

**GENED1008: POWER AND IDENTITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**  
**Spring 2020**

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Lecture Meeting Time: Tuesday/Thursday 01:30 PM - 02:45 PM  
Lecture Location: Sever Hall 102  
Section Meetings: Thursday 3-4:15pm, Thursday 6-7:15pm or Friday 12-1:15pm

Head Teaching Fellow: Aytug Sasmaz ([sasmaz@g.harvard.edu](mailto:sasmaz@g.harvard.edu))  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Why do revolutions occur and can we predict them in advance? Why are some countries governed democratically while dictators seem to have a firm grasp on power in others? Why have religious movements emerged and gained support in recent decades? Why do people threaten and even kill each other in the name of ethnicity or religion in some places and times but not others?

This course explores these questions and more in the context of the Middle East, a region that has been widely perceived as a bastion of authoritarianism and a hotbed of ethnic and religious politics and political violence. In late 2010 and early 2011, the Middle East witnessed an exhilarating wave of mass protests that brought millions to the streets to demand greater economic and political inclusion. Now, almost a decade later, one country in the region has witnessed momentous change but, in many others, little appears to have changed – at least on the surface – and some countries have become sites of mass carnage and even more entrenched dictatorial rule. These developments invite us to explore a variety of critical questions for our time: Why and how did the Arab uprisings occur and what explains the varied trajectories in their wake? Why does authoritarianism persist in most of the region – in some cases even after longtime dictators were ousted – while Tunisia bucked this trend by embarking a democratic transition? In Turkey, which had one of the developed democracies in the region, why has democracy eroded? Why have Islamists gained prominence in many Middle Eastern countries while secular movements seem to be on the decline? Why are people killing each other in the name of religion at this moment in history, and how can we understand the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State? What does all of this mean for the future of the Middle East?

In short, this course considers big questions and debates about politics, governance and identity through the lens of the Middle East. While fostering a critical understanding of politics in the region, the broader aims are to promote critical thinking about politics and about the evidence and methodologies that social scientists use to support their explanations. The course therefore uses concrete knowledge of events and developments across the Middle East to probe analytical approaches to some of the most important social and political questions of our times. There are no prerequisites and students with all levels of familiarity (or non-familiarity) with the Middle East are welcome.

## REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance and Participation (10% of course grade)
  - Class and section meeting attendance is mandatory.
  - Participation in section meetings is vital.
- Response paper (20%)
  - Tuesday, February 18: Released at 12pm US EST
  - Monday, February 24: Upload to course website *no later than 11:59pm US EST*
- Position paper (5-7 pp.) (20%)
  - Thursday, March 12: Assigned released on website at 12pm US EST
  - Thursday, March 26: Upload to course website *no later than 11:59pm US EST*
- Group policy brief: Post-conflict institutional design (20%)
  - Thursday, April 9: Assignment released on website at 12pm US EST
  - Monday, April 20, 6-8pm: Hackathon, location TBA
  - Wednesday, April 22: Upload to course website *no later than 11:59pm US EST*
- Final capstone project (approx. 15 pp.) (30%)
  - Thursday, April 23: Guidelines released on course website at 12pm US EST
  - *No later than* Tuesday, April 28: Approval of topic by TF
  - Date determined by Registrar: Upload to course website *no later than 11:59pm US EST*
  - NB: Students opting to take the course for graduate credit are required to write an original research paper (approx. 25 pages, double-spaced) in lieu of the final capstone project. Format and requirements to be released to graduate-level students.

## MATERIALS

Available on the course website.

## **POLICIES**

Please note the following requirements and expectations. In the interest of upholding the rule of law, no exceptions to these policies can be granted.

*No Late Work:* Assignments will lose ½ grade per day except in the case of documented, serious medical or family problems.

*Absentee Policy:* Attendance at both lecture and section meetings is critical and mandatory. In the case of absence from a section meeting, a two-page (approx. 600-1,000 words) critical analysis of the readings must be submitted to the Teaching Fellow by the end of the same day. These papers may not substitute for attendance; two or more absences from section meetings will result in deductions from the final grade.

