Instructor: Hicham Bou Nassif
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Room: Weitz 231
Office: Willis Hall – 408
Office hours: Tuesday: 12:30 to 2:30; and Wednesday: 11:00 to 1:00; and by appointment.

**Course Description**

This course studies contemporary politics in four Middle East countries, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. The lectures are divided into two parts: The first part covers civil wars and ethnic conflict in the Levant i.e. Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. The second part studies the institutional and economic structure of Arab authoritarianism with a specific emphasis on Egypt and Iraq. Overall, the course has two main goals: 1) - To sharpen the students’ understanding of the historical origins of contemporary Middle Eastern dilemmas. 2) - To encourage students to develop their own ideas and opinions as per the current events, and hone their political and analytical skills.

**Required Texts**


**Course Requirements**

*Participation (20 % of your final grade)*

Students are expected to participate actively in the class. I will be asking you to contribute to class discussions and will invite you to offer your opinion on required readings or on related events unfolding as the course goes on.

*Quizzes (10% of your final grade)*
Throughout the term you will take two quizzes. They will have several components such as multiple choice questions, true/false questions and so forth. You will be tested to see whether you understood the general line of an argument, or the main events that shaped the outlook of a historical turning point.

*Mid-Term (20 % of your final grade)*

Multiple Choice + Analytical questions

*Term paper (50% of your final grade)*

We will discuss the topics you could work on for the final paper in class, or in office hours.

**What is expected of you as you do the readings?**

The readings assigned for the course deal with the most critical events pertaining to the making of the contemporary Middle East. As you read, you will be expected to think critically on the articles by asking yourselves the following questions:

1) What is the author’s main argument?
2) Do I find that argument convincing or not? Why?
3) What alternative explanations can be thought of for the author’s evidence?
4) What are the implications of the argument made by the author?

In addition to the required readings, you are encouraged to keep yourself informed about current issues related to Middle Eastern politics. Consulting newspapers helps a great deal, namely national newspapers following closely Middle Eastern events such as *The New York Times, The International Herald Tribune, The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. You can also read magazines such as *The Economist* and *Newsweek*. Two flagship academic journals are particularly important in the field of Middle Eastern politics, namely, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)* and *Middle East Journal*. Also, keep an eye on the *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*.

**Reading assignments**

**Tuesday, March 28: Introduction**

We will discuss the Syllabus in class + General intro to the Middle East
Part I: Civil Wars and Ethnic Conflict

Thursday, March 30: Groups in Conflict

Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, pp1 – 47.
Hampf, Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon, pp1-43.

LEBANON

Tuesday, April 4: On Perceptions And Self-Perceptions

Salibi, A House of Many Mansions, pp1-37 +200-234.
Hourani, Ideologies of the Mountain and the City, pp170 – 178.
Khazen, The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, pp3 – 86.

Thursday, April 6: The Road to War I

Khazen, The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, pp 89 – 234.

Tuesday, April 11: The Road to War II

Khazen, The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, pp 285 -322.

Thursday, April 13: The Post-War “Reconstruction”

Leenders, Spoils of Truce, pp 1 – 17; 122 – 250.

SYRIA

Tuesday, April 18: The Bloody Road to Power

Van Dam, The Struggle For Power in Syria, pp 1- 145.

Thursday, April 20: On “Acting As If”

Wedeen, Ambiguities of Domination, pp 1- 160.
**Tuesday, April 25: From Hafez to Bachar**
Hinnebusch, “Syria from authoritarian upgrading to revolution?”

Bou Nassif, “Second Class: The Grievances of Sunni Officers in the Syrian Armed Forces”

Holliday, “The Struggle For Syria in 2011”

Holliday, “The Assad Regime”

Kozak, “An Army in All Corners”

**II- The Arab Authoritarian Order**

**Thursday, April 27: A Handbook of Dictatorships**

Gerschewski, “The Three Pillars of Stability”


**Tuesday, May 2: Mid-Term Review Session**

**Thursday, May 4: Mid-Term**

**IRAQ**

**Tuesday, May 9: Rise of the Republic of Fear**

Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’ Baath Party*, 1-15; and 95-226

**Thursday, May 11: The Republic of Fear**

EGYPT

**Tuesday, May 16: The Making of Mubarak’s Egypt I**


**Thursday, May 18: The Making of Mubarak’s Egypt II**


Samer Soliman, *The Autumn of Dictatorship*, pp 1 -75


**Tuesday, May 23:**

In-class paper presentations

**Thursday, May 25**

In-class paper presentations

**Tuesday, May 30**

In-class paper presentations

Papers are due in my inbox on Friday (June, 2) – by 4:00 pm.