

# Middle Eastern Politics

PolSci XX: Class hours, Tuesday and Thursday

Andrew Heiss  
Office hours (office)  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
andrew.heiss@duke.edu

TA: Josiah “Jed” Bartlet  
Office hours (office)

## Course Description

In this course we will study how institutions shape the politics of the modern Middle East. In the first part of the course we will delve into institutional theory and look at how institutions have helped create national identities and shared ideologies. In the second part of the course we will study how formal and informal institutions have lent themselves both to the endurance authoritarianism and persistent resistance to the state. In the last part of the course we will look at what role these institutional dynamics have played in three case studies: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, America’s increased involvement in the region following the attacks of September 11, and the Arab Spring movement.

## Required Texts

al-Aswany, Alaa. *The Yacoubian Building*. Translated by Humphrey Davies. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.

Wright, Lawrence. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Vintage, 2007.

Lynch, Marc. *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012.

Articles posted on Canvas/Sakai/Blackboard.

Movies available in the library media center or online.

## Class Policies

Be nice. Be honest. Don’t cheat.

An entire list of INSTITUTION class policies and honor code can be found at <http://www.example.edu/honorcode>

## Grades

Grades will be based on your performance under the following point system:

	Points				
Map quiz	20	A	94–100%	A–	90–93%
Exam 1	75	B+	85–89%	B	80–84%
Exam 2	75	B–	75–79%	C+	70–74%
Exam 3	80	C	66–69%	C–	60–65%
News assignment 1	30				
News assignment 2	30				
Research paper	125				
Participation	65				
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>				

## Participation

**Follow the news:** Throughout the semester you will need to follow current events in the Middle East through a variety of internet sources, such as the Middle East Channel at *Foreign Policy*, Juan Cole’s “Informed Comment” blog, or a major media outlet like Al-Jazeera.

**Complete the assigned readings:** I want to reward students who conscientiously and thoughtfully read the assigned readings and take high quality notes. Prior to each class period, you will need to self-report the quantity and quality of your reading and the quality of your reading notes at [ONLINE FORM HERE](#).

One way that I hold students accountable for their self-reported preparation is to occasionally invite those who indicate they are well-prepared to take the lead in a class discussion by sharing their reflections or questions from the readings with the rest of the class. “A” grades are reserved for students who consistently indicate their preparedness to lead out by responding that they have prepared at the highest level. “B” grades are generally awarded to students who read most of their assignments, but do not consistently prepare to the extent that they feel ready to lead out. “C” grades are awarded to students who read infrequently or who regularly only skim the reading.

Emergencies will arise that prevent even the most conscientious students from reading all assignments every day. I will overlook one missed reading assignment (no effect on your grade), and will pay more attention to the overall pattern of your preparation than to a rare lapse. Upon request, I will provide midterm feedback on your participation grade, so that you know where you stand and have time to improve if you wish before the final grade.

## Assignments

**News assignments:** You will need to turn in two short (300–400 words) analyses of a current event in the Middle East. Briefly summarize the event and devote the rest of the paper to looking at how the various dynamics we have discussed in class influence what is going on. Your assignments must analyze different events in different countries (i.e. you can't write two papers about gender politics in Jordan and Lebanon or oil politics and authoritarianism in Saudi Arabia).

**Research paper:** You will be expected to complete a 2,500 word research paper on a topic related to Middle Eastern political institutions. Your paper should follow Chicago/Turabian or APA citation and style guidelines. You will need to turn in a 300–400 word prospectus and preliminary bibliography during the semester to get feedback and guidance about your chosen topic. *For the best possible grade*, please talk to me about your topic—I would like to be an active partner in helping you develop your ideas.

## Exams

**Map quiz:** To properly understand the political systems of the Middle East, you need to know where the Middle East is. In the second week of the course you will take an in-class quiz where you will need to identify all the countries and capitals in the Middle East and North Africa. A blank practice map is available at <http://www.andrewheiss.com/teaching/ME-map-quiz.pdf>.

