Middle East Security (JPM698)
Winter Semester 2020/21
Charles University in Prague, Institute of Political Studies
6 ECTS

Tuesdays 11 am, online – check https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=5489 for updates and session links

Lecturer
Jan Daniel (jan.daniel@fsv.cuni.cz)

Course description
This course offers introduction to the politics of security in the Middle East. In so doing, it aims to go beyond the usual listing of various conflicts between states, insurgencies or civil wars. To the contrary, it conceives of "security" in broad terms and pays attention to a variety of social and political processes that underpin diverse political contestations and forms of (in)security in the region. The course starts with a critical discussion of the academic discipline of Middle Eastern Studies, showing its close implication in the Western attempts to dominate the region. It then attends to historical background, focusing mostly on the 20th century and formation of regional system of states. Following this introduction, the course explores, both empirically and conceptually, several themes crucial for understanding (security) politics in the Middle East, like the role of religion, state-society relations, gender and others. Lastly, the attention will be paid to the most important conflicts currently ongoing in the region, where previously discussed issues will be illustrated and critically unpacked.

Aims of the course
Upon the completion of the course, students will have empirical knowledge of the security issues pertaining to the Middle East, both past and contemporary. They will be able to situate these issues within larger political and social processes and phenomena, and will be able to analyze them in conceptual terms.

Recommended popular-academic online publications to follow
- https://www.jadaliyya.com/
- https://www.mashallahnews.com/
- https://pomeps.org/
- https://merip.org/
Structure of the course

1) Introduction: What is the “Middle East”, Middle Eastern Studies in the West; 29.9.

Requirements, syllabus; Boundaries of the region, its geopolitics; Middle Eastern Studies as a discipline, its emergence and development in the West; Theoretical approaches to the study of the region.

Readings:

Core


Additional readings


2) Historical Development of the Middle Eastern System of States; 6.10.

Formation of the modern state system after the WWI; Decolonization, Arab nationalism, Pan-arabism; Cold War and Great powers’ interests; Rise of political Islam up to 2003 Iraq War

Readings:

Core


Additional readings

https://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2013/12/30/dammit-it-is-not-unravelling-an-historians-rebuke-to-misrepresentations-of-sykes-picot/


3) The State in the Middle East; 13.10.

Formation of a “state” in the Middle East – Arab Republics and conservative monarchies; Internal x external challenges to the security of the state and regime.

Readings:

Core


Additional readings

- Pearlman, Wendy (2017), *We Crossed a Bridge and it Trembled: Voices from Syria*, New York, Harper Collins, pp. 1 – 30 (Ch.1 Authoritarianism)

4) Arab Spring: Regimes and Revolutions; 20.10., guest lecturer: Tereza Jermanová (Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University)
Explaining protests: What triggered the popular demonstrations that started in 2010 and 2011? Who joined the protests and why? How did the uprisings differ across countries and why? Explaining the different outcomes of the protests: Why did some protests succeed in toppling dictators, while others did not? How can we account for the differences in political trajectories in Egypt and Tunisia after the uprisings?

Readings:

Core


Additional readings

- Hamzawy, Amr. 2017. “Seven years on: Why Egypt failed to become a democracy.” Middle East Eye, 12 December (recommended)

5) Substate Actors in the Middle Eastern Politics and Security; 27.10.

Forms of power and societal organization below the state level, upholding or contesting the state power; Negotiating the limits of the state; Family networks, Tribal identities, religious actors, “sects”, ethnic identities; Security and securing on the local level

Readings:

Core

• Al-Mohammad, Hayder (2011): “‘You Have Car Insurance, We Have Tribes’: Negotiating Everyday Life in Basra and the Re-emergence of Tribalism”, Anthropology of the Middle East, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 18-34.

Additional readings
• Tribe and State in the Middle East, LSE blog posts series. Available at http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2018/07/11/tribe-and-state-in-the-middle-east/

6) Religion and Security; 3.11., guest lecturer: Giedrė Šabasevičiūtė (Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences)
Readings:
Core
• TBD

7) Human Security and Humanitarianism: Gender, displacement and international reactions; 10.11.
Western attitudes towards gender, human security and humanitarian issues; Shaping of gender between communal, national and international discourses
Readings:
Core


Additional readings

• Ghannam, Farha (2013) *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt*, Stanford: University of Stanford Press, chapter 4: Gendered Violence: Local and national articulations


• [https://kerningcultures.com/kerning-cultures/not-just-my-hijab](https://kerningcultures.com/kerning-cultures/not-just-my-hijab)

8) National Holiday - No class; 17.11.

