

GEOG 487/687: Political Geography of the Middle East
University of Nevada Reno
Instructor: Dr. Jessie Clark



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Middle East is a region of significant importance to our understanding of contemporary economic, social, and political processes in the world today. But, what and where exactly is the 'Middle East'? This course examines the political geography of the modern Middle East. We focus largely on political transformations from the 19th century onward, in which we can trace many recent geopolitical, economic, and social changes in the region. In this course, we will historicize how the place of the 'Middle East' is constructed and to what end, examine contemporary transnational and geopolitical issues tied to this region, and explore how the Middle East is populated and practiced by ordinary people living in and outside the region. A major goal of this course is to dispel predominant geographical imaginaries about the Middle East and cultivate an appreciation for the vast, complex, and interrelated social, economic, and cultural diversity of this place. In doing so, we will learn to view the Middle East not as a distant place over "there", but as a region that is shaped by and shapes global processes intimately tied to "here".

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will cultivate an appreciation for the political, cultural, and economic diversity of the Middle East.
2. Students will learn to critically read how the Middle East is discussed/represented in media.
3. Students will recognize how events in the Middle East are intimately tied to their lives.
4. Students will develop critical reading, writing, and discussion skills.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of taking this class, students will be able to:

1. Describe how and why the Middle East has been constructed as a geographical concept, the historical and contemporary colonial and geopolitical experiences of the region, and how ordinary people within and outside the region experience the Middle East.
2. Critically assess how the Middle East is represented in contemporary media and how these representations connect to and reflect geopolitical relationships and power relations.
3. Contextualize in writing and discussion course concepts in world events and personal experience.
4. Demonstrate through writing and discussion an ability to read, comprehend, and analyze scholarly articles.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Gelvin, J. 2016. *The Modern Middle East: A History, 4th Ed.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.***
Kanafani, G. 1999. *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories.* Lynne Rienner Publishers.
Munif, A. 1987. *Cities of Salt.* Vintage International.

***This textbook is available at the bookstore or can be found online. Be sure you buy the 4th edition. Readings from the main textbooks will be supplemented with additional readings, including book chapters, scholarly articles, and newspaper articles, that I will post on WebCampus.

COURSEWORK

Reading Responses: The bulk of your grade is comprised of weekly reading responses. Writing is a tool to digest and analyze readings and will help prepare you for in-class discussions. Responses should be 700-800 words in length (approx. 1-1 1/2 pp. single spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman) and respond to a series of questions provided below. You will upload an electronic copy of your response to the discussion portal in **WebCampus by 8:00 am on Tuesdays** and bring a hard copy to class. I will only accept hard copies of your response papers. Come to class having read your fellow students' responses. Out of 12 possible responses, you will submit 10. Having two "free" weeks is meant to give you some flexibility when your workload is overwhelming. Use these strategically. Not writing a response does NOT excuse you from the readings. Note that no reading responses are assigned for Weeks 1 & 15.

Class Leadership: Each of you will introduce the week's key concepts and help lead discussion once in a term. This involves providing a one-page handout and a PowerPoint/Prezi of key points and concepts and crafting 3-4 discussion questions to share with the class.

Mid-Term Prezi Presentation and class participation: TBD, project focused on spatial interconnections and global processes, finding connections across regions

Art and Place project: TBD, students will choose a piece of art from a list of contemporary Middle Eastern artists and explore how meanings of place are represented in the work

Final Portfolio/Cover Essay: As your final project (in lieu of an exam and paper), you will submit 3-4 of your best reading responses in a portfolio along with a cover essay of approximately 1500-2000 words (2-3 pages single spaced). Your cover essay should weave together the ideas in your chosen responses, highlighting differences, similarities, and your own thoughts about key questions/topics that arose throughout the term. We will discuss the specific parameters of the cover essay at a later date.

Activity	Due	Points
Weekly Reading Responses (10/12 required)	Written response uploaded electronically on WebCampus by 8:00 am every Tuesday and submitted in hard copy format in-class.	200 (10/12 responses X 20 pts. each)
Class leadership	Once in a semester	30
Mid-term pres. on Connections & class participation	Week 6 in-class	60 (50 presentation + 10 class participation)
Art and Place project	Week 12 in-class	40
Final Portfolio/Essay	Week 16 in my mailbox	50
Participation	Regular attendance, preparation, and contribution to discussion	20
TOTAL		400

SCHEDULE/READINGS ***readings are subject to change

Week 1: Is there a Middle East?

