

PLSC 396/MMES 364: Politics of the Contemporary Middle East

Spring 2021

Instructor: Professor Elizabeth Nugent
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Office Hours: Thursday 2-4pm
(over Zoom; sign up on [Calendly](#))

Course Description

This course provides an overview of politics of the contemporary Middle East through the lens of the 2010-2011 Arab Spring uprisings. We interrogate the main debates surrounding the democratic deficit in the region to understand whether recent developments mark change or continuity. We explore the ways in which a variety of factors such as foreign intervention, oil, and religion has contributed to persistent authoritarianism in the Middle East. We will consider different aspects of domestic politics, including redistribution, gender politics, political mobilization, and public opinion. The course materials combine on academic and popular writing, documentaries, and pre-recorded lectures in podcast form with synchronous townhalls and discussion section meetings.

Course Information

Format

This class will be taught over Zoom and is a hybrid between asynchronous and synchronous content. It consists of the following four components:

1. Asynchronous Weekly Readings and Viewings
 - Please complete this reading and viewing **before** Wednesday sections and/or our Thursday class townhalls.
2. Asynchronous Lectures
 - I will post each week's lectures by 8pm Sunday night. Lectures may be posted in sections but will never exceed 30 minutes total. You are expected to listen to these lectures **before** Wednesday sections and/or our Thursday class townhalls. I recommend that you reserve Tuesday's lecture time for this task.
3. Synchronous Section Meeting
 - Teaching Fellows will lead 10 50-minute section meetings throughout the semester. You are required to attend the section for which you sign up at the beginning of the semester.
4. Synchronous Class Townhalls on Thursdays from 10:30am to 11:20am
 - We will come together for 10 class townhalls throughout the semester. These will feature guests from academia, policy, journalism, and Middle East politics. Both attendance (over Zoom) and participation (in the form of one question submitted to your teaching fellow through Canvas by 12pm noon the Wednesday before each scheduled townhall) are required.

I recommend starting with readings, then lectures, then viewings – and completing these tasks ahead of Wednesday sections and Thursday townhalls.

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- 10 points of your grade will be determined by attendance and participation in section. You are required to attend the section for which you sign up at the beginning of the semester. Sections will be held on the following Wednesdays:
 - February 10
 - February 17
 - March 3
 - March 10
 - March 17
 - March 31
 - April 7
 - April 14
 - April 21
 - April 28

Please post any questions or comments (with anonymously or with your name attached) on Ed Discussion, enabled through Canvas. Your question is likely one that others have had, or a comment that will benefit group discussions – so please feel free to use this space as much as needed. Your activity on the site will count towards your participation grade.

- 20 points of your grade will be determined by attendance and participation in townhall meetings scheduled throughout the semester. You will receive 1 point for attending the townhall, and 1 point for submitting a question to your teaching fellow by 12pm EST the Wednesday before the townhall. These will feature guests from academia, policy, journalism, and Middle East politics. Sessions are scheduled for the following dates:
 - February 4 10:30-11:20am (*question submission not required*)
 - February 11 10:30-11:20am
 - February 18 10:30-11:20am
 - March 4 10:30-11:20am
 - March 11 10:30-11:20am
 - March 18 10:30-11:20am
 - April 1 10:30-11:20am
 - April 15 10:30-11:20am
 - April 22 10:30am-11:20am
 - April 29 10:30am-11:20am
 - May 6 10:30am-11:20am

- 10 points of your grade will be determined by attending a session of “Teach-In: The Egyptian Revolution 10 Years On,” scheduled for February 26-27, 2021. Choose one session and write up a one-page (single-spaced) summary of it, due through Canvas by 5pm on Friday March 5, 2021.
- 40 points of your grade will be determined by the final written assignment. You are required to write an encyclopedia-style article of 1,000 words on a topic related to the Arab Spring and contemporary Middle East politics. The final assignment is broken down into the following sub-assignments:
 - Assignment 1 due through Canvas by 5pm on March 19 (10 points): Choose your topic and write one paragraph on its relevance to motivate your choice.
 - Assignment 2 due through Canvas by 5pm on April 2 (10 points): Complete training on identifying and using popular and academic sources.
 - Assignment 3 due through Canvas by 5pm on April 26 (10 points): Submit an annotated bibliography (including at least 10 sources).
 - Final Paper due through Canvas by 5pm on May 14 (10 points): Submit the full article with complete bibliography (at least 20 sources).
- 20 points will be determined by 7 quizzes, though only the top 5 grades will be included in the average. These quizzes will be available on Canvas on Fridays from 9am to 2pm EST and are required to be completed within 30 minutes. They will ask about content from lectures, films, readings, and townhalls. The quizzes are open note, but do not speak to anyone else about the content or use the internet.

