

Comparative Politics and International Relations of the Middle East
MIT subject 17.568, Spring 2017

Instructors: Rich Nielsen and Fotini Christia

Time/Location: Tuesdays, 1pm-3pm, E53-438

First Meeting: February 7, 2017

Office hours: by appointment (send us an email)

Overview

This course surveys both classic and cutting edge work on the politics of the Middle East, broadly defined. Topics include the causes and consequences of political and economic development, authoritarianism and democratization, the influence of social movements, the role of women in Middle Eastern polities, Islamism, terrorism, colonialism and foreign occupation, state-building, resistance and rebellion, and the Arab uprisings. We will cover a variety of methods and approaches to studying the Middle East: ethnographic studies, survey research, case studies, rational choice, and “big data” approaches. You will have the opportunity to explore your own interests further by developing a grant proposal, research paper, or by writing response papers.

This is a graduate class, open to advanced undergraduates by permission of the instructors. We expect graduate-level discussion and work. We do not provide an overview of basic facts about politics in the Middle East and we expect students who need such an overview to do extra reading on their own time.¹ The purpose of the class is to teach students how to carry out Political Science research on Middle East politics.

Assignments

Our goals for the class are to (1) discuss and critique current research about Middle East politics, and (2) help you produce writing that will advance your academic and professional goals.

Reading: You should **read required readings prior to class.**

Participation (25% of grade): We expect you to participate in seminar discussions. You will learn just as much from hearing your peers discuss the readings as from hearing the instructors discuss the readings. **Before each class period, you must come up with at least one question or issue related to the reading that you would like to discuss. Email your questions to both instructors by midnight the day before class.**

Our goal is to crowd-source our way to greater insights; this is only possible when everyone participates in class discussions. If you are concerned that your communication style places you at a disadvantage, get in touch and we can discuss how you might participate in ways that help achieve the group goals.

¹ One place to start is *Politics in the Middle East* by Bill and Springborg.

Writing (75% of grade): We need to see and evaluate some writing. There are three main options: (1) a seminar paper, (2) a research proposal/grant proposal (without empirical analysis), or (3) six response papers reacting to course readings (approximately 1,500 words each). Other genres require instructor permission; you will need to describe how writing in a different genre will help you and meet the goals of the class. *If you are writing a paper or research proposal, you are required to have at least one in-depth discussion with us about this assignment prior to turning it in.* **Term papers are due on May 18th, at 11:59 pm, by email to both instructors. Response papers are at midnight the night before class discussing the readings to which you are responding, by email to both instructors.**

Graduate students: We recommend that graduate students write a seminar paper or grant proposal. Graduate students who choose to write response papers should aim to achieve the insight and analysis of a review essay.

Undergraduate students: We recommend that undergraduates write response papers. Undergraduates who choose to write seminar papers or other types of assignments must get specific permission from the instructors.

Schedule

On the first day of class, we will fill in the schedule of readings in an order that matches student interest. We will try to get to readings related to students' likely paper topics early in the semester.

- 2/7 Politics of Knowledge in Middle East Political Science
- 2/14 Political Violence
- 2/21 *Monday class schedule.*
- 2/28 Authoritarianism
- 3/7 Sectarianism
- 3/14 Anti-Americanism and Views of the West
- 3/21 Gender
- 3/28 *MIT spring break*
- 4/4 Islamism
- 4/11 Development
- 4/18 *MIT holiday*
- 4/25 Arab Spring
- 5/2 Religion
- 5/9 Elections
- 5/16 Syrian Conflict

Topics

Authoritarianism
Elections

Islamism
Arab Spring
Political Violence: Ideas and Structure
Religion
Sectarianism
Gender
Historical Approaches to Development
Anti-Americanism and Views of the West
The Syrian Conflict

Readings:

Politics of Knowledge in Middle East Political Science

Required readings:

Ellen Lust-Okar, Lisa Anderson, Steve Heydemann and Mark Tessler, "Comparative Politics of the Middle East and Academic Freedom," *APSA-CP Newsletter* 18 (Winter 2007): 12-15.

