INTL 290-2
Issues of Peace and Conflict in the Middle East

Term: Fall 2016
Class time: Monday-Wednesday-Friday: 1.00 pm – 1:50 pm
Location: Education Center 114
Instructor: Ali Demirdas
Office: Education Building Room 206-A
Office Hours: MWF 2pm-3pm or by appointment.
Contact: demirdasa@cofc.edu (E-Mail is the best way to contact with me. Specify the subject line appropriately in your e-mail.)

"The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge."
Thomas Berger

Course Description, Learning Objectives and Outcomes.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the “cradle of civilization,” is today home to around 330 million people, the world’s fastest growing religion, and great resource wealth. The Middle East is also home to some of the world’s most pressing challenges.

At the state level, Iraq, which until the U.S. occupation was held together by authoritarian rule, appears increasingly unstable and divided along ethnic and religious
lines. 250 miles to the west, the Israel-Palestine conflict has left over 4,500 people dead in just the past four years. And Iran, a growing power and a country which the United States sees as the next threat in the region, has done little to hide its intention of developing nuclear weapons.

The course has several objectives. First, it aims to give students a more nuanced and complete understanding of the politics, societies and economies of the MENA. Second, it fosters students’ analytical skills, helping them to apply theoretical frameworks to problems in the Middle East. Finally, it seeks to supply students with the theoretical and empirical evidence necessary to evaluate and make critical, analytical arguments about the Middle East in comparative perspective. It is important to remind you that Martha Nussbaum in Cultivating Humanity (1997)\(^1\) defines critical thinking as "the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment."

Critical comparison and judgment depends on more than factual knowledge, however. The other main objective is to encourage your imagination. "to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story." (Martha Nussbaum)

**Textbook**


**Grading (PLEASE READ CAREFULLY)**

→ **Participation (10%)**
Regular attendance and participation in class is very important and required. You will be graded according to your participation in class discussions. Therefore, it is strongly advised that you come to class well prepared and contribute to the discussion. A sign-in sheet will be given to you at the beginning of every class to keep record of your attendance. Undocumented absences will result in deduction from your final grade. (1 day = 2 points) If need be, please bring a copy of doctor’s report to me for the record.

→ **Pop Quizzes (10%)**

→ **Research Paper (20%)**
You will pick a country in the Middle East and write an analytical research paper about important aspects of foreign relations vis-à-vis its neighboring countries as well as the United States and other related major powers. Details will be given in class.

→ **Presentations (10%)**
In a 15 minute period, you will present your research paper.

**Midterm Exam (20%)**

There will be a cumulative mid-term exam.

**Final Exam (30%)**

It will cover all the course materials (lectures, discussions and readings). A review sheet will be made available before the final exam.

**Note on the Syllabus Readings**

The weekly readings listed below are subject to change based on what the instructor deems relevant new or alternative material. Since the course deals with current affairs issues in regard to which daily, if not hourly, developments are constantly unfolding, occasional topical readings from newspapers or online resources will be included in class sessions.

**Final grades will be calculated using the following table:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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Assignment grades (insofar as they use a percentage scale) will also follow this grading scheme. Please, be a responsible student and take charge of your grade. If you want to know your current standing in class, check on the OAKS course site or inquire with me about this.

**Disability Services**

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the Center for Disability Services / SNAP, located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsibility for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.
Content of the Course

- Introduction and Course Content.
- Introduction to the Middle East: Its Geography.
- Introduction to the Middle East: Its Early History
  - Middle East Before Islam
  - The Birth of Islam. (The First Muslim Revolution, the Early Arab Conquests, the Caliphate, the Islamic Civilization)
- People of the Middle East: Arabs, Turks, Iranians, Kurds and Jews.
- European Colonization and its Legacy in the MENA.
- Sunni-Shia conflict.
- State & Society in MENA: Identity
- Islam and the West. (Edward Said, “Covering Islam”, Orientalism.)
- Arab-Israeli Conflict
- US foreign policy vis-a-vis Middle East
- Current Events in MENA (The Arab Spring, ISIS, the Rise of Iran, the Regional Rivalaries etc.)

- PRESENTATIONS