

POSC 242: Middle East Politics
Fall 2020
Mixed Mode
MW: 10:00AM-11:10AM CST
F: 9:50PM-10:50AM CST

Professor Summer Forester
Office: Willis 408
Virtual Office Hours ([click to sign up for a time](#))
Mondays 2:30PM – 4:30PM CST
Thursdays 1PM – 4PM CST
By appointment

Professor Forester's Welcome Message

This course introduces the politics and political structures of states in the Middle East. We explore the political origins of Middle Eastern states, and investigate how regional politics are shaped by colonialism, religion, the family, and more. We examine the persistence of authoritarianism and its links to other issues like nationalism and militarism. The course covers how recent and current events like the revolutionary movements of the 'Arab Spring' affect the states and their societies. We conclude with a consideration of the future of Middle Eastern politics, evaluating lingering concerns and emerging prospects for liberalization and reform.

Kudos to all of us for engaging with these topics while contending with a global pandemic, pursuing racial justice, and keeping an eye on the upcoming US election. And navigating our own personal and professional commitments. I want to encourage you all to embrace chaos with a solid sense of grace, patience, and flexibility.

I have done my best to design the course so that everyone can be successful, regardless of personal circumstances. Communication will be key; please keep me updated about your situation in addition to reaching out to the other relevant offices on campus. If you experience significant technological problems that limit your ability to participate, please contact the ITS Helpdesk at 507-222-5999 or helpdesk@carleton.edu. For announcements of known technical issues, visit the [Helpdesk portal](#). If your personal situation (due to COVID-19 illness or other circumstances) begins to impact your ability to engage with the course, please contact the Dean of Students Office.

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes

Course objectives:

1. Cultivate a historically-grounded, learned, and critical understanding of the political forces that created (and sustain) the modern Middle East
2. Introduce the major scholarly debates within the field of Middle East politics

3. Describe the interrelationship between international and national phenomena within and across states of the Middle East

Learning outcomes:

1. Understand the origins and effects of political borders, structures, and systems in the Middle East
2. Critically analyze and engage with both mainstream media portrayals of and scholarly arguments about Middle Eastern politics
3. Craft a theoretically sophisticated argument using empirical data

Ethics & Expectations

I believe in transparency and open communication, and strive to ensure you understand the purpose and intent of the readings, activities, grading, and other course-related materials/decisions. My goal is for us to create a collaborative environment where we can grapple with difficult topics and sharpen our intellect in a trusted and secure space. As such, I require that you treat our course, course content, and all communication (e.g., emails, Moodle posts, discussion forums, etc.) with confidentiality. I will not share your comments, communication, or other submissions and ask that you do the same for your colleagues and me.

Mutual Respect

Treat each everyone in the class with respect. We will be discussing a variety of politically charged issues and I expect all of us to interrogate, critique, and discuss these issues in a safe environment free from judgement or fear of reprisal from any member of the class. In other words, I hope that you feel free to disagree with your colleagues, but I will require that you disagree *respectfully*.

What you can expect of me:

- I will return assignments in a timely manner
- I will be available and accessible during my office hours. If you cannot meet me during my office hours, please do not hesitate to contact me and we will arrange for an alternative time to meet.
- I will strive to make this course understandable and accessible for everyone. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help if you come to me *before* assignments or exams are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date – come talk to me before if you have lingering questions or would like me to elaborate on some aspect of the readings or an assignment.

Other Additions?

As this is your class, too, I'd like to hear what you think we should include in our course's rules of engagement. [Click here to submit your ideas](#) for building an inclusive and effective class.

Course Structure

In general, we will meet synchronously. I will note the days for which you will have asynchronous activities.

On Mondays and Wednesdays, those of you who are on-campus will join me in Willis 204. For our remote colleagues, we will zoom you into the classroom those days. In order to make sure we're all connecting and engaging with each other (not only the folks in your classroom groups), we will meet synchronously online on Fridays. I fully recognize that not all of you will be able to join the synchronous discussions – I assure you that you will still be able to succeed in this class. I'll post the recorded classes to Moodle and provide a discussion forum through which you can engage with your colleagues and me should you find it impossible to join synchronously. Moreover, I am happy to connect with you during office hours (or by appointment) to discuss any of the course components, readings, or to extend a class discussion.

To be sure, this term necessitates flexibility and a hearty embrace of the unknown. We'll do our best and make adjustments as necessary throughout the term.