"The Ethics of Research in the Middle East," *POMEPS Studies* 8, 2 July 2014.

More resources:

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.

Said, Edward. 1980. "Islam through Western Eyes." *The Nation*, 26 April 1980.

<http://www.thenation.com/article/islam-through-western-eyes>

Lockman, Zachary. 2010. Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; second edition, 2009).

McMurtie, Beth. 2013. "Terrorism Experts Are Sought by the Public but Not by Academe", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/article/Terrorism-Experts-Sought-by/139957/?cid=wb>

Authoritarianism

Required readings:

Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. University of Chicago Press. **1-65; 143-60**

Wedeen, Lisa. "Ideology and Humor in Dark Times: Notes from Syria," *Critical Inquiry* 39, Summer 2013: 841-873.

Bush, Sarah Sunn, Aaron Erlich, Lauren Prather, and Yael Zeira. 2016. "The Effects of Authoritarian Iconography An Experimental Test." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Jones, Calvert W. 2015. "Seeing like an autocrat: liberal social engineering in an illiberal state." *Perspectives on Politics*, 13(01), 24-41.

Bellin, Eva R. 2004. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 36. 2: 139-157.

Bellin, Eva R. 2012. "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring" *Comparative Politics*, January.

More resources:

Brownlee, Jason. 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Owen, Roger. 2013. *The rise and fall of Arab presidents for life*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. ([Available as an e book through MIT libraries](#))

Menaldo, Victor. 2012. "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchies." *Journal of Politics*.

Elections

Required readings:

Blaydes, Lisa. 2011. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Chps 1, 3, 4**

Masoud, Tarek. 2014. *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt*. New York: Cambridge University Press. **Chapters: 1, 3, 4**

Corstange, Daniel. (2016). *The Price of a Vote in the Middle East: Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen*. Cambridge University Press. **Chapters 1 and 8.**

Islamism

Required readings:

Schwedler, Jillian. 2011. "Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis" *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (April): 347-376.

Wickham, Carrie. 2013. *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **Chapters 1 and 3.**

Mona El-Ghobashy. 2005. "Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*

Meyersson, Erik. 2014. "Islamic Rule and the Empowerment of the Poor and Pious" *Econometrica*

"Evolving Methodologies in the Study of Islamism", POMEPS Studies 17, March 2016

More resources:

"Islamist Social Services", POMEPS Studies 9, October 15, 2014

Wickham, Carrie. 2002. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cammett, Melani and Pauline Jones Luong. 2014. "Is There an Islamist Political Advantage?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17(May/June).

Schwedler, Jillian. 2007. *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, Nathan. 2012. *When Victory Is Not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics*. Cornell University Press.

Lacroix, Stephane. 2011. *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2007. *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Arab Spring

Required readings:

Gause, Gregory F. III. 2011. "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability" *Foreign Affairs*. 90 : 81

Kuran, 1989 "Sparks and Prairie Fires: a Theory of Unanticipated Revolution" *World Politics*.

Pearlman, Wendy. 2013. "Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings." *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(2): 387-409.

Hassanpour, Navid. 2014. "Media Disruption and Revolutionary Unrest: Evidence from Mubarak's Quasi-Experiment" *Political Communication*.

Steinert-Threlkeld et al., "Online social networks and offline protest," *EPJ Data Science* (2015) 4:19.

"Reflections Five Years after the Uprisings", *POMEPS Studies* 18, 28 March 2016.

Political Violence: Ideas and Structure

Required readings:

Nielsen, Richard. Forthcoming. *Deadly Clerics: Blocked Ambition and the Path to Jihad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Chapters 1 and 3.**

Hegghammer, Thomas. 2013. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107(1).

