POLS210: MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

Mount Lebanon

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Lectures
Wednesday: 2.00 – 2.50pm
Thursday: 4.00 – 4.50pm

Tutorials
Wednesday: 3.00 – 3.50; 4.00 – 4.50pm
Friday: 10.00 – 10.50; 11.00 – 11.50am

Office hours – Monday: 2.00 – 3.50pm
COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course explores the politics and international relations of Middle Eastern states, principally in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We shall survey state, nation, ethnicity, sectarianism, pluralism, democracy, theocracy, and autocracy in the Middle Eastern context. We shall consider the significance of territory, resources, demography, culture/religion, and gender in political affairs. We shall give attention to the post-2010 wave of uprisings in the Arab world, the ongoing crises of Syria and Iraq, and Israeli-Palestinian developments. Can regional affairs be represented as ‘Tyranny and Terror’? The course has cultural and historical components because of the need to interpret the present in terms of the past, especially in a core region of world civilization like the Middle East.

OUTPUTS

By the end of this course you should have:

• Appreciation of the intricacy and instability of geopolitical relations and balances, and their inseparability from their economic and cultural backgrounds
• An understanding of the characteristics and significance of Middle Eastern countries and of the Middle East as a major region of the global "South"
• Enhanced but critical sensitivity towards non-Western perspectives on contemporary political issues
• Awareness of the complexities in interpreting such ideas as “state," "community," and "nation"

LECTURES AND TUTORIALS

There are two lecture sessions each week. On eight weeks, as specified in the course timetable, there will be tutorials.

TERMS

You are required to attend at least six out of the eight tutorials. Failure to do so means you will not be permitted to sit the final examination.
ASSESSMENT

Assessment comprises tutorial group work (20%), an essay based on group work (30%), and a two-hour examination based on the lecture programme (50%).

**Tutorial group work (20%)**

Each tutorial will divide into four groups of five-six students per group. Each group will be responsible for becoming familiar with the features and issues of a particular country. Groups will have two tasks:

**Write a briefing memo on your allocated country (15 marks out of 20)**

The briefing memo should be a short (four-page) document that summarizes and integrates relevant information about your country and the challenges it faces today. Although it is short, writing the briefing memo requires substantial research and critical thinking. You will need to use academic sources as well as search for information on the Web. The memo is not merely about presenting raw data. It is crucial that you explain how different factors account for the current situation in your country. Here students can draw on lectures given in the first half of the course (see Module One, pp. 7-9 in this course guide).

Because there is no single correct way to write a briefing memo, you will not be given specific guidelines. You should look up examples of briefing memos or similar documents, such as from think-tanks. Various combinations of text, tables and images may work, and this will partly depend on the information you find most relevant. You should write the main text using space and a half format.

**Oral presentation of the briefing memo (5 marks)**

Each group will give a six-minute oral presentation of their memo, followed by five minutes Q & A (**week of 3 September 2018**). Your presentation will be assessed on structure and clarity, raising of key issues, and response to questions. You will hand-in the briefing memo itself by **midday, Monday 10 September 2018** (200-level box, fourth floor foyer, Burns building).
Introductory literature:

**Essay (30%)**

Proceeding from the group work, each student will a prepare a **comparative evaluation of two Middle Eastern countries in the early twenty-first century**. Students should choose cases from the list of countries for the group work. You may stay with your original assigned country as one of the cases, but you are not required to do so. For the United Arab Emirates/Qatar (combined for group purposes), you should make comparisons of one or the other with third countries – not with each other.

Question: **Compare the situations, politics, and prospects of any two Middle East countries (out of the nine selected for the group activity).**

Essays should include:

(a) An **introduction** briefly explaining your approach and major themes/arguments being used to address the question (in other words, your ‘road map’);

(b) A **main body** of coherent interconnected themes exploring various possibilities inherent in the essay topic, backed by concrete exemplification; and

(c) A **conclusion** presenting an integrated summary of your argument and evidence, highlighting the two or three most important features of your answer.

Your arguments and exemplification should be supported by reference to relevant sources. For referencing styles, consult the *Otago library subject guide Referencing/Citation Styles*. At the end of the essay you **must** provide a bibliography of sources that you have used in your essay. For notes and bibliography, you may use either the Chicago or APA or Harvard referencing style, but not a mixture.
Your composition must be your own original work. Copying or close paraphrasing from the sources without acknowledgement, or copying from other student essays, is plagiarism, and it will be penalized. Please consult the Politics Department website regarding “dishonest practice” (http://www.otago.ac.nz/politicalstudies/degrees.html). Quotation in support of arguments should be brief, with acknowledgement of the source.