Amanat, A. 2014. "Introduction: Is There a Middle East: Problematizing a Virtual Space", In *Is There a Middle East: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Eds. Bonine, M., et al.), pp. 1-7. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Week 2: Representation and the Politics of Sight

Film: Edward Said: Out of Place

Said, E. 1994. [1979] "Introduction", In *Orientalism*. 1978. New York: Vintage, 1994.

Parkinson, S. "Towards an ethics of sight: Violence scholarship and the Arab uprising", <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2015/08/26/towards-an-ethics-of-sight-violence-scholarship-and-the-arab-uprisings/>

Week 3: Empire and Modernity

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 11-89

Week 4: Colonization and Decolonization

Film: Battle for Algiers

Fanon, F. 1963. "On Violence", In *Wretched of the Earth* (pp. 1-62). New York: Grove Press

Week 5: State Making and Society

Film: On the Way to School

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 117-139 (Photo Essay) w/

Mitchell, T. 1991. "Appearance of Order", In *Colonising Egypt* (pp. 63-94). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 189-229

Week 6: WW2, Israel-Palestine

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 230—254

TBD

Week 7: Presentations

Week 8: Geographies of Oil

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 288-299

Mitchell T. 2009. Carbon Democracy. *Economy and Society* 38:3, pp. 399-432.

Munif, *Cities of Salt*

Week 9: Geographies of Aid and Development

Bhungalia, L. 2015. Managing Violence: Aid, Counterinsurgency, and the Humanitarian Present in Palestine. *Environment and Planning A* 47, pp. 2308-2323.

Clark, J. Just One drop: Geopolitics and the Social Reproduction of Security in Southeast Turkey. In

Meehan, K. & Strauss, K. (Eds.) *Precarious Worlds* (45-64). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Simsek & Jondergen

Week 10: Gender, Sexuality, and Space

Film: In Between

Ozyegin, Gul. *New Desires, New Selves: Sex, Love, and Piety among Turkish Youth*.

New York: NYU Press, 2015, pp. 243-308.

Culcasi, K. 2019. 'We are Women and Men Now': Intimate Spaces and Coping Labour For Syrian Refugees in Jordan. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 44: 463-478.

TBD

Week 11: Youth, Political Movements, and Public Space

Film: Persepolis

2019 ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey. White Paper,

<https://www.arabyouthsurvey.com/pdf/downloadwhitepaper/download-whitepaper.pdf>

Bayat, A. 2013. "The Art of Presence" and "Reclaiming Youthfulness", In *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (pp. 1-29, 106-128). Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA.

Darici, H. 2016. Of Kurdish Youth and Ditches. *Theory and Event* 19(1).

Tufekci, Z. 2017. "A Networked Public". In *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*, pp. 3-27.

Elsayed, Y. "Laughing through Change: Subversive Humor in Online Videos of Arab Youth." *International Journal of Communication* 10, (2016): 5102-5122.

Week 12: New Geographies of Territory

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 347-358

Jabareen, Y. 2015. The Emerging Islamic State: Terror, Territoriality, and the Agenda of Social Transformation. *Geoforum* 58, pp. 51-55.

Hamdan, A. 2016. Breakers of Barrier? Notes on the Geopolitics of the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham. *Geopolitics* 21:3, 605-627.

TBD, Reading on *Democratic Confederalism*

Week 13: (Im)mobility and Refuge

Jones, R. 2016. "Introduction" and "The European Union: The World's Deadliest Border", In *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*, pp. 1-28. Verso: London.

Ali, S. 2010. "Introduction" and "Living in 'Fly-By' Dubai", In *Dubai: Gilded Age* (pp. 1-13. 110-134). Yale University Press: New Haven, CT.

Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*

Week 14: Secularism and Religion

Evered, E. Ö., & Evered, K. T. (2016). A Geopolitics of Drinking: Debating the Place of Alcohol in Early Republican Turkey. *Political Geography* 50, pp. 48–60

Gökarıksel, B. (2012). The Intimate Politics of Secularism and the Headscarf: The Mall, the Neighborhood, and the Public Square in Istanbul. *Gender, Place & Culture* 19(1), pp. 1–20.

Mahmood, S. and Hirschkind, C. 2002. Feminism, the Taliban, and the Politics of Counterinsurgency.

<http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777190136/>

Week 15: Final Wrap-up