

COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST
GVPT459E
SPRING 2018

Professor Calvert W. Jones
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BASICS

Course Meeting: MW 2-3:15, TYD 1132

ELMS Site: <https://myelms.umd.edu> (login required)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-3pm, 2116 Chincoteague

Prerequisites: Must be GVPT major.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The Middle East is a fascinating and complex part of the world, important to understand on its own terms but also a flashpoint of international relations. It raises many headline-grabbing questions. For example, is the region doomed to “persistent authoritarianism,” or is it on the cusp of a system-wide democratic breakthrough? Are women oppressed, or more empowered than we realize? Should the United States be promoting democracy in the region, or keeping its distance? Does the region’s skyrocketing youth population—the Arab Millennials—represent a powerful new force in politics, or is it fundamentally too disorganized to make a difference?

The purpose of this course is to help you build a more nuanced understanding of Middle Eastern politics. We take a thematic, social science-based approach, exploring key trends, themes, and issues shaping politics in the region. The course is divided into three parts. Part 1 examines the history of the Middle East, with emphasis on the rise and fall of empires and divergent paths of state formation. Part 2 focuses on issues in domestic politics, such as the implications of oil wealth, religion and politics, and political culture. Part 3 delves into contemporary challenges, examining the prospects for peace, democracy, and economic development in comparative perspective. The course focuses primarily on the Arab states of the Middle East.

By the end of the course, I expect you will have gained: (1) a more complete knowledge of some of the key historical factors shaping the political trajectory of the Middle East; (2) a deeper understanding of the central principles guiding comparative politics in the region, with emphasis on what recent and cutting-edge political science research can teach us; (3) more productive ways of understanding contemporary challenges, including the headline-grabbing questions above; (4) in-depth knowledge of a single Middle Eastern country; and (5) a stronger analytical and empirical framework with which to further and develop your own thoughts on the nature of politics in the Middle East. To put it in a more down-to-earth manner, when a friend or family member asks you, “Can you help me understand what’s going on in the Middle East?” you will have a more confident, thoughtful, and evidence-based answer than you would have had, if you hadn’t taken the course. It is also my hope that the course will inspire a lifelong interest in this exciting and evolving region.

COURSE MECHANICS

The course is conducted as a mixture of lecture and discussion. Although it will vary, I will typically lecture for about 20-50 minutes, and then we will use the last portion of class for discussion. Because of the need to preserve time for discussion, I will not typically take questions during lectures. Often, the discussion after each lecture will be structured around interesting and provocative discussion questions, drawn from the readings and lecture, which I will send you in advance.

Laptops and smartphones are generally not allowed in class. The research increasingly suggests that students who use these devices in class learn and retain less on average than those who take notes by hand. My advice is to take notes by hand, and then type up your notes after class, so that you can read and word-search them easily later on. Note that PowerPoint lecture slides will not be posted on ELMS.

Outside of class, the best way to get in touch with me is to email me at cwjones@umd.edu. I will be emailing you via ELMS to make important announcements, such as schedule changes or class cancellations. In the case of inclement weather or another kind of emergency closing the University, I will also be communicating with you via email. It is your responsibility to check your email so that you receive these updates.

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assessment	Assessment Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Midterm 1 (and Map Quiz)	Feb. 28, in-class	15%
Midterm 2	March 28, in-class	15%
In-Class Participation	Ongoing	25%
Country Report (8-10 page paper)	Due April 30	25%
Final Exam (cumulative)	May 16, 1:30-3:30pm	20%

The course offers a variety of forms of assessment. Both midterms will feature short-answer or “ID-style” questions, with no essays. The Final Exam will be cumulative, albeit emphasizing the last third of the course, and it will combine short-answer questions as well as an essay question. The Country Report will allow you to choose a Middle Eastern country of interest to you, research it independently, and analyze an important question regarding its future. Further information about these forms of assessment will be provided as the course progresses.

