses may be required to enroll. After successfully completing the course, students will gain insight into the patterns of domestic policy, political behavior, and regional dynamics in the Middle East.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- understand basic concepts related to Comparative Politics and International Relations in the Middle East
- Analyze the theoretical underpinnings of important political phenomenon, such as regime types, transitions, and foreign policy formation
- Identify and discuss solutions to problems identified with theoretical concepts
- Communicate effectively through discussions and written responses
- Apply methods, theories, and concepts covered in the course to their own research interests

Required Readings

The readings for this course will be distributed by the instructor through Moodle. No other textbooks are required. Students are only responsible for reading the required texts; suggested texts are listed to provide additional resources.

Course Assessment

This course will assess the students through four different instruments. The breakdown for the course's assignments is given below.

Assignment Name	Marks Percentage	Mode of Submission
Attendance & Weekly Discussions	20%	In-person & online
Response Papers (4)	20%	Online
Take-home Midterm	30%	Online
Final Exam	30%	Online

1. **Weekly Class Discussions & Participation:** Each week students will participate in class discussions when they are on-campus. These discussions will be held on Moodle through a discussion forum for students who have permission from the Vice Rector's Office (VRO) to take the entire course online. Excluding any special weeks listed in the Reading Schedule, all other weeks will have class discussions that will be graded. Reading the assigned texts before coming to class is required, and students are expected to take part in class discussions based on their understanding of the readings. Before each class, the instructor will ask students to provide questions they have for the week's readings individually, which will be subsequently addressed during the lecture. Students can also post questions in a separate 'Questions' thread on Moodle.

Students' Responsibilities:

Each student must have questions ready that pertain to the week's readings. The instructor may ask each student individually to provide her/his questions before the start of each class. Each student must participate in class and respond to discussion questions (in-person or online on Moodle if semester is being taken completely online). **Completely online students are responsible for participation through Moodle discussion forums only; blended mode students will get their attendance and discussion graded in-class only.** If course switches to fully online instruction for some reason, then discussions will be held through Moodle forums. The expectations for each mode of learning are listed below.

For blended-mode students: In-class participation will be graded.

For completely online students: Students following along online will have discussion questions posted online as a forum post on Moodle. These forum posts will be online during the entire corresponding week, but will be taken down after the Friday class of each week. Before this deadline, each online asynchronous student must respond at least once to the instructor's original question. Replying to other students' replies is encouraged but is not mandatory. Online students can also ask their own questions in the Questions thread.

2. **Response Papers:** Students will write **four (4)** response papers in total for weeks specified in the Response Paper Schedule (below); students must write a **two-page, double-spaced, size 12 font** response paper for each of the chosen weeks. Response papers must be submitted online through the relevant submission links on Moodle. Submissions after the start of the class will be considered late and will result in penalties (described below in the course policies section).

A response paper is a student's reaction to the week's assigned readings, and must include a demonstration of the student's understanding of the text. Students can choose to write a response paper on only one of the week's readings, or they can choose to combine two readings with a similar topic; if writing on two readings, students must still write only **one** response paper per week. The response paper should not be a summary of the reading; rather, it should contain the student's critique of the material and ways to overcome said shortcomings.

Students' Responsibilities: Each student must write four response papers during the semester. Response papers must be submitted before the start of the respective week's class on Moodle. For example, for Week 4's readings, your response paper is due at the start of the Monday class in Week 4.

3. **Take-home Midterm:** The instructor will assign a question for a take-home midterm exam, and submission deadlines will be intimated later on. The take-home midterm exam will make students answer a question based on applying a concept that they would have covered in their readings. The answer to the midterm exam should not exceed **six (6) double-spaced pages with size 12 font**. This paper must be submitted online through Moodle; no other modes of submission are allowed. The grading rubric for the research paper is available on Moodle.

Students' Responsibilities: Each student must complete and submit the take-home midterm exam through Moodle, keeping in mind the parameters mentioned above.