Your essay word limit is 2,000 words

Readings
Academic journals that may contain useful articles include Arab Studies Quarterly, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Current History, Foreign Affairs, International Journal of Middle East Studies, Middle East Journal, Middle East Quarterly, Middle Eastern Studies, Survival (all in Otago library e-journals), and Orient (library hard copy). To make country/issue searches, visit the politics database guide on the library web site – you can use academic journal article search engines such as Academic Search Complete (EBSCO host) and Pro-Quest, and databases such as Factiva (Reuters and Dow-Jones).

On the Internet, the Foreign Affairs (Council on Foreign Relations), Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), Foreign Policy, Brookings, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Open Democracy, AEI, and MERIA sites feature good reports on contemporary Middle Eastern affairs. Middle Eastern English language newspapers on the web include The Daily Star (Lebanon), The Jerusalem Post (Israel), ynet (Israel), and The National (United Arab Emirates). Al-Monitor supplies short, sharp commentaries that are well worth reading.

Hand-in date
All essays must be submitted by 12pm, Monday 24 September 2018. You should put your hard copy essays into the 200-level box in the fourth-floor foyer, Burns Building. Late work for which an extension or exemption has not been obtained will NOT be accepted. Marked essays will be returned to you in class on Thursday 11 October 2018.

Criteria for assessment
• Identification and exploration of possibilities inherent in the essay
• Appropriate use of a range of sources
• Ability to summarise evidence, arguments, and debates
• Ability to support argument with appropriate exemplification
• Logical organisation of material
• Evidence of care in preparation
• Clarity and correctness of writing
• Attention to conventions of referencing

If you wish clarification of your grade in addition to the commentary on your essay, you should consult the lecturer. Revisiting of grades is not normal procedure.

**Examination (50%)**

The two-hour final examination will be based on the lecture programme, although the tutorial component of the course will also provide useful material. You will answer two out of five-six essay format questions.
COURSE OUTLINE

Recommended readings:

Recommended for individual countries:

MODULE ONE: Cultural Context and General Issues

11 July General features of the Middle East
12 July Sunni and Shia Muslims

Schwedler, Chapters 2 and 10.

18 July Christians and Jews
19 July Emergence of Modern Middle Eastern States

Tutorials Shi’ism film

Fawcett, Chapters 2 and 3.
MacQueen, Chapters 1 and 2.
Schwedler, Chapters 3 and 5.

25 July  External intrusion – the case of the United States
26 July  Tyranny and Terror: modern Middle Eastern Despotism

Tutorials  Syria film

Fawcett, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 16.
MacQueen, Chapters 5 and 8.
Schwedler, Chapter 4.

1 August  Islamism and Jihadism
2 August  The Arab Uprisings: Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya

Tutorials  Group work

MacQueen, Chapter 10.
Schwedler, Chapter 12.
Fawcett, Chapters 8 and 15.

8 August  The Arab Uprisings: Yemen and the Arab East
9 August  Women in the Arab World

Tutorials  Group work


Schwedler, Chapter 11.


**15 August** No lecture

**16 August** No lecture

*Tutorials* Group work

**MODULE TWO: Regional Conflicts**

**22 August** Israel and the Palestinians

**23 August** Discussion of tutorial group work with lecturer

Gasiorowski and Yom chapters on Israel and the Palestinians.


MacQueen, Chapter 9.

Fawcett, Chapters 12 and 13.

5 September  West Bank and Gaza issues
6 September  Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian outlooks

*Tutorials*  Group presentations


12 September  Parameters of the Syria and Iraq crises, 2011-2018
13 September  Tyranny and Terror in Syria

*Tutorials*  Essay advice

Gasiorowski and Yom chapters on Syria and Iraq.


19 September  Syrian situation and geopolitics looking ahead
24 September  ESSAY DEADLINE

26 September  Iraq since 2003

*Tutorials*  Syria and Iraq plus exam revision

Gasiorowski and Yom chapter on Iraq.


3 October

**The Kurds and the Syria-Iraq war zone**


**SPECIAL NEEDS:** Students with special or specific needs are encouraged to speak to the lecturer and the University’s disability information and support office regarding alternative arrangements required. All such matters are treated with the strictest confidence by all staff.