

SPECIAL TOPICS OFFERED DURING FALL 2016

POLS 5130-01

Dr. Farah

Topic Post-Neoliberalism Latin America vs the ME

A great number of Latin American countries adopted the neoliberal policies from the mid-1970s. These policies led to chronic economic crises and their drastic neoliberal resolution, such as increased poverty and inequality, higher levels of unemployment, and lower standards of living. These economic conditions produced, among other things, anomie, disorder, and societal disorganization.

The effects of the adoption of neoliberalism in Latin America reignited collective protests and forced presidents to leave office. Other forms of political protests took the form of antigovernment mobilizations against economic liberalization. New forms of protest took the shape of road blockades, Seizure of public buildings, Land invasions and occupations, Riots and marches, in addition to the traditional forms of labor strikes.

In the last decade, the neoliberal policies and the social and political protests led to the collapse of many Latin American regimes, such as Argentina economic collapse in 2001. A new policy frame emerged in many Latin American countries which relies more on state-led development and the adoption of social democracy. Social democracy is a redistributive system to decrease inequalities, reduce poverty and obtain the support of the groups which were marginalized and pauperized under the neoliberal policies. These policies are known as Neo-Populism.

So how does the Latin American case relate to the Middle East and especially Egypt? The so-called Arab Spring was motivated in large part by the drastic neoliberal policies adopted by most Middle Eastern countries, especially Egypt and Tunisia. But the new regimes emerging in these countries are oblivious to the effects of neoliberalism and are following the same economic policies of the previous regimes. What is achieved in the Arab Spring countries is ironically the superimposition of political Islamism on the drastic economic policies followed by the deposed regimes. That is why political protest is continuing in the Arab Spring countries due to the failure of the current regimes to deal with the deep economic crises and the increasing inequalities ravaging the new democracies.

In this course we aim at the study of Latin America experiments with the new policies that are targeting growth but also social equity. We also aim at formulating new economic policies for the Arab Spring countries especially Egypt that might resolve the deep economic crises ravaging the new regimes. CAN WE LAERN FROM LATIN AMERICA?

POLS 5130-02

Dr. Tschirgi

Topic: The Arab World's Civil War

The once high hopes that the so-called “Arab Spring” of 2011 would lead to positive and productive political change in the Arab Region have now proved a disastrous illusion. During the past five years, most major states of the MENA Region have been directly challenged by the growing wave of political violence accompanying the demand for radical change in the values and structures that determined the internal and external power relations marking those societies since the end of World War I.

The Twentieth Century’s political history of Islamic fundamentalism provides a central motif for understanding what this seminar terms the “Twenty-First Century’s Arab Civil War.” Egypt’s central importance to intellectual and political currents in the modernizing Arab World inevitably gave that country a key role in the formation of Arab political thought and activism. Sayyid Qutb’s personal anguish gave rise to the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as to that group’s fundamentalist Islamic orientation to political and social change. By the early Twenty-First Century, Egyptians figured prominently in militant Islamic political movements, such as al-Qaeda. With the rise of the proclaimed “Islamic Caliphate” in June, 2014, political Islamism forthrightly abandoned what had long since

become an ambivalent stance toward the modern (post W.W.I) Arab state system and espoused a clearly and defiantly atavistic political program favoring a return to the earliest days of Islam's political identity.

This seminar will be predicated on an assumption: that the Arab World is now in the grip of an ongoing civil war pitting radical atavistically-oriented Islamist forces against an array of pro-status quo adversaries. On this basis, the seminar will review most of the contemporary Middle East's ongoing military conflicts in order to determine the extent to which the above assumption may validly be seen as true. The conflicts to be examined will include:

1. The current Syrian Civil War.
2. The ongoing series of conflicts in Iraq.
3. The Libyan Conflict
4. Egyptian Tensions: Open Conflict in Sinai; Generalized Frictions Elsewhere.
5. The Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Civil War Thesis.

By way of trying to come to grips with this difficult issue, the seminar will focus initially on the seminal theoretical works of Emile Durkheim and David Apter, whose theorizing regarding political religion remains unsurpassed.

POLS 5130-03

Dr. ElMahdi

Topic: The Arab Uprisings: Redefining Politics and Beyond

The Arab Uprisings of 2011 came as a turbulent shock to both politicians and scholars of the region. While still trying to decode its causes and effects, it took another (un)expected turn in most of the countries it graced. Looking at these events and its ongoing path, this course questions the significance of these events, and what we (students of the region and responsible citizens) can make out of them both politically and analytically. It questions the uprisings against established assumptions in comparative politics, political theory, and Middle East studies literature, deciphering the meaning of revolution, counter-revolution, narratives, and democratization, as they play out in the region during the 21st century. It looks at sports, arts, and the media as spaces of engagement.

POLS 5140-01

Dr. McMahon

Topic: Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism

POLS 5140 synthesizes the fields of international relations and global political economy. It productively combines critical studies of power relations and the global production, circulation and accumulation of capital to understand eruptions of crisis in our contemporary neoliberal moment. More specifically, the course historicizes the neoliberal moment in social terms, analyzes processes such as the transnationalization of production, privatization and monetization, studies contradictions such as capital's necessity of infinite growth against the finite capacities of societies and the planet, problematizes the political function of hegemonic ideals such as reform and freedom, and formulates plans for the coming eruption of crisis. In the process, students will make sense of ideas that power has intentionally obfuscated including hegemony, negative interest rates, derivatives, securitization and currency depreciation. Throughout POLS 5140, special attention is paid to the modes of appearance of crisis in the Middle East.

The course is built on a strong foundation of diverse resources including texts by Karl Polanyi, David Harvey, Samir Amin, Wendy Brown, Robert Cox, and Adam Hanieh, videos such as *The Big Short* and *Too Big to Fail* and the Bloomberg Surveillance podcast.

Through POLS 5140 students develop a critical, more realistic understanding of their political-economic world.