

POLS 3340: Middle East Politics

Syllabus



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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar describes this course as follows:

A comprehensive introduction to issues of war and peace in the Middle East.

It is common to hear that conflict in the Middle East has been going on forever, or at least since biblical times! This gives the impression that people in the Middle East are somehow prone to conflict, as if they have it in their blood. However, this view is false. Conflict in the Middle East has definite origins in the 20th Century that resulted from specific events and processes, for example, the influence of Western imperialist countries and their designs on the region as well as bargaining over the nature of political institutions. Middle East history could have been different. However, you can only know that by studying the momentous events and personalities that shaped Middle East politics.

Due to the geostrategic importance of the Middle East, terrorism, and the centrality of its holy sites to all three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), what happens in the Middle East is important not only to the people living there but to people all over the world. Middle East politics tends to be covered disproportionately in the world media, and because of its emotional nature, many stereotypes and prejudices have developed. Casual conversation about Middle East politics often erupts into shouting matches or descends into dogma (rigid and uncompromising beliefs).

This course seeks to expel all myths and stereotypes about the Middle East through a comprehensive and critical discussion of Middle East issues. You need to understand the stereotypes in order to get past them and move on to a real, meaningful discussion of the region. Throughout this course, you will look at how issues of war and peace in the Middle East developed historically and consider different perspectives on the issues expressed by the different actors (in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender and so on).

Consider times when the Middle East comes on the news. The images are ones of violence and bloodshed, fanaticism and hysteria. These images are generally out of context and thus give a distorted picture of what goes on there. To understand the real Middle East, you will follow a chronology of the momentous events in Middle East history and learn how contemporary problems came to be and developed over time. By becoming familiar with the main groups, divisions and bases for conflict, you will come to know and appreciate this complex and fascinating region as objectively as possible.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to:

- define the Middle East as a geopolitical region and distinguish the unique politics of different Middle East states;
- reinterpret contemporary events against the backdrop of Middle East political history;
- recognize the key political moments that shaped the trajectory of Middle East political institutions, leadership, relations among groups and major changes;
- identify the main lines of conflict and identity in the Middle East according to nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender and so on;
- discover the region like a political scientist would by using the lenses of the prominent thinkers, writers and practitioners of Middle East politics;

- dispel common prejudices about the Middle East that stem from the media, casual debate, film and the written word;
- articulate your own reasoned perspective on the problems that plague the region and present constructive solutions towards peace and democracy in the Middle East.

COURSE MATERIALS

Textbooks

The following required textbooks are available for purchase from the [University of Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your materials immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Student Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials.

Roy R. Anderson, Robert F. Seibert & Jon G. Wagner, *Politics and Change in the Middle East, Tenth Edition*, Boston: Longman, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-205-08239-1 (paperback)

Mehran Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War, Third Edition*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course covers a variety of topics and approaches to understanding Middle East politics focusing on the major challenges of violence, authoritarianism, and economic development.

[Two-Minute Overview](#)

Topics

Unit 1: An Introductory Guide to the Middle East

Unit 2: Rise and political legacy of Islam

Unit 3: Western Imperialism

Unit 4: Rise of the State System

Unit 5: Nationalism

Unit 6: The Politics of Religion, Culture and Gender

Unit 7: Political Leadership

Unit 8: Political Economy of the Middle East

Unit 9: International Relations of the Middle East

Unit 10: The Question of Democracy

Unit 11: The Gulf Wars and 9/11

Unit 12: Upcoming Challenges and the Arab Spring

EVALUATION AND GRADING

You will be evaluated on the basis of five assignments – two critical outlines, two online discussions and one essay - and a final exam.

Distribution of Marks

| Evaluation | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Critical Outline #1 Critical Outline #2 | 10% 10% |
| Online Discussion #1 Online Discussion #2 | 5% 5% |
| Essay | 30% |
| Final Exam | 40% |
| Total | 100% |

Grading Scale

| Letter Grade | Percentage Range | Description |
|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| A+ | 90-100 | Exceptional |
| A | 80-89 | Excellent |
| B+ | 75-79 | Very good |
| B | 70-74 | Good |
| C+ | 65-69 | Satisfactory |
| C | 60-64 | Adequate |
| D | 50-59 | Marginal |
| F | 0-49 | Failure |

Note: All final grades are subject to departmental review.

Plagiarism, Cheating, and Examination Impersonation

You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation as detailed in the General Academic Regulations and Policy section of the University of Manitoba *Undergraduate Calendar*. Note: These policies are also located in your *Distance and Online Education Student Handbook* or you may refer to Student Affairs at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/student>.

Assignments

Critical Outlines

You will be required to write two critical outlines (each worth 10%). Critical outlines are brief evaluations of selected articles from the course materials. These assignments are intended to encourage you to engage with the topics covered in this course and allow you to describe, criticize and evaluate the arguments given by respected authors in the field (total 20%).

Online Discussions

There will be two online discussion forums in the course that will serve as a type of seminar (each worth 5%). The online discussion is designed to ensure that you: keep up with the reading, understand what you are reading and engage in a vibrant and constructive dialogue with your peers and the professor. The online discussion will enrich your learning experience by exposing you to the opinions of others, which will help you further develop your own opinions (Total 10%).

Essay

There will be one essay in this course (worth 30%). The essay is an opportunity for you to clearly organize an argument and substantiate/defend it about a controversial political problem in the Middle East using evidence provided by the course materials. You will be required to consult primary and secondary sources and develop your own substantive conclusions (total 30%).

Note: Detailed instructions about the assignments are found in the Assignments section in your course website.

Assignment Due Dates

Consult the course Calendar for assignment due dates.

Final Exam

The final exam will be written at the University of Manitoba (UM), Fort Garry campus or at an approved off-campus location. **Students needing to write at an off-campus location must declare a location by the specified deadline date** (see off-campus declaration and policy under Student Resources on course homepage). **Students writing at the UM Fort Garry campus do not need to declare an exam location.**

The Registrar's Office is responsible for the [final exam schedule](#) which is available approximately one month after the start of the course.

There will be a three hour final examination in this course and it will be worth 40% of your grade. The examination will take place during the examination period. The examination format will consist of very short essay-style questions. You are not required to know sections of the textbook that are not covered in the course material.

DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION (DE) STUDENT RESOURCES

In your course website there are links for the following:

- Contact Distance and Online Education Staff
- Distance and Online Student Handbook
- Distance and Online Education Website

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Tami Amanda Jacoby teaches in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Manitoba, where she is Associate Professor and Graduate Chair. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Manitoba, and holds a Master of Arts from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Doctor of Philosophy from York University in Toronto. Her primary areas of research are Arab-Israeli conflict, security studies, the politics of victimhood, terrorism and gender in International Relations. She is the author of many articles and three books entitled *Redefining Security in the Middle East* (Manchester University Press, 2002), *Women in Zones of Conflict: Power and Resistance in Israel* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), and *Bridging the Barrier: Israeli Unilateral Disengagement* (Ashgate Press, 2007).

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