This course is an introduction to the comparative politics of the Middle East. As such, students will be introduced to the major questions and theoretical approaches involved in the study of Middle Eastern politics. Some of the substantive topics we will cover include: the dynamics and persistence of authoritarianism in the region; political liberalization, civil society and democratization; nationalism, identity and Arab nationalism; oil; politics and theories of the rentier state; political economy approaches to Middle East politics; Islamist politics; the state in the Middle East, etc. We can not hope to be comprehensive in our coverage of these important issues in only one semester. This course, therefore, is designed to provide a foundation in Middle East politics/political science (e.g. theories, debates in the field, political concepts, etc.) that can be useful to you in the future as you pursue more detailed studies of the region’s politics.

Although this course is about “Middle East politics,” we will focus primarily on the Arab world, and more specifically on the Mashreq, Egypt and the Gulf States (we will not deal with Israel, Turkey or Iran explicitly). As an introductory course, we will focus more on theoretical issues and cross-country questions than on the political histories of individual nation-states.

Some of the major topics and questions we will address include:

1) **The State:** What is the character of the state in the Middle East? What are its historical origins and present condition? How can we characterize Middle Eastern states? Are they “strong,” “hard,” “brittle” or “weak”?

2) **Nationalism:** What is Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism? Is Arab nationalism “dead” and is it related to Islamists politics? Have Islamist political identities come to replace Arab nationalism?

3) **Politics: Elites & Masses:** Is politics in the Middle East exclusively an elite game? Have popular classes engaged in politics in the region? What types of relations exist between political elites and popular classes (populist authoritarianism, patron-client relations; etc.)
4) Islam and Politics: What explains the increasing prominence of Islamist political movements in the region and beyond? What are the competing explanations for the rise of Islamist politics? What is the extent of variation within Islamist politics? What are the main components, goals, and discursive themes in Islamist politics? We often hear the questions, “Is Islam compatible with democracy?” How should we go about addressing such a question? Does the question make sense? How have Islamist political parties and movements fared in different states in the region (e.g. Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Turkey, etc.)? How have different regimes in the region dealt with Islamist political movements?

5) Oil and Politics: Does oil impact the politics of the region? Does oil hinder democracy? Does the rentier theory of the state explain the absence of democracy in oil-dominated economies? Are there other political consequences of oil wealth on the politics of individual nation states as well as regional politics?

6) Democracy and Authoritarianism: A) What explains the persistence of authoritarianism in the region – or alternatively – Why is there no democracy in the Middle East? B) Are these questions the same? C) What is democracy and what are its empirical indicators, what accounts for its emergence and what are the obstacles to the development of democracy in the Middle East? D) What is civil society and how is it related to democracy? What is the state of civil society in the region? E) Do countries ‘transition to democracy’? What is ‘liberalized autocracy’ or ‘semi-authoritarianism’? Are these stable regime types? D) Can democracy be imposed from the outside? Can states ‘push’ countries along democratization paths? If so, how? How much variation in “regime types” and politics is there in the region?

7) Economic & Political Reform: How does economic reform impact politics? Are economic reform and political reform related? Do free markets eventually produce free politics? What changes take place in country’s domestic politics as they pursue economic liberalization policies?

8) Middle East “Exceptionalism”: Related to questions 4, 5 and 6 above (Islam, oil and authoritarianism) – is the question of the Middle East’s uniqueness. Are Middle Eastern politics somehow different than politics elsewhere and if so why? Is the Middle East exceptional? Which approaches are best for understanding Middle East politics (political economy/culture-symbolic/ rational choice)?

9) Regional & International Dimensions: What has been the role of regional and international conflicts in the politics of the region? How has the United States (and/or other powers) impacted Middle Eastern politics? What have been the economic and political consequences of conflict and war in the region?

Requirements: This is a seminar based primarily on the close reading and focused discussion of set texts. The success of such an enterprise depends on the active participation of everyone. Therefore, you are required to:
1) Come to class prepared - having read the assignments carefully and ready to discuss them. Everyone will lead class discussion at least once during the semester.

2) Seminar participants are required to write weekly one page response papers distributed via email to all members of the seminar by Wednesday at 3:00 pm. These are not intended to be highly polished pieces of writing. Nor are they meant to be summaries of the week’s readings. Rather, they are your critical reactions to the readings and are intended to promote discussion, generate debate and raise critical questions about the topics to be discussed in class.

3) You are required to write three ‘review essays’ (ranging between 6-7 double-spaced pages each) focusing closely on one week’s readings and one or two of the ‘Further Readings’ from that week. Please note that these review essays are not to be serial reviews of the works under discussion but are intended as opportunities for you to critically engage with the ideas presented in the texts. Review essays should be textually focused and based on your analysis of the readings.

4) Subscribe to Arab Reform Bulletin published monthly by the Carnegie Foundation. You can subscribe by clicking the link at the bottom of the following web page: http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1302

Grading: 30% Attendance, Participation & Weekly Response Papers
20% Review Essay #1
25% Review Essay #2
25% Review Essay #3

Books to Purchase:

Ghassan Salame, Democracy without Democrats (Tauris, 1994) paperback.


Optional:

**Readings:**

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available through electronic reserves. Readings that include a web address beside them are available on the internet. All other readings are in the books to be purchased.

**Thursday, August 31**  
**Introduction:** Syllabus; Assignments; Mechanics, etc…

**Thursday, September 7**  
**Topic 1: The Study of Middle East Politics**


**Further Reading:**  

Summary of a panel session which included Martin Kramer and Lisa Anderson on Middle East Studies and the impact of *Ivory Towers on Sand*.  
http://www.martinkramer.org/pages/899527/
Journal of Democracy (Middle East Studies After 9/11) (July 2003) 13:3
Articles by Marc Plattner and Larry Diamond; Ibrahim Karawan, ‘Time for an Audit,’; Steven Heydemann, ‘Defending the Discipline’; Daniel Brumberg ‘Islamists and the Politics of Consensus.’


