

Introduction to the Modern Middle East

Mondays & Thursdays, 10.20–11.40 a.m.

Livingston, BRR-5085 (Business Building)

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Office Hours: Mondays, 12–1.15 p.m.; Thursdays, 2–3.15 p.m.; by appointment.

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the foundational course for Middle Eastern Studies. It introduces students to major debates, issues and literature in several of the disciplines that comprise Middle East area studies. Through the lens of major approaches and theories, this course explores the key processes and issues that have shaped and continue to shape the modern Middle East: Western penetration, encounters with ‘modernity’ and colonialism; the formation of the Middle East state system, international relations and wars; nationalism and political Islam; economic development, modernization and the impact of oil; authoritarianism, democratization and civil society; ethnicity, kinship and gender relations; and literature, arts and popular culture.

The classes will be a mixture of lectures and discussion. I expect students to come to class having prepared the readings for the day. Pop quizzes, small group discussions and in-class writing will all be used to bring the course material together. **I will regularly call on people in class.**

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will come to appreciate the complexities in the political, social and cultural tapestries of the modern Middle East and its relationship to Europe and North America. Students will also develop the skills necessary to critically engage with differing perspectives found in contemporary scholarship and public discourses.

III. TEXTS REQUIRED TO BE PURCHASED

1. Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).
2. Alaa al-Aswany, *The Yacoubian Building*, tr. Humphrey Davies (Cairo: AUC Press, 2004).

IV. ADDITIONAL READINGS

Further required readings for the class have been placed on Sakai (listed as e-reserves).

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ATTENDANCE

You will be required to take a **mid-term** and a **final** examination. You will also submit a total of **three** short assignments: **one response paper** (500–750 words each), and **two summaries** (250 words maximum). You will also be required to undertake a **group project** which will require out-of-class research and reading, an in-class presentation and a final write-up. **The instructions for the response paper, summaries, and group presentations can be found at the end of the syllabus (pp. 11–13).**

You are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions on a regular basis. **More than 2 unexcused absences will affect your grade adversely, i.e. for every two additional classes missed, I will dock a full letter grade.** You are also expected to show up to class **on time** and **prepared**. If you show up **after attendance has been taken**, it will be counted as an unexcused absence. If you show up to class without having done the readings, that too will count as an unexcused absence.

Participation will be assessed on the basis of your prior reading and engagement in class discussion. To that end, for every class, you must come prepared with three things written up: 1. Factual information from the reading that you found most relevant to the

topic of the day; 2. A brief 2-3 sentence analysis of a specific point, document, doctrine, etc., found in the readings, and; 3. A brief 2-3 sentence synthesis of a concept, idea, position, etc., found in the readings. **You must bring these on a notecard to every class. I will collect these at the end of class, as and when I deem fit.**

The **in-class mid-term exam** will cover the entire first part of the course. The **final exam** will be cumulative, but will naturally emphasize material covered since the mid-term. The mid-term is scheduled for Thursday, February 26; the final exam will take place in-class during the Registrar assigned time.

VI. LAPTOP AND OTHER POLICIES

Laptops and tablets may be used in class for pulling up electronic copies of the readings and/or to take notes. However, if at any point I ask a student to show me his/her device, and if any window is open unrelated to the class material, suggesting that the person was using his/her device in class for work unrelated to the specific class discussion, **laptop and tablet use will be banned for every student in class.**

Students are required to familiarize themselves with the material in this syllabus. All information deemed pertinent has been included, and the syllabus will be available at all times on Sakai (in addition to the hard copy distributed in class).

VII. ASSESSMENT

Response Paper–10%; Summaries–10%;

Mid-term Exam–20%; Final Exam–30%;

Group Paper and Presentation–15%; Class Participation and Quizzes–15%

VIII. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND DEADLINES

“Plagiarizing doesn’t just mean borrowing someone else’s words. It also means borrowing someone else’s ideas” (Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College*, p. 46). Please familiarize yourself with the university’s “Academic Integrity Policy.” For information, see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>, and also consult the library’s document, “Don’t Plagiarize: Document your Research! Tips about how to take notes so that you don’t plagiarize by accident,” http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism.

Work submitted after deadlines will be penalized for tardiness.