*Laptop/Wireless Policy:* Laptops and other devices are discouraged and students are permitted to use them only in the back rows of the lecture meeting room. As an alternative, feel free to take notes the old-fashioned way - with paper and pen. Laptops and other devices are permitted during section meetings.

*No recording of lecture:* Audio and/or video recording of lectures is not permitted.

*Abide by the Harvard College Honor Code:* You may reacquaint yourself with the Honor Code [here](#).

*Individual work:* All assignments for this course are online. You are permitted to consult the readings and course notes while completing the assignments. While you may discuss the assignments with peers in the course, your submitted work must be solely your own. No collaboration on the actual assignments or sharing of work is permitted.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

Gaining from this course is in part a function of your own effort. You need to be an active, engaged and committed learner. Here are some tips:

*Do the readings.* The lectures are not a substitute for the readings. Assignments demand familiarity with material not covered in lecture but found in the readings.

*Attend and engage with the lectures.* Lectures include material not covered in the readings and will help you to build critical thinking skills.

*Read critically and effectively.* Focus on the big picture to glean the main arguments in the texts. Think about the logics of the arguments and draw linkages and contrasts among the texts.

*Ask questions.* Do not hesitate to ask questions or raise issues with the Professor and/or Teaching Fellows. Your comments and questions will enrich your experience of the course and, of course, are essential during course meetings.

*Reach out to the instruction team.* The Teaching Fellows are here to help and invite you to share your responses and reactions to the course material.

*Follow relevant issues outside of class.* Reading about current (or not so current) events in important journals and newspapers will help you to assess and apply the concepts we cover in the course. Try to look at newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and/or periodicals such as the *Economist*, *New Yorker*, *New York Review of Books* and *Atlantic*, among others. In addition, the course website includes a range of websites and sources devoted to Middle East politics.

## COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

### **I. Introduction: Power and identity through the prism of the Middle East**

*In this unit, we will briefly discuss the main topics and goals of the course.*

Tues., Jan. 28: Overview of the course

No readings

### **II. Protests and rebellion under authoritarian rule**

*In this unit, we'll examine a variety of perspectives on why and how people go out on the streets to join in mass protests – especially where they put their lives and livelihoods at great risk in countries with repressive governments. Examples from Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Syria, among other cases, allow you to situate these perspectives in real places. The unit culminates in a short midterm examination in which you will have the opportunity to critically assess the main explanations you encounter in both the lectures and readings and to assess how much they help us to understand why Tunisians, Egyptians, Moroccans, Syrians and others took to the streets in the Arab uprisings.*

Thurs., Jan. 30: The anatomy of the “Arab Spring”

- Melani Cammett and Ishac Diwan. “Epilogue: A Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings.” In *A Political Economy of the Middle East*. Third ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013, pp. 407-437.
- Laryssa Chomiak. “The Making of a Revolution in Tunisia.” *Middle East Law and Governance* 3(2011): **68-75 only**.
- David Patel, Valerie Bunce, and Sharon Wolchik. “Diffusion and Demonstration.” In *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, edited by Marc Lynch. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, pp. 57-74.

Tues. Feb. 4: Why rebel? The decision to protest under authoritarian rule and regime responses

- Timur Kuran. “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.” *World Politics* 44, no. 1(October 1991): **7-25 only**.
- Adria Lawrence. “Repression and Activism among the Arab Spring’s First Movers: Morocco’s (Almost) Revolutionaries.” *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 3 (2016): 699-718.
- Chantal Berman. “Policing the Organizational Threat in Morocco: Protest and Public Violence in Liberal Autocracies.” Unpublished manuscript, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Harvard University, January 2020.
- Dana M. Moss. “Repression, Response, and Contained Escalation under Liberalized Authoritarianism in Jordan.” *Mobilization* 19, no. 3 (2014): 261-286.

Thurs., Feb. 6: High-risk protests in repressive regimes: The case of Syria

- Samer N. Abboud. *Syria*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Polity, 2018, ch. 1 (pp. 1-15) and ch. 2 (pp. 16-52).
- Wendy Pearlman. “Moral Identity and Protest Cascades in Syria.” *British Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4(2018): 877-901.
- Anand Gopal. “The Island of Democracy.” In *The New Yorker*, Dec. 10, 2018, pp. 36-51. Available [here](#).