1. February 12
2. February 19
3. March 12
4. March 19
5. April 9
6. April 16
7. April 30

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected in all sections and townhalls. You will lose points from your participation grades for each unexcused absence. Please communicate absences ahead of class when possible.

E-mail Policy

If you have a quick (i.e. non-substantive) question, email is the best way to contact me. While I typically respond to emails quickly, please allow 48 hours for a response. If you do not receive a

response within 48 hours, follow up with a reminder. This article is recommended reading about how to draft an effective email: Laura Portwood-Stacer, "[How to Email Your Professor \(without being annoying AF\).](#)"

If you email me or your assigned teaching fellow the night before a deadline with a last minute request, please do not expect a response. It is important that you look at the assignments early to ensure we can answer any questions you may have in a timeframe that is useful to you. Longer questions -- for example, those dealing with your performance in the course or substantive questions about the course material -- are better asked in person. I will hold regular office hours on Thursdays from 2-4pm throughout the semester, and appointments can also be made on an individual basis. Your teaching fellows will also hold regular office hours.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

For every day a written assignment is late, you will lose 2 points out of the total points available. No final papers will be accepted after May 13, 2020 without prior permission. Familiarize yourself with [Yale University's policy on incomplete grades](#).

Academic Integrity

Familiarize yourself with Yale University's policy on academic integrity. In short, don't turn in the same paper for two classes, don't plagiarize someone else's work, and don't cheat on the in-class exam or other assignments. When in doubt, come talk to me. To ensure that you do not accidentally violate Yale's academic honesty policies, please review [Yale University's Definitions of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Documentation of Sources](#).

Commitment to Diversity

Your experience in this class is very important to me. If you have already established accommodations with the [Resource Office on Disabilities](#), please communicate those to me as early as possible so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through ROD, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), please contact ROD. ROD offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, me, and the ROD.

Commitment to an Inclusive Learning Environment

Yale University adheres to the philosophy that all community members should enjoy an environment free of any harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, or violence. If you encounter sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability

please contact the Title IX Coordinator, [Stephanie Spangler](#), or [any of the University Title IX Coordinators](#). You may also report an incident to me. I am required to notify the Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident, though you may choose to request confidentiality from the University.

Teaching Fellows

We are extremely lucky to have Stephanie Posner (stephanie.posner@yale.edu), Drew Stommes (drew.stommes@yale.edu) and Dana Stuster (dana.stuster@yale.edu) as teaching fellows for the semester. They will lead discussion sections and should be your first point of contact for any questions or concerns about the course.

Book to Purchase

Please purchase *The Middle East* edited by Ellen Lust (15th edition, Sage, 2019). The book is available in electronic and paper form through Yale Bookstore and online retailers. All other readings area available online and linked through Canvas.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Assignments

WEEK 1: February 1 Introduction

Listen	Lecture 1: Introduction to the Middle East
Read	Reading 1: <u>Required:</u> Chapter 1 of Lust, "The Making of the Modern Middle East." 3-62. <u>Recommended:</u> Abbas Amanat, "Introduction" in <i>Is there a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept</i> . Stanford University Press, 2012. 1-8. Zachary Lockman, "Said's <i>Orientalism</i> : A Book and its Aftermath" in <i>Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism</i> . Cambridge University Press, 2009. Chapter 6, 183-191 only.
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	Introduction to Professor Nugent and Teaching Fellows; Course Overview Thursday February 4 10:30-11:20am
Section	<i>None</i>
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 2: February 8 Processes of the Arab Spring

Listen	Lecture 2: The Arab Spring - Overview of Timeline of Mobilization and Major Themes
Read	Reading 2: Jeff Goodwin, "Why we were surprised (again) by the Arab Spring." <i>Swiss Political Science Review</i> 17.4 (2011): 452-456. Jason Brownlee, Tarek E. Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, <i>The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform</i> . Chapter 3: "Breakdowns and Crackdowns" (pages 64-97)
Watch	Film 1: Required: "Karama Has No Walls" (26 minutes); Yemen <i>Content warning: violence, police brutality</i>
Attend	Townhall 1: Sara Ishaq, Director of "Karama Has No Walls" and "The Mulberry House" (Sara's personal story behind "Karama", available for rent here) Thursday February 11 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 1
Quiz	Quiz 1
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 3: February 15 Outcomes of the Arab Spring

