

Psc 248: The Politics of the Middle East

Fall 2008

Instructor: Adam Ramey

Location/Time: Goergen 108, MW 3:25-4:40pm

Office Hours: T 2:00-4:00pm

E-mail: adam.ramey@rochester.edu

Website: <http://mail.rochester.edu/~aramey/teaching>

Introduction

As the fall begins, the War in Iraq rages, the crisis in Lebanon continues, and Iran continues its plan to acquire nuclear technology. Indeed, one must not look far in order to find something in the news pertaining to a region dubbed by historians as “the cradle of civilization.” Unfortunate as it may be, that same region which provided the foundation for the great civilizations that came to be finds itself today in the midst of uncertainty and turmoil.

In this course, we seek to explore the politics of the Middle East, from Morocco in the west to Iran in the east. This is certainly a tall order and, as must be the case, we will be limited in terms of how much we can cover. My goal, broadly speaking, is to provide you with a sufficient background in the politics, history, geography, and demography of this region. By doing so, I hope that you will be prepared to pursue the *next* step: addressing many of the theoretical and practical issues that come up.

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Grading

The grading in this course will have a few components. All students will have a participation grade that is worth **30%**. The participation grade will be based on evaluation in one of five in-class debates. Near the beginning of the semester, the class will be divided into several groups for debating purposes. For each debate, there will be two groups of about five, with one group arguing one side of an issue and the other group opposing. Groups will be expected to do *substantial* research in advance and all members will be expected to participate. This research will include a 10-15 page research dossier. A grading rubric will be provided. **ALL MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE EQUALLY.**

The remaining 70% is divided into **two 35% components: *Exam I* and *Exam II***. Each exam will be a non-cumulative assessment of course materials (lecture and readings) up until that point. This means that Exam II will *not* include material covered by Exam I.

Texts

As popular of a topic as the Middle East is, there are few *good* texts out there. For this course, I have chosen a few texts that are “as good as it gets.” These should be available at the bookstore

or, more cheaply, online. The first five are must-haves, while the others are recommended. I will place the relevant readings from the recommended texts on reserve at the library.

Required:

- *Cleveland, William. *A History of the Modern Middle East*.
- *Owen, Roger. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (2004 ed.)
- * Nisan, Mordechai. *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression* (2nd ed.)
- *Bergesen, Albert. *Sayyid Qutb Reader*.
- *Lewis, Bernard. *The Middle East: A Short History of the Last 2000 Years*.

Recommended:

- Khomeini, Ayatollah. *Islam and Revolution* (Volume 1).
- Milton-Edwards, Beverley. *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East* (2nd ed.)
- Phares, Walid. *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance*

Current Events

Every class will begin with a brief discussion of current events in the region. While mainstream news sources like CNN, Fox, and MSNBC might give you a “Readers Digest” version of events, you should consult area newspapers. Since most of these are in Arabic, most of you will need to consult English or French sources. Some of these are listed below. Please note that the list is not exhaustive. A more in-depth list is found at <http://www.al-bab.com/media/newspapers.htm>.

- *The Daily Star* (English)
- *L’Orient-Le Jour* (French)
- *Al Ahram* (Arabic, English & French weekly)
- *Watani* (English)
- *Ha’aretz* (Hebrew, English)
- *Jordan Times* (English)
- *Al-Jazirah* (Arabic, now English too)

Course Outline

N.B. Starred (*) readings are required – others are recommended but optional.

9/3: Course logistics; introduction

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9/8: Pre-history, classical era, Byzantine Empire, and the Rise of Islam (part 1)
Readings: *Cleveland Ch. 1, *Lewis 1-2

9/10: Rise of Islam (part 2)
Readings: *Cleveland Ch. 2, *Lewis 3-4

11/10: The Kurds / *DEBATE 3: Kurdish Autonomy and/or Independence*
Readings: *Nisan Ch. 2, Milton-Edwards Ch. 8

11/12: Lebanon: Druze, Maronites, and the Lebanese Civil War
Readings: *Nisan Ch. 5-6, 10

11/17: *Video:* ABC Presents the “Lebanese Civil War”
Readings: *Nisan Ch. 5-6, 10

11/19: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Readings: *Nisan Ch. 12-13, *Owen Ch. 13, 17, 23

11/24: *DEBATE 4: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process*
Readings: *Nisan Ch. 12-13, *Owen Ch. 13, 17, 23

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12/1: Economics, the legacy of Nasserism, and Oil / *DEBATE 5: Oil and the Future*
Readings: *Owen Ch. 7

12/3: Future of democracy, parties, and military regimes
Readings: *Owen Ch. 8 and 10, Milton-Edwards Ch. 6

12/8: Identity, ideology, and prospects for the future
Readings: *Owen (conclusion), Nissan (conclusion), and Qutb (conclusion)

12/10: **EXAM II**