4. **Final Exam:** The instructor will assign a question for a take-home final exam, and submission deadlines will be intimated later on.

Students' Responsibilities: Each student must complete and submit the final exam through Moodle, keeping in mind the parameters mentioned above.

Grading Legend

Below is the grading legend of FCCU (published in all catalogs and available on the FCCU website) as approved by the Academic Council and applies for Fall as well.

Grade	Point Value	Numerical Value	Meaning
A	4	93-100	Superior
A-	3.7	90-92	
B+	3.3	87-89	Good
B	3	83-86	
B-	2.7	80-82	
C+	2.3	77-79	Satisfactory
C	2	73-76	
C-	1.7	70-72	
D+	1.3	67-69	Passing
D	1	60-66	
F	0	59 or below	Failing

Important Course Policies

- **Mode of Instruction:** This course will be taught **in-person and online asynchronously**, and will heavily make use of Moodle and Microsoft Teams; kindly ensure that you are familiar with using both. Students will require access to internet and access to a PC for successful completion of assignments. In-person students will attend the lecture, and a video of the same lecture will be uploaded on Moodle within the same day for online asynchronous students.
- **Discussion Blocks:** From time to time, the instructor will set aside time for students to ask questions about the week's readings and other related matters. These discussions will be held in class during class times, and students following online will be able to take part through online Microsoft Teams meetings simultaneously. In other words, the instructor will start a Microsoft Teams meeting in class and all students will be able to discuss the week's

readings and ask questions related to the course. The links for the online meetings will be posted on Moodle before the class, and the details will be communicated through email beforehand.

- **Asynchronous Online Notification:** If you have permission from the Vice Rector's Office (VRO) to attend the course online asynchronously for the entire semester, please contact the course instructor immediately.
- **Contacting the Instructor:** The best way to reach the instructor is through email. During the scheduled office hours, the instructor will respond within 45 minutes of the query being sent; response time outside of office hours is 16 hours max. If a student is participating in the course online, individual meetings can be arranged online via email. The instructor will be readily available for such meetings during office hours (listed above) and all a student needs to do is send a request for an individual meeting through email. The meeting link will be provided shortly afterwards, via Microsoft Teams. Online meetings outside of office hours will depend on instructor availability.
- **Response Time for Emails:** The instructor will **only communicate with students on their official FCCU email addresses**, and respond to all emails during 9am to 5pm during Mondays to Fridays, with a maximum reply time of 16 hours. If you have urgent matters that need discussion, try to participate during scheduled office hours (in-person or online). The instructor is not responsible for responding to queries between Friday evening after 5pm and Monday morning before 9am.
- **Submission of Assignments and Plagiarism:** All written assignments must be submitted through Moodle, and will be checked for plagiarism via TurnItIn. This software ensures that the work submitted is the student's own, and plagiarism and cheating in any class discussion or assignment will be dealt with a failing grade, and further disciplinary action will be taken according to FCC policies. Please read the relevant sections in your Student Handbook for further details.
- **Late Submissions:** Late submission of the midterm exam and research paper will result in automatic penalties. Each day that passes after the deadline for submission will result in a 5% overall grade reduction. Submitting an assignment at 12.01am when it was due at 12.00am will be considered to be late by a full day. No late submission for class discussions (if class held asynchronously) or response papers is allowed in any case.
- **Re-take Policies:** Absolutely no re-takes for any assignment are allowed, and no extensions will be given for any assignment as well. Under extreme circumstances beyond the student's control - such as electric or internet outages during online quizzes - s/he should inform the instructor. Retakes may be allowed in such cases, but will be subject to reduced grades/penalties. For instance, if a student requests a retake for a quiz, the total grade for the quiz will be reduced by 30%, i.e., no student will be able to retake the quiz with the assignment counting as 100% towards the course grade.
- **Participation Etiquette:** Students are expected to come to class on time; failure to do so will result in reduced points for participation. Personal attacks on other participants - including the instructor - through class discussions or other means will garner strict punishments. A written warning will be issued after one transgression, and further transgressions will result in an automatic failing grade in the course.
- **Electronics Policy:** Usage of cell phones and other electronic or recording devices is strictly prohibited in class. If you need to use your laptop or tablet to take notes, please see the instructor to obtain permission beforehand.
- **Language of Instruction:** The language of instruction for the course is English, as required by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). As such, the instructor is not responsible for delivering the lecture or disseminating class-related reading materials in a language other than English; however, reasonable accommodations can be made on an individual basis. All assignments are to be completed and submitted in English as well. Students facing difficulty with the medium of instruction should contact the instructor and seek help during office hours (or by appointment).
- **Accommodation for Disabled Students:** If a student is facing difficulty in the course due to a disability or handicap, please contact the instructor immediately to arrange for an appropriate instruction method.
- **Health Emergencies:** If a student or a student's family member encounters a health emergency that can have significant impact on the student's performance in the course, s/he should immediately inform the instructor. Failure to do so will result in absolutely no accommodations being made towards the course assessments.