Listen	Lecture 3: Arab Spring - Divergent Outcomes and Major Themes
Read	Reading 3: Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring." <i>Comparative Politics</i> 44.2 (2012): 127-149. Jason Brownlee, Tarek E. Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, <i>The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform</i> . Chapter 4: "Post-Breakdown Trajectories" (pages 98-169).
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	Townhall 2: Tarek Masoud, Professor of Public Policy and the Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman Professor of International Relations at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government Thursday February 18 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 2
Quiz	Quiz 2
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 4: February 22 Teach-In

Listen	<i>None</i>
Read	<p>Reading 4:</p> <p>Elizabeth Nugent, <i>After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition</i>. Princeton University Press, 2020. Chapter 8, “Polarization during Democratic Transitions,” 207-247.</p> <p>Max Fisher, ‘The Square’ is a beautiful documentary. But its politics are dangerous.’ <i>The Washington Post</i> 17 January 2014.</p>
Watch	<p>Film 2:</p> <p>“The Square” (1 hour 48 minutes); Egypt <i>Content warning: violence, police brutality</i></p>
Attend	<i>None</i>
Section	<i>None</i>
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	Attend one full panel of the Egypt Teach-In, Friday-Saturday February 26-27, 2021

WEEK 5: March 1 Regime Types and Institutions in the Middle East

Listen	Lecture 4: Regime Types and Institutions in the Middle East
Read	Reading 5: Chapter 3 of Lust, "States and Institutions" (133-167). Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar. "Elections under Authoritarianism." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 12 (2009): 403-422. Sean L. Yom and F. Gregory Gause III. "Resilient royals: How Arab monarchies hang on." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 23.4 (2012): 74-88.
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	Townhall 3: Daniel Tavana, Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale's Council on Middle East Studies Thursday March 4 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 3
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	1 page summary of Teach-In due to Canvas by 5pm Friday March 5

WEEK 6: March 8 Regime Types and Institutions in the Middle East (continued)

Listen	<i>None</i>
Read	<p>Reading 6:</p> <p>Derek Lutterbeck, "Tool of Rule: the Tunisian Police under Ben Ali." <i>The Journal of North African Studies</i> 20.5 (2015): 813-831.</p> <p>Tamir Moustafa, "Law and Courts in Authoritarian Regimes." <i>Annual Review of Law and Social Science</i> 10 (2014): 281-299.</p> <p>Human Rights Watch, "All According to Plan: The Rab`a Massacres and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt." August 2014, pages 1-31 only. Available here. <i>Content warning: there are pictures of injured and dead bodies throughout the piece. Skip page 9 in particular.</i></p>
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	<p>Townhall 4:</p> <p>Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine Director of Human Rights Watch Thursday March 11 10:30-11:20am</p>
Section	Section 4
Quiz	Quiz 3
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 7: March 15 Political Participation in the Middle East

Listen	Lecture 5: Political Participation in the Middle East
Read	Reading 7: Chapter 5 of Lust, "Actors, Public Opinion & Participation" (201- 232). Yael Zeira, "From the Schools to the Streets: Education and Anti-Regime Resistance in the West Bank." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 52.8 (2019): 1131-1168. Elizabeth R. Nugent and Chantal E. Berman. "Ctrl-Alt-Revolt?: Online and Offline Networks during the 2011 Egyptian Uprising." <i>Middle East Law and Governance</i> 10.1 (2018): 59-90.
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	Townhall 5: Yael Zeira, Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs, Syracuse University Thursday March 18 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 5
Quiz	Quiz 4
Do	Assignment 1 due to Canvas by 5pm Friday March 19

WEEK 8: March 22 Religion and Politics in the Middle East

Listen	Lecture 6: Religion and Politics in the Middle East
Read	Reading 8: Chapter 4 of Lust, "Religion, Society & Politics in the Middle East" (169-200). Amr Hamzawy and Nathan J. Brown. "Islamist Parties and Democracy: A Boon or a Bane for Democracy?" <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 19.3 (2008): 49-54. Ashraf El Sherif, "Islamism After the Arab Spring." <i>Current History</i> 110.740 (2011): 358-363.
Watch	Film 3: "Tunisia, Year Zero" (52 minutes)
Attend	<i>None</i>
Section	<i>None</i>
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 9: March 29 Gender and Politics in the Middle East