**Exams:** You will take three short exams covering each of the three broad course topics. I will provide a study guide for each exam that details the key topics covered on the exam.

## Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading (read before class)	Assignment
(1)	What is the Middle East?	—	
(2)	Why institutions?	Kuran, Timur. "Why the Middle East is Economically Underdeveloped: Historical Mechanisms of Institutional Stagnation." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 18, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 71–90.	
(3)	Colonialism	Mitchell, Timothy. <i>Colonising Egypt</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. Chapters 1 and 6.	
(4)	Nation building	Owen, Roger. <i>State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East</i> . 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2004. Chapters 1–3	Map quiz (in class)
(5)	Economic challenges to current institutions	Owen, Roger. <i>State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East</i> . 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2004. Chapter 7. Mitchell, Timothy. "Dreamland: The Neoliberalism of Your Desires." <i>Middle East Report</i> 210 (Spring 1999). <a href="http://www.merip.org/mer/mer210/mitchell.html">http://www.merip.org/mer/mer210/mitchell.html</a> .	

(6)	Authoritarianism	<p>Brumberg, Daniel. "Democratization in the Arab World? The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 13, no. 4 (October 2002): 56–68.</p> <p>Heiss, Andrew. "The Failed Management of a Dying Regime: Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's National Democratic Party, and the January 25 Revolution." <i>Journal of Third World Studies</i> 28, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 155–171.</p> <p>Al-Jazeera. "Absolute power." The Arab Awakening documentary series, April 2011.  <a href="http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html">http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html</a>.</p>	Research prospectus & bibliography
-----	------------------	---	------------------------------------

(Day)

**Exam 1**

(7)	Strategies for maintaining authoritarian rule	<p>Bellin, Eva. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." <i>Comparative Politics</i> 36, no. 2 (January 2004): 139–57.</p> <p>Blaydes, Lisa. <i>Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Introduction.</p>	
(8)	The Yacoubian Building	<p>al-Aswany, Alaa. <i>The Yacoubian Building</i>. Translated by Humphrey Davies. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.</p>	
(9)	The Military	<p>Cook, Steven A. <i>Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey</i>. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. Chapter 1.</p> <p>Kandil, Hazem. <i>Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen: Egypt's Road to Revolt</i>. London: Verso, 2012. Introduction and prelude.</p>	
(10)	Oil	<p>Ross, Michael L. <i>The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Chapter 1.</p>	
(11)	Political economy of gender	<p>Ross, Michael L. <i>The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Chapter 4.</p> <p>Blaydes, Lisa, and Drew A. Linzer. "The Political Economy of Women's Support for Fundamentalist Islam." <i>World Politics</i> 60, no. 4 (July 2008): 576–609. (Don't get bogged down in the statistics and math.)</p>	News assignment 1
(12)	Islam and politics	<p>Bayat, Asef. <i>Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. Chapter 1.</p>	
(13)	Islamic movements	<p>Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. <i>Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt</i>. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Chapter 7.</p>	