- **Modifications in Syllabus:** This syllabus was designed to convey course information and requirements as accurately as possible. It is important to note however that it may be subject to change during the course depending on the needs of the class and other situational factors. Such changes would be for the students' benefit and they will be notified of them as soon as possible.

Strategies for Success in the Course

- This course is reading-intensive. This means that students are expected to do the readings for each week beforehand, and engage in class discussions. In order to get a reasonable grade, students must do the readings regularly, and not fall behind. The readings for each week are listed in the Reading Schedule, and the instructor will upload each week's readings beforehand on Moodle. You are only responsible for doing the Required readings; the Suggested readings are there to provide useful insight in case a student wants to do a research paper on the respective topic.
- Participating in class discussions is a major chunk of the grade for this class. Therefore, students are expected to contribute to these discussions and demonstrate their understanding of the course material. Regular participation in class discussions is definitely a good way to go for this course. Be mindful of other participants' viewpoints during class discussions (see penalties related to class discussions in the above section).
- Ask questions and engage with the instructor over the course material. As no prior knowledge of the course material is required, students are bound to get confused from time to time. A good way to gain clarity is to ask questions from the instructor. The instructor's contact details and office hours are mentioned at the top of the syllabus. Students are advised to communicate with the instructor with respect in a formal manner.
- Try to work in a smart manner: focus on the key themes for readings and ask yourself if you understand what is being discussed. Your focus should be on understanding the concepts being discussed. Always ask yourself, "What is the puzzle/thesis being discussed?" when doing reading for each week.
- If you find yourself stressed out due to the course's workload, discuss the difficulties you are facing with the instructor.

Response Paper Schedule

- Response 1 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 2.
- Response 2 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 6.
- Response 3 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 8.
- Response 4 submission deadline is beginning of class on the first Monday of Week 10.

Reading Schedule

Week 1 - What is the 'Middle East'?

Required

- Mehmet Akif Koç. "What is the 'Middle East'? : Western-centric knowledge-power perception towards the 'East'". *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 5, no. 2 (2019): 482-489
- Edward W. Said. "Introduction". In *Orientalism*, 1-28. London, UK: Penguin Books, 2004

Week 2 - History and Context - I

Required

- Fred Halliday. "Introduction and Chapter 1". In *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 1–164. Cambridge, UK, 2005

Week 3 - History and Context - II

Required

- Fred Halliday. "Chapters 3 and 4". In *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, 1–164. Cambridge, UK, 2005

Week 4 - Political Economy of the Middle East - I

Required

- Alan Richards et al. "Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (The Framework of the Study)". In *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013