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War" *American Political Science Review* 107(3)

Krause, Peter. 2013/14. "The Structure of Success: How the Internal Distribution of Power Drives Armed Group Behavior and National Movement Effectiveness," *International Security*, 38(3): 72-116.

Manekin, Devorah. 2013. "Violence against Civilians in the Second Intifada: The Moderating Effect of Armed Group Structure on Opportunistic Violence," *Comparative Political Studies* 46(10): 1273-1300.

More resources:

Wendy Pearlman. 2011. *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* New York: Cambridge University Press. **Chps 1, 4, 6**

Berrebi, Claude, and Esteban F. Klor. 2008 "Are Voters Sensitive to Terrorism? Direct Evidence from the Israeli Electorate" *American Political Science Review* 102(3)

Getmansky, Anna and Thomas Zeitzoff. 2014. "Terrorism and Voting: The Effect of Exposure to Rockets on Voting in Israeli Elections." *American Political Science Review*, 108(3).

Menoret, Pascal. 2014. *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*. Cambridge University Press.

Hegghammer, Thomas. 2011. "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad", *International Security*, 35(3): 53-91.

Hegghammer, Thomas. 2010. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gerges, Fawaz. 2005. *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Religion

Required readings:

Hassner, Ron. 2011. "Blasphemy and Violence," *International Studies Quarterly* 55(1): 23-45.

Chaney, Eric. 2013. "Revolt on the Nile: Economic Shocks, Religion and Political Power," *Econometrica*, 81(5):2033-2053

Taylor, Julie. 2008. "Prophet sharing: strategic interaction between Muslim clerics and Middle Eastern regimes," *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, 10(1): 41-62

Campante, Filipe R., and David Yanagizawa-Drott. 2015. "Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness? Evidence from Ramadan." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 130(2), pp.615–658.

Clingingsmith, David, Asim Ijaz Khwaja and Michael Kremer. 2009. "Estimating the Impact of The Hajj: Religion and Tolerance in Islam's Global Gathering", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 124(3)

Sectarianism

Required readings:

"The Politics of Sectarianism," POMEPS Studies 4, November 13, 2013.

Fotini Christia, Elizabeth Dekeyser and Dean Knox, "To Karbala: Surveying Religious Shi'a from Iran and Iraq, [MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2016-39](#), download from here: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2885347

Fotini Christia, Dean Knox and Jaffar Al-Rikabi, "Networks of Sectarianism: Experimental Evidence on Access to Services in Baghdad," Working Paper.

Cammett, Melani. 2014. *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Cornell University Press. **Chapters 1 and 4.**

Alexandra Siegel, "Viral Pulpits: Clerics and the Sectarianization of the Gulf Online Sphere," *part of the Islam, Islamists, and the Media in a Changing Middle East workshop held at George Washington University on October 28, 2016*, access here: <https://pomeps.org/2017/01/09/viral-pulpits-clerics-and-the-sectarianization-of-the-gulf-online-sphere/>

Gender

Required readings:

Patel, David. 2012. "Concealing to Reveal: the Informational Role of Islamic Dress." *Rationality and Society* 24, 3:295-323.

Ben Shitrit, Lihi. 2015. *Righteous Transgressions: Women's Activism on the Israeli and Palestinian Religious Right*. Princeton University Press. **Chapters 1 and 4.**

Nielsen, Richard. "The Circumscribed Authority of Female Preachers in the Salafi Movement," Working Paper. Download from <http://www.mit.edu/~rnielsen/daeyat.pdf>.

Blaydes, Lisa and Drew Linzer. 2008. "The Political Economy of Women's Support for Fundamentalism Islam." *World Politics* 60(4).

Sarah Sunn Bush and Eleanor Gao, "Small Tribes, Big Gains: The Strategic Uses of Gender Quotas in the Middle East," *Comparative Politics*, January 2017, pp.149-167.

"Women and Gender in Middle East Politics", POMEPS Studies 19, May 10, 2016.

