

# Middle East Politics

## POLS 5235 – Spring 2017

Wednesdays 5-7.40pm  
Room CP52 - Waleed

### Instructor: Dr. Sandrine Gamblin

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Office Hours: UW 10:00-11:30 only by appointment (students should send a confirmation email the day before the scheduled appointment) and UW 1-2pm (with no appointment)  
Office : 2014 HUSS Building –Political Science Department

### Teaching Assistant: Mona El Hussein

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## Course Organisation

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This course deals with fundamental issues in Middle East Politics, with a focus on contemporary dynamics and events. After questioning the relation of the discipline (Political Science) and the Middle East (Studies), a set of topics will be covered, such as conflicts, revolutions, regional powers, state-formation, political life, civil society, social movements, political economy. The list is open and students are welcome to suggest themes they would like to study in this course.

The class starts with a news review in order to engage the students in political analysis and critical thinking regarding major events that occur in the region. The students should be able to articulate a brief presentation of the news, by providing relevant information, and a political and historical perspective.

The second part of the class is based on the readings assigned, and a discussion. Here, the objective is to engage students in critically evaluating existing scholarship, and their conditions of production, and exploring possibilities for future research projects.

## Assignments and Grading

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- **Class Participation: 10%**

Includes “professionalism”, i.e. being on time, delivering papers on time, politeness, active and constructive participation in class, readings done.

- **Press review: 10%**

Every week, a student (a volunteer or randomly selected by the instructor) presents the news, focus on one specific item (15mn), and open a discussion. If the student does more than one press review, it counts as a bonus (indeed).

- **Readings presentations: 20%**

All students are expected to read and reflect critically on all the assigned texts, and to contribute constructively to class discussions. Each week two students will provide a 20-minute critical and analytical review—not a summary—of the readings.

The written version will be circulated a day before class (to be sent to instructor and TA), and will form the basis for that week’s class discussion. Your presentation should include a brief background of the authors to position them and contextualize their work; a brief synopsis of their main arguments; your own analysis and critique of the readings; AND a set of questions (max 5) should be provided in advanced to the class for discussion.

There should be 2 presentations by student during the semester.

- **Film AND book (fiction) review: 15+15=30%**

The student will write a typed 5-page critical and analytical review—not a summary—of a film (fiction) and novel. 2,500 words maximum; should include a bibliography.

- **Final Paper: 30%**

Students will submit a final paper which focuses on a specific question/topic. The paper is NOT a synthesis of secondary sources. The paper investigates how *academia*, and political science in particular, have studied/discussed the selected topic (the exercise is similar to a literature review). The student should be able to provide a comprehensive overview on the production of knowledge (and its conditions) related to it. The paper must ask a specific question and attempt to answer it by critically discussing evidence and arguments found in *academic* sources beyond the assigned readings on the syllabus. Each student must meet with the instructor in person at least once to discuss their abstract, outline and bibliography before it is due.

Paper format: font 12, 1.5 spaced, 5,000 to 6,000 words + bibliography

Late papers are not accepted and must be submitted electronically by email to the instructor. The file should be named as such: name\_POLS5235\_spring2017

## **General Regulations**

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- Attendance policy: The university-wide attendance policy will be applied in this course. Thus, a student who misses more than the equivalent of three weeks of class meetings during a semester for any reason may be assigned a reduced grade for the course –including the grade of “F”–solely on the basis of inadequate attendance, regardless of excuse. Students who miss fewer than three weeks of class sessions may not be penalized on the grounds of attendance alone. Students are personally responsible for making up any academic tasks and assignments missed due to their absence.
- Punctuality is necessary and students may not be allowed in after class begins since it distracts the rest of the class.
- Mobile phones and other electronic devices, except laptops, must be switched off during class.
- Going out of the classroom during the lecture is not permitted, unless there is an emergency.
- Grades are not open for negotiations and no grade will be changed.
- Plagiarism will result in an F in the course.

Detailed information about the University Academic Integrity Policy may be found in the Catalog and on the University Web site.

## **Calendar**

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*NB: Here are the required readings. Changes might occur during the semester. Readings are available on blackboard.*

### **1 February: Introduction and Organization**

### **8 February: Session 1, The Middle East, Middle East Studies and its Critics**

*Readings:*

Davison, Roderic H. 1960. “Where Is the Middle East?” *Foreign Affairs* 38 (4) (July 1): 665-675.

Hajjar, Lisa & Niva, Steve. 1997. “(Re) Made in the USA. Middle East Studies in the Global Era”. *Middle East Report*, October-December 1997.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2003. “The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science”. In *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, ed. David L. Szanton. University of California Press.

Rashid Khalidi, “Is There a Future for Middle East Studies,” 1994 MESA Presidential Speech, *MESA Bulletin* July 1995

*Guiding questions:*

- What is the Middle East?
- How do you relate the Middle East as a “construct”, and Middle East Studies as a scholar field of studies?
- What is the Middle East Studies relations to mainstream disciplines, especially Political Science?

- What would you answer to Khalidi's question nowadays?