Suggested

- Alan Richards et al. "Chapter 8 (Contradictions of State-led Growth), Chapter 9 (Re-mixing Market and State), Chapter 11 (Political Regimes), Chapter 12 (Solidarism and its Enemies), and Chapter 13 (The Military and the State)". In *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013
- Alan Richards et al. "Chapter 14 (Is Islam the Solution?)" In *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013

Week 5 - Sovereignty and Self-Representation: Israel and the Question of Palestine

Required

- Edward W. Said. "Chapter 1 (The Question of Palestine)". In *The Question of Palestine*, ix–181. New York, NY: Random House, 1980
- Philipp O. Amour. "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 293–309

Suggested

- Benoit Challand. "Research in and on the Palestinian Occupied Territories". In *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges*, ed. by James A. Clark and Francesco Cavatorta. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018

Week 6 - Class activity

Week 7 - Midterm (No Class and Discussions)

Week 8 - Major Powers I: Russia and China in the Middle East

Required

- Mehmet Akif Koç. "Russia in the Middle East: A New Perspective on the Corporatization of Foreign Policy". *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 6, no. 1 (2020): 104–119

- Muhammad Olinat. “Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (A five-dimensional paradigm)”. In *China and the Middle East: From Silk Road to Arab Spring*, 1–87. London, UK: Routledge, 2015

Suggested

- Nikolay Kozhanov. *Russia and the Syrian Conflict: Moscow’s Domestic, Regional and Strategic Interests*. Berlin, Germany: Gerlach Press, 2016

Week 9 - Major Powers II: American Interests and Anti-Americanism

Required

- Amaney A. Jamal. “Introduction”. In *Of Empires and Citizens: Pro-American Democracy or No Democracy at All?*, 1–37. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012

Suggested

- Timo Kivimaki. “The United States and the Arab Spring”. *Journal of Human Security* 9, no. 1 (2013): 15–26
- Sean L. Yom. *From Resilience to Revolution: How Foreign Interventions Destabilize the Middle East*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2020

Week 10 - Regional Powers

Required

- Mehmet Ozkan. “Chapter 3”. In *Foreign Policy after Tahrir Revolution: (Re)-defining the role of Egypt in the Middle East*, 33–118. Germany: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2011

Week 11 - Authoritarianism

Required

- Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski. “Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats”. *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 11 (2007): 1279–1301
- Eva Bellin. “Reconsidering the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring”. *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 127–149

Suggested

- André Bank, Thomas Richter, and Anna Sunik. “Long-term monarchical survival in the Middle East: a configurational comparison, 1945–2012”. *Democratization* 22, no. 1 (2015): 179–200
- Gwenn Okruhlik. “Authoritarianism, Gender, and Sociopolitics in Saudi Arabia”. In *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges*, ed. by James A. Clark and Francesco Cavatorta. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018

Week 12 - Democratization

Required

- Raymond Hinnebusch. “Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East: An overview and critique”. *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (2006): 373–395

- Lindsay J. Benstead. “Why do some Arab citizens see democracy as unsuitable for their country?” *Democratization* 22, no. 7 (2015): 1183–1208

Suggested

- Benjamin Smith. “Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World, 1960–1999”. *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 2 (2004): 232–246
- Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler. “Separation of Religion and State in the Twenty-First Century: Comparing the Middle East and Western Democracies”. *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 3 (2005): 317–335

Week 13 - International Security and Non-State Actors

Required

- Frederic Wehrey et al. “Iran and Its Non-State Partners: Assessing Linkages and Control”. In *Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East*. RAND Corporation, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.7249/mg781af>

Suggested

- Paola Rivetti. “What Is So Special about Field Research in Iran?” In *Political Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Methodological and Ethical Challenges*, ed. by James A. Clark and Francesco Cavatorta. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018
- Jon B. Alterman. “Iraq and the Gulf States - The Balance of Fear”. In *Regional Influences on Iraq*, 319–340. London, UK: Nova Science Publishers, 2011

Week 14 - Final Exam Due (No Class and Discussions)