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Identity and Conflict in the Middle East

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Off University & New University in Exile Consortium

This 10-week seminar explores the politics of state and identity formation in the Middle East through a thematic approach in order to examine the protracted crises in the region. Topics and case studies of identity conflicts/formations covered in the seminar will reflect on the social structures, political currents, and economic relations to understand the contemporary Middle East. Our focus will be on the foundational dynamics of ongoing identity conflicts such as making of the modern state in the Middle East, varieties of nationalism, cycles of authoritarianism, and rise and fall of social movements. By the end of the seminar, participants will be able to compare and contrast theoretical and historical background of related concepts of identity conflicts/formations, and employ these perspectives to examine contemporary conflicts in the Middle East in a broader political-economic perspective.

We expect participants to spend around 3 hours of preparation for each week.

Seminar materials:

All course material will be uploaded online to the Course website.

- * required readings and optional readings
- * documentaries and films
- * daily media on the region

Seminar Requirements:

All participants should meet the following requirements to be eligible to receive a certificate of completion:

* *Papers:* There will be two writing assignments for this seminar. The first one is a midterm short paper (1500 words maximum) that will focus on a recent topic in the region related to the issues of identity and conflict. The first assignment should be written in the form of a op-ed or a short analysis for a newspaper.

The second writing assignment will be your final papers due by the end of the seminar. Final papers will be in the form of a research paper that will include an in-depth analysis of a topic related to the region in the framework of our discussions. We will provide more guidelines about the writing assignments and a general rubric of our expectations by the third week.

* *Online Seminar Meetings:* Participants are expected to be prepared for further discussion of the provided materials and attend the weekly online meetings regularly. Participants should attend at least 7 (out of 10) weekly meetings.

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Seminar Schedule and Materials:

I. Introduction (October 3, 2019)

Video: Course objectives, themes, and requirements

Judith Butler, "Preface," *Precarious Life: The Powers Of Mourning And Violence*, London, Verso, 2004, p. xi-xxi.

II. Identity: Unity and/or Difference : Theoretical Background and Concepts (October 10, 2019)

Video: Conceptual Toolbox

Michael Mann, "The Argument", *The Dark Side of Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 1-33.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed., London, New York, Verso, 2006, p. 1-7.

Steven Cook, Washington Can't Solve the Identity Crisis in Middle East Nations, *Washington Post*, August 15, 2014.

III. Colonial and Postcolonial Identities in the Middle East: Algeria (October 17, 2019)

Video: Perpetual Postcolonialism in the Middle East

Edward Said, "Introduction", *Orientalism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 9-36.

Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled," *A Dying Colonialism*, transl. Haakon Chevalier, New York, Grove Press, 1965, p. 35-67.

Farid Laroussi, "Beyond Revolution Algeria's Postcolonial Challenge," *Interventions International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 19 (1), 2016, p. 1-16.

Video: Interview with Edward Said on Orientalism, Director Sut Jhally, 1998. (excerpts)

Optional Reading:

Arif Dirlik, Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, And The Nation," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 4:3, 2002, p. 428-448.

IV. Nationalism in the Middle East: Turkey and Egypt (October 24, 2019)

Video: Rise, Fall, and Reemergence of Nationalism

Youssef M. Choueiri, "Nationalisms in the Middle East: The Case of Pan-Arabism," *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005, p. 291-312

James L. Gelvin, "The Introduction and Spread of Nationalism, " *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 3rd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 208-216.



Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?*, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 11-64.

V. What is a Conflict?: Arab-Israel Conflict (October 31, 2019)

Video: Defining Conflicts

James L. Gelvin, “The Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Dispute,” *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 3rd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 217-232.

Ilan Pappé and Noam Chomsky, *On Palestine*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2015.

Nadya Hajj, “Institutional Formation in Transitional Settings”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (July 2014), pp. 399-418.

Video Interview with Nadya Hajj

Video: Anthony Bourdain Goes to Gaza

VI. Political Islam (November 7, 2019)

Video: Social Roots of Political Islam

Anne Wolf, “Beyond the Secular Myth”, *Political Islam in Tunisia, The History of Enahda*, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 11-27.

Asef Bayat, “Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Islamist Activism in Iran and Egypt, 1960s-1980s.”, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the PostIslamist Turn*, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. tba.

Movie: Persepolis

VII. Kurdish Issue (November 14, 2019)

Video: Kurds in the Middle East and Abroad

Stefano M. Torelli, “Kurdistan and the Middle East. Historical Divisions and Internal Plots,” *Kurdistan An Invisible Nation*, ed. Stefano M. Torelli, ISPI, Milano, 2016, p. 18-43.

Cengiz Gunes & Çetin Gürer, “Kurdish Movement’s Democratic Autonomy Proposals in Turkey”, *Democratic Representation in Plurinational States*, ed. E. Nimni & E. Aktoprak, London, Palgrave, 2019, p. 159-175.

Movie: Küçük Kara Balıklar, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V68wNKbgnb4>

Optional Readings:

Thomas Schmidinger, “Self-Determination, Federalism and Autonomy in the Middle East”, *Minority Self-Government in Europe and the Middle East: From Theory to Practice*, ed. O. Akbulut & E. Aktoprak, Leiden, Brill, 2019, p. 183-200.



Elçin Aktoprak, “Between Authoritarianism and Peace: The Kurdish Opening in Turkey (2013–2015),” *Democratic Representation in Plurinational States*, ed. E. Nimni & E. Aktoprak, London, Palgrave, 2019, p. 137-158.

Hamit Bozarslan, “Between integration, autonomization and radicalization. Hamit Bozarslan on the Kurdish Movement and the Turkish Left”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online], 14 | 2012, Online since 18 January 2013, Connection on 13 February 2014. URL : <http://ejts.revues.org/4663>

VIII. Resistance and Social Movements (November 21, 2019)

Video: Protesting on the Streets of the Middle East

Asef Bayat, “Revolutions of Wrong Times”, *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*,

Amy Austin Holmes, “Introduction”, *Coups and Revolutions, Mass Mobilization, the Egyptian Military, and the United States From Mubarak to Sisi*, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 3-8.

Delal Aydin, “Mobilizing the Kurds in Turkey: Newroz as a Myth”, *Kurdish Question in Turkey*, ed. Welat Zeydanlioglu and Cengiz Gunes, Routledge, 2014, p. 68-88.

Video interview with Ozge Ozkoc

Film: The Square

Tahir Abbas & Ismail Hakki Yigit, “Scenes from Gezi Park: Localisation, nationalism and globalisation in Turkey,” *City*, 19 (1), 2015.

Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism: Lessons from the Arab Spring,” *Comparative Politics*, January 2012, p. 127-149

IX. Gender (December 5, 2019)

Video: Gendered Perspectives of the Middle East

Sara Cravatts, “Examining Gender, Conflict and Identity in the Middle East from a Female Perspective,” *Popular Photograph*, April 16, 2016.

Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, “Gender, Protest and Political Transition in the Middle East and North Africa”, *Handbook on Gender in World Politics*, ed. Jill Steans, 2016.

Jad Islah, “Islamist Women of Hamas: Between Feminism and Nationalism,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 12(2), 2011: 176-201.

Bahar Şimşek, “Militancy, Reconciliation, Motherhood: A History of Kurdish Women’s Movements,” *Democratic Representation in Plurinational States*, ed. E. Nimni & E. Aktoprak, London, Palgrave, 2019, p. 229-251.

Video Interview with Nadje Al-Ali

X. Futures of the Middle East (December 12, 2019)

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Video: Is A Middle Eastern Union Possible?