

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**POLI 4061: Comparative Politics of the Middle East**

Tu-Th 1:30-2:50 pm  
Syllabus

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Office Hours: Tu-Th 3:15-4:15 pm  
Room: Stubbs-208B

**Fall 2015**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms that drive Middle East politics and present security challenges to various states and identity groups in the region. I expect students to demonstrate insight on whether general theories of comparative politics apply to Middle East political actors. Along with participation (10% of the overall grade), students will be graded on a 7-8 page analytical profile of a contemporary non-state actor that operates in the Middle East (35% of the overall grade), a presentation of the analytical profile (10% of the overall grade), quizzes (15% of the overall grade), and a final exam, which will include a map test (30% of the overall grade).

*Mandatory Texts:*

Harris, William W. (2005) *The New Face of Lebanon: History's Revenge*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener. ISBN: 978-1558763920

Schanzer, Jonathan. (2008) *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine*. New York: Palgrave. ISBN: 978-0230609051

Morris, Benny. (2010) *One State, Two State: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. ISBN: 978-0300164442

**One: Conceptualizing the Middle East**

Questions: What defines and distinguishes the Middle East? Where does the region begin and end? How did Middle Eastern states emerge? What is the Levant?

## **Two: The Role of Identity in the Middle East**

Questions: Do issues of collective identity generate unique security challenges in the Middle East? How do state goals derive from national identity? How do Middle Eastern states formulate foreign policy? How did different Iraqi identity groups conceive and respond to the U.S. War in Iraq?

Readings:

Barnett, Michael and Shibley Telhami eds. (2002) *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*. Ch. 1

## **Three: Political Islam and Militant Political Islam**

Questions: How do ideologies of political Islam relate to the major identity groups of the Middle East? What are the differences between the Mujahedin, the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and revolutionary Shi'ism? What are the Islamic State's origins? What is the Islamic State's core goal and has the organization achieved it?

Readings:

Lewis, Bernard. (1990) "The Roots of Muslim Rage." *The Atlantic* (September): 47-60.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. (2003) "The True Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Policy* (March/April): 67-74.

Hegghammer, Thomas. (2011) "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad." *International Security* 35 (3): 53-94.

## **Four: Politics of Lebanon**

Questions: What drives Lebanese politics? What caused Lebanon's (Third) Civil War? How did identity groups emerge, align, and splinter during Lebanon's civil war? Is there a viable alternative to Lebanon's formal institutionalization of identity politics into its political system? Is the civil war over or has it just transitioned to a "cold" political war?

Readings:

Harris, William W. (2005) *The New Face of Lebanon: History's Revenge*.

Harris, William. (2013) "Investigating Lebanon's Political Murders: International Idealism in the Realist Middle East?" *Middle East Journal* 67 (1): 9-27.

Childs, Steven. (2011) "From Identity to Militancy: The Shi'a of Hezbollah." *Comparative Strategy* 30 (4): 363-372.

## **Five: The Civil Wars in Syria and Iraq**

Questions: Do ethnic and religious divisions make Middle Eastern states prone to civil war? What prolongs civil wars? What caused Iraq's civil conflict? What are the forces driving the current Syrian civil war?

### Readings:

Wucherpennig, Julian, Nils W. Metternich, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. (2012) "Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of Civil War." *World Politics* 64 (1): 79-115.

Walter, Barbara F. (1997) "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51 (3): 335-364.

Romano, David. (2014) "Iraq's Descent into Civil War: A Constitutional Explanation." *Middle East Journal* 68 (4): 547-566.

Rosen, Nir. (2012) "Islamism and the Syrian Uprising." *Foreign Policy*. (8 March).

Rabil, Robert. (2013) "The Syrian Stalemate." *The National Interest*. (7 January).

## **Six: The Arab-Israeli Wars**

Questions: Do traditional theories of war initiation apply to the Arab-Israeli Wars? What caused the various Arab-Israeli wars? Does identity contribute to conflict in the Middle East?

### Readings:

Bard, Mitchell G. (2012) *Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Ch. 1-9

## **Seven: Terrorism and Insurgency in the Middle East**

Questions: Is there a difference between terrorism, guerrilla warfare, insurgency and rebellion? Is terrorism an effective strategy for achieving political goals? Why do militant organizations conduct suicide attacks?

### Readings:

Hoffman, Bruce. (2006) *Inside Terrorism*. Ch. 3

Abrahms, Max. (2012) "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited." *Comparative Political Studies* 45 (3): 366-393.

