

Politics and Culture of the Middle East [NEJS 197B]

A seminar aimed at Juniors, Seniors and Graduate students who have a prior knowledge of the Middle East. Instructor's permission required. Enrolment limited to fifteen. In addition to regular class hours on Tuesday, 1:30-4:30pm, students are expected to view a number of films outside of class. The time and place of film viewing sessions will be determined after the first day of classes. Discussion of the films will take place in class.

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Description

This seminar will consider the evolution and interrelations of the reigning ideologies of the modern period in the Arab world: liberalism, nationalism, socialism, and Islamism. The time period covered will range from the early 19th century to the present. The focus of the course is on the ideas that have moved millions of men and women starting in the 19th century and during all of the 20th century. The course will conclude by examining questions like: how has the language of politics changed? Where does it stand now? Does religiosity necessarily conflict with change? Upon what foundations can a modern idea of toleration stand in the modern Arab world?

Requirements

(1) Regular class attendance, doing the reading, watching all required films, and participation in class. Assigned reading must be completed before class. During the semester, each student is expected to make at least two 15 minute presentations, and lead the class discussion that follows. All students are expected to view, and discuss in class, the films listed in the syllabus.

(25% of final grade)

(2) Each student is expected to submit ten weekly 500 word commentaries in e-mail form on the reading, the films and/or on written class assignments handed out in class. These must discuss and/or 'construct' questions/comments derived from the course material. Think of these pages as your own running commentary on the reading and the films. The focus of the commentaries must be on the content of the reading. Keep a copy. I will want to see these again, grouped in chronological sequence, and properly formatted at the end of the semester. The commentaries should never be merely an outpouring of your feelings and/or opinions. I must receive your submissions no later than 9:00am on the Monday before our assigned class meeting on Tuesday. They will then form the basis of class discussion the following day. Always identify yourself, the date of the class during which they will be discussed, and the readings being discussed at the outset (include e-mail and a telephone number). The weekly comments are not individually graded. But students lose grades by doing them sloppily or not submitting them. There is no point to a late submission. This is a requirement that cannot be compensated for at a later date.

(35% of final grade)

(3) Each student must write a 20 page carefully worded paper on a theme derived from the reading and syllabus.
Concept, preliminary outline & bibliography due: March 3;
Detailed outline and writing sample due: April 7;
Final Paper due: April 28.

(25% of final grade)

(4) There will be two written exams (in class or take-home) on February 13 and March 27 as indicated in the syllabus.

(15% of grade)

On The Reading

All the reading is on reserve or online and some of the books are available for purchase in the bookstore. The reading entered under each week is intended for discussion on the Tuesday of the following week. I must receive your weekly postings the day before, by Monday 11:00am. Generally we will consider texts in the order in which they appear in the syllabus.

Books Recommended for Purchase:

- Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (Schocken)
- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Oxford University Press)
- Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (Cambridge University Press)
- Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle and the Prophet* (Pantheon)
- Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World* (W.W.Norton)
- Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*
- Emile Habiby, *Saeed The Pesoptimist*

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you, please see the instructors immediately after class.

Syllabus

Part One: Introduction

Tuesday, January 13, 1:30-4:30

Outline of the course content and the character of the reading. Discussion of course structure, requirements and mechanics. Assigning dates for class presentations.

Reading (to be discussed January 27):

- Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*. Read whole book.
- Film Viewing: *The Syrian Bride*. Time and place To Be Determined

Tuesday, January 27, 1:30-4:30

What is identity politics? Has it become more, or less, important in the course of 20th century Middle Eastern history. Make a list of ten political organizations, or parties, in the contemporary Middle East that are based on identity politics. What are the exceptions?

Reading (to be discussed February 3):

- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Oxford University Press). Read chapters 1-6.

Part Two: Foundations

Tuesday, February 3, 1:30-4:30

What were the first views Muslims from the Middle East formed of Europe? And how did the first generation of early modern intellectuals deal with Western ideas of government and social order? Notions of state and social organization inherited from the pre-Ottoman era.

Reading (to be discussed February 10):

- Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Chapters 7-11 (to be discussed February 10)

Tuesday, February 10, 1:30-4:30

The biography, ideas and influences of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh.

Reading (to be discussed February 24):

- Finish Hourani, *Arabic Thought*.

Part Three: Aftermath of Defeat

Tuesday, February 24, 1:30-4:30

Exam 1: On whole of Hourani's *Arabic Thought*

Reading (to be discussed March 3):

- Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press). Read 'Aftershocks,' pp. 305-327.
- Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (Cambridge University Press). Read the Introduction and Parts 1 and 2, through p.136.

Tuesday, March 3, 1:30-4:30

Historians of the modern Middle East are agreed that the Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967 was a transforming event in the region. We will examine the underlying changes in thought and political culture brought about by that event.

Concept, preliminary outline & bibliography of final paper is due today. Concept is a one-page description in your own words of what it is you are going to write about. The reading list should accompany it and be tailored to the idea, and the outline will be broken down into sections with brief descriptions of a sentence or two.

Reading (to be discussed March 10):

- Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*. Read Part 3, through p.200. (Cambridge University Press)
- Emile Habibi, *Saeed The Pesoptimist*

Part Four: Islamic Revolution

Tuesday, March 10, 1:30-4:30

Reading (to be discussed March 17):

- Start Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle and the Prophet* (Pantheon)
- Paul Salem, 'The Rise and fall of Secularism in the Arab World,' Middle East Policy, vol. iv, no. 3, March 1996, pp. 147-160. ON LATTE

Tuesday, March 17, 1:30-4:30

We will discuss the rise and triumph of the 1979 revolution in Iran. How it changed the language and politics of the whole Middle East.

Reading (to be discussed on March 24):

- Finish Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle and the Prophet* (Pantheon)

Tuesday, March 24, 1:30-4:30

Student presentations of preselected themes in Mottahedeh.

All students are required to attend the March 28-29 Crown Center Conference held at Brandeis on Iran: 30 Years After the 1979 Revolution. Your weekly commentaries should be focused on one of the lectures.

Reading (to be discussed on March 31)

- Start reading selected chapters in Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*.

Tuesday, March 31, 1:30-4:30

The Afghan war and the rise of al-Qaeda. What is Jihadi Islam: and how does it differ from previous forms of Islamist politics. A break with tradition, or a reaffirmation of it?

Discuss Iran Conference.

Student Presentations of papers. Revised concept of final paper, if applicable, is due.

Exam 2: On whole of Mottahedeh's *The Mantle and the Prophet*

Reading (to be discussed on April 7):

- Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World*. Read the Introduction, pp.15-27, & Silence, chapters, 7-10, pp.231-327.

Part Five: Towards a Politics of Rights

Tuesday, April 7, 1:30-4:30

We will discuss the 1991 Gulf war, and the reaction of Arab intellectuals to the occupation of Kuwait and the subsequent defeat of the Saddam regime.

Final paper detailed outline plus writing sample of 6-8 pages is due.

Reading (to be discussed on April 21):

- Continue selected readings in Gilles Kepel, *Jihad*.
- Kevin Dwyer, Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East (University of California Press, 1991). Read Introduction, and Part I, pp.1-84. ON LATTE

Tuesday, April 21, 1:30-4:30

This week will be on the politics of human rights and democratization in the modern Middle East. The focus is on the prerequisites of the emergence of a new cultural political paradigm in the region.

No Reading this week. Paper presentations due April 28.

Tuesday, April 28, 1:30-4:30

Final papers due.

Oral Presentations of final papers. Must be at least twenty pages long with attached bibliography.