

**THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO**  
**POLS. 3408-03 COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST**

**Dr. Kareem Mahmoud Kamel**  
**Class: UW 11:30-12:50 Waleed C153**  
**Office Hours: UW 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm HUSS 1935**  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Middle East is an area rich with cultural diversity and a region of immense historical, political, and strategic significance. The region is home to the world's three major monotheistic religions and it has immense natural resources, yet it suffers from huge inequalities within and between every state and its turbulent history has witnessed some of the world's most destructive and pervasive conflicts.

This course is intended for students with little/or no prior knowledge about the contemporary politics of the region. It aims at introducing students to the defining features and characteristic trends of Middle East politics – history, ideologies, causes and consequences of conflict, experiences of state-building, state-society relations, the dynamics of inter-regional politics, and political economy. It will also shed light on the historical and contemporary realities of various state and non-state actors, and the role that intrusive, foreign actors played in shaping the region in the process of making and re-making “regional order”. Our approach to the comparative politics of the Middle East will be thematic. Rather than relying upon in-depth case studies of a few particular countries, we will examine various issues or themes of relevance to the current political systems of the Middle East. The course ends with an open discussion on the prospects of democracy and the future of political and socio-economic transformation of the region in light of the varied consequences of the ‘Arab Spring’.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS & STUDENT EVALUATION**

**- Attendance/Participation (10%):**

Despite the class having a significant lecture component, attendance/participation are essential aspects of the course and reflect an important dimension of student commitment. Students are expected to read the assigned material before coming to class, to punctually attend, and actively & meaningfully participate in class discussions. They are also expected to respond to any queries the instructor might ask about the readings or current events. **An attendance sheet will be created to record student attendance. I will personally take attendance at the end of every class once the student roster is finalized.**

- **In order to avoid unnecessary disruption, students must avoid drifting in or leaving the room while class is in session. Those who show up 10 minutes or more after the beginning of class will not be allowed in and they will be considered absent.**
- **The use of mobile phones during class is strictly prohibited (including SMS or any other messaging service). Please either switch off your phones or put them on silent/sleep mode before entering class. Repetitive violation of this policy will negatively impact your participation grade.**
- **SIX absences (the equivalent of 3 weeks of class) or more will result in an automatic F for the course. Less than six absences will negatively affect your attendance grade.**
- **Exceptions to the absence policy will ONLY be made if the student has a serious, documented, and verifiable excuse that is acknowledged by the Office of Student Affairs (or clinic) and brought to my notice within a maximum period of one month from the time the absence took place. Later excuses will not be accepted.**

**- Current Affairs Quiz (10%) – Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Students are encouraged to keep up with the news and follow up consistently with current events. *CNN International, BBC, Sky News, Al-Arabeyya* and *Al-Jazeera* channels and their affiliated websites provide ample coverage of regional affairs and are a reliable source of news. Students will take a brief in-class quiz composed of MCQs and short-answer questions testing their **basic factual knowledge** of current affairs. It is therefore suggested that you remain attentive to news-making personalities, political/militant movements, consequential decisions, groundbreaking events, conflict flashpoints, and/or changes in leadership in the Middle East.

**- Midterm Exam (20%) – Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**- Term paper (30%) – DUE IN-CLASS: Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**

Students are expected to turn in one research paper of a minimum of 3,000 words analytically examining a specific issue (eg. case study, crisis, policy decision, causes/consequences of event..etc) relevant to a certain course theme. *A detailed guidelines sheet will be distributed to class specifying the exact requirements of this assignment several weeks before the paper due date.*

**- Presentations (10%) – FROM MAY 8<sup>TH</sup> – MAY 18<sup>TH</sup>:**

During the final two weeks of the semester, each student will be allocated **10 minutes** to present their research to class.

**- Final Exam (20%): A final non-comprehensive exam will be administered during the final examination period (TBA by university between May 20<sup>th</sup> – May 25<sup>th</sup>)**

**Percentage Points are distributed as follows:**

Attendance/Participation	10%
Current Affairs Quiz	10%
Midterm	20%
Term paper	30%
Presentation	10%
Final Exam	20%

**Grading Scale (100 points):**

A	93-100
A-	89-92
B+	85-88
B	81-84
B-	77-80
C+	73-76
C	69-72
C-	65-68
D+	61-64
D	57-60
F	Below 57

**VERY IMPORTANT**

- Please refer to the University academic integrity policy concerning academic dishonesty, which includes, but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, obtaining unfair advantage, and other forms of academic misconduct. This usually manifests itself in the receipt of information during an examination; use of unauthorized material during an examination, transfer of unauthorized material to another student; and submission of the same paper or substantially the same paper for two different courses. <http://aucegypt.edu/academics/undergraduate-studies/academic-experience>

