

Syllabus

Title of the Course:	Heritage, Politics and Modern State in the Middle East	Course Breakdown:	28 teaching hours online, 152 hours independent study
Name of the Instructor:	Mohamad Moustafa Alabsi & Rand Abu Ackl	Weekly class time:	Tuesdays, 18.00 – 20.00 (CET)
Language:	English	Credit:	6 ECTS
Hosted by:	Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München	Certificate issued by:	Institute of Near and Middle East Studies

This Seminar is funded by the New University in In Exile Consortium based at the New School and is hosted by the Institute of Near and Middle East Studies at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

Academic fields: Middle Eastern Studies – History – Archeology – Anthropology & Cultural Studies – Theory of State – Constitutional Theory and Practices

Description of the course

The events of the last two decades in the Middle East have not only led to revolutionary outcomes but also to civil wars, to dictatorship exerted by representatives of ethno-religious majorities and to a large-scale refugee's crisis.

With an interactive methodology and student's participation in the program, throughout the course and in multidisciplinary perspectives we will pose several essential questions that Middle Eastern societies and political borders face.

With a political and theoretical background, the course will discuss the nature of the modern Middle Eastern states, the history of its twentieth century and the practices that characterized the legal and political life in the region. The theoretical perspective of the course will focus on the relationship between the state and the dictator in modern Arab times, between state and ideology in a one-party-system as well as the observation and discussion of young movements and initiatives in the contemporary Arab world. The main engagement will be with the definition of civil society and its potential role in any social and political cohesion.

The course will also discuss the tangible and intangible heritage in the Middle East through archeological and anthropological insights. From antiquity to medieval then to modern times, temples and religions have always occupied physical and mental spaces in the shaping of Middle Eastern identities and communities. An overview of interreligious violence in the region's history will complete the reflection offered by the course on conflictuality and on future of democratic and political perspectives.

Learning Aims

- To obtain critical knowledge about the Middle East by studying its complexity and conflicts
- To familiarize with the ancient and the modern Middle Eastern landscape through archeological, cultural, and political insights
- To familiarize with the multicultural nature of Middle Eastern societies
- To practice active analyzing of Middle Eastern topics and conflicts
- To get weekly involved in thinking and analyzing Middle Eastern news and events
- To have an insight into Middle Eastern social movements and political aspirations

Upon the successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- Understand and discuss with a critical approach the stakes of Democracy and Citizenship in general as well as in the Middle Eastern modern experience.
- Thinking theoretical and practical differences between Majority & Democracy, Revolution & Civil War, Legality and Legitimacy.
- Thinking the theoretical and historical differences between dictatorship, nationalism, and totalitarianism.
- Assessing distinctions between Territory and Land, between Law and Nature.
- The course will be interactive, so students will be missioned to participate to as far as 15% percent of its content.

Course requirements

Course components include:

- Class participation: 14-Week **Lectures** (36 hours = 20%)
- **Two response papers:** Two thematic dossiers by each student for the end of Week 2 and Week 6 (36 hours = 20%)
- **Personal documentation** to be planned by instructors: academic readings, documentaries, movies (45 hours =25%)
- **Group presentations:** (18 hours = 10%)
- **Final assignment:** Fifteen-page **research paper** by each student for the Week 14 (45 hours = 25%)

The **final grade** for the course will be based on the following:

- 35% for assignments & personal participation (response papers, personal documentation quality, and so on)
- 30% for Group working and activities
- 35% for the Final Assignment

Outline of the Course Schedule

Week 1		Introduction
Week 2	By the end of Week 2, each student will have chosen a Middle Eastern country and submitted a 1300-word paper on its modern history -social components and political regime.	First Response Paper
Week 3		
Week 4		
Week 5	By the end of week 5 each student will have submitted a 800-word Response Paper. The theme will be inspired from General Materials and Readings assigned by instructors at the beginning of the course	Second Response Paper
Week 6		
Week 7	Week 7 will begin with the formation of small groups. These will be based on the sharing of their individual responses in order to choose a common subject to be presented on Week 10. Instructors will be available to discuss and help the themes selection.	Workshop & Group presentations

Week 8		
Week 9		
Week 10	Week 10 will begin with a selection of a dissertation subject by each student. Students will have four-week time to prepare their final paper. Instructors will be available to help and discuss each dissertation subject.	
	By Week 7 the reading of the Book <i>In The Name of Identity</i> (Amin Maalouf) will be over. By Week 10, a comment of 2000 to 2500 words will be required from each student.	
Week 11		
Week 12		
Week 13		Final paper (fifteen-page dissertation) by the end of Week 13
Week 14		Wrap-up and Conclusion

Syllabus / Readings List

General Materials and Readings

General materials and readings for the semester will bring the students to the heart of Middle eastern political landscape and social realities. The course proposes the reading of the award-winning and Lebanese author Amin Maalouf “In the Name of Identity”. A very stimulating reflection on the personal and the collective identity in the Middle East but also on the global stage.

