

*Rutgers University*  
*Department of Political Science*  
*Fall 2019*

**Governments/Politics of the Middle East**  
**(21:790:333)**

Instructor: Nermin Allam  
Office: Hill Hall 708  
Email: [nermin.allam@rutgers.edu](mailto:nermin.allam@rutgers.edu)

Room: Hill Hall 102  
Thursday 2:30 PM - 5:20 PM  
Office hours: Fridays 12:00 PM -  
2:00 PM or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course is designed to provide students with an overview of contemporary politics in the Middle East. It offers a survey of the most salient issues in the region as well as some common explanations for the current state of affairs. The course is organized into three sections. **Part I** surveys the emergence of the “Middle East” as a region as well as the main discussions regarding the study of Middle Eastern Politics and its place in the wider Political Science literature. **Part II** lays out the principal problems in the region, namely: democratic deficiency, authoritarian resilience, gender disparities, historical and modern conflicts, and economic underdevelopment. **Part III** explores some common explanations for this state of affairs. We will analyse the influence of history, economy, religion, and foreign intervention on the trajectory of events in the region. The course concludes by assessing the future of the Middle East and asking what can or cannot be done to increase the likelihood of democracy in the region.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the course is to help students develop their own views on politics in the Middle East by offering them the necessary theoretical skills and empirical evidence. After completing this course, students will demonstrate:

- critical knowledge of politics and contemporary events in the Middle East region
- familiarity with key concepts, scholars, and approaches in the field of Middle Eastern studies
- ability to use various conceptual tools to better analyze, understand, and/or explain political events and processes in the region

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION**

Attendance and Participation:	20%	
Food Presentation:	15%	
Research Paper Proposal:	10%	<i>October 17</i>
In-class Midterm:	30%	<i>October 24</i>
Research Paper:	25%	<i>December 5</i>

**Participation:** Students are expected to have read the assigned readings and to be prepared to answer quizzes, as well as participate with informed comments and questions during the lectures and group presentations.

Grading Scheme	
Attendance	/10
Participation	/10
Total	/20

**Presentation:** Students are expected to sign up for an oral presentation (approx. 20 - 30 minutes) on one session's assigned food. Presentations must include the following components: 1) a brief summary of the history of the assigned food; 2) questions surrounding it proprietorship; 3) a discussion of some of the current cultural debates and tensions surrounding it. You will have the opportunity to sign up for presentation on blackboard until September 12, after that date I will randomly assign students. Please note that you are responsible for remembering the date of your presentation and your group. Please feel free to charm us with your culinary skills by sharing samples of the assigned dish.

Grading Scheme	
History and proprietorship	/10
Reflection/Discussion	/5
Total	/15

**Midterm Exam:** An in-class midterm exam will take place on **October 24**. The midterm will include materials covered in the first half of the course—Week 1 to Week 6. A review session will be held in class prior to the exam. The exam will cover lectures, presentations, and readings. It will consist of multiple choice and essay questions. The exam will be closed to books, notes, and all electronic equipment (laptops, smart phones, tablets etc.).

**Research Paper Proposal:** A research paper proposal (approx. 250 words, double-spaced, *Times New Roman* font size 12) is due on **October 17**. Proposals should be submitted through the Blackboard. The proposal should include:

- The topic and the country/countries you wish to write your paper on.
- Preliminary sources (including a minimum of 2 books and 2 academic journal articles).
- A brief statement describing what in particular you wish to address.

Grading Scheme	
Topic Outline	/5
Citations and Bibliography	/5
Total Grade	/10

**Research paper:** A research paper (approx. 2000 words, double-spaced, *Times New Roman* font size 12) is due on **December 05**. Papers should be submitted through blackboard. The research question must address one of the major themes of the course. Please pay attention to the following points:

- This assignment requires a critical evaluation of the themes discussed in the course and students are expected to incorporate some of the course material in their papers.
- You may choose to examine case studies, or focus on theoretical concepts related to the course. In either case, the paper must provide a critical analysis of the subject of investigation.
- Make sure to state a clear main argument (thesis statement) in the introductory paragraph of your paper. In the body of the paper, you must support your thesis, cite and briefly discuss contrary views, and develop your own arguments and positions. End the paper with a summary of the main arguments.
- You may use the Chicago Manual of Style, MLA Style, or another citation system. Please make sure you consistently use one system of citation for your references.
- Include a bibliography listing all sources used in the essay. Do not pad the bibliography with items you did not actually use.

Need writing support? Visit the University Writing Center for writing workshops and one-on-one tutoring services at: <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>. Another excellent resource for writing support is Rutgers Learning Center at: <http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc>

Grading Scheme	
Quality of Argumentation	/10
Depth of Research (use of sources)	/10
Clarity of Organization, Grammar/Writing Quality	/5
Total Grade	/25

## GRADING SCHEME

<i>Descriptor</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Grades Scored Between</i>
Outstanding	A	90 - 100
Very Good	B+	87 and less than 90
Good	B	80 and less than 87
Satisfactory	C+	77 and less than 80
	C	70 and less than 77
Poor	D	65 and less than 70
Fail	F	0 and less than 65

## **RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK ACADEMIC POLICIES**

**Attendance:** Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. Unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result. Per the University policy, absences are excused only in the case of illness, death in the family, religious observance, or official college business. In cases of potentially excusable absences, please notify your professor immediately and provide the necessary documentation.