(14)	Theories of civil society	Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. <i>Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Chapter 6.  de Tocqueville, Alexis. <i>Democracy in America</i> . Translated by Henry Reeve. 1899. <a href="http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/toc_indx.html">http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/toc_indx.html</a> . Read “Of the Uses which the Americans Make of Public Associations” and “Relation of Civil to Political Associations.”  Buttigieg, Joseph A. “Gramsci on Civil Society.” <i>boundary 2</i> 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 1–32. (Skim this).	
(15)	Civil society under authoritarianism	Jamal, Amaney. <i>Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Chapters 1 and 6.	
(16)	Life as politics	Bayat, Asef. <i>Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East</i> . Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. Chapter 1.	
(Date)	<b>Exam 2</b>		
(17)	Israel and Palestine	—	News assignment 2
(18)	Israel and Palestine	Burnat, Emad, and Guy Davidi. “5 Broken Cameras.” 2012.  Pearlman, Wendy. <i>Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Chapter 1.	
(19)	The road to 9/11 and beyond	Wright, Lawrence. <i>The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11</i> . New York: Vintage, 2007. Chapters 1–10.	
(20)	The road to 9/11 and beyond	Wright, Lawrence. <i>The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11</i> . New York: Vintage, 2007. Chapters 11–20.	
(21)	The road to 9/11 and beyond	Obama, Barack. “A New Beginning.” <i>The New York Times</i> , June 4, 2009. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html</a> .  Brownlee, Jason. <i>Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Introduction.	
(22)	The Arab Spring	Lynch, Marc. <i>The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East</i> . New York: PublicAffairs, 2012. Chapters 1–3.  Al-Jazeera. “Seeds of Revolution.” The Arab Awakening documentary series, April 2011. <a href="http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html">http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html</a> .	
(23)	The Arab Spring	Lynch, Marc. <i>The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East</i> . New York: PublicAffairs, 2012. Chapters 4–6.	
(24)	The Arab Spring	Lynch, Marc. <i>The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East</i> . New York: PublicAffairs, 2012. Chapters 7–8.	Research paper
(Date)	<b>Exam 3</b>		

## **Explanation of readings and class sessions (for my use only)**

### **Session 1: What is the Middle East?**

Course overview; discussion of the term “Middle East” and history of Middle East political science

### **Session 2: Why institutions?**

Kuran, Timur. “Why the Middle East is Economically Underdeveloped: Historical Mechanisms of Institutional Stagnation.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 71–90.

Since this course is focused on the institutional aspects of Middle East politics, students will need to be introduced to institutional analysis. While I don’t agree with everything in his article, Timur Kuran makes a clear case that the Middle East has been underdeveloped not because of anything inherently “backward” in the region’s religion or culture, but because small events and random choices in institutional configurations led to the current arrangement of political and economic systems today.

### **Session 3: Colonialism**

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. Chapters 1 and 6.

Colonial powers had an immense amount of influence on existing institutions and political structures in the Middle East. Mitchell investigates the dynamics of colonial control, specifically how the region was enframed as an exhibition that could be ordered and managed.

### **Session 4: Nation building**

Owen, Roger. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2004. Chapters 1–3.

After independence, Arab leaders built on the existing colonial institutions as they pursued state-building projects. We will discuss Roger Owen’s theory of state-building and look at how single-part and family regimes have operated since the end of colonialism.

### **Session 5: Economic challenges to current institutions**

Owen, Roger. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2004. Chapter 7.

Mitchell, Timothy. “Dreamland: The Neoliberalism of Your Desires.” *Middle East Report* 210 (Spring 1999). <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer210/mitchell.html>.

Pressures for economic and political institutional reform have driven many Arab states to pursue policies of neoliberalism and privatization, reversing many of the post-independence state-building efforts. Roger

Owen's chapter on the politics of economic restructuring and Timothy Mitchell's MERIP article look deeper into the dynamics of neoliberalization, public sector shrinkage, and privatization.

## **Session 6: Authoritarianism**

Brumberg, Daniel. "Democratization in the Arab World? The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy." *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (October 2002): 56–68.

Heiss, Andrew. "The Failed Management of a Dying Regime: Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's National Democratic Party, and the January 25 Revolution." *Journal of Third World Studies* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 155–171.

Al-Jazeera. "Absolute power." The Arab Awakening documentary series, April 2011.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>.

Authoritarianism has been the dominant regime type throughout the Middle East. Eva Bellin looks at the persistence of authoritarianism, despite efforts to reform and democratize. In this session we will look at how authoritarianism works, how it's different from totalitarianism and other regime types, and begin our discussion about why it's so persistent. Brumberg begins that discussion by arguing that authoritarian regimes in the Middle East vary the boundaries of permissible participation and expression in response to challenges they face. He proposes a spectrum of authoritarianism, ranging from total hegemony to liberalized autocracy, with varying amounts of allowable opposition. My article looks at what can happen when regimes fail to control that allowed opposition.

