POLS 448 Conflicts in the Middle East

(International Relations of the Middle East)

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The Middle East is one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world. Numerous inter-state and civil wars, coups, protracted conflicts, and arms races determine the nature of the international and domestic politics of the region. The origins of the state system, frequent violations of sovereign rights of other states, weakness of cooperation among actors despite strong ethnic, religious and linguistic ties, and strong presence of transnational movements pose several puzzles for students of International Relations. The Middle East is also important in the sense that it affects world politics as much as it is affected by it. The states in the region have had more nuanced relations with great powers compared to other regions. Thus the Middle East is one of the most important and puzzling regions for the study of international relations. This course looks at the evolution of the inter-state system, its main features as well as primary challengers while analyzing the impact of great power politics on the region, ongoing crises and future outlook of international relations in the Middle East. As we study these issues we will make use of IR theories in answering the following questions: Which of the IR theories, realist, liberal, constructivist, help us better understand inter-state relations in the Middle East? What are other approaches that may be useful in this endeavor? What are the driving forces of the inter-state relations: state interests, ideology, religion, or political economy? Who are the main actors of Middle East international relations: great powers, regional states, transnational movements, or regional organizations? Which levels of analyses are most helpful in understanding the complexity of politics in the region?

There will be a mid-term and a final examination which will be combined with your attendance and participation to make up your grade for this course.

The percentages are as follows:
Midterm 35
Final 35
Attendance 10
Participation 20

The readings assigned for this course will be available in a course pack.

I. International Relations and the Middle East

F. Halliday, 2005, Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology, pp. 21-40


II. Origins of the Middle East State System: Ottoman Empire, the WWI, and the Mandate System


III. WWII and the Cold War

F. Halliday, Middle East in International Relations, pp.97-129

IV. The Post-Cold War Era

F. Halliday, Middle East in International Relations, pp. 130-164

V. War and peace

R. Hinnebusch, 2003, International Politics of the Middle East, pp. 154-203


VI. Domestic politics and foreign policy making

R. Hinnebusch, 2003, International Politics of the Middle East, pp. 91-153


VII. Regional alignments, regional organizations

L. Fawcett, 2005, Alliances, Cooperation and Regionalism in the Middle East in Fawcett ed.


VIII. Mid-term

IX. Great power politics: Cold War

P. Sluglett, 2005, The Cold War in the Middle East, in Fawcett ed.

M. Hudson, 2005, The United States and the Middle East, in Fawcett ed.

X. Great power politics: Post-Cold War


XI. International political economy: nomadism, oil, security

G. Luciani, Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East, Fawcett ed.

G. Gause, 2007, Threats and Threat Perceptions in the Gulf, Middle East Policy, 14/2

XII. Identity and Ideology


XIII. Transnational movements and Terrorism

M. Levitt, 2002, The Political Economy of Middle East Terrorism, MERIA

XIV. Towards a New Middle East Regional System?

G. Bahgat, 2007, Iran and the United States: The Emerging Security Paradigm in the Middle East, Parameters