Note that regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. In-class participation is included in your grade as described above. You are expected to come to class having read the material for the assigned day, and prepared to participate meaningfully in structured classroom discussions demonstrating that you:

- (1) Have read and comprehended the course material assigned for the class session.
- (2) Have absorbed the material in the lectures.
- (3) Have thought critically about questions posed by readings and lectures.

Examples of high-quality participation include: summarizing the reading for other students; pointing out additional reasons why arguments might be correct; pointing out reasons why

arguments may be incorrect; identifying flaws in question formation, logic, or research design; posing questions about how arguments might apply in a different context, or not; proposing alternative hypotheses to research questions at hand; and responding productively to other students doing any of the above. Further information on how to engage meaningfully and productively can be found in the hand-out “Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking” (Browne and Keeley, 2010), attached to this syllabus and available on ELMS under “Assistance and Tips.”

Note that our aim in discussion is less to “find the right answer” and/or “illustrate our smarts” and more to (1) confirm understanding of readings and lecture material and (2) explore alternative perspectives on the questions asked, playing them out in a friendly, collaborative process that, ideally, will be intellectually exciting and help you develop and refine your own thinking.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

In order to succeed, and I want you to succeed in this course, here are some guidelines.

- First, come to lecture and take good notes. Practice the art of self-control by challenging yourself to stay focused and open-minded. Mindfulness and the ability to focus without distraction are fundamental skills in this age of information, and they will serve you well beyond this particular course.
- Second, keep up with the reading. Yes, easier said than done, but still an important goal toward which you should strive. The key is not *how long* you spend reading, but *how efficiently* you read. Learning how to read actively and efficiently is an important skill for you to learn and cultivate, and it will get easier. When reading, take notes, highlight, write comments in the margins, summarize key points in your own words, and ask yourself the “Ten Critical Thinking Questions” provided with this syllabus and under “Assistance and Tips” on ELMS.
- Third, engage with the material: stay up to date on ELMS; keep in mind the exam and due dates, and plan accordingly; talk to your friends and family about the Middle East; tell them what you’re learning; and play devil’s advocate. Be in touch with me. I am delighted to talk with you during my office hours, and I am very “plugged in”—you can email me any time with questions or comments, and you should get a quick response.
- Be polite, civil, and honorable. During discussion, you are here to learn, try on different analytic hats, experiment with various perspectives, and advance your own knowledge and thinking on these important issues. Check preconceived notions, emotions, ideological hang-ups, and biases at the door. When you are in this class, you are a social scientist and an intellectual, and not a lobbyist, pundit, or activist.
- Please do not use cell phones during lectures, don’t walk in and out frequently, don’t eat breakfast or lunch, and don’t whisper to your neighbor. Of course, you may bring water, soda, coffee, etc. Caffeine is very welcome.

READINGS

There are no required textbooks for this course; all readings will be available online or in PDF form via ELMS.

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Course materials that exist in a tangible medium, such as written or recorded lectures, PowerPoint presentations, handouts and tests, are copyright protected. You may not copy and distribute such materials except for personal use and with my express permission. This means you may not audio-record or video-record class sessions without my permission.

ABSENCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. Students claiming *excused absence* must notify the course instructor in a timely manner, preferably prior to the excused absence, and provide appropriate documentation. For an excused absence, students are responsible for information and material missed on the day of excused absence, and within reason are entitled to receive materials provided to the class during the excused absence. The Undergraduate Catalog 2017-2018 defines an excused absence as follows:

“Events that justify an excused absence include religious observances; mandatory military obligation; illness of the student or illness of an immediate family member; participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control (e.g., death in the family, required court appearance). Absences stemming from work duties other than military obligation (e.g., unexpected changes in shift assignments) and traffic/transit problems do not typically qualify for excused absence.”