- Optional film: PBS Frontline. “Syria Undercover.” November 8, 2011. Available [here](#).

### **III. Authoritarianism, democratization and democratic backsliding**

*The Middle East is home to the largest number of authoritarian governments of all global regions. In this unit, we’ll look at a range of explanations for the persistence of authoritarian rule. Examples from monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco, as well as republics, such as Egypt and Syria, illustrate how these explanations fare in some countries in the region. We then try to understand an exception to authoritarian durability through the case of Tunisia as well as the unraveling of democracy through the case of Turkey. At the end of the unit, you will draw on the readings and material presented during lectures to write a memo to the U.S. Secretary of State to provide a critical analysis of the reasons for the apparent entrenchment of authoritarianism and the prospects for democratization in the Middle East.*

#### Tues., Feb. 11 and Thurs., Feb. 13: Arab Winters: Explaining durable authoritarianism in the Middle East

- Bernard Lewis. “Islam and Liberal Democracy.” *The Atlantic* 271 (February 1993): 1-19. Available [here](#).
- Gudrun Kramer. “Islamist Notions of Democracy.” *Middle East Report*, no. 183 (July–August 1993): 2-8.
- Olivier Roy. “Islam: The Democracy Dilemma.” In *The Islamists Are Coming: Who They Really Are*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press with United States Institute of Peace, 2012, ch. 2. Available [here](#).
- Michael Ross. *The Resource Curse*. Princeton University Press, 2010, ch. 3 (pp. 63-109).
- Eva Bellin. “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East.” *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004), pp. 139-157.
- Daniel Baissa and Melani Cammett. “External Support and the Persistence of Authoritarianism in the Middle East.” Unpublished manuscript, Dept. of Government, Harvard University, 2019.

#### Tues., Feb. 18 and Thurs., Feb. 20: How did we get here? Ottoman and colonial legacies for the Middle East

*Tues., Feb 18: Response paper prompt released on course website at 12pm*

- William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009, ch. 1 (5-18).
- Melani Cammett, Ishac Diwan, Alan Richards, and John Waterbury. *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015, ch. 2 (skim pp. 73-88, read pp. 88-122).
- Roger Owen. *State Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). London: Routledge, 2004, ch. 1 (pp. 8-31).
- Jacob Gerner Hariri. “A Contribution to the Study of Middle Eastern and Muslim Exceptionalism.” *Journal of Politics* 77, no. 2 (2015): 477-490.
- Elizabeth Thompson. “Justice Interrupted: Historical Perspectives on Promoting Democracy in the Middle East.” Special Report, U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., 2009.
- Optional film: PBS Documentary. “Islam: Empire of Faith,” 2000. Available [here](#).

*Mon., Feb. 24: Response paper due (upload to course website at 11:59pm)*

Tues., Feb. 25 and Thurs., Feb. 27: Do monarchies govern better? Politics in the rich and poor monarchies

- Victor Menaldo. "The Middle East and North Africa's Resilient Monarchs." In *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 3 (2012): 707-722.
- Marc Lynch. "Does Arab Monarchy Matter?" In *Foreign Policy*, August 31, 2012. Available [here](#).
- Sean Yom and Gregory Gause. "Resilient Royals: How Arab monarchies hang on." *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74-88.
- Gregory Gause. "Saudi Regime Stability and Challenges." In *Salman's Legacy: The Dilemmas of a New Era in Saudi Arabia*, edited by Madawi Al-Rasheed. New York, Oxford University Press, 2018, ch. 1 (pp. 31-43).
- Abullah Al-Arian. "Seventy Years of the New York Times Describing Saudi Royals as Reformers." In *Jadaliyya*, Nov. 27, 2017. Available [here](#).
- Mehran Kamrava. "The Arab Spring and the Saudi-Led Counterrevolution." *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (2012): 96-104.