**Completion of Requirements:** You should complete all the requirements of the course. If you do not submit an assignment or appear for your presentation, you will automatically fail the course.

**Late Assignments:** It is your responsibility to inform your professor as soon as it becomes clear that your assignment will be late. Late research papers will receive *a penalty of 5% per day* including weekends. Research papers more than one week late will not be accepted.

**Make-Ups for Presentations and Exams:** Students who miss class on the date they were scheduled to make their presentation will not be able to make it up on another date, unless the absence was documented and excused in accordance with the University policy. Students will not be allowed to take the mid-term exam on another date unless the absence was documented and excused in accordance with the University policy.

**Academic Integrity and Honesty:** Rutgers University is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the academic integrity code at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/> and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Important Semester Dates:** Important Semester Dates are found at <https://registrar.newark.rutgers.edu/office-registrar-academic-calendar>

**Use of Electronic Devices:** You can only use your laptop for taking notes. Please turn off all cell phones and personal electronic devices when you enter the classroom. There is a wealth of research demonstrating that the use of these devices in the classroom impedes not only the learning of students who use them, but those who are seated near them. Use of cell phones will result in loss of your attendance grade.

**Email Communication:** Outside of the classroom, the primary method of communication will be via emails, sent either directly or via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that your Rutgers email ID is operational to receive my emails and announcements. Contact the Technology Help Desk immediately if you experience problems in receiving emails from me. If you are still reading the syllabus at this point, email me at the address listed above with a cute kitten picture and you will be able to secure a two-day extension on the final course paper.

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

**Religious Holiday Policy and Accommodations:** Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule. The Division of Student Affairs is available to verify absences for religious observance, as needed: (973) 353-5063 or [DeanofStudents@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:DeanofStudents@newark.rutgers.edu).

**Students with Temporary Conditions/Injuries:** Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury that is adversely affecting their ability to fully participate in their courses should submit a request for assistance at: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

**Students Who are Pregnant:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu).

**Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** Students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, should know that help and support are available. To report an incident, contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance: (973) 353-1906 or [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu). To submit an incident report: [tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm](https://tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm). To speak with a staff member who is confidential and does **NOT** have a reporting responsibility, contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: (973) 353-1918 or [run.vpva@rutgers.edu](mailto:run.vpva@rutgers.edu).

**Childcare:** While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes regardless of their parenting status, I understand how unforeseen disruptions in childcare can prevent you from meeting course expectations. In case of minor illnesses and/or unforeseen disruptions in childcare, students are welcomed to bring their child to class. It is however important to note that this is not a long-term childcare solution. I also request that you sit close to the door so that if the little one needs attention or is distracting other students, you can step outside and attend to their needs. The University does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom; the policies described here are based on best practices adopted in family-friendly courses.

**Disability Services:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must complete and submit the Registration Form, schedule and complete an intake meeting, and submit appropriate documentation. If your request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privately to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations are not retroactive and are effective only upon submission of the LOA to the instructor. Please begin the process by completing and submitting the Registration Form, Applying for Services, which is available at the website below.

- **Applying for Services:** <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>
- **Documentation Guidelines:** <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>

- **Letter of Accommodations (LOA):** <https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations>
- **Office of Disability Services (ODS)**  
Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center  
(973) 353-5375  
[odsnewark@rutgers.edu](mailto:odsnewark@rutgers.edu)

**FEELING OVERWHELMED?**

The Student Wellness Program (SWP) is a free and confidential counseling service which helps students deal effectively with stressors and pressures.

- Call to schedule an appointment: (973) 353-5805
- Drop off at: Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall,
- Visit website for more information at: or <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/>

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS:**

The course readings will draw on a variety of disciplines as well as translated essays by activists and writers based in the region. There is one required textbook for this course. It can be purchased from the University Bookstore:

- ❖ Schwedler, Jillian, ed. 2013. *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*. Fourth edition. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

In addition to the course text there are a number of academic journal articles that will be used throughout the year. These are posted and accessible online through the library database and the Blackboard.