More resources:

Masoud, Tarek, Amaney Jamal, and Elizabeth Nugent. 2016. "Using the Qur'ān to Empower Arab Women? Theory and Experimental Evidence From Egypt." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Murat Iyigun, "Lessons from the Ottoman Harem on Culture, Religion and Wars," October 2011.

Blaydes, Lisa. Forthcoming. "How Does Islamic Local Governance Affect the Lives of Women? A Comparative Study of Two Cairo Neighborhoods" *Governance*.

Blaydes, Lisa, and Rachel Gillum. 2013. "Religiosity-of-Interviewer Effects: Assessing the Impact of Veiled Enumerators on Survey Response in Egypt." *Politics and Religion*.

Ahmed, Leila. 2011. *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America*. Yale University Press. **Chp 5**

Ross, Michael. 2008. "Oil, Islam, and Women," *American Political Science Review*, 102(1): 107

Feryal Cherif. 2010. "Culture, Rights, and Norms: Women's Rights Reform in Muslim Countries." *Journal of Politics* 72 (October) 1144-60.

Al-Rasheed, Madawi. 2013. *A Most Masculine State: Gender, Politics and Religion in Saudi Arabia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Historical Approaches to Development

Required readings:

Timur Kuran. 2004. "Why the Middle East Is Economically Underdeveloped: Historical Mechanisms of Institutional Stagnation" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(3):71-90

Blaydes, Lisa and Eric Chaney. 2013. "The Feudal Revolution and Europe's Rise: Political Divergence of the Christian West and the Muslim World before 1500 CE," *American Political Science Review*, 107(1): 16-34.

Chaney, Eric. 2008. *Tolerance, Religious Competition and the Rise and Fall of Muslim Science*. Unpublished manuscript.

Iyigun, Murat. 2008. "Luther and Suleyman." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1465-1494.

Rubin, Jared. 2017. *Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not*, Cambridge University Press. **Chapters TBA.**

Anti-Americanism and Views of the West

Required readings:

Jamal, Amaney. 2012. *Of empires and citizens: pro-American democracy or no democracy at all?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. **Chps 1, 4, 5**

Blaydes, Lisa, and Drew Linzer. 2012. "Elite Competition, Religiosity, and Anti-Americanism in the Islamic World" *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 225-243.

Jamal, Amaney, Robert Keohane, David Romney, and Dustin Tingley. 2015. Anti-Americanism or Anti-Interventionism in Arabic Twitter Discourses. *Perspectives on Politics*.

Corstange, Daniel. 2016. "Anti-American Behavior in the Middle East: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Lebanon." *The Journal of Politics* 78, 1: 311-325.

Elizabeth Nugent, Tarek Masoud and Amaney A Jamal, "Arab Responses to Western Hegemony: Experimental Evidence from Egypt", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2016, pp.1-35.

The Syrian Conflict

Required Reading

Wendy Pearlman, 2016. "Narratives of Fear in Syria," *Perspectives on Politics*, pp.21-37.

Daniel Corstange and Erin York, "Sectarian Framing in the Syrian Civil War", Working Paper.

"Monitoring the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis with the JRC's Global Human Settlement Layer and Night-Time Satellite Data" JRC Technical Report, 2016

"The Political Science of Syria's War", POMEPS Studies 5, 18 December 2013.

Schulhofer-Wohl, Jonah. 2014. "How the U.S. Fragmented Syria's Rebels." *The Washington Post: The Monkey Cage* blog, September 22. Access here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/09/22/how-the-u-s-fragmented-syrias-rebels/?utm_term=.bb81ebb0290e

Balcells, Laia, Lionel Beehner and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl. 2014. "How Should We Count the War Dead Dead in Syria?" *The Washington Post: The Monkey Cage* blog, May 1. Access here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/01/how-should-we-count-the-war-dead-in-syria/?utm_term=.36d40f0daa2f