

POLS 2590 – Politics of the Middle East and North Africa

Spring 2024

MWF 12:00-12:50 pm, McGannon 121

Professor Matthew Nanes – matthew.nanes@slu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 11:00-12:00, McGannon 133

Course Description:

This course examines the modern politics of the Middle East and North Africa, emphasizing the years 1960 to 2010. Students who complete each of the written assignments for this course will gain a stronger understanding of the system of contemporary knowledge production about the region.

Course Motivation and Goals:

This course introduces students to the politics of the contemporary Middle East. It is a course in “comparative politics,” meaning that we will focus primarily on the domestic politics of various countries, including their institutions and cultures. The course assumes minimal knowledge of the region and is appropriate for students from all majors. You may find it helpful to have taken an introductory course in international politics, but there are no required prerequisites.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

Identify key characteristics of the current government of most Middle Eastern countries, including whether the country is democratic or authoritarian (and the nuances between different types of authoritarian governments), the current economic situation in the country, the religious makeup of the country and religion’s role in politics, and the most important social and political issues citizens face.

Identify the religious and ethnic cleavages that are politically relevant in the Middle East, explain their origins, and analyze how these divisions affect contemporary politics.

Explain the degree to which different countries do or do not rely on oil revenues, and how this reliance affects their political situations.

Apply political science theories on identity, protest and revolution, federalism, and civil conflict to contemporary events in the Middle East.

Analyze isolated events like those you might find in a newspaper article in a broader context. Explain the background of the event in question, identify the key players and their preferences, and predict what we might expect to happen next.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance and active participation are expected at every class session. Throughout the semester, you will participate in several classroom activities, including simulations, presentations, discussions, and short written assignments. If you are absent for a reason that is both unforeseeable and unavoidable, you will be allowed to make up the assignment if possible, otherwise you will be exempt from the grade. Missed assignments due to unexcused absences will receive a 0.

If you miss a class, please be in touch as soon as it is feasible so we can make the necessary arrangements. My goal is to be reasonable and accommodating.

Grading and Assignments:

1. **READING QUESTIONS – 25%.** These take-home assignments are designed to ensure that you have completed the assigned readings and are prepared to discuss them. They are open-book, but you must work alone. Your responses are due before the start of class in which we discuss the relevant reading, and they cannot be turned in late. If you miss an assignment due to an *excused* absence, you will be exempt from the grade. For the most part, I've assigned reading questions for the most difficult readings to help guide you through them. If you can answer the questions correctly, you should feel confident that you got what you were supposed to out of the reading. Note: Professor may convert these quizzes to in-class if there is evidence of cheating on the take-home quizzes.
2. **CLASS PARTICIPATION – 20%.** All students are expected to contribute to in-class discussions in a thoughtful manner. Your performance on any in-class activities is included in this category, including (but not limited to) the OPEC simulation and reflection, collective action activity, critical analysis of research articles, and discussions of current events.
3. **COUNTRY PRESENTATION – 5%.** Each student (or small group, depending on class size) will be assigned a country at the beginning of the semester. Throughout the semester, students will give a short (5-8 minute) presentation on a current political event in their assigned country. If noteworthy events occur in your assigned country during the semester, I may ask you to briefly discuss them with the class.
4. **MIDTERM PAPER – 25 %.** Due March 6th at 9:00 pm
5. **FINAL PAPER – 25%.** Due May 10th at 10:00 am

Students taking this course for honors credit will give a more extensive presentation and lead a classroom discussion on an agreed-upon topic. Please contact me by the end of Week 2 so we can discuss details.

I will convert your numeric grades to a letter course grade using this scale:

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-70
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	below 60
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

Making the Most of Lectures:

This class deals with topics that may be sensitive, emotionally-charged, and of course “political.” You may find yourself outside of your comfort zone, either due to something in the readings, something I say, or something a classmate says. This is a normal part of the learning experience. So long as we remain open-minded and respectful of these differences, they are a source for learning. You should feel free to challenge statements that you disagree with, regardless of whether they come from me or from a classmate. Just be sure that you do so in a respectful manner. Be open to the possibility that you are both right (or both wrong). Always make sure to challenge the statement, not the person who said it.

If you find yourself uncomfortable with the way a topic is being discussed in class, please come talk to me about it.

Readings and Resources:

You do not need to purchase any books. All assigned reading will be posted on the course website or linked directly from this syllabus.