## **Session 7: Strategies for maintaining authoritarian rule**

Bellin, Eva. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January 2004): 139–57.

Blaydes, Lisa. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Introduction.

Authoritarian regimes use a variety of institutions to stay in power. Eva Bellin shows that regimes structure institutions and reforms to ensure that key subgroups (namely labor and capital) stay out of power. Lisa Blaydes argues that authoritarian regimes often use legitimate democracy institutions to keep themselves in power. In Egypt, Mubarak used competitive democratic elections and institutions not for the purposes of actual democratic reform, but to create a mechanism to mediate regime-elite relationships.

## **Session 8: The Yacoubian Building**

al-Aswany, Alaa. *The Yacoubian Building*. Translated by Humphrey Davies. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.

We will use Alaa al-Aswany's *Yacoubian Building* to see a fictionalization of state-society relations and internal social dynamics in Arab society. The book highlights how electoral patronage and corruption works in Egypt, how neoliberalization has changed the country's economic system, and how varied political Islamic movements can be.

### **Session 9: The Military**

Cook, Steven A. *Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. Chapter 1.

Kandil, Hazem. *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen: Egypt's Road to Revolt*. London: Verso, 2012. Introduction and prelude.

Many Middle Eastern states are dominated by the military, and in most states the military plays a key political role. In this class we will discuss the varying types of state-military relations in the region and specifically look at the military in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey, following Steven Cook's theory that the military there attempts to rule without governing. Hazem Kandil makes a similar argument, though with more specific Egyptian examples.

### **Session 10: Oil**

Ross, Michael L. *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Chapter 1.

Oil wealth has an inordinate influence on Middle Eastern politics, causing civil and international wars and the opulence of the Gulf. In this class we will look at rentierism and discuss whether or not oil is a resource curse, following Michael Ross' nuanced argument.

### **Session 11: Political economy of gender**

Ross, Michael L. *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Chapter 4.

Blaydes, Lisa, and Drew A. Linzer. "The Political Economy of Women's Support for Fundamentalist Islam." *World Politics* 60, no. 4 (July 2008): 576–609. (Don't get bogged down in the statistics and math.)

In this class we will look at two ways economic institutions influence gender relations in Middle Eastern nations. Michael Ross shows that economic growth that is based on industrialization draws women into the workforce and leads to female empowerment, while growth that is based on oil fails to produce more jobs for women and can block the path toward gender rights. Lisa Blaydes and Drew Linzer argue that a lack of economic opportunity is a stronger predictor of fundamentalism among women than socioeconomic class, highlighting the importance of gender rights and empowerment.



## Session 12: Islam and politics

Bayat, Asef. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. Chapter 1.

Perhaps more than any other social factor, religion—specifically Islam—has long been used to explain the political regimes of the Middle East. In this session we will briefly review the basic doctrines of Islam and then look at different modern interpretations of role of Islam. Asef Bayat’s chapter is apt as he argues that states and social groups have reconceptualized political Islam for a variety of political and social purposes, from attempts to make an active citizenry to efforts to gain political legitimacy.

## Session 13: Islamic movements

Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Chapter 7.

Islamist movements have been some of the most successful anti-regime movements in the Middle East, as evidenced by the post-revolutionary electoral victories of Ennahda and the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia and Egypt. In this session we will discuss how these social movements use Islam to successfully reach out to those in search of ideology, humanitarian assistance, and social networks. Carrie Wickham looks carefully into the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s youth outreach strategy and argues that the group’s careful use of political Islamic tropes and targeted marketing strategies have allowed the Brotherhood to become more powerful than its secular rivals.