In the case of religious observances, athletic events, and planned absences known at the beginning of the semester, the student must inform the instructor during the schedule adjustment period (the first 10 days of class). See below for more information on excused absences based on religious observance and medical necessary absences. For all other absences, students must provide verifiable documentation upon request (e.g., court summons, death announcement, etc).

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

You should notify your instructor within the first 10 days of classes (the schedule adjustment period) if you will miss a class or an examination date due to religious observance. You will be allowed to make up academic assignments or exams for such absences in keeping with university policy. Note that it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances in advance. This notification is especially important if the missed class involves the final examination because of the need to schedule a make-up exam **before** the official final exam date.

MEDICALLY NECESSARY ABSENCES

For every medically necessary absence from class (lecture, recitation, or lab), a reasonable effort should be made to notify your instructor in advance of the class. When returning to class after the first such absence, students may bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate. After the second such absence,

or if the absence occurs on the date of a Major Scheduled Grading Event (identified on the syllabus), documentation by a health care professional is required. Students must provide documentation from a physician or the University Health Center for the absence to be recorded as an excused one and to receive accommodation. In cases where students are asked to provide verification, the course instructor may request the dates of treatment or the time frame that the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities, but may not request diagnostic information.

MAKE-UP EXAMS

For excused absences that involve a Major Scheduled Grading Event, a make-up exam will be arranged. In the case of closure for inclement weather or other cause, I will reschedule the examination or assignment due date as needed. Note that a self-signed note attesting to illness will not be accepted as the basis for an excused absence on a day during which there is a Major Scheduled Grading Event, in keeping with university policy.

POLICY FOR LATE PAPERS

Due dates for assigned papers are listed on the syllabus. Papers that are submitted late, without arranging with the instructor for an extension based on a university-approved excuse, will be penalized a third of a grade per day.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The student-administered [Honor Code and Honor Pledge](#) prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not specifically exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).

Compliance with the code is administered by the Student Honor Council, which strives to promote a community of trust on the College Park campus. Allegations of academic dishonesty should be reported directly to the Honor Council (301-314-8450) by any member of the campus community. For additional information, consult the Office of Student Conduct.

See the section on [Academic Integrity in the University of Maryland Undergraduate Catalog](#) for more information.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who will need accommodations should contact Disability Support Service (DSS) Office (dissup@umd.edu) to discuss accommodations and obtain documentation. Students are responsible for presenting this documentation to the instructor by the end of the drop/add period so that needed accommodations can be arranged. Please note that DSS test scheduling has gone paperless, and students are now required to submit test requests online at least three business days prior to the scheduled test. If students miss this deadline, they will be unable to book a test.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**** Denotes a “Major Scheduled Grading Event”**

*** Denotes a reminder or tip**

PART 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

* **Tip:** Do the readings in the order in which they appear in the syllabus. They have been designed in such a way as to guide you on an intellectual adventure.

Week 1 **The Early Period**

Jan 24 Course Introduction

Week 2 **Empires and their Discontents**

Jan 29 The Pre-Islamic Middle East and the Birth of Islam

- Read Albert Hourani. 1991. *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Harvard University Press. Chapter 1, “A New Power in an Old World,” pp. 1-21.
- Read William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton. 2013. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 3rd Edition, Westview Press, pp. 1-12.

Jan 31 Conquest and Empire

- Read Ibn Khaldun, 1377. “On Dynasties” from *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (~3 pages).
- Read Hourani, “The Formation of an Empire” (Ch. 2), pp. 22-37.

Week 3 **The Rise of the Contemporary State System**

Feb 5 Modernization and Empire

- Read Hourani, “The Ottoman Empire” (Ch. 13), pp. 207-230.
- Read James L. Gelvin. 2016. *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 4th Edition, Oxford University Press. Chapter 5, “Defensive Developmentalism,” pp. 72-89.