9) Security Across Scales: The Transformation of Regional security; 24.11.

Regional competition; politics of alliances and identities in the contemporary Middle East and their manifestation in local conflicts (Iran x Saudi Arabia and Israel x Qatar and Turkey)

Readings

Core


Additional Readings

- SEPAD podcast: Interview with Danny Postel https://soundcloud.com/richardsoninstitute/sepadpod-with-danny-postel
- https://carnegieendowment.org/specialprojects/SourcesofSectarianismintheMiddleEast
- https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/yemen-national-chaos-local-order
- https://pomeps.org/pomeps-studies-34-shifting-global-politics-and-the-middle-east

10) Current Issues I: Syria, Iraq, ISIS; 1.12.

Civil war in Syria, rise of ISIS, globalization of Syrian Conflict

Readings:

Core


Additional readings

- Pearlman, Wendy (2017), We Crossed a Bridge and it Trembled: Voices from Syria, New York, Harper Collins, pp. 143 – 26 (Ch. 5 and 6 – Militarization and Living War)

11) Current Issues II: Israel, Palestine; 8.12. (Guest lecturer: Jakub Záhora)

Historical development of the Israeli occupation; conflicting narratives; current issues
Readings:

Core


12) Current Issues III: Iran in the New Middle East; Conclusion; 15.12.

Domestic politics, Geopolitics and proxies, The Nuclear Deal and current position of Iran in international system

Reading:

Core


Additional readings

- https://www.hudson.org/research/15119-what-iran-is-really-up-to
Course requirements

Students shall come the lectures prepared by reading the assigned texts. Please follow the Moodle page of the course where you will the core readings and the exercises. The attendance is compulsory and students may miss the maximum of four lectures to successfully pass the course. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the assigned readings before the class as the lectures directly build on the texts and use them for in-class discussions. Moodle exercises (see below) based on the core readings for each lesson will take place from week 2 to week 12.

Furthermore, students will be required to prepare a brief research outline (ca. 500 words) that will serve to develop the initial idea for a term paper, ground it in relevant academic debates through a review of relevant academic literature and culminate in the research question.

Finally, students will be required to submit a term paper (3,000 words) based on the previously prepared literature review.

Evaluation

Attendance: Attendance is compulsory (as much as possible in these times), students can miss up to four classes. In case you won’t be able to connect to more than four classes, please let me know.

Moodle exercises (40 %): Every week before the class (except for week 1), students shall take a brief online quiz (published on Moodle) focused on understanding the assigned readings. For each quiz, every student may receive up to 3 percent points. This requirement applies even to classes missed by students.

Research outline (15 %): Each participant is required to prepare a short literature review combined with outlining of a research question and an argument (500 words) related to the topic of the final paper (see below). A list of broader topics from which they may choose will be distributed during the first half of the course. The literature review will be evaluated on the basis of its grasp of the relevant literature, clarity of research question and argumentation. Students are strongly advised to discuss their research questions with the lecturer in advance. The deadline for the literature review is December 6, 2020.

Final paper (45 %): Each participant is required to prepare a final essay (ca. 3 000 words) related to the topic of the course and previously prepared literature review. It is not possible to pass the course without a submission of the final paper. The final paper will be graded on the basis of its argumentation, structure, style and finally empirical evidence. The deadline for your final essay is January 17, 2021.

Late submissions of the papers will be subject to grade penalty (minus 10 percent points from the paper’s score for each day after the deadline). Papers should be within 10% (+ or -) of the specified word limit.

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Course rules

The Code of Study and Examination of Charles University in Prague provides the general framework of study rules at the university. According to art. 6, par. 17 of this Code, “a student may not take any examination in any subject entered in his study plan more than three times, i.e. he shall have the right to two resit dates; no extraordinary resit date shall be permitted. (...) If a student fails to appear for an examination on the date for which he has enrolled without duly excusing himself, he shall not be marked; the provision of neither this nor of the first sentence shall constitute the right to arrange for a special examination date.”

Any written assignment composed by the student shall be an original piece. The practices of plagiarism, defined by the Dean’s Provision no. 18/2015, are seen as “a major violation of the rules of academic ethics” and “will be penalized in accordance with Disciplinarian Regulations of the faculty.”