Part	Week	Date	Topic	Readings and In-class Activities	Assignments and Exams Due Date
PART I Studying the Middle East	1	09/05	Introduction	No Required Reading	
	2	09/12	Studying the Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anderson, Lisa. “2003 MESA Presidential Address: Scholarship, Policy, Debate and Conflict: Why We Should Study the Middle East and Why it Matters,” <i>Middle East Studies Association Bulletin</i> 38, 1 (June 2004). Available at: <a href="http://bit.ly/2vFB5Zn">http://bit.ly/2vFB5Zn</a></li> <li>• Said, Edward. “Islam Through Western Eyes,” <i>The Nation</i>, April 26, 1980, 488–92. Available at: <a href="http://bit.ly/2vG0qSV">http://bit.ly/2vG0qSV</a></li> <li>• Reel Bad Arab [In-class]</li> </ul>	

Part 2: Understanding the Region : Some Relentless Problems	3	09/19	Democratic Deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mehran Kamrava, “The Middle East’s Democracy Deficit in Comparative Perspective,” <i>Perspectives on Global Development &amp; Technology</i> 6, no. 1–3 (June 2007): 189–213, Available at: <a href="http://bit.ly/2MIA5Da">http://bit.ly/2MIA5Da</a></li> </ul>	Group 1 Food Presentation on Tabbouleh [In-class]
	4	09/26	Authoritarian Resilience and the Arab Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dina Shehata, “The Arab Uprisings and the Prospects for Building Shared Societies,” <i>Development</i> 57, no. 1 (25 2014): 84–95, Available at: <a href="http://bit.ly/2MljuPU">http://bit.ly/2MljuPU</a></li> <li>Hicham Alaoui. 2019. “From Algeria to Sudan, a New Lease of Life for Arab Springs.” <i>Jadaliyya</i>. July 12, 2019. <a href="https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/39808">https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/39808</a>.</li> <li>Tickling Giants Movie [In-class]</li> </ul>	
	5	10/03	The Arab-Israeli Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharoni, Simona, and Mohammed Abu-Nimer. 2013. “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” In <i>Understanding the Contemporary Middle East</i>, edited by Jillian Schwedler, Fourth edition. [Chapter 6]</li> </ul>	Group 2 Food Presentation - The Humus Debate [In-class]
	6	10/10	Women's Rights and Gender Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pollard, Lisa. 2013. “The Role of Women.” In <i>Understanding the Contemporary Middle East</i>, edited by Jillian Schwedler, Fourth edition. [Chapter 11]</li> <li>World Bank, <i>Opening Doors: Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North</i></li> </ul>	

				<p><i>Africa</i>, 2013, pages 1-31. Available at: <a href="http://bit.ly/2vDsg24">http://bit.ly/2vDsg24</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library Resources [In-class Training]</li> </ul>	
7	10/17	Historical Legacies: Colonialism, Imperialism, and Nationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rami Khouri, "Arab Mismanagement? Blame Colonialism," <i>The Daily Star</i> (Lebanon), September 3, 2008. Available at: <a href="http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2008/Sep-03/120349-arab-mismanagement-blame-colonialism.ashx">http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2008/Sep-03/120349-arab-mismanagement-blame-colonialism.ashx</a></li> <li>Robin Wright, "How the Curse of Sykes Picot Still Haunts the Middle East," <i>The New Yorker</i>, April 30, 2016. Available at: <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-curse-of-sykes-picot-still-haunts-the-middle-east">http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-curse-of-sykes-picot-still-haunts-the-middle-east</a></li> <li>Review [In-class]</li> </ul>	Research Paper Proposal Due	
8	10/24	IN-CLASS MIDTERM			
9	10/31	Political Economy: Development and Oil Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" <i>World Politics</i>, no. 3 (2001):325-361. Available at: <a href="https://www-jstor-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/pdf/25054153.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5d1786f197f639206e8fa56a8b88fb3c">https://www-jstor-org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/pdf/25054153.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5d1786f197f639206e8fa56a8b88fb3c</a></li> <li>American Coup Documentary [In-class]</li> </ul>		

Part 3: Explaining the Middle East: Some Plausible Explanations	10	11/07	Religion and Politics: The Rise of Political Islam and Islamist Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schwedler, Jillian. 2013. "Religion and Politics in the Middle East." In <i>Understanding the Contemporary Middle East</i>, edited by Jillian Schwedler, Fourth edition. [Chapter 12]</li> <li>Conversation with Dalia Fahmy, Abdullah al-Arian, and Khalil al-Anani, and Shadi Hamid, "The Many Battles of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood." Available at: <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/battles-egypt-muslim-brotherhood-150604103022250.html">https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/battles-egypt-muslim-brotherhood-150604103022250.html</a></li> </ul>	Group 3 Food Presentation Falafel [In-class]
	11	11/14	No Class		
	12	11/21	U.S. Foreign Policies and the War on Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner, "Step Back: Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy from the Failed War on Terror   Cato Institute," <i>Policy Analysis</i>, June 26, 2017, <a href="http://bit.ly/2OBnolh">http://bit.ly/2OBnolh</a></li> <li>"Habeas Schmabeas 2007." <i>This American Life</i>. April 27, 2007. <a href="https://www.thisamericanlife.org/331/habeas-schmabeas-2007">https://www.thisamericanlife.org/331/habeas-schmabeas-2007</a></li> </ul>	Group 4 Presentation #cookforsyria [In-class]
	13	11/28	No Class		
	14	12/05	Hope and Disappointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bayat, Assef. (2010). <i>Life as Politics : How Ordinary People Change the Middle East</i> (pp. 1 - 29). <a href="http://bit.ly/2KOsjuX">http://bit.ly/2KOsjuX</a></li> <li>Course Reflection over Pizza Lunch</li> </ul>	Research Paper due