Course Components & Assessment

The requirements for this course involve both the completion of assignments on your own and your active and informed contributions to our class discussions. All of your assignments will be submitted electronically via Moodle. I will often provide in-text commentary or line edits for your written work.

Please submit your documents in Word (.doc or .docx). Your grade will be based on the following requirements:

Course components & points possible for each component:

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. Participation | 25 |
| 2. Everyday Orientalism paper | 20 |
| 3. Group simulation design & presentation | 25 |
| 4. Case study analysis | 30 |

Participation (25)

A large portion of your grade is based on your willingness to contribute to and engage in our class. What does this require of you? You should prepare for and participate meaningfully in class every week, to the best of your ability. In a mixed mode environment, your participation is especially crucial. "Meaningful" participation comes in a number of forms: asking questions to clarify course topics, answering questions that I pose in class, drawing connections between course topics and current events, and/or participating respectfully in class discussions.

You will demonstrate your participation in the course by fully engaging in our weekly activities. Additionally, each week, you will either be a moderator, a notetaker, or an engaged participant.

Moderator:

During the discussion sections in the Monday and Wednesday classes, the moderators will essentially keep the conversation moving in their respective groups. Use my discussion questions as a starting point and then add your own questions into the mix. Feel free to provide extra links or materials that connect to the readings or theme of the week. You will act as the moderator for both days.

Notetakers:

During the discussion sections in the Monday and Wednesday classes, notetakers will keep track of the conversation. At the end of the class, paste your notes in the shared google doc. We'll use these notes as a springboard for our group discussions and as a tool for disseminating ideas across the groups.

Engaged participant:

We have all experienced those classes when the discussion seems to drag on and on and on and on. As an engaged participant, you'll be the tour-de-force ensuring that the conversations and discussions connect to the readings, are lively, and are not reliant on (or dominated by) any single group member.

Everyday Orientalism (20)

One of the major theoretical concepts we will engage with throughout this course is that of "orientalism." Although Edward Said first coined the term and developed the theory of orientalism in 1978, we can still find examples of orientalism – in movies, media, magazines, and more – today. Your task is to find one of these examples of orientalism and write an analytical paper (~800-1000 words) explaining 1) why your selected item is orientalist and 2) the political relevance of orientalism vis-à-vis your identified item.

Middle East Politics Simulation Design & Presentation¹ (25)

Throughout the term, we will be building towards your collaborative creation of a simulation that helps others learn about some part of contentious politics in the Middle East.

Think about the contentious politics that surround:

- Gender and land rights
- Refugees
- African migrants in the Middle East
- Water rights
- Constitutional reforms
- Countering violent extremism
- Domestic violence shelters
- Economic policies
- Normalizing relations with Israel
- Oil

Working in groups of three, you will design a role-playing simulation about some facet of contentious politics in the Middle East. You will conduct research on your topic and present an exercise that engages participants with the issues.

¹ This assignment draws, in large part, on student-led simulations designed by Prof. Sarah Federman at the University of Baltimore

The final simulation will include: 1) a 5-minute video introduction to your topic; 2) an overview of the contentious politics of choice; 3) an instructor note (basically a how-to-play overview); 4) description of roles; 5) resources page.

Your group will present your simulation during week 8. By a class vote, we'll determine the top 3 simulations. I'll share the top 3 simulations with my colleagues at Georgetown (with your approval, of course) where others can use your simulation to learn about Middle East politics. During week 9 of the course, we will run the #1 ranked simulation in class.

Case Study on COVID-19 and Middle East Politics (30)

For your final project, you will conduct a case study analysis (2000 words) of the effects of COVID-19 on the politics of a Middle Eastern state. You should envision your case study as part of a special issue of *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* focusing on pandemic politics. During the first week of class, you will submit your top 3 choices for the country you would like research. I will circulate more details on the case study in the coming weeks.

Citation Style:

Please adhere to the APA citation guidelines in your papers and other assignments:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

Grading Scale

The course will follow a standard grading scale:

A: Achievement outstanding relative to the basic course requirements

A 93 or higher

A - 90-92

B: Achievement significantly above the basic course requirements

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C: Achievement meeting the basic course requirements

C+ 77-79

C 74-76

C- 70-72

D: Achievement worthy of credit but below the basic course requirements

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F Below 60

Additional Grading Policies

I will not consider grade complaints if more than one week has passed after the assignment has been returned to you.