Moghadam, Assaf. (2009) "Motives for Martyrdom: Al Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." *International Security* 33 (3):46-78.

Acosta, Benjamin. (2010) "The Suicide Bomber as Sunni-Shi'i Hybrid." *Middle East Quarterly* 17 (3): 13-20.

Film:

*The Cult of the Suicide Bomber.* (2006) Produced and directed by David Betty and Kevin Toolis. 1 hr. 35 min. Many Rivers Films.

## **Eight: Politics of Israel**

Questions: What drives Israeli politics? What components make up Israeli national identity? What role does territory, and specifically Jerusalem, play in Israeli politics? What matters more in Israeli politics—the secular-religious divide, ethnic differences within the Jewish population, or competing conceptualizations of Zionism?

Readings:

Acosta, Benjamin. (2014) "The Dynamics of Israel's Democratic Tribalism." *Middle East Journal* 68 (2): 268-286.

Waxman, Dov. (2006) *The Pursuit of Peace and the Crisis of Israeli Identity: Defending/Defining the Nation.* Ch. 1

## **Nine: Palestinian Politics**

Questions: What drives Palestinian politics? What components make up Palestinian national identity? What role does territory, and specifically Jerusalem, play in Palestinian politics? Are Fatah and Hamas compatible? Or, will there necessarily be a civil war between the two organizations?

Readings:

Schanzer, Jonathan. (2008) *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine.*

## **Ten: Diplomacy and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Questions: What are the sustaining factors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? How do domestic Israeli and Palestinian politics contribute to the relations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority? Is a two-state solution possible?

Readings:

Morris, Benny. (2009) *One State, Two State: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict.*

Bard, Mitchell. (2012) *Myths and Facts: A Guide to Arab-Israeli Conflict.* Ch. 11-21

Waxman, Dov. (2006) *The Pursuit of Peace and the Crisis of Israeli Identity: Defending/ Defining the Nation*. Ch. 5

Putnam, Robert D. (1988) "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization* 42 (3): 427-460.

Lieberfeld, Daniel. (2008) "Secrecy and 'Two-Level Games' in the Oslo Accord: What the Primary Sources Tell Us." *International Negotiation* 13 (1): 133-146.

## **Eleven: Analyzing Iran's Foreign Policy**

Questions: What is the political nature of the Iranian regime? What are its long-term goals? How would the development of an Iranian nuclear weapon affect regional politics? How does Iran contribute to instability in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen?

### Readings:

Barnett, Michael and Shibley Telhami eds. (2002) *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*. Ch. 8

Pry, Peter Vincent. (2012) "Ideology as a Factor in Deterrence." *Comparative Strategy* 31: 111-146.

Bolton, John. (2015) "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran." *New York Times*. 26 March.  
[www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/opinion/to-stop-irans-bomb-bomb-iran.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/26/opinion/to-stop-irans-bomb-bomb-iran.html?_r=0)

Gerect, Marc Reuel. (2015) "History Contradicts the Dream of Iranian Moderation." *Wall Street Journal*. 31 July. [www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/senior-fellow-history-contradicts-the-dream-of-iranian-moderation/](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/senior-fellow-history-contradicts-the-dream-of-iranian-moderation/)

## **Twelve: Arab and Islamic Revolutions and Democratization in the Middle East**

Questions: Did the "Arab Spring" resemble traditional movements of democratization? What roles do economic development and culture have on the potential for democratization? Why do some democratic movements succeed when seemingly similar movements fail?

### Readings:

Huntington, Samuel P. (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Ch. 1-2 and Ch. 6

Inglehart, Ronald and Christian Welzel. (2007) *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Ch. 1, Ch. 7-8, and Ch. 13

## **List of Non-State Actors for Analytical Profile Assignment**

The Islamic State; previously known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

The Muslim Brotherhood

Al-Qaeda

Hamas

Fatah

Hezbollah

Amal

People's Protection Units (YPG)

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Ansar al-Shari'a (Yemen)

Ansar al-Shari'a (North Africa)

Houthis

Al-Nusra Front

Naqshbandi Order

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Wilayat Sinai (previously known as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdes)

\*Students may also write a profile on one of the "Arab Spring" social movements

## **Words to the Wise**

I will dock late assignments one-letter grade per day. IMPORTANT: I will not tolerate plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Weekly readings are subject to change so pay attention to class announcements.

During class put your cell phones on silent and do not use them.