Feb 7 State Formation in the Wake of WW1

- Read Hourani, “The Climax of European Power” (Ch. 19), pp. 315-332.
- Read short historical documents: Theodor Herzl. 1896. “A Solution of the Jewish Question” (~ 1.5 pages); Excerpt from Husayn-McMahon correspondence, 1915-6 (~ 2 pages); “The Balfour Declaration,” 2 November 1917 (~ a paragraph); and “Resolution of the Syrian General Congress at Damascus,” 2 July 1919 (~ 2 pages).

PART 2: ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

Week 4 Political Economy

Feb 12 Nationalism and the Struggle for Independence and Prosperity

- Read Hourani, “The End of the Empires” and “The Climax of Arabism,” pp. 351-372, 401-415.

Feb 14 Politics and Economic Growth: Is the Middle East “Underdeveloped”?

- Timur Kuran. 2007. “Economic Underdevelopment in the Middle East: The Historical Role of Culture, Institutions, and Religion.” Working paper (~32 pages).

Week 5 Regimes and Institutions

Feb 19 Oil, Politics, and the Rentier State

- Read Michael Ross. 2011. “Will Oil Drown the Arab Spring?” *Foreign Affairs* (~8 pages).
- Read Gwenn Okruhlik. 1999. “Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of Opposition: The Political Economy of Oil States.” *Comparative Politics* 31. **Read only pp. 295-300 for the key critiques.**

Feb 21 The Puzzle of Persistent Authoritarianism

- Read Ellen Lust. 2007. “The Management of Opposition: Formal Structures of Contestation and Informal Political Manipulation in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco.” In Oliver Schlumberger (Ed.), *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability*, Stanford University Press, pp. 39-49.
- Read Eva Bellin. 2002. *Stalled Democracy*. Excerpts (pp. 1-8).

Week 6 Regimes, Cont’d

Feb 26 Varieties of Authoritarianism

- Read Michael Herb. 1999. *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies*, Chapter 1 (pp.1-16).
- Read short contributions in “The Arab Monarchy Debate” by Marc Lynch, “Do Arab Monarchies Matter?” (~2 pages) and David Brumberg, “Sustaining Mechanics of Arab Autocracies” (~4 pages).

Feb 28 **Midterm 1

Week 7 Politics of Social Change

March 5 Politics of Gender I

- Read Lila Abu-Lughod. 2002. “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others.” *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 783-790.
- Read Mona Eltahawy. 2012. “Why Do They Hate Us?” *Foreign Policy* (~10 pages).

- Read Nahed Eltantawy. 2012. Blog Response to “Why Do They Hate Us?” (~4 pages).

March 7 Politics of Gender II

- Read Masoud, Jamal, and Nugent. “Using the Quran to Empower Arab Women? Theory and Experimental Evidence from Egypt,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 2016.

Week 8 Political Participation

March 12 Rethinking Political Participation

- Read Lisa Wedeen. 2007. “The Politics of Deliberation: Qat Chews as Public Spheres in Yemen.” *Public Culture* 19(1): 59-84.

March 14 Political Islam

- Read Amr Hamzaway. 2005. *The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists*. Carnegie Endowment (~7 pages).
- Read Bassam Tibi. 2008. “Why They Can’t Be Democratic.” *Journal of Democracy* 19(3): 43-48.

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MARCH 19 AND MARCH 21

Week 9 Political Culture and Midterm 2

March 26 The “Political Culture” Approach

- **Skim** Lisa Anderson. 1995. “Democracy in the Arab World: A Critique of the Political Culture Approach.” In Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Nobel (Eds.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Vol. 1, Theoretical Perspectives*, Lynne Rienner, pp. 77-92.
- **Skim** Michael C. Hudson. 1995. “The Political Culture Approach to Arab Democratization: The Case for Bringing it Back In, Carefully.” In Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Nobel (Eds.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Vol. 1, Theoretical Perspectives*, Lynne Rienner, pp. 61-76.
- **Read** Philip Carl Salzman. 2008. “The Middle East’s Tribal DNA.” *Middle East Quarterly* (~10 pages).