You should follow the news in the Middle East throughout the semester. Some resources that provide a good place to start:

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/middleeast/index.html>

Al-Jazeera English: <http://www.aljazeera.com/>

Al-Monitor: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html>

Ynet News (Israel-specific): <http://www.ynetnews.com>

There is a lot of “biased” news (or perhaps biased “news”) on the internet. Read broadly, but always consider the source and the perspective of that source when interpreting new information. Also remember to check whether you are reading news or analysis.

Academic Integrity:

I take academic integrity very seriously. I intend to make the guidelines for each assignment clear. If you are not sure what is allowed on an assignment, you should contact me for clarification. Unless I specify otherwise, assignments should be completed on your own with no input from anyone else. Any violation of academic integrity will result in an automatic F in the class.

You should familiarize yourself with the university’s general guidelines on academic integrity found here: <http://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/student-resources/academic-honesty.php>

Students with Disabilities

Students with a documented need who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please visit their website (<https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/accessibility-and-disability-resources/index.php>) for details. Please also contact me as soon as possible if you wish to discuss any of these options.

Also see: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/faculty-affairs/teaching-resources-for-faculty/course-syllabus-information/syllabus-statements/syllabus-stmt-disability-accommodations.docx>

Title IX

SLU policy and federal law requires that I pass along certain types of information that you share with me. Even if you ask me to keep the information confidential, I am not allowed to do so. You can find full information here: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/faculty-affairs/teaching-resources-for-faculty/course-syllabus-information/syllabus-statements/syllabus-stmt-title-ix.docx>

Student Success Center

“In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center assists students with academic-related services and is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331). Students can visit the Student Success Center to learn more about tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, and academic coaching.”

University Writing Services

“Students are encouraged to take advantage of University Writing Services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, visit the Student Success Center or call the Student Success Center at 314-977-3484.”

Basic Needs Security

“Students in personal or academic distress and/or who may be specifically experiencing

Date	Before Class	In Class
Module 1: Origins of the Modern Middle East		
<p>Wednesday 1/17/24</p>	<p>Al Jazeera: Sykes-Picot a Century On http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2016/sykes-picot-100-years-middle-east-map/index.html</p> <p>Jacobs, Frank (2012), “Winston’s Hiccup.” <i>New York Times</i> http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/06/winstons-hiccup/?_r=0</p>	<p>Course introduction</p> <p>Discussion of borders</p>
<p>Friday 1/19/24</p>	<p><i>The readings below discuss the Balfour Declaration. As you read, pay attention to similarities and differences between the way that each source discusses the same information. Note how even though all three sources are factually accurate, they paint different pictures of these facts.</i></p> <p>Knell, Yolande (2017), “Balfour Declaration: The divisive legacy of 67 words.” https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41765892</p> <p>Ettinger, Shmuel, “The Balfour Declaration of 1917: A landmark in efforts to secure a Jewish state.” https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-</p>	

Wednesday 1/24/24 Gardner, Andrew (2012), "Why do they Keep Coming? Labor Migrants in the Persian Gulf States." In Kamrava and Bara (eds.), *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf*.
Reading Q's due before class

Discussion of migration and migrant labor in the Gulf

Monday
2/12/24

Brown, Jeremy (2017), "1967 War: Six Days that changed the Middle East." <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39960461>

Pan-

Laub, Zachary (2017), "How Six Days in 1967 Shaped the Modern Middle East." <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/how-six-days-1967-shaped-modern-middle-east>

	<p><i>Recommended Readings (optional)</i></p> <p>Brown (2010), "The Hamas-Fatah Conflict: Shallow but Wide." Shikaki (2006), "The Palestinian Elections: Sweeping Victory, Uncertain Mandate"</p>	
Wednesday 2/21/24		GUEST SPEAKER

Wednesday 4/3/24	Bellin, Eva 2004, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> Reading Q's due before class	How dictators rule
Friday 4/5/24		NO CLASS – Professor Nanes at a conference
Monday 4/8/24		NO CLASS – go see the eclipse
Wednesday 4/10/24	Steinert-Threlkeld, Zachary (2017), "Spontaneous Collective Action" Reading Q's due before class	Collective action activity
Friday 4/12/24	Bellin, Eva (2012). "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring."	
Monday 4/15/24	Campante and Chor (2012), "Why was the Arab World Poised for Revolution? Schooling, Economic Opportunities, and the Arab Spring." Reading Q's due before class	
Module 8: Federalism and Power Sharing		

Wednesday
4/17/24 Raymond, Elad (2020), "Federalism in a Unitary Desert: Analyzing the Successes of Federal Political Structure in the United Arab Emirates." Onero Institute."