## Session 14: Theories of civil society

Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Chapter 6.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. Translated by Henry Reeve. 1899.

[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/toc\\_indx.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/toc_indx.html). Read “Of the Uses which the Americans Make of Public Associations” and “Relation of Civil to Political Associations.”

Buttigieg, Joseph A. “Gramsci on Civil Society.” *boundary 2* 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 1–32. (Skim this).

In this class we will look at various theories of civil society from a broader non-Middle East perspective, reading and discussing Robert Putnam’s theory of social capital, Alexis de Tocqueville’s account of early American civil society, and Antonio Gramsci’s view of civil society as a guardian of state hegemony. This theoretic background will provide the foundation for the following session and the final case study on the Arab Spring.

## Session 15: Civil society under authoritarianism

Jamal, Amaney. *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Chapters 1 and 6.

In this session we will look at how civil society works under authoritarian regimes, looking specifically at how authoritarian structures change the nature of social capital and citizen-state relations. Amaney Jamal's *Barriers to Democracy* demonstrates that when civil society associations are linked to the regime, they lose the ability to facilitate horizontal networks of citizen engagement that are needed for democratic civil societies.

### **Session 16: Life as politics**

Bayat, Asef. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. Chapter 1.

Nongovernmental social movements need not always be formally organized. Asef Bayat shows how non-movements such as the urban poor, women's activism, and youth activism enable large scale collective action and can challenge the regime through everyday practices, not actual protests.

### **Sessions 17, 18, and 19: Israel and Palestine**

Burnat, Emad, and Guy Davidi. "5 Broken Cameras." 2012.

Pearlman, Wendy. *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Chapter 1.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most salient and widely known political issues in the world. In the first session we will discuss the history of the conflict, with special emphasis on its recency (i.e. it's not a timeless biblical conflict). In the second session we will look at various forms of resistance to the state of Israel, with specific focus on nonviolent protest. The film *5 Broken Cameras* is a compelling account that shows five years of relatively peaceful protest in Bil'in and will challenge students' conception that there is no Palestinian Gandhi. We will also discuss Wendy Pearlman's hypothesis that violent protest is linked to internal group cohesion. In the third session, we will complete USIP's Israel-Palestinian conflict simulation (available at [http://www.usip.org/files/resources/israeli\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.usip.org/files/resources/israeli_conflict.pdf)) to experience the complicated dynamics of the conflict.

### **Sessions 20, 21, and 22: The road to 9/11 and beyond**

Wright, Lawrence. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Vintage, 2007.

Obama, Barack. "A New Beginning." *The New York Times*, June 4, 2009.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>.

Brownlee, Jason. *Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Introduction.

American students (me included) have become especially interested in Middle East politics since the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the aftermath of the attacks (especially given America's response in

Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere) has dramatically reshaped the region. The institutions we have discussed in this course can all be used to explain how 9/11 happened and how America has responded since. The best book I have found for weaving these interrelated trends together is Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower*. We will read and discuss the book over three sessions, paying special attention to the class topics we have covered. In the last session we will look briefly at current US-Arab World relations.

### **Sessions 23, 24, and 25: The Arab Spring**

Lynch, Marc. *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012.

Al-Jazeera. "Seeds of Revolution." *The Arab Awakening* documentary series, April 2011.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/04/20114483425914466.html>.

The 2011 Arab Spring was an extremely dramatic example of anti-regime collective action which arguably helped launch a global string of protests, from Bahrain to Athens to Occupy Wall Street. As with 9/11, the motivations, causes, and effects of these protests and revolutions are complicated and multifaceted. Marc Lynch's *The Arab Uprising* is the most cogent and comprehensive post-revolution book on the Arab Spring. We will read and discuss the book over the final three class sessions, again applying the theories we have covered earlier in the class to analyze the revolutions and their aftermath. Al-Jazeera's "Seeds of Revolution" documentary provides good dramatic background information on the revolution.