

POL 241
Politics of the Middle East

Syllabus
Spring Semester 2002

Dr. Ken Menkhaus
Office: Chamber 207
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T-Th 1:00-2:15
Chambers 212

Ahlen wa-sahlen (welcome) to the course! The Middle East is and has long been on center stage of world politics, and is today one of the most important and fascinating regions in the international system. It has been home to some of the most powerful ancient and medieval civilizations; it has been the origin of the three great monotheistic religions of the world; it has long been a critical crossroad of commerce and the flow of ideas between Europe, Africa, and the Far East.

Today, the region commands the front page of the newspaper almost daily with a wide range of critical political developments, from the war on terrorism to the long search for peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This course is an introduction to the contemporary politics and international relations of the Middle East. It is intended to provide you with essential background information on the cultures and history of the Middle East, familiarize you with a survey of selected contemporary political issues from the region, and, hopefully, impart to you the enthusiasm and curiosity that I have about this politically complex and vibrant part of the world. By the end of the course, you should have a nuanced understanding of the main political, social, and economic factors at play in the region, and will be well-equipped to follow developments in the Middle East for years to come.

Structure of the Course:

The course will be divided into four sections -- an introduction to the region, the Arab-Israeli conflict, governance and the rise of political Islam, and international relations of the Middle East. The war on terrorism will be treated as a separate topic at the very end of the semester, but we will follow it throughout the spring. Each class session will be devoted to a particular topic and set of readings as shown in the syllabus. Occasional films will be shown in the evenings; special arrangements will be made for students unable to attend the viewing. The course will require relatively heavy reading, but I have selected some of the best, most readable books -- many written by journalists -- and I think you will find the added reading a pleasure, not a burden.

Format of the Course:

Class sessions will generally consist of a combination of lecture and discussion based on a set of required readings. For discussion to succeed, all participants must have carefully completed reading assignments. We will very often delve into current events and their significance, in which case students will be asked to assess and take positions on political and policy issues. Debate will be strongly encouraged but as always, it should be professional and thoughtful in tone.

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday 10:00-11:30; Tuesday, Thursday, 2:30-3:30.

I will keep a sign-up sheet on the office door so that you can sign up for a time in advance. Please do not phone to my home, as we have a baby and do not want calls waking her up. If you only have a quick question, you can contact me via email at kemenkhaus@davidson.edu.

Evaluation:

participation:	10%
review #1:	20%
midterm:	25%
final exam:	30%
comparative paper:	15%

Final grades translate from number to letter grades as follows:

93-100 A
90-92 A-
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B-
and so on.

Participation: Thorough preparation for each course session is essential. Active participation in class discussion is mandatory. Remember that one of the most valuable types of input can be a thoughtful question! If you do not actively participate in class, you will receive a failing grade for that component of the course.

Quizzes: quizzes, both announced and unannounced, may be administered over the course of the semester, and will be counted as part of your participation grade.

Reviews and final exam: Two reviews and one final exam will be administered over the course of the semester. Study guides will be provided prior to each review.

Policy Paper: Each class participant will write a 5-7 page (double-spaced) paper comparing aspects of political Islamic movements in two countries about which we have read in class: Afghanistan, Somalia, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, and Iran. This paper will ask you to draw on information in our required readings and does not require additional research. More details about this assignment will be provided later.

Honor Code:

Strict adherence to all aspects of the honor code is essential. There will be zero tolerance of cheating and plagiarism -- all cases will be forwarded directly to the Dean of Student's office for disciplinary action.

Reading Material:

The following books are required reading and are on sale at the bookstore:

Friedman, Thomas. *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. (1990).
Sciolino, Elaine. *Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran*. (2000)
Ajami, Fouad. *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*. (1998)
Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban*. (2000)
Huband, Mark. *Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam*. (1998)

Additional reading will also be made available on the library's electronic reserve website.

We will place strong emphasis on linking our course material to current events in the Middle East; you will be expected to keep closely informed on news from the region. The *New York Times* is required reading; you may either read the library's copy each day or subscribe to the newspaper at the bookstore. We will make heavy use of internet news sources as well.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I: Introduction to the Middle East

Tuesday, Jan. 15: Introduction to the Course.
Film, Introduction to the Arab World.

