

## POSC 245A: Middle East Politics

Fall 2015

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Office Hrs.: T 10-11 am and 2-3 pm  
Or by appointment

**Course Description:** In this course we focus on the Middle East. We begin by a critical discussion about what “we” know and how “we” have come to know the region in North America. Common misperceptions abound and we cannot hope to come to any humane understanding of the region without first tackling them. The Middle East contains many countries and even more issues that can be reasonably covered in an introductory course such as this. So, we will focus on a select number of key issues and countries. These include the Israeli-Palestinian issue, politics of oil, political Islam and empire, the Arab uprisings, the region’s political economy, the so-called “war on terrorism,” the rise of the Islamic State, and the modern histories of countries such as Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan, Libya, and Egypt. We will also supplement our readings and discussions with a number of critical documentaries/films that present often excluded (from the mainstream) voices and perspectives.

**Required Readings:** 1) Islamophobia by Kumar 2) The Coup by Abrahamian, 3) Inside Syria by Erlich 4) On Palestine by Barat, and 5) Islamist Phoenix by Napoleonio

**Grades\*:** Participation/TCs (40%); Book Review (20%); Quizzes (4) (10% each, 40% total)

### Notes & Explanations:

- **Class Participation:** Regular attendance makes up one half (i.e., 20% of the course grade) of your class participation grade. The other half is determined by the quality of your participation in the Takeaway Circles and in the more general class discussions.
  - **Takeaway Circles (TC):** Students will be organized into groups. Each group forms a TC. We begin each class session with TC discussions of that day’s reading assignments. To facilitate informed discussions within each TC and beyond, I require the following: (1) Bring to each TC one discussion item and one probing question, (2) E-mail the same to me no later than midnight before we meet in class. You must bring to class the reading materials assigned for that session. Each TC will designate a *facilitator* on a rotational basis to moderate discussions. The facilitator will ensure that (a) every person’s items/questions are considered, (b) discussions remain focused on the significant issues, and (c) the TC formulates and justifies a significant question for a broader class discussion to follow.
- **Book Review:** Write a book review of the Islamist Phoenix. By a Book Review I have in mind a commentary that answers the following three questions: a) What is the main argument of the book? b) What evidence does the book offer in support of its main argument? c) How persuasive do YOU find the book’s argument? It consists of no less than 800-typed words. This review is due no later than a week after the class has finished reading this book. I will not accept a late review.
- **Quizzes:** There will be 4 quizzes, one per each book, excepting the Islamist Phoenix book. No make-up quizzes are allowed unless the absence is due to a substantiated emergency situation.
- **Class Readings** will be assigned on a class-by-class basis. If you miss a class, consult a classmate to find out about assigned readings or contact me for details.
  - **Attendance Policy:** Please arrive on time to every class. Students are required to attend classes regularly. Absence due to illness requires a written confirmation from a healthcare provider. Any other absence requires a satisfactory explanation otherwise it will be marked and incorporated into the course grade determination.
  - **Academic Honesty Policy:** In cases of cheating or plagiarizing in any way, *I will follow the appropriate procedures as they appear in the College Student Handbook.*
  - **E-Devices:** All electronic devices should be turned off before class.
  - Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

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\* It is within my purview to apply qualitative judgment in the determination of any and all grades.