The second requested task will be the listening to the BBC podcast “Our man in the Middle East”. Twenty-five reports from many Middle Eastern countries that the British journalist Jeremy Bowen had documented during his 30 years of reporting for the BBC from the region. The podcast episodes will let student observe and think of a widened number of problems that characterize the Middle Eastern society. These two tasks will help students to add their views and thoughts to the weekly sessions and especially help them to extend their background for the achieving of essays and presentations.

The third task will be the reading of the 2003 United Nation’s report on the Middle Eastern situation of knowledge and cultural production. This material will give a scientific and methodological support for the discussion of the facts and perspectives for the region. This very important report represents an in-depth view of these societies few years before the explosion of the Arab Spring.

- Maalouf, Amin. [1998] 2003. *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. Translated from French by Barbara Bray.
- Bowen, Jeremy. 2017. *Our Man In the Middle East* [Audio Podcast]. BBC Radio 4 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08q4cls> (25 Episodes of 15 minutes each)
- *Arab Human Development Report (AHDR): Building a Knowledge Society* (2003). The United Nations Development Program, Regional Bureau for Arab States. Part 1 + Chapters 2 + 4 + 6 + 8 (80 pages). Available on <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/arab-human-development-report-2003>

Week 1: Introduction – Tangible & intangible heritage: between stones and societies

The first session will introduce the fields covered by Middle Eastern studies, the specificities, and different possible borders of that region. Instructors will also discuss the expectations of the students regarding the content and the proposed materials. The instructors will also present and discuss the activities and interaction tasks that students will have to achieve during the semester and at its end.

Readings for Week 1:

- Hourani Albert, “How should We Write the History of the Middle East” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (May 1991), pp. 125-136 available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164233> [11 pages]
- Anderson, Lisa, “The State in the Middle East and North Africa, “*Comparative Politics* 20:1 (October 1987) www.jstor.org/stable/421917 [18 pages]

Week 2: The State and the Temple in classical Middle East: the examples of Summer, the Roman Empire and the Islamic Califate

The purpose of the second session will be the passionate exploring of the historical relationship between temple and State in the Middle East and the understanding of how that relationship has reshaped communities and identities in the region. The session will introduce inter-disciplinary methods of research and analysis into the understanding and clarification of middle east State.

Readings for Week 2:

- Lapidus, Ira M. (1996): State and Religion in Islamic Societies. In *Past & Present* (151), pp. 3–27. Available online at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/651204> [24 pages]

To go further / Curiosity:

- Mierse, W. E. (2012): Temples and Sanctuaries from the Early Iron Age Levant. Recovery After Collapse: Penn State University Press (History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant). Available at <https://books.google.it/books?id=VDULEAAAQBAJ>

Week 3: Features and Characteristics of the Califal State in the Islamic Legal Tradition

This session will discuss the “natural State” or the “Naturalism” from the theory of the State point of view. Pre-modern history was characterized by a form of State that wasn’t organized upon a constitutional basis. We will present and discuss the features of what we can call the “classical State”. An emphasis will be made upon the Philosophy of History of the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun as well as some Muslim medieval jurists.

Readings for Week 3:

- Kayapinar, M. “Ibn Khaldun's Concept of "Assabiyya": An Alternative Tool for Understanding Long-Term Politics?” *Asian Journal of Social Science* (3/4), 375-407 (August 2008). Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23654979> [33 pages]

Articles visited and commented during the session/ Complete reading is optional:

- Lenn Evan Goodman. Ibn Khaldun and Thucydides. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (April 1972). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/600652> [21 pages]
- Dhaouadi, Mahmoud. “The Forgotten Concept of Human Nature in Khaldunian Studies” *Asian Journal of Social Science* (3/4), 571-589. (2008). Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23654986> [19 pages]
- Abbès, Makram.. *Islam et politique à l'âge classique*. Paris : Presses universitaires de France (2009). [Extracts will be translated and commented by the instructor]

Week 4: Presentations & discussions of the First Response Paper

Discussions will be led by students. Student works and comments will be discussed after 5-minutes presentations of each of them. The aim of this first activity is to orient and help students in formulating

their next and longer papers for Week 7. The material upon which the work will be done is firstly the **general materials and readings**, and then the checking that all students have at listened to 10 of the 25-BBC podcast episodes. A paper of around 800 words summarizing the 10 episodes will be required from each student. This session will also summarize the first three sessions and resume the introduction of the next three ones.