Before I review your grade, you must first:

1. Wait 24 hours.
2. Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
3. Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and

the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”

The second grade, higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

Murphy’s Law² Deadline Extension: Over the course of the term, you have one no-questions-asked opportunity to submit an assignment 48 hours after the deadline has passed. You may only use this grace period once per term. However, we are showing up for classes in a pandemic. If you are struggling to meet a deadline, then please talk to me and I will do my best to accommodate you. But please be respectful of group-work situations. No one person should carry all the weight of the group!

Resources & Well-Being

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact disability@carleton.edu or call Jan Foley, Student Accessibility Specialist (x4464) or Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services (x5250) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Academic Integrity

In writing course papers, students must document all passages, paraphrases and/or ideas that are borrowed from any source, and direct quotations must be placed within quotation marks. Similarly, papers must represent research conducted for the course in which they are assigned and no other; it is not appropriate to submit a paper that has already been or will be submitted to another course. Finally, papers must be the product of students’ own work. Papers written by anyone other than the student, including those purchased from commercial research services, are unacceptable.

All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources! A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/>.

Well-Being

During these particularly rough times, I urge you to make yourself – your own health and well-being – a priority throughout this ten-week term. It is important to recognize stressors you may be facing, which can be personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic (along with the global pandemic, struggles for racial justice, and a tense US election). Sleep, exercise, and connecting with others can be

² Murphy’s Law = whatever can go wrong, will go wrong

strategies to help you flourish at Carleton. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, feel free to contact me and/or pursue other resources, such as [Student Health and Counseling](#) or the [Office of Health Promotion](#).

An additional word³ on wellness and health: Audre Lorde once said, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” Please see your wellness as an act of power and perseverance. The core to your success. Hold each other – and me – accountable. Go for walks. Let your mind wander. Take a deep breath. Drink water. All of your work will wait for you, and your final product will be better when you are in balance.

For our purposes, the “Middle East & North Africa” will include:

Algeria
Bahrain
Djibouti
Egypt
Iran
Iraq
Israel
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Libya
Mauritania
Morocco
Oman
Palestine
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Somalia
Sudan
Syria
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
Yemen

³ Thank you to Dr. Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve at Brown University and Dr. Simon Weffer at Northern Illinois Univ for this addition

Weekly Readings & Due Dates (tentative!!)

Refer to the Moodle page for additional activities (e.g., videos, discussion forums, collaborative reading guides, etc.)

Part I: Political origins of states & social structures

Week 1: 14 September – 18 September

Monday: Course introduction

What is the Middle East? Interrogate both Middle East AND politics. What do we mean by the phrase “Middle East politics”?

Wednesday:

Intro to Part I: Confronting biases

Required readings:

1. Said, Edward. (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. Introduction.
2. Said, Edward. “Islam Through Western Eyes,” *The Nation*, April 26, 1980.

Friday: Why do origins matter?

Submit your top 3 country choices (through Moodle) by 8PM

Required viewing for Friday’s class: [World War I through Arab Eyes: The Arabs](#) (episode one)

Required readings:

1. Roger Owen “The end of empires: the emergence of the modern Middle Eastern states,” in *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 1
2. Osamah F. Khalil, “[The Crossroads of the World: U.S. and British Foreign Policy Doctrines and the Construct of the Middle East, 1902-2007](#),” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 299-344, February 2014.

Week 2: 21 September – 25 September

Monday: Colonial legacies

State assignments distributed

Required viewing for Monday’s class: [World War I Through Arab Eyes: the New Middle East](#) (episode three)

Required readings:

1. Fromkin, David. “How the Modern Middle East Map Came to be Drawn.” *Smithsonian* (May 1991): 166-170.
2. Wright, Robin. “How the Curse of Sykes Picot Still Haunts the Middle East,” *The New Yorker*, April 30, 2016.

Wednesday:

1. Nasr, Vali (1999). "European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. by John L. Esposito. Oxford: Oxford University Press
2. Voll, John O. (2013). "Political Islam and the State" from *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*.

Friday: Arab Nationalism

Due: Simulation topic by 8PM

Required readings:

1. Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. Read chapters 24 and 25, "The Climax of Arabism" and "Arab Unity and Disunity."

Week 3: 28 September – 2 October

Monday:

Everyday Orientalism paper due by 9PM

Required Readings

1. [Primer on Israeli – Palestinian conflict](#)

Wednesday: Palestine & Israel

Required viewing:

1. The Wanted 18 (available on Kanopy)

Required reading:

1. "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" in *The Middle East*, ed. Ellen Lust: CQ Press, 2011. Pages 238-313

Friday:

Peteet, J. (2017). *Space and mobility in Palestine*. Indiana University Press. Chapter 1.