Listen	Lecture 7: The Politics of Gender in the Middle East
Read	Reading 9: Chapter 6 of Lust, "Social Change in the Middle East" (233-268). Hind Ahmed Zaki, "El-Sissi's Women? Shifting Gender Discourses and the Limits of State Feminism." <i>Egypte/Monde Arabe</i> 13 (2015): 39-53. Samar Habib, "LGBT Activism in the Middle East." <i>The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies</i> . 2016.
Watch	Required -- two short videos: "Tunisia: Keeping the Promise." Available here (5 minutes) "Egypt: Life's Sentence." Available here (5 minutes) Recommended: "The Judge" (1 hr 22 mins); Palestine
Attend	Townhall 6: Hind Ahmed Zaki, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Literatures, Cultures, and Languages, University of Connecticut Thursday April 1 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 6
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	Assignment 2 due to Canvas by 5pm Friday April 2

WEEK 10: April 5 Oil & Economics in the Middle East

Listen	Lecture 8: Political Economy in the Middle East: Oil and Inequality
Read	Reading 10: Chapter 7 of Lust, "The Political Economy of Development in the Middle East" (269-306). Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" <i>World Politics</i> 53:3 (2011), 325-361. Lydia Assoud, "Inequality and its Discontents in the Middle East," March 12, 2020. <i>Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center</i> .
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	<i>None</i>
Section	Section 7
Quiz	Quiz 5
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 11: April 12 Green Politics in the Middle East

Listen	Lecture 9: Green Politics in the Middle East
Read	Reading 11: Sarah Johnstone and Jeffrey Mazo, "Global Warming and the Arab Spring." Available here . Jeannie L. Sowers, "Environmental Activism in the Middle East & North Africa" in <i>Political Ecology of the Middle East & North Africa</i> , 27-52. Alexandra Blackman, "Prison Reform and Drug Decriminalization in Tunisia." 2018, <i>Project on Middle East Political Science</i> . Available here . Additional piece TBC.
Watch	None
Attend	Townhall 7: Alexandra Blackman, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Cornell University Thursday April 15 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 8
Quiz	Quiz 6
Do	None

WEEK 12: April 19 Foreign Influence

Listen	Lecture 10: Foreign Influence in Domestic Politics of the Middle East
Read	Reading 12: Chapter 8 of Lust, "International Relations" (307-338). Nathalie Tocci, "On Power and Norms: Libya, Syria and the Responsibility to Protect." <i>Global Responsibility to Protect</i> 8.1 (2016): 51-75. Robin Wright, "Former Ambassador Robert Ford on the State Department Mutiny on Syria." <i>The New Yorker</i> 2016, available here .
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	Townhall 8: Ambassador Robert Ford, Kissinger Senior Fellow at Yale's Jackson Institute; U.S. Ambassador to Algeria (2006-2008) and Syria (2010-2014) Thursday April 22 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 9
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	Assignment 3 due to Canvas by 5pm Friday April 23

WEEK 13: April 26 Regional Influence

Listen	Lecture 11: Regional International Relations in the Middle East
Read	Reading 13: Gregory F. Gause, "Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War." <i>Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper</i> 11 (2014): 1-27.
Watch	Film 4: For Sama (1 hr 40 minutes) <i>Content warning: this film takes place in the center of the Syrian civil war and includes significant violence against civilians, including the bombing of a hospital.</i>
Attend	Townhall 9: Nicholas Lotito, Lecturer in Political Science and Global Affairs, Yale University Thursday April 29 10:30-11:20am Thursday April 29 10:30-11:20am
Section	Section 10
Quiz	Quiz 7
Do	<i>None</i>

WEEK 14: May 3 Making Sense of the Arab Spring

Listen	Lecture 12: The Revolution Continues?
Read	Reading 14: Philippe Fargues and Christine Fandrich, "Migration after the Arab Spring." Migration Policy Centre Research Report September 2019. Available here . Marwan Muasher, "Is this the Arab Spring 2.0?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2019. Available here . Selections of Vivian Yee's recent articles, <i>New York Times</i> .
Watch	<i>None</i>
Attend	Townhall 10: Vivian Yee, Cairo Bureau Chief, <i>The New York Times</i> Thursday May 6 10:30-11:20am
Section	<i>None</i>
Quiz	<i>None</i>
Do	Final assignment due to Canvas by 5pm May 14