IX. ROUGH DRAFTS

Rough drafts, first drafts, final drafts, etc. are highly encouraged for all writing assignments. Writing is a process and even the most gifted writers cannot churn out a perfect piece of writing on their first attempt. Please do avail my services as well as those of the Livingston Writing Center on in Lucy Stone Hall. Bear in mind though, revising too is a process that takes time, so neither of us can help you the night before the paper is due!

X. CLASS SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week One Readings marked by ** may be used for the summary assignment

Monday, 1/19 **Martin Luther King Day**

Thursday, 1/22 Introduction

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 1–9

Week Two

Monday, 1/26

What is Orientalism?

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 9–18

Video: *Said on Orientalism*

Thursday, 1/29

Debating Orientalism (Option to turn in first summary)

Readings:

1. **Fred Halliday, “Orientalism and its Critics” (e-reserves)**
2. Edward Said, “Afterword” (e-reserves)

Week Three

Monday, 2/2

Historical Overview: from the Rise of Islam to the Ottomans

Readings:

1. Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 1–50 (e-reserves)

Thursday, 2/5

Historical Overview: Rise of the Safavids to the Nineteenth Century

Readings:

1. Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 51–102 (e-reserves)

Week Four

Monday, 2/9

Colonialism

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 19–49

2. The Earl of Cromer, “Why Britain Acquired Egypt” (e-reserves)

Thursday, 2/12

Colonialism: Egypt

Readings:

1. **P. J. Cain, “Character and Imperialism: The British Financial Administration of Egypt” (e-reserves)**

Week Five

Monday, 2/16

Colonialism: Palestine

Readings:

1. May Seikaly, *Haifa: Transformation of an Arab Society* (e-reserves)
2. **Nicholas Roberts, “Palestine on Display” (e-reserves)**

Thursday, 2/19

Nationalisms

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 50–79.
2. **Ted Swedenburg, “The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier”** (e-reserves)

Week Six

Monday, 2/23

Nationalisms: Egypt

Readings:

1. **Beth Baron, “Mothers, Morality, and Nationalism in Pre-1919 Egypt” (e-reserves)**

Thursday, 2/26

Mid-Term Exam

Week Seven

Monday, 3/2

Economies of the Middle East

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 80–109

Thursday, 3/5

Economies of the Middle East: Oil and Globalization

1. Toby Jones, *Desert Kingdom* (e-reserves)

Week Eight

Monday, 3/9

International Relations

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 110–143
2. Rashad Abu Shawar, “O Beirut” (e-reserves)

Thursday, 3/12

International Relations: The Iraqi Invasion (2003)

Readings:

1. Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire* (e-reserves)

Video: *Letter to the Prime Minister: Jo Wilding's Diary From Iraq*

Spring Break

Week Nine

Monday, 3/23

Political Islam

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 144–172

Thursday, 3/26

Political Islam: Iran and Hamas

Readings:

1. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (e-reserves)
2. Ayatollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government* (e-reserves)

Week Ten

Monday, 3/30

Democratization

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 173–205

Thursday, 4/2

Democratization: Israel

Readings:

1. **Asad Ghanem, “State and Minority in Israel” (e-reserves)**

Week Eleven

Monday, 4/6

Women and Gender

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 206–232

Thursday, 4/9

No class

Week Twelve

Monday, 4/13

Women and Gender: Palestine

Readings:

1. **Julie Peteet, “Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada”** (e-reserves).

Thursday, 4/16

Women and Gender: Iran

Readings:

1. **Nahid Yeganeh, “Women, Nationalism and Islam in Contemporary Political Discourse in Iran”** (e-reserves)

Video: *Divorce: Iranian Style*

Week Thirteen

Monday, 4/20

The U.S. and the Middle East

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 260–289

Thursday, 4/23

The U.S. and the Middle East: America and Israel

Readings:

1. **Stephen Walt & John Mearsheimer, “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy”** (e-reserves).

Week Fourteen

Monday, 4/27

Literature, Arts and Popular Culture

Readings:

1. *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa* (selections).

Video: *Umm Kulthum: A Voice Like Egypt*

Thursday, 4/30

Literature, Arts and Popular Culture

Readings:

1. Al-Aswany, all.

Week Fifteen

Monday, 5/4

Conclusions

Readings:

1. Milton-Edwards, 290-300

Monday, 5/11

Final Exam, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

XI. INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING RESPONSE PAPERS

These short papers are designed for you to reflect on the readings for each topic. Their purpose is to demonstrate a critical understanding of a set of readings. These papers need to reflect a critical engagement with the readings and should **not** be summaries of texts and/or their arguments. Here are examples of the ways you can engage with these texts:

“These set of primary and secondary source readings put forth the following argument _____ . This argument is similar to one we saw earlier in the semester because _____ ” (proceed to show how they are similar). Alternatively, you could say it is different from one we saw earlier, and then provide your reasons for it.

