GOVT 270, Comparative Politics of the Middle East

Fall 2016
PAC 002
T/R 8:50 – 10:10 am

Ioana Emy Matesan
PAC 202, 860-685-3323
imatesan@wesleyan.edu
Office hours: Tue 3:00 – 5:00 pm, Wed. 4:00 – 5:00 pm & by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the political landscape of the contemporary Middle East and North Africa, focusing on domestic social, political and economic issues. The course materials offer a historical background of the region and of particular cases, while also exploring various theoretical debates and reflecting on pressing contemporary challenges. Through the readings, discussions and assignments, the goal is to help you understand the political dynamics of the Middle East in their historical context, be able to critically engage with the media and policy discourse on the region, and to enhance your speaking, writing and analytical skills.

The course begins with a brief overview of the history of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), asking how the modern states emerged, exploring how Western notions of the state competed with alternative frameworks for political organization, and reflecting on how these legacies impact the current situation in Yemen. From there we move on to examine contemporary institutions and political actors, examining the prospects of political reform in monarchies like Morocco and Jordan.

In order to understand the persistence of authoritarianism and the democratic deficit of the region, the next sets of readings grapple with the politics of oil economies and the nature of civil-military relations, exploring the extent to which Saudi Arabia is blessed or cursed by its natural resources, and evaluating the impact of the Syrian security apparatus on political life and on state-society relations. The sectarian conflict that is escalating in Syria is considered and discussed in the context of rising sectarianism in Iraq, and of the legacy of the civil war in Lebanon. However, a full investigation of these issues would not be complete without a broader discussion of religion and politics in the region, paying special attention to a variety of Islamist movements, and the role of religion in Iran.

It is against this background that the course will consider why the Arab Spring erupted, what explains its aftermath, and the prospects of democratization in the region, with an eye towards the relative success of Tunisia and the recent democratic reversal in Turkey. The last part of the course considers the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and reflects on the motivations and impact of American foreign policy in the Middle East. The class concludes with a discussion of some of the continuing challenges facing the region.
Class Format
This course will be primarily focused on classroom discussions, which will be occasionally complemented by short lectures. You are expected to do all the assigned readings for the day, submit two discussion questions before every class, and come prepared to engage with the material.

Readings
Required textbook:

All other readings will be uploaded on Moodle, or are available online. Videos are either available online or on reserve at the library. Some of the weeks also include recommended readings. These additional materials can enhance your understanding of the issues discussed and can serve as valuable reference points if you have a special interest in any particular subject or country; however, you are not required to read these supplemental materials for class.

In addition to the course readings, you should also stay up on current events in the region. Some helpful resources on the Middle East are *Al Monitor*, *Jadaliyya*, *The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, the *Council on Foreign Relations*, and the *Carnegie Middle East Center*, among many others.

Assignments and Grades
Grading
The grades for this class will be based on a total of 100 possible points, broken down as follows:

- **Attendance**: 5 points
- **Participation**: 10 points
- **Daily Discussion Questions**: 12 points
- **Blog 1**: 15 points
- **Blog 2**: 15 points
- **Literature Review Paper**: 23 points
- **Final exam**: 20 points

Attendance & Participation
For this class to be successful, it is necessary for everybody to come to class prepared and ready to engage in meaningful discussions and intellectual debates with one another. Therefore, attendance is mandatory, and a significant portion of your grade will be based
on your active participation in the course. Please note that if you have more than three unexcused absences, you will lose the 5 points for attendance.

You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to engage with both the course material and with your colleagues. Meaningful participation requires that you treat everybody with respect, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with their views. It is never appropriate for critiques to degenerate into personal attacks, and it is crucial that debates are civil, respectful and grounded in intellectual arguments. Rude and inappropriate comments or disruptive behavior (arriving late, leaving early, using cell phones, surfing the web, etc) can result in a reduced grade. Please note that while you can use your laptops to take notes or access the readings, surfing the web and the use of other electronics including cell phones is prohibited, except for emergencies.

Daily Discussion Questions
Before every class, you should submit 2 discussion questions in the discussion forum on Moodle by 7 pm the day before class. The questions may critique particular claims or question underlying assumptions, draw connections to other topics or texts discussed, relate the readings to current events, raise questions about policy implications, or draw attention to problematic concepts and arguments that we should clarify or discuss in greater detail in class.

