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. 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:

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

More resources:

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


Authoritarianism

Required readings:


More resources:


Elections
Required readings:


Islamism
Required readings:


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


**Arab Spring**

**Required readings:**


“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.**


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


**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)

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


**Religion**

*Required readings:*


**Sectarianism**

*Required readings:*


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


**Gender**

**Required readings:**


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

**More resources:**


**Historical Approaches to Development**

*Required readings:*


**Anti-Americanism and Views of the West**

*Required readings:*


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


**The Syrian Conflict**

*Required Reading*