“The author(s) _____ from this week’s readings claims _____. I agree with this claim because _____ ” (proceed to defend your agreement using the assigned readings). Alternatively, you could also disagree fully or partially, etc.

“Even though the authors _____ and _____ both discuss the concept of _____, they fundamentally disagree about _____ ” (proceed to show their disagreements and judge the merits of their arguments using evidence from the readings).

Notice that for all of the above examples, you need to back up your claims with evidence (because ____). Naturally, that means you **are required** to cite specific evidence from the readings. However, as these papers are meant to be slightly informal, you need not provide full Chicago/Turabian style citations. Parenthetical citations with the author’s name, brief title of work and page number should suffice, for example: (Said, *Orientalism*, 3). However, I will **not** accept poorly organized, un-proofed papers that resemble drafts.

You are required to submit **one** of these papers out of a possible nine (Orientalism is included as a topic). You may choose to submit more than two, in which case I will factor only the top two response paper grades into your final grade. These papers are **due in-class** on the first Monday after the topic has been fully covered (e.g. Monday 9/15 for Orientalism), and they **must** be turned in as **hard-copies**.

XII. INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING SUMMARIES

Oftentimes, especially when reading academic articles and monographs, we get too bogged down with the details of a particular paper and miss the larger argument. This exercise should force you to pay attention to the larger argument. Throughout the course of the semester, we shall be reading scholarly work. You must submit a summary for two of these works. **The summary is due in-class on the day of the reading assignment (summaries are due for readings marked with asterisks **).**

A good summary is one that reconstructs the main argument of a piece, simply and succinctly. Thus, this assignment requires you to phrase in your own words the argument of a particular text. You may not exceed the word limit of 250 words. This tight word limit should force you to really concentrate on the essential parts of the argument.

These summaries should help you in two ways. First, they should help you make your prose, in general, more clear and concise. Second, once you are able to grasp and restate the arguments of academic articles in your own words, you will also be able to assess the strength of these arguments. Consequently, you will be in a better position to raise counter-arguments against and/or critique academic and/or non-academic articles. The latter skill is extremely important for your burgeoning academic and professional career. **Bear in mind though, a summary itself NEVER judges or critiques the work.** A summary should only describe the overall argument and how it is established. This is NOT a critical summary.

If you submit more than two summaries, I will only factor in the top two grades into your final grade. You will receive full grades with their numerical equivalents.

For further help on writing summaries, come see me or visit the Livingston Writing Center (Lucy Stone Hall, B-103, B-106, B-108). You may also check out:

<http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/tips/summary/>

XIII. INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROUP PRESENTATIONS

The group presentations will allow you to research one of the case-studies of the textbook on your own. The aim of this assignment is to have you read materials outside of the assigned readings, and then present your findings to the class. A good place to look for additional sources on the topic is to start with the suggested readings in the textbook for your case-study. The presentation and report should be structured in a way so as to inform the students and the instructor about: 1. What questions have been asked by scholars about the topic? 2. What approaches have been adopted by scholars to answer those questions? 3. What are some of the key findings of these scholars that provide us with a deeper understanding of the topic? Bear in mind, all students will have read the text-book summary of the case-study, so your presentation and report need to go beyond that.

By the end of the second week, you will be assigned randomly to groups, and each group will be assigned a specific case-study for which they will be responsible. There are a total of twelve such case-studies, so there will be twelve groups of around five students each. If you have a university engagement (such as athletics, for example) that will prevent you from presenting on a given day then please let me know as soon as possible. Students are not allowed to change their groups once they have been assigned, except with the permission of the instructor.

There are two graded components to the group project. First, you will have to make a 15 minute presentation as a group to the rest of the class on the day scheduled for the case-study. The presentation will be followed up by students asking questions which the group will have to field and answer. Second, the group will submit a 1000–1250-word report based on their research, along with any PowerPoint or other presentation slides that were used for the presentation, and a full bibliography of materials consulted. **The report must be submitted exactly one-week after the in-class presentation. It must be uploaded and submitted through the course site on Sakai.**