- All references must be *clearly* and *consistently* cited in your written assignments both in-text and in the works cited list. Copy-pasting material or submitting unreferenced research work will not be tolerated. Any form of plagiarism will result in an F in the course, and possible request for dismissal from the university.
- No modification in any of the deadlines specified in the syllabus will be granted.
- In order to ensure fairness, every student has one chance at every method of assessment. No additional chance for compensation will be granted for any student who deems his/her grade unsatisfactory. Extra credit assignments, re-takes, re-submissions, drafts, re-drafts or make-up exams will NOT be allowed.
- All written assignments (hard copies) have to be handed in to the instructor in person in class on the designated date of submission.
- Late papers without an official, verifiable, emergency excuse will not be accepted and/or heavily penalized.

### READING MATERIAL

Required reading material will mainly be taken from the following books (preferably purchased):

- Roger Owen, *State, Power, & Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Routledge, 2004)
- Mehran Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)

Additional required readings will be assigned and made accessible to students on certain weeks as shown in the reading schedule below. The two books and all other assigned material will be relevant for exams.

### Topics List & Tentative Reading Schedule

#### Week of January 31<sup>st</sup> – Colonialism and State-Formation

- Roger Owen, Ch: 1
- Mehran Kamrava, Ch: 2, pp. 37-68

#### Week of February 7<sup>th</sup> – The Trajectory of State Power in the Arab World – Republican Systems

- Roger Owen, Ch: 2
- Roger Owen, "The Origins of the Presidential Security State," in Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 23-36. **(blackboard)**
- Mehran Kamrava, "The Rise and Fall of Ruling Bargains in the Middle East," in Mehran Kamrava, ed. *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014), pp.17-45. **(blackboard)**

#### Week of February 14<sup>th</sup> – The Trajectory of State Power in the Arab World – Monarchical Systems

- Roger Owen, Ch: 5
- Sean L. Yom and Gregory Gause III, "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On," *Journal of Democracy* 23 (October 2012): 74-88. **(blackboard)**
- Madawi Al-Rasheed, "Saudi Internal Dilemmas and Regional Responses to the Arab Uprisings," in Fawaz Gerges ed. *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 353-379.

#### Week of February 21<sup>st</sup> – The Politics of Nationalism

- Roger Owen, Ch: 4
- Mehran Kamrava, Ch: 3 pp. 69-99

**Week of February 28<sup>th</sup> – Political Islam and Identity Politics in the Middle East**

- Roger Owen, Ch: 9
- James A. Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, Ch: 2 'States, Beliefs, and Ideologies' pp. 21-62.
- Abdullah Al-Arian, "Islamist Movements and the Arab Spring," in Mehran Kamrava, ed. *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East*, pp.99-129. **(blackboard)**

**Week of March 6<sup>th</sup> – The Political Economy of the Middle East**

**Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup> – CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ**

- Roger Owen Ch:7
- Mehran Kamrava Ch: 8, pp.259-296

**Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup> – MID-TERM EXAM REVISION**

**Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> – MID-TERM EXAM**

**Week of March 20<sup>th</sup> – The Gulf Wars**

- Roger Owen Ch: 6
- Mehran Kamrava, Ch: 6 pp. 170-209

**Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> – NO CLASS (WESTERN EASTER)**

**Week of April 3<sup>rd</sup> - The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Issue of Palestine**

- Mehran Kamrava, Ch: 4, pp. 109-139
- Mehran Kamrava, Ch:7, pp. 215-258

**Week of April 10<sup>th</sup> – Arab Spring – Causes, Processes, and Outcomes**

**TBA – Selected readings from:**

- Fawaz Gerges ed. *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Marc Lynch, ed. *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

**Week of April 17<sup>th</sup> – Arab Spring – Causes, Processes, and Outcomes**

**TBA – Selected readings from:**

- Fawaz Gerges (ed), *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Marc Lynch (ed), *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

**Week of April 24<sup>th</sup> – NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK HOLIDAY)**

**Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup> – NO CLASS (EASTER EASTER/LABOR DAY HOLIDAY)**

**Week of May 8<sup>th</sup> - STUDENT PRESENTATIONS BEGIN**

**Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup> - Term Paper Due (HARD COPY IN-CLASS)**

**Week of May 15<sup>th</sup> – STUDENT PRESENTATIONS CONT'D + FINAL EXAM REVISION**

**Wednesday, May, 18<sup>th</sup> – Last Day of Class**

**May 20<sup>th</sup> – May 25<sup>th</sup> – FINAL EXAM WEEK**