Tues., March 3: The making and unmaking of revolution: The case of Egypt

- Tarek Masoud. *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, Introduction (pp. 1-13) and ch. 6 (pp. 155-182).
- Bruce Rutherford. "Egypt's New Authoritarianism Under Sisi." *Middle East Journal* 72, no. 2 (2018): 185-208.

Thurs., March 5: "Successful" and "failed" democratization: Tunisian "exceptionalism" in comparative perspective

- Eva Bellin. "The Puzzle of Democratic Divergence in the Arab World: Theory Confronts Experience in Egypt and Tunisia." *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 435-474.
- Sarah Yerkes and Zeineb Ben Yahmed. "Tunisia's Revolutionary Goals Remain Unfulfilled." Dec., 6, 2018. Available [here](#).
- Jason Brownlee. *Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, ch. Introduction (pp. 1-14) and Conclusion (pp. 154-177).
- Erin A. Snider. "U.S. Democracy Aid and the Authoritarian State: Evidence from Egypt and Morocco." *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2018): 795-808.

Tues., March 10 and Thurs., March 12: How do democracies die? Turkey and AKP Rule

- Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown, 2018, ch. 1 (pp. 11-32).
- Larry Diamond. "Facing Up To the Democratic Recession." *Journal of Democracy*, 26, no. 1 (2015): 141-155.
- Yeşim Arat and Şevket Pamuk. *Turkey Between Democracy and Authoritarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, ch. 1 (pp. 1-27).
- Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016): 1581-1606.

*Thurs., March 12: Position paper assignment released on course website at 12pm*

*Spring break: No class meetings on Tues., March 17 and Thurs., March 19*

#### **IV. Religion and politics: Islamism on the rise**

*Religious actors are on the rise in the world. In the Middle East, Islamist groups have become major political players since at least the 1970s while secular organizations have been on the wane. This unit aims to explain why religious movements and parties have garnered so much support in the Middle East and explores how they do or do not evolve once they hold power. The case of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt serves as the primary focus. The unit culminates in a debate during your section meeting in which you will argue for or against the claim that Islamists “moderate” when they are included in mainstream politics.*

##### Tues., March 24 and Thurs., March 26: Why is religion appealing? The rise of Islamist movements in the Middle East

- Melani Cammett and Pauline Jones Luong. “Is There an Islamist Political Advantage?” In *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 17 (May/June 2014): 187-206.
- Steven Brooke. *Winning Hearts and Votes: Social Services and the Islamist Political Advantage*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018, ch 1 (pp. 1-20), ch. 5 (pp. 78-101) and ch. 6 (pp. 102-120).
- Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog. “Why Are There So Many Engineers Among Islamic Radicals?” *European Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2 (August 2009): 201-230.

*Thurs., March 26: Position paper due (upload to the course website no later than 11:59pm)*

##### Tues., March 31 and Thurs., April 2: Does inclusion lead to “moderation”? The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in power after the uprisings

- Khalil Al-Anani. “Islamist Parties Post-Arab Spring.” *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 3 (2012): 466-472.
- Carrie Rosefsky Wickham. “The Muslim Brother in (Egypt’s) Transition.” In *The Muslim Brother, Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, edited by Wickham. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013, ch. 9 (pp. 247-288).
- Jillian Schwedler. “Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis.” In *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (2011): 347-376.

#### **V. Conflict and violence in the name of religion**

*Newspaper headlines show that conflict and violence in the name of religion is on the rise in many countries across the world. Perhaps nowhere is this trend more apparent than in the contemporary Middle East, where Sunni-Shia tensions have erupted in violence since at least the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Why are people killing each other in the name of religion? Is it possible to solve religious conflict once it has been unleashed? The unit focuses on examples from the Levant, including the war in Syria and the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as Yemen, where a bloody war between ostensibly Sunni and Shi’a factions has raged for the past few years. To conclude the unit, you will write a policy memo for an international think tank in which you will outline a strategy for constructing post-war political institutions in Syria.*



Tues., April 7: Why “sectarian” conflict? The case of Syria

- Ashutosh Varshney. “Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict.” In *The Oxford Handbook on Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009: ch. 12 (pp. 274-294).
- Curtis Ryan. “The New Arab Cold War and the Struggle for Syria.” *Middle East Report* 262 (Spring 2012): 28-31.
- Paulo Gabriel Hilu Pinto. “The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict.” In *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, ch. 7 (pp. 123-142).

