



Comparative Political History of Modern Middle East

Fall 2018

Instructor: Prof. Yüksel Taşkın

The Middle East has been represented as an “exception” and an “unfitting geography” and scholarly work on the area has long strengthened these conceptions. The sudden outbreak of the Arab Spring created a new image of a democratizing Middle East and raised optimistic expectations on the region. However, the persistence of authoritarianism and the unsettling global effects of the violent Syrian civil war have once again nurtured the idea of an enduring Middle Eastern predicament. This course aims to provide students with a comparative historical insight and introduce them to rival theoretical perspectives in critically understanding the past and the present Middle East. It will begin with an introduction and critique of Western colonialism in the Middle East and its intellectual component: orientalism. Then, the deep-rooted impacts of the colonial era on the lives of the indigenous peoples will be analyzed. In understanding the changes and main trends in the post- World War II setting, three countries –Iran, Egypt and Syria- will be studied with a comparative insight. There will be one week devoted to the understanding of the roots and worldwide impacts of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Last but not the least, four weeks will be devoted to the general question of democratization in the Middle East through a detailed analysis of the outbreak of the Arab Spring and its immediate outcomes. Some documentaries or short movies will be introduced to support students’ visual understanding of regional reality. Students are, first, expected to develop a rich comparative historical insight to be able to truly assess rival theories and approaches.

Students are strongly encouraged to fulfill their reading assignments (if assigned for that week, they must also see the visual material) and participate in the class debates. The first half of the class will include a short lecture and a ten-minute student presentation based on one of the assigned readings of the week. The second half of the class will be organized as class debates. Students will be sent some questions prior to the next week’s debate. They are expected to get prepared and formulate some answers for these questions before the classes. Besides, they can also propose their questions for the class debate.

Course Requirements:

Participation: 20% (active participation in class debates)

Short-presentation: 10% (ten-minute-presentation on one of the assigned readings of the week)

Response Papers: 30% (Three in total. 5 pages max. Double-spaced)

Final Paper: 40% (A long paper that will address major socioeconomic or political problems and/or prospects in past and contemporary Middle East. 15 pages max. Double-spaced).



Week I: Introduction: main goals and structure

Week II: Power and knowledge: Western Colonialism and Orientalism

- Zachary Lockman, *Contending visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism...* 66-99.
- Samuel P. Huntington, Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No.3 (Summer 1993), 22-99.

Week III: The Legacy of Colonialism

- “The First Wave of Colonialism: North Africa,” in Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History...*134-181.

Week IV: EGYPT: From Independence to Nasser’s Arab Nationalism

- William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *a History of the Middle East...*179-189 & 280-300 & 314-321 & 370-380.

Week V: EGYPT: Mubarak Era (1981-2011): Regime consolidation versus Islamism

- Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule...* 104-158.

Week VI: IRAN: From Pahlavi Monarchy to the Islamic Revolution

- Willim L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton...pp. 101-108 & 132-136 & 171-178 & 267-279 & 347-363.

Week VII: IRAN: The founding of Islamic regime, the Reformist upsurge and Conservative Revival

- Ferhat Khosrokhavar, “Postrevolutionary Iran and the New Social Movements”, in Eric Hooglund ed., *Twenty Years of Islamic Revolution...*3-19
- Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, “The Pluralistic Momentum in Iran and the Future of the Reform Movement,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No.4, 2006: 665-674.
- Kazem Alemdari, “Power Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran: transition from populism to clientalism and militarization of government” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No.8, 2005: 1285-1301.

Week VIII: SYRIA: Under Hafez al-Assad (1970-2000) and Bashar Al-Assad (2000-?): Failure to create a political community

- William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton...pp. 201-214 & 301-304 & 414-424.
- Eyal Zisser. Who is afraid of Syrian Nationalism? National and State Identity in Syria. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2006, Vol. 42, No.2: 179-198
- Flynt Leverett, *Inheriting Syria, Bashar’s Trial by Fire...*57-99.



- David W. Lesch, The Evolution of Bashar Al Asad, *Middle East Policy*, Vol: XVII, No. 2, Summer 2010, 70-81

Week IX: The roots of the Palestine, Israel and Arab-Israeli conflict

- Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *A Premier to Palestine, Israel and Arab-Israeli Conflict*, MERIP ONLINE, http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/intro-pal-isr-primer.html...1-23.
- John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy, *Middle East Policy*, vol. XIII, No. 3, Fall 2006, 29-87

Week X: Persistence of authoritarianism or problems of democratization in the Middle East

- Simon Bromley, “Middle East Exceptionalism-myth or reality?” in David Potter et al. *Democratization...*321-344,
- Mehran Kamrava, Preserving Non-Democracies: Leaders and State Institutions in the Middle East, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2, March 2010, 251–270,
- Meliha Benli Altunışık, Rentier State Theory and the Arab Uprisings: An Appraisal, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, Vol. 11, No: 42, Summer 2014, 75-91

Week XI: Understanding the main dynamics of the Arab Spring:

- James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What everyone needs to know....*1-67

Week XII: The Arab Spring: Tunisia and Egypt

- Alfred Stepan, Tunisia’s transition and the twin tolerations, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 23, no.2, April 2012, 89-103.
- Ann M. Lesch, Troubled political transitions: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, *Middle East Policy*, Vol: XXI, No. 1, Spring 2014, 62-74,
- Hazem Kandil (Interview) Sisi’s Egypt, *New Left Review* 102, Nov-Dec 2016,5-40.
- Valentine M. Moghadam, Modernising women and democratisation after the Arab Spring, *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2014 137–142
- **Suggested Readings:** Abdullah Al-Arian, Between Terror and Tyranny: Political Islam in the Shadow of the Arab Uprisings, December 2015, MERIP, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero123015>

Week XIII: What went wrong? Understanding the dynamics of Syrian Civil War

- James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What everyone needs to know...*100-119
- Aurora Sottimano, Building authoritarian ‘legitimacy’: domestic compliance and international standing of Bashar al-Asad’s Syria, *Global Discourse*, Vol.6 No. 3, 2016, 450–466
- Christopher Phillips and Morten Valbjørn, ‘What is in a Name?’: The Role of (Different) Identities in the Multiple Proxy Wars in Syria, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2018, 414–433



- Nimer Sultany, *Three Theses on ISIS: The Universal, the Millenarian, the Philistine*, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/22338/three-theses-on-isis_the-universal-the-millenarian

BOOKS:

- Zachary Lockman, *Contending visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004
- Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*, New York, Basic Books, 2009.
- William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *a History of the Middle East*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2013,
- Flynt Leverett, *Inheriting Syria, Bashar's Trial by Fire*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005.
- Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule*, Boulder, London; Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004.
- James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What everyone needs to know*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

SUGGESTED BOOKS:

- Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002,
- Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Fred Halliday, *100 Myths about the Middle East*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005.
- Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's men: An American coup and the roots of Middle East Terror*, Hoboken, New Jersey: J. Wiley & Sons, 2003.
- Stephen Kinzer, *Reset: Iran, Turkey and America's future*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2011.