PART II: Modern states, structures, and (in)security

Week 4: 5 October – 9 October

Intro to Part II – Modern states, persistent institutions & structures, and societies in transition. From colonialism to independence to post-colonial status. Robustness of authoritarianism in the MENA region:

Monday:

Due: Selection of issue for case study

Required readings:

1. Bellin, Eva. 2004. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: A Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics*, 36 (2): 139-157
2. Ryan, C. R. (2009). "Security Dilemmas in Arab Politics," from *Inter-Arab alliances: Regime security and Jordanian foreign policy*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Recommended:

Project on Middle East Politics. 2015. [Rethinking Nation and Nationalism](#).

Wednesday:

Required readings:

1. Goddard, H. (2002). Islam and democracy. *The Political Quarterly*, 73(1), 3-9.
2. Hashemi, Nader (2013) "Islam and Democracy," from *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*.
3. Mernissi, F. (2002). "Fear of the Foreign West," from *Islam And Democracy: Fear Of The Modern World With New Introduction*. Basic books.

Friday: Political economy of oil

Simulation outline due

Required readings:

1. Tétreault, Mary Ann. "The political economy of middle eastern oil." *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East* (2008): 255-279.
2. Ross, M. L. (2011, September-October). Will oil drown the Arab Spring? Democracy and the resource curse. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(5).

Week 5: 12 October – 16 October

Monday: Authoritarianism & Militaries

Required readings:

1. Kamrava, Mehran. 2000. "Military Professionalization and Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly*, 115 (1): 67-92.
2. Nael Shama, "[Egypt's Power Game: Why Cairo is Boosting its Military Power](#)" *Jadaliyya*

Wednesday: Authoritarianism, Militarism, & Women's Rights

Required readings:

1. Forester, S. (2019). Protecting women, protecting the state: Militarism, security threats, and government action on violence against women in Jordan. *Security Dialogue*, 50(6), 475-492.

Friday: Orientalism, Militarism, and Patriarchy

Data descriptions – identify primary data for case study

Required readings:

1. Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others. *American anthropologist*, 104(3), 783-790.
2. Ababneh, S. (2009). Islamic Political Activism as a Means of Women's Empowerment? The Case of the Female Islamic Action Front Activists. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 9(1), 1-24.

Part III: Challenging (?) the State

Week 6: 19 October – 23 October

Monday: MID-TERM BREAK

Part III: Challenging (?) the State Intro lecture. What have we established so far? What do we expect for potential pushback?

Wednesday:

Required readings:

1. Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2000. "Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan." *Comparative Politics*, 33 (1): pp. 43–61
2. Bayat, Asef "A Street Named Revolution" from *Life as Politics*

Friday: Intro Arab Uprisings

Case study outline due by 9PM

Required readings:

1. Lynch, Marc. 2012. *The Arab Uprisings: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. New York: Perseus Books. Introduction & Chapter 1
2. Pearlman, W. (2013). Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(2), 387-409.

Week 7: 26 October – 30 October: The Arab Spring

Monday:

Readings TBD; possible guest speaker

Wednesday:

Pearlman, Wendy. (2017). *We Crossed a Bridge and it Trembled: Voices from Syria*. HarperCollins. See Moodle for excerpts

Friday:

Gause, Gregory F. "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability" in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2011).

Khalidi, Rashid. "Preliminary Historical Observations on the Arab Revolutions of 2011," *Jadaliyya*

Week 8: 2 November – 6 November:

Monday:

Simulation Presentations

Wednesday:

Simulation Presentations

Friday:

Required readings:

1. [Shwartz and Gözl, "Going to War with the Coronavirus and Maintaining the State of Resistance in Iran"](#)
2. Elfeituri, ["Why Civil Society is Libya's Best Defense Against the COVID-19 Pandemic"](#)
3. [Warscapes Corona Notebooks](#) from Yemen (video)

Part IV: Simulation on Contentious Politics in the Middle East

Week 9: 9 November – 13 November

Monday:

Rough draft due

Readings TBD

Wednesday:

Readings TBD

Friday:

Simulation – day 1

Week 10: 16 November – 20 November

Monday

Simulation wrap-up

Wednesday

Final readings:

1. [The Foreigner's Grift](#)
2. [From Algeria to Sudan, a New Lease of Life for Arab Springs](#)
3. [When the lights go out: Iraq in revolution](#)
4. The Identity of Hope. A graphic novel by Shifaa Alsairafi

Friday: Reading day