INTL 290
Issues of Peace and Conflict in the Middle East

Spring 2016

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"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) 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%)
You will be graded according to your participation in class discussions. Each week a discussion chain will be started to keep a record of your participation. Therefore, it is strongly advised that you prepared well and contribute to the discussion. Absences from participation in discussions will result in deduction from your FINAL GRADE. (1 discussion=2 points)

✓ Weekly Quizzes (10%)
Each week on Blackboard you may be given a time sensitive quiz that covers the material and the chapter of that week.

✓ Presentation of Research Paper – 10%
There will be a schedule class meeting online for each student to present in powerpoint their idea for a research paper. Each person will have 10 minutes to present the idea.

*Please make sure that you have a headset with a microphone that works with your computer. Please test them before the assigned class time. The class will take place in the evening. You will be notified as to what evening so that you may schedule appropriately.

Research Paper – 20%
You will pick a country in the Middle East and in a 10-12 page paper, 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.

- In the first part of the paper introduce your country by writing about its location, neighbors, population, demographics, economy, government and such.
- In the second part, you will talk about important aspects of your country’s history in 20th century. In this context, pay close attention to the pre-WWI, the western colonization (your country’s relations with the European powers) as well as, if relevant, with the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia). For example, if your country is Egypt, you will talk about the developments before and after WWI leading to its establishment in 1922. In this context, among other things, you will talk about Egypt’s post-Colonial relations with Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union. Don’t forget to talk about the Egypt-USA and the Egypt-Soviet (Russia) relations.
- In the third section, you will analyze your country’s relations with the neighbors. For example, in the case of Egypt, talk about its relations with Israel, Jordan, and Palestine.
- In the fourth section, you will give a detailed account of the current situation your country is in. Again, in the case of Egypt, you will talk about the impacts of the Arab Spring and how it has impacted the country’s current political, social and economic state.
- The conclusion section will reflect your evaluation of the country with your own words. Tell what you have learned about your country in the research paper and based on that make future projections in regards to its political, social and economic state.

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

In writing the paper, you must do the following things:

- Clearly articulate a central question.
- Explain the significance of the question. Why do you think the topic is important? Why should we care about the topic that you have picked?
- Clearly articulate your answer to the question.
- Reference Section (This DOES count as part of your word count.)

Your references may come from the following:
1. Media Sources
2. Books (I strongly recommend using the library.)
3. Academic Journals
4. Primary sources: Government documents, for instance.

5. Electronic sources: Please avoid citing unreliable sources such as blogs. While Wikipedia is a good way to obtain general knowledge, do not cite it as a source. If you have a question about a source, please ask!

**Academic integrity:** The learning community at the College of Charleston depends on mutual respect between instructors and students. Your attention is drawn to the College of Charleston’s Honor Code ([http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/faqs.php](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/faqs.php)), especially the sections that forbid cheating, attempted cheating, plagiarism and disruptive classroom behavior. A student found guilty of any of these offenses will face penalties in accordance with CofC regulations. Compliance with these policies is an important part of your learning process in this introductory course and, hence, is your responsibility.

- **Midterm Exam (20 %)**
  There will be a cumulative mid-term exam online in Blackboard. It will be a timed-test and will vary with each student.

- **Final – (30 %)**
  There will be a cumulative final exam online in Blackboard at the end of the semester. It will be a timed-test and the questions will vary with each student. It will cover all the course materials (videos, 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.

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

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>60-62</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</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 th
➢ 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 Rivalries etc.)

➢ PRESENTATIONS