March 28 **Midterm 2

Week 10 Pol. Culture (Cont’d) and Politics of Education

April 2 New Approaches to Political Culture

- Read Lisa Wedeen. 2015. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Excerpts.

April 4 Politics of Education

- Read Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum (the Ruler of Dubai). 2012. *My Vision*. The Dubai Government Media Office. Chapter 1, “The Lion and the Gazelle,” pp. 6-27.

Consider: What does reading a primary source like this, a document written by a contemporary autocrat, tell you about the way autocrats think?

PART 3: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Week 11 **Film: “Wadjda”**

April 9 **Film**

- Read Madawi Al Rasheed. “Caught Between Religion and State: Women in Saudi Arabia.” In Bernard Haykel, Thomas Heghammer, and Stephane Lacroix (Eds.), *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic, and Religious Change*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 292-313.

April 11 **Film (cont’d)**

- Read Tariq Al Hadar. *Jadaliyya*. “Haifaa Al Mansour's Wadjda: Revolutionary Art or Pro-State Propaganda?” (~2 pages). Available on ELMS, or at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15996/haifaa-al-mansours-wadjda_revolutionary-art-or-pro

Week 12 **Fostering Reform**

April 16 **Democracy Promotion**

- Read Quintan Wiktorowicz. 2000. “Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan.” *Comparative Politics* 33(1): 43-61.
- Read Shadi Hamid and Peter Mandaville. 2014. “The U.S. Is Giving Up on Middle East Democracy—and That's a Mistake.” *The Atlantic* (~4 pages).

April 18 **Beyond Democracy Promotion: Education and the Economy**

- Read Anna Chen. 2015. “Youth Unemployment in the Middle East: Is Entrepreneurship the Answer?” *Huffington Post* (~4 pages).
- Read Eva Bellin. 2004. “The Political-Economic Conundrum: The Affinity of Economic and Political Reform in the Middle East and North Africa.” Carnegie Endowment (~11 pages).
- **Student Activity:** Select a Start-Up

Week 13 **Reducing Conflict**

April 23 **Wars and the Dynamics of Intervention**

- Read two short debates, “Is Yemen America’s Fight?” *The New York Times* (2015, ~8 pages) and “Should the U.S. Intervene in Syria with Military Action?” *US News & World Report* (2012, ~9 pages).
- Read Samir Makdisi and Marcus Marktanner. 2009. “Trapped by Consociationalism: The Case of Lebanon.” Working paper (~14 pages). **Read only pp. 1-5 and conclusion, pp. 12-14.**

April 25 **NO CLASS**

Week 14 Conflict (Cont'd) and the Contemporary Role of Foreign Experts

April 30 Terrorism and Political Violence

**** Country Report Due – Paper Copy Submitted In Class**

- Read Nielsen, “Can Ideas Be ‘Killed’? Evidence from Counterterror Targeting of Jihadi Ideologues” (focus on introduction, theory, arguments, conclusions, less on methodology).
- Read Roy, “Who Are the New Jihadis?” *The Guardian*, 2017.

May 2 The Ministry of McKinsey?

- Read Jones, “The Hand of the King: Experts, Rationalization, and Legitimacy,” working paper.

Week 15 Navigating the “Arab Spring”

May 7 Film, “The Square”

- Read Eva Bellin. 2012. “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring.” *Comparative Politics* 44(2): 127-149.

May 9 Film and Discussion

- Read Marc Lynch. 2007. “Twitter Devolutions: How Social Media is Hurting the Arab Spring.” *Foreign Policy* (~7 pages).
- *Recommended:* Read Raymond Hinnebusch. 2015. “Introduction: understanding the consequences of the Arab uprisings—starting points and divergent trajectories.” *Democratization* 22(2): 205-218

FINAL EXAM DATE: Monday, May 16, 1:30-3:30pm