Blogs
The goal of the blogs is to relate the readings and cases discussed to current events and to the ongoing discourses about the Middle East in the media and in the policy arena. Each blog should be 1,000 – 1,200 words, and should respond to a current news article or policy issue that is on the agenda by engaging the course readings. You may write one of the blogs in response to a recent film or book about the Middle East. Your piece should be informative and analytical, explicitly engage at least one or two scholarly articles from the class, and offer a creative and unique perspective on the topic of discussion. While the tone is more engaging and conversational than in a typical academic paper, you should still engage with theoretical arguments and provide evidence for your arguments by embedding links to supporting research and external sources. For class readings use in-text citations (author and year). The blogs should be posted on Moodle. The first blog is due by the beginning of class on Tuesday, September 27, and the second blog is due by the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 22.

The class after the blogs are due, instead of submitting two discussion questions, you should submit one question on the readings, and post a response to at least one blog. This is to encourage you to read and engage with each other’s writing, and to have constructive discussions outside of the classroom. In terms of grading, the response to the blog will count as your second discussion question.

If you would like to see some examples of what academic blogs look like, you can check out Duck of Minerva, the Monkey Cage or Political Violence @ a Glance. Some samples will also be posted on Moodle.
Literature Review Paper

- Research question, paper outline and bibliography – 1 sentence topic/research question + 2-3 page outline + bibliography, due in hard copy at the beginning of class on October 11th (3 points)
- Final paper – 8-10 pages double spaced, due by the beginning of class on November 8th via TurnItIn on Moodle (20 points)

Literature reviews are a foundational element of academic research, and an excellent way to deepen your knowledge on a particular topic of interest, critically engage with the existing academic conversations, and identify viable research questions for future research projects.

For this paper, you first have to identify a MENA-related research question that interests you. Then you dive into the academic literature and find out how scholars have addressed this issue. Your literature review should critically engage this scholarship, outlining the major themes and debates, identifying the most recent contributions and findings, underlining the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches or studies, identifying gaps in the literature, and proposing new lines of inquiry for future studies.

While your paper should draw on a wide variety of academic sources, there is no magic number on how many sources you need to include, as the extent of the literature varies widely depending on the topic.

A highly effective review:
- Is clear, well-organized and uses citations appropriately
- Focuses on concepts, ideas and common themes rather than individual books, articles or authors
- Identifies debates, controversies, conflicting results or conclusions, and unanswered questions
- Integrates class readings, current events and/or class discussions to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature
- Offers creative ways to think about the topic and proposes new lines of academic inquiry for future research.

For some excellent examples, you can browse the Annual Review of Political Science.

Final Exam

Take-home paper, due via TurnItIn on Thursday, December 15th by 12:00 pm (NOON).

The final exam will be a take-home, open-book exam that will cover the materials from the entire semester. You will receive the essay questions for the final exam and the detailed guidelines in class on the last day of class on Thursday, December 8.

Other Policies

Unless you have a documented emergency or we make arrangements in advance, late assignments will be severely penalized, and you will lose 10% of the points for each day that it is late. I will not accept any assignment if it is more than three days late.
If you need to miss class because of a religious observance, please notify me as early as possible so we can make arrangements in advance on how to keep you up to speed.

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes and adjustments to the syllabus throughout the semester. Should such changes happen, you will be notified in class and via Moodle.

**Grading Rubric**

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<th>Points</th>
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<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Under 50</td>
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**Academic Honesty**

Please note that in this course, no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Infractions can result in you failing the entire course. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please visit:

[http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html)

If you want to learn more about how to properly use citations, you can read the guidelines offered by the Wesleyan library at: [http://libguides.wesleyan.edu/citing](http://libguides.wesleyan.edu/citing)

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

**Other Services**

You are encouraged to take advantage of the many services available to you at Wesleyan. Writing workshop tutors are available to help you with your papers. For more information, visit wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop or call 860-685-2440.
For assistance with your research paper, you may also want to schedule an appointment with a librarian. You can do so online at: http://www.wesleyan.edu/library/howdoi/makeanappointment.html

### COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday –</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Sept. 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OVERVIEW</td>
<td>Review of syllabus and course expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday –</td>
<td>Early History and State Formation</td>
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<td>Sept. 13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>READINGS</td>
<td>• Lust, <em>The Middle East</em>, Chapter 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday –</td>
<td>Yemen and the Challenges of Weak States</td>
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<td>Sept. 15</td>
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<td>READINGS</td>
<td>• Lust, <em>The Middle East</em>, Chapter 4 (Institutions and Governance), pages 160-167.</td>
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VIDEO
• “Yemen: A Failed State” Vice News (16 min), Available at: http://www.vice.com/video/yemen-a-failed-state-014

RECOMMENDED VIDEO
• “Return to Yemen” Vice on HBO (2016, 29 min) [Note: This is a very graphic video on the impact of the Saudi air strikes in Yemen. You can view it through the HBO website, and it has also been posted here: http://bit.ly/2bCh4Zy ]

RECOMMENDED READINGS
• Lust, The Middle East, Chapter 26: Yemen.