### 15 February: Session 2, Re-reading Orientalism nowadays

#### Readings:

- Said, Edward. 1978-2003. *Orientalism*. New York, Vintage Books. Preface + Introduction
- Lockman, Zachary. 2010. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 and 6.
- Edmund Burke III & David Prochaska. 2007. "Rethinking the Genealogies of Orientalism". *History and Anthropology*. 18p.
- ElMarsafy, Ziyad & Bernard, Anna. 2013. *Debating Orientalism*. MacMillan Palgrave. Chapter 1 ("Orientalism, legacies of a performance") and chapter 2 (Peter Gran, "Orientalism's contribution to World History and Middle Eastern History 35 years later")

#### Guiding questions:

- How do we read nowadays Edward Said and its critics?
- How can we explain the "longevity" of Said's Orientalism, and the on-going debate that has been triggered till nowadays?

### 22 February: Session 3, Talking about the Revolution

#### Readings:

- Khosrokhavar, Farhad. 2012. *The New Arab Revolutions that Shook the World*, London, Paradigm Publishers. Introduction + chap 1 to chap 6
- Abul Ghod, Laila. 2011. "Living the revolution in an Egyptian Village. Moral Action in a National Space". *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 21–25
- Amar, Paul & Prashad, Vijay. *Dispatching from the Arab Spring: Understanding the New Middle East*. University of Minnesota Press, septembre 2013. Introduction.
- Bennani-Chraïbi Mounia et al., "Towards a sociology of revolutionary situations. Reflections on the Arab uprisings », *Revue française de science politique* (English), 2012/5 Vol. 62, p. 1-29

#### Guiding questions:

- How relevant is Khosrokhavar's proposal to theorize uprisings/revolutions in the ME?
- What new Middle East are Amar and Prashad talking about? (i.e. what's new?)
- "Is it an uprising? No, Sir, this is a revolution?" How do you interpret the debate on terminology related to the ME uprisings?
- How does the anthropologist's view contribute to our understanding of the 2011 uprising?

### 1 March: Session 4, Film screening "I am the People" and discussion

The discussion on the film is related to the previous session on Revolutions in the ME.

#### Guiding questions:

- How does (if it does) this documentary film contribute to our understanding of the 2011 uprising?
- What are the issues that the film is addressing that you (and scholarship you read) haven't paid attention to before? In other words, does the film bring a new perspective on the 2011 events in Egypt or not?
- How do you relate the film and the readings from previous session?

### 5 March: First assignment (Book or Film review)

### 8 March: Session 5, Is there a Civil Society in the Middle East?

#### Readings:

- Norton, Augustus Richard. "The Future of Civil Society in the Middle East". *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Spring, 1993), pp. 205-216
- Roy, Olivier. "The Predicament of 'Civil Society' in Central Asia and the 'Greater Middle East'. *International Affairs*, vol.81, n°5, Oct. 2005, pp. 1001-1012.

Härdig, Anders C. "Beyond the Arab revolts: conceptualizing civil society in the Middle East and North Africa", *Democratization*, 22:6, 2015, 1131-1153.

Niblock, Tim. "Civil Society in the Middle East". In Choueiri, Youssef M. (ed). *Companion to the History of the Middle East*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2005, pp.486-503.

Jessica Leigh Doyle (2015): "Civil Society as Ideology in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2015.

Bellin, Eva. "Civil Society: Effective Tool of Analysis for Middle East Politics?". *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Sep., 1994), pp. 509-510.

*Guiding questions:*

- Is it relevant to ask whether there is a civil society in the Middle East?

**15 March: Session 6, Economic development**

**22 March: Session 7, Conflicts in the Middle East -1- Palestine/Israel: National Narratives in conflict**

**28 March: Second assignment (Book of film review)**

**29 March: Session 8, Conflict in the Middle East 2 - Lebanon**

**5 April, Session 9, Re-mapping the Middle East after 2003 and 2011**

**6 April: Paper proposal to be submitted**

**19 April, Session 10, Round-table - Paper presentation**

**26 April, Session 11, Gender issues in the Middle East**

**3 May, Lesson 12,**

**10 May, Lesson 13,**

**17 May, Lesson 14,**

**17 May: Final paper to be submitted**

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**Suggestions of films:**

"Battle of Algiers" (123 min.) Algeria

"A Summer at La Goulette" (100 min.) Tunisia

"Yadun Ilahiyah" (Divine Intervention; 92 min.) Palestine

"Al-zaman al-baqi" (The time that remains) Palestine

"West Beirut" Lebanon

"Caramel" (2007, Lebanon)

"A Separation" (Iran, 2012)

"Amreeka" (2009) Palestine-Canadian

"Paradise Now" (2005, Palestine)

"I want to see" (2008, Lebanon)

"Incendie" (2010, Lebanon/Canada)

Films from Amos Gitai (Israel)

**Suggestions of writers:**

Mohamed Choukri - Morocco

Hanan El Sheikh - Lebanon

Elias Khoury - Lebanon

Rachid El Daif - Lebanon

Jabour Douahy - Lebanon

Kateb Yassine – Algeria