Thursday, Jan. 17: Geographic, demographic, and cultural setting.
Read: Ian Manners and Barbara Parmenter, "A Geographic Preface," in Gerner, *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East* (electronic reserve); and Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*, ch. 1, 2.

Tuesday, Jan. 22: Religions and Ethnic Identities of the Middle East
Read: Colbert Held, *Middle East Patterns*, pp. 68-94; Congressional Quarterly, "Fourteen Centuries of Islam," pp. 195-215 in *The Middle East* (electronic reserve);

Thursday, Jan. 24: Key historical themes: Islamic empires, colonization, Zionism, Arab nationalism, WWII
Read: Goldschmidt, "The Historical Context" in Gerner, *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East* (electronic reserve); Ajami, ch. 3 (both of these readings will be of use for this and the next session)

Tuesday, Jan. 29: Historical themes, continued: decolonization, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the first decades of independence
Read: Bickerton and Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* pp. 1-99 (electronic reserve)

Thursday, Jan. 31: Overview of contemporary Middle East
Read: TBA (electronic reserve)

Tuesday, Feb. 5: **Review #1 – in-class review**

Part II: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Middle East Peace Process

Thursday, Feb. 7: One land, two peoples C The conflict from 1948 to 1988
read: Gerner, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict;" (electronic reserve); Friedman, ch. 5-7.

Tuesday, Feb. 12: The Intifada and its impact on Israeli and Palestinian society
read: Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, ch. 11-17, and epilogue.

Thursday, Feb. 14: Israeli and Palestinian domestic politics

Read: TBA (electronic reserve)

Tuesday, Feb. 19 – guest lecture TBA

Thursday, Feb. 21 – in-class film TBA

Tuesday, Feb. 26 – The peace process and the role of external mediators, 1992-2000
read: TBA (electronic reserve)

Thursday, Feb. 28 – The current impasse in the peace process: outstanding issues, key disputes, domestic and international pressures.

Read: Ajami, ch. 5; TBA (electronic reserve)

March 2-10 – **Spring Break**

Part III: Governance and the Rise of Political Islam: Case Studies

Tuesday March 12: Patterns of authoritarianism; democratization in the Middle East
Read: Friedman, ch. 4; TBA (electronic reserve)

Thursday March 14: Debt and the Impact of Structural Adjustment
Read: electronic reserve

Tuesday March 19: The Rise of Political Islam – the Debate
Read: electronic reserve

Thursday March 21: Contemporary Iran
Read: Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*, all.

Tuesday March 26 – **Review #2 – in class**

Thursday March 28 – Contemporary Egypt
Read: Ajami, ch. 4; Huband, ch. 4.

Tuesday, April 2 – **Easter holiday**

Thursday, April 4 – Contemporary Lebanon
Read: Friedman, ch. 2-3, 8-10; and an update from Dr. Menkhaus' trip there

Tuesday, April 9 – Sudan and Algeria
Read: Huband, *Warriors of the Prophet*, chapters 3, 7.

Thursday, April 11 -- Afghanistan and the Taliban

Read: Rashid, *Taliban*, all; Huband, ch. 1.

Tuesday, April 16 – Political Islam in Somalia

Read: Huband, ch. 2; Menkhaus, (electronic reserve).

Part IV: International Relations of the Middle East/US Foreign Policy

Thursday, April 18 – US Foreign Policy Interests – Overview

Lecture only

Tuesday, April 23 – International Politics of Resources: Oil, Water, Migrant Labor

Read: TBA

Paper due in class

Wednesday evening, 7:00-9:00 Frontline, ‘The Gulf War – Five Years Later Part I’

Thursday, April 25 – The Gulf War

Monday evening, 7:00-9:00 Frontline, ‘The Gulf War – Five Years Later Part II’

Tuesday, April 30 – Post-Gulf War policy debates: Sanctions on Iraq

(electronic reserve)

Thursday, May 2 – The war on terrorism

(electronic reserve)

Tuesday, May 7 – The war on terrorism

(electronic reserve)

Final exam week: May 10-15

(seniors, May 10-13)

Commencement May 19