Tuesday – Sept. 20

Pan-Arabism & Pan-Islamism

READINGS


RECOMMENDED READINGS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dunne, Michele and Thomas Carothers. 2014. “Egypt’s Evolving Governance</td>
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<td>is No ‘Democratic Transition’.” <em>The Washington Post</em>, available at:</td>
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<td>[<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/egypts-evolving-governance-is-no-">https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/egypts-evolving-governance-is-no-</a></td>
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<td>democratic-transition/2014/01/23/8b7d910e-83bc-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html](<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/egypts-evolving-governance-is-no-democratic-transition/2014/01/23/8b7d910e-83bc-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/egypts-evolving-governance-is-no-democratic-transition/2014/01/23/8b7d910e-83bc-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html</a>)</td>
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<td>• Brown, Nathan and Katie Bentivoglio. 2015. “Who is Running the Egyptian</td>
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<td>RECOMMENDED</td>
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<td>• Aly, Abdel Monem Said. 2014. “Deciphering Abdel Fattah el-Sisi: President</td>
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<td>READINGS</td>
<td></td>
<td>of Egypt’s Third Republic,” <em>Middle East Brief</em>, Crown Center for Middle</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>East Studies, Brandeis University.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Institutions and Governance – part 2:</td>
<td>• Lust, <em>The Middle East</em>, Chapter 4, pages 192-204.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>• Bellin, Eva. 2014. “The Road to the Rule of Law in the Arab World:</td>
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<td>Comparative Insights,” <em>Middle East Brief</em>, Crown Center for Middle East</td>
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<td>Studies, Brandeis University.</td>
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<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Participation</td>
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**Tuesday – Oct. 4**  
**Elections & Reform in Monarchies: Jordan**

**READINGS**
- Lust, *The Middle East*, Chapter 14: Jordan

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Thursday – Oct. 6**  
**Political Reform in Monarchies: Morocco**

**READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Tuesday – Oct. 11**  
**Political Economy**

**ASSIGNMENT**
Outline and bibliography for literature review paper due in hard copy in the beginning of class.

**READINGS**
- Lust, *The Middle East*, Chapter 3 (The Political Economy of Development in the Middle East), pages 106-133.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Thursday – Oct. 13**

**Rentier States & Political Reform in Oil Economies**

**READINGS**
• Lust, *The Middle East*, Chapter 3 (The Political Economy of Development in the Middle East), pages 133 - 159.
• Lust, *The Middle East*, Chapter 22: Saudi Arabia

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

**Tuesday - Oct. 18**

**Civil-Military Relations**

**READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.</td>
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Lust, *The Middle East*, Chapter 16: Lebanon.  

### Thursday – Nov. 3

**Religion and the State: Iran**

**READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

### Tuesday – Nov. 8

**Islamist Movements and Political Participation**

**ASSIGNMENT**
Final Literature Review Paper due by the beginning of class via TurnItIn on Moodle.

**READINGS**
- Volpi, Frederic and Ewan Stein. 2015. “Islamism and the state after the Arab uprisings: Between people power and state power.” *Democratization*, 22(2).

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

### Thursday – Nov. 10

**Islamist Movements and Political Violence**

**READINGS**


**RECOMMENDED VIDEO**


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**Tuesday – Nov. 15**

**The Arab Spring**

**READINGS**


**VIDEO**

- The Square (2013, UK, 95 min.)

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


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**Thursday – Nov. 17**

**Tunisia & The Prospects of Democratization**

**READINGS**


RECOMMENDED READINGS


Tuesday – Nov. 22

ASSIGNMENT

Blog 2 due by the beginning of class (Moodle).

READINGS

- Lust, The Middle East, Chapter 25: Turkey.

RECOMMENDED READINGS


Thursday – Nov. 24

NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING BREAK.

Tuesday – Nov. 29

READINGS

- Lust, The Middle East, Chapter 7, pages 288-343.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Lust, The Middle East, Chapter 14: Israel, Chapter 20: Palestinian Authority
### Thursday – Dec. 1
**The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict – Post-Oslo**

**READINGS**

### Tuesday – Dec. 6
**U.S. Policy in the Middle East**

**READINGS**
- Pollack, Kenneth et al. 2014. “U.S. Foreign Policy and the Future of the Middle East.” *Middle East Policy*, 21(3).

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**
Thursday – Dec. 8  

Continuing Challenges

Hand out questions for final exam.

READINGS


FINAL EXAM DUE Thursday, December 15, by NOON (12:00 pm), via TurnItIn on Moodle.