Materials for Week 4:

10 of the 25-BBC Podcasts should have been listened to. Each student will return a written resumé of his listening. 4 to 5 lines per episode, total: 40 to 50 lines.

Week 5: The State as a legal device & the Burden of *Laïcité*

The modern State as a theory but also as a practice was a revolutionary step in human History. After having discussed some features of the Classical State in general and in Middle Eastern Classical Ages in particular, the course will offer a simplified understanding of philosophical and normative theories of the State whose shaping have taken many centuries especially since the Enlightenment age in Europe. Focuses will be done upon the points below:

- European wars of religion and the birth of ‘internal alterity’ in the Catholic World with the Protestant movement
- Alterity, Pluralism and Politics
- Alterity and Politics in the Middle East

Readings for Week 5:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 6: The territorial order in the Middle East, from Empire to Modern State

The relationship between Pluralism and Politics necessitate a discussion on the territorial order in the Middle Eastern landscape. While the English term “community” means the “politically organized people” and the “citizens of a State” in nowadays western tradition, the Middle Eastern significance of it often means “ethnic” and “religious” groups. This session will present the difficulties Modern State’s structure encounter when it has been trying to deal with “natural communities” in the Middle East.

Readings for Week 6:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 7: Presentations & discussions of the Second Response

Discussions will be led by students. According to their respective interests, students will discuss and form work group for a collective task (to be presented on Week 10).

*No reading material for Week 7. Focus will be made on summarizing the last sessions and trying within students to relate them to the book of Amin Maalouf 'In the Name of Identity' (see **General Materials and Readings**).*

Week 8: National identity: Christians in Syria & Lebanon. Kurds in Iraq & Syria

This course will follow the history of the study of Christian communities in Syria from the Ottoman period till the 20th century. It will particularly consider relationship and interactions between the Syrian State and its Christians inhabitants. It will explore how Christians have been looking and recognizing themselves.

Readings for Week 8:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 9: Constitutions & Dictatorship in the Middle East

This session will present and discuss what we can call the “biggest defeat of Modern State” in modern time Middle East. The culture of “Pronunciamento” or the regular military coups in Arab States across the second half of the 20th century. The interest of such an observation lies in the perversion of the legal system and the hypothesis according to which the Modern Middle Eastern State is not modern anymore.

The most important points of this session will be

- What is the definition of dictatorship from legal and theoretical point of view?
- The invisible consequences of soft dictatorship on constitutionalism
- Hard Dictatorship / The one-party State and the totalitarian State: the experience of the Baath in Iraq and Syria
- Extracts from the German and Jewish thinker Hannah Arendt work on totalitarianism

Readings for Week 9:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 10: Presentations & discussions of the groups' outcome work

Discussions will be led by the students. The 10th session will see students presenting each their reading outcome of the Book “In the Name of Identity” of the Lebanese author Amin Maalouf (see **General Materials and Readings**). The students' texts will length of around 2000 to 2500 words. In collaboration with instructors, students will choose and discuss the respective themes of the final dissertation.

No reading materials for Week 10. Focus will be made on Final Subjects to be chosen by students.

Week 11: Violence & rational theory: from iconoclasm movements to the events in Maaloula and Palmyra

The course will focus on the history of icons and explain why people commit art crimes art crimes by discussing the main theoretical frameworks and issues focusing on case studies related to Iconoclasm. It will focus on the problems of definition and measurement and the main ways by which crime can be explained and controlled. The historical cases of iconoclasm presented in this session will focus on the cases of Maaloula and Palmyra in Syria during the Syrian War/Revolution.

Readings for Week 11:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 12: Violence: Looting & Illicit trafficking of antiquities in the Middle East

In the Middle East, antiquities suffer during times of armed conflict. It is destroyed, displaced, stolen and lost. This course will introduce students to the subject of criminology (looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities). It will focus on looting and illicit trafficking in antiquities and study many cases of these art crimes in Syria and Iraq, etc. Through a series of case studies, the student will learn why criminals target art and understand the illicit trade in cultural objects.

Readings for Week 12:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 13: Revolution, Civil Society and Civil War

This final session will surf back on philosophy, Law and State theory. The notion of regime change is not an easy matter either in theory or practice. The stalemates of the Arab Springs represent a malaise especially when they are exposed to disciplinary definition of the notions of Revolution and Civil War. We will try to give open answers to theoretical and practical differences between Revolution and Civil War and we'll emphasize the notion of Civil Society and its historical importance with Hegel, Arendt and Habermas.

Readings for Week 13:

to be defined by October 10th

Week 14: Presentations & discussions of students' final papers.