Thurs., April 9: Whence the Islamic State?

*Group policy brief assignment released on course website at 12pm*

- Charles Tripp. *A History of Iraq*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, ch. 6 (pp. 239-276 only) and ch. 7 (pp. 277-316)
- Fawaz A. Gerges. “ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism.” *Current History* 113, no. 767 (December 2014): 339-343.
- Mara Revkin. “Does the Islamic State Have a Social Contract? Evidence from Iraq and Syria.” Working Paper No. 9, Program on Governance and Local Development, Yale University and the University of Gothenburg, 2016.
- Optional films:
  - PBS Frontline. “Syria at War.” Available [here](#). (Warning: Contains graphic images.)
  - VICE. “Syria.” Available [here](#). (Warning: Contains graphic images.)

Tues., April 14 and Thurs., April 16: Taming sectarian conflict: Designing institutions for “divided” societies

- Arend Lijphart. “The Power Sharing Approach.” In *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, edited by Joseph V. Montville. Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990, ch. 27 (pp. 491-509).
- Donald Horowitz. “Making Moderation Pay: The Comparative Politics of Ethnic Conflict Management.” In *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, edited by Joseph V. Montville. Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990, ch. 25 (pp. 451-475).
- Ben Reilly. “Electoral Systems for Divided Societies.” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 156-170.
- Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar. “Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon.” *World Politics* 62, no. 3 (July 2010): 381-421.
- Daniel Corstange. “Clientelism in Competitive and Uncompetitive Elections.” *Comparative Political Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018): 76-104.

*Mon., April 20: Hackathon for the group policy brief (6-8pm, location TBA)*

Tues., April 21: Regional rivalries and conflict: The war in Yemen

- Bassel Fawzi Salloukh. “The Sectarianization of Geopolitics in the Middle East.” In *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel. New York: Oxford University Press, ch. 2 (pp. 35-52).
- Stacey Philbrick Yadav. “Fragmentation and Localization in Yemen’s War.” Middle East Brief No. 123, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, Nov. 2018.
- Thomas Juneau. “Iran’s Policy Towards the Houthis in Yemen: A Limited Return on a Modest Investment.” *International Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2016): 647-663.
- Optional films:
  - PBS Frontline. “Inside Yemen” (available [here](#))
  - PBS Frontline. “The Fight for Yemen” (available [here](#)).

*Wed., April 22: Upload group policy brief to course website by 11:59pm*

**VI. What next? The future of the Middle East**

*This unit concludes the course, outlining the main themes and assessing the prospects for stability and development in the Middle East. In the final session, we will also discuss the final capstone project for the course.*

Thurs., April 23 and Tues., April 28: Post-conflict politics and popular mobilization in the Middle East

*Thurs., April 23: Final capstone project assignment released on course website as 12pm.*

- Yezid Sayigh. “The Arab Region at Tipping point: Why Sectarianism Fails to Explain the Turmoil.” In *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel. New York: Oxford University Press, ch. 3 (pp. 53-59).
- Selections from Middle East Report. “Return to Revolution.” Fall/Winter 2019:
  - Zahra Ali. “Iraqis Demand a Country” (pp. 2-5).
  - Rima Majed and Lana Salman. “Lebanon’s *Thawra*” (pp. 6-9).
  - Colfax Phillips. “Chiban as Barometer of Jordan’s Rural Discontent” (pp. 15-19).
  - Jonathan Fenton-Harvey. “Regional Uprisings Confront Gulf-Backed Counterrevolution” (pp. 33-38).
  - Sahan Savas Karataş. “The Political Economy of Erdogan’s Syria Gamble” (pp. 56-62).

*Tues., April 28: Obtain TF approval (via email) for the final capstone project no later than 11:59pm*

*Date determined by Registrar: Upload final capstone project to course website no later than 11:59pm.*