International and Area Studies
MES 20:
Perspectives on The Middle East
Modern Arab Politics and Society
Instructor: Yasmeen Daifallah
Office hours: Tues-Thurs, 5:30-6:30 Café Strada
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Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the history, politics, and societies of the modern Arab World. It assumes no prior knowledge of the Middle East or the Arab World on the part of the students. We shall explore the most salient ideas and events in the history of that region since the 18th century, and learn about the current waves of social and political change since December 2010, in what have come to be known as the Arab Spring. This course has two major objectives: first, to familiarize you with the social, economic and political developments in Arab societies throughout the past two centuries, and second, to introduce you to the various approaches to studying that region. Although this course is about “The Middle East,” we will focus primarily on the Arab World. (We will not deal with Turkey, Iran or Israel except insofar as they are related to the history and development of Arab society and politics. We shall also discuss North African countries -Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya- that lie outside the geographical region of the Middle East).

The course is divided into four major parts. The first provides a historical background of the region. The second explores major approaches to analyzing Arab politics and society. The third part covers three major contemporary issues in Arab politics: the persistence of authoritarian regimes, religion and politics, and gender. In part four, we will examine and analyze the Arab uprisings of the past two years, and revisit how some of themes we raised before (religion and politics, gender, etc.) feature in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Course Requirements:

Class participation: 15 %
Students are expected to attend all class sessions, do the assigned readings, and participate in class through classroom activities, posing questions and comments about the reading material and lecture.
Map quiz: 5 %
Group project: 15%
Students will be required to prepare a poster about an Islamist group in the modern Arab World. On April 17th, each group will be required to present its poster and to deliver a ten-minute presentation about the group of their choice.
Mid term: 25%
Final exam: 40%

Course Materials:

Course materials will be provided in a reader sold at Copy Central on 2560 Bancroft
Way, posted on Bspace, or accessible through the internet.

Course Structure:

PART I: Historical Background

Jan 23rd: The Middle East: An Overview


Jan 30th: Historical Background

Map Quiz


Feb 6th: Historical background (continued)

Feb 13th: Nation-States and Arab Nationalism


PART II: Approaches to Studying the Middle East

Feb 20th: The Battle of Algiers (Screening)

Feb 27th: The Area Studies Approach


Anderson, L. 1999. “Politics in the Middle East: Opportunities and Limits in the Quest for Theory.” In Area Studies and Social Science: Strategies for Understanding Middle
March 6th: The Cultural and Statist Approaches


Recommended:
El Gobashy, M. *Politics and Society of the Contemporary Middle East*. Pp. 29-47.

Part III: Issues in Arab Politics

March 13th: Persisting Authoritarianism


March 20th: Midterm Exam

March 27th: Spring break

April 3rd: Religion and Politics


**April 10th: Gender**


**April 17th: Group Presentations on Case Study of an Islamist Group**

**PART IV: The Arab Spring**

**April 24th: What Happened and Why**


May 1st: Religion, Gender, and the Arab Spring


May 6th- May 10th: RRR Week

May 14th: Final Exam