Jerrold D. Green, ‘The Politics of Middle East Politics,’ PS: Political Science 27, no. 3 (September 1994)

Jerrold D. Green, ‘Where are the Arabs?’ Survival 40, no. 2 (Summer 1998).


Thursday, September 14
Topic 2: The State in the Middle East


*Emile Sahliyeh, ‘The Limits of State power in the Middle East,’ Arab Studies Quarterly vol. 22, no. 4, Fall 2000, pp. 1-29.


Further Reading:

**Thursday September 21 – No Class**

**Thursday, September 28**

**Topic 3: Nationalism, Identity & Politics**


**Highly Recommended:**


**Further Reading:**


Thursday, October 5
Topic 4: Authoritarianism & Authoritarian Politics


Further Reading:

Nazih Ayubi, Over-Stating the Arab State, Skim pp. 164-288.


Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World*


*For different cultural analyses of authoritarianism see:


**Thursday, October 12**  
**Topic 5: Politics from Below**


**Further Reading:**  

*TBA*

**Thursday, October 19**  
**Topic 6: Oil & Politics**


* TBA

Further Reading:


*Arab Studies Quarterly* (two issues) vol. 10, no. 2 & 3.


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**Thursday, October 26**

**Topic 7: Political Liberalization & Democratization**


• *Eva Bellin, ‘Contingent Democrats: Industrialists, Labor, and Democratization in Late-Developing Countries,’* in *World Politics* 52 (January 2000), pp. 175-205. (about democratization).


**Further Reading:**
*Michael Hudson, ‘Obstacles to Democratization in the Middle East,’ *Contention,* vol. 5, no. 2, winter 1996, pp. 81-105


Look over additional articles in Brynen, Noble and Korany (eds.) *Political Liberalization & Democratization in the Arab World.*


Responses to Michael Hudson in the same issue of *Contention* by Farhad Kazemi and A. R. Norton; Suad Joseph; Clifford Chanin; Ellis Goldberg.
Thursday, October 28

**Topic 8: Civil Society**


Further Reading:


Mohammed Talbi, ‘A Record of Failure,’ *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 11, no. 3 (July 2000).


– Case Study – Jordan:


**Thursday, November 2**

**Topic 9: Islam and Politics**


- Quintan Wiktorowicz, Conceptualizing Islamic Activism, ISIM Newsletter, 14, June 2004. Available at: http://www.isim.nl/files/newsl_14/newsl_14-34.pdf#search=%22wiktorowicz%22

• M. Steven Fish, 'Islam and Authoritarianism,' World Politics 55; October 2002, pp. 4-37. http://weber.ucsd.edu/~jlbroz/PElunch/Fish.pdf

**Further Reading:**


What is Liberal Islam? In Journal of Democracy (several articles) – volume 14, no.2, April 2003

Jillian Schwedler and Janine Astrid Clark recent piece in Comparative Politics (on Islamist political activism) "Who Opened the Window? Women's Activism within Islamist Parties," Comparative Politics 35, no. 3 (April).


Nazih Ayubi, Political Islam (ch.. 1,2,3 (pp. 1-70) and 6,7,8 (pp. 120-200).


J. Esposito and J. Voll, ‘Islam and Democracy,’ in MERIP


**More Recent Writings on Islam and Democracy (post 9/11):**


- Arab Democracy: Dismal Prospects.
http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/anderson.html

- Can Islam bring democracy to the Middle East?

- A Comparative Approach to Islam and Democracy
  http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v021/21.2gulen.html

- Indonesia, Islam, and the Prospect for Democracy
  http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v021/21.2woodward.html

- Islamic Identity: Myth, Menace, or Mobilizer?
  http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v021/21.2schwedler.html

Thursday, November 9

**Topic 10: Political Islam II: Islamist Politics in contemporary Egypt**


**Further Reading:**


- Also see the “filmmakers notes”:
  http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/turkey/filmmaker.html


* Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, ‘Silencing is at the heart of my case,’ Interview with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, interview in MERIP, Nov-Dec, no. 185, vol. 23, no. 6 1993, pp. 27-29.


* On the Samia Mehrez/AUC incident:
  http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/mehr.htm

Book Banning at AUC: Didier and the Maxime Rodinson Controversy (Joseph Logan’s article in Lingua Franca).

**Recommended Films:**
- The Terrorist (film with Adel Imam)
- Destiny (film by Youssef Chahine - AFD) 1997.
- The Closed Door (film by Atef Hetata, 1999 - AFD)

**Thursday, November 16**
**Topic 11: Political Economy of Reform**


Further Reading:


**Thursday, November 23 Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Thursday, November 30**

**Topic 12: The United States & the Middle East:**

• *Michael Hudson, ‘To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy Toward the Middle East,’ Middle East Journal vol. 50, no. 3, summer 1996.


• President Bush’s speech at the National Endowment for Democracy (November 6, 2003) [http://www.ned.org/events/anniversary/oct1603-Bush.html](http://www.ned.org/events/anniversary/oct1603-Bush.html)

Further Reading:


President Bush’s speech at the National Endowment for Democracy (November 6, 2003) http://www.ned.org/events/anniversary/oct1603-Bush.html


Guilain P. Denoeux, ‘The United States and the Challenge of Democratization in the Arab World,’ Occasional Paper, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1996.


Thursday December 7 – Last Class