

## POSC 245Z: Middle East Politics

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Spring 2016

Office Hrs.: W 10 AM to Noon  
Or by appointment

**Course Description:** We begin with a critical discussion of what and how “we” in the West have come to “know” about the Middle East. The course maintains that there are common misperceptions about this region that prevent “us” from obtaining a humane understanding of its people, history, culture, and politics. The students will come to know how to navigate their efforts to understand this region in order to avoid such pitfalls. Beyond that, the region contains too many countries and even more issues that can be reasonably covered in an introductory course. So, we will focus only on a number of key issues and countries such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, politics of oil, political Islam, the Arab uprisings, the region’s political economy, the “war on terrorism,” the rise of the Islamic State, and the modern histories of countries such as Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Libya, and Egypt. The students are expected to learn the fundamental themes associated with each of the latter. To help accomplish that, we will supplement our readings and discussions with a number of critical documentaries and films that present non-mainstream voices and perspectives.

**Required Readings:** 1) Islamophobia by Kumar 2) The Coup by Abrahamian, 3) Understanding ISIS and the New Global War on Terror by Bennis 4) Israeli Apartheid by White

**Grades\*:** Consistent Attendance (10%); Weekly Entries (20%); Participation (10%); Short Paper (10%); Quizzes (10% each, a total of 50%)

### Notes:

- **Weekly Entries:** The course requires that each student submit *a total of 10 weekly entries*. The entries are due on Wednesdays by 4 PM and must be submitted in a Google Doc format. Late entries will affect grades negatively. The entries can function as *creative spaces* where you get to engage the course materials on a deeper basis. However, I do require the following minimum: pose a question and provide an explanation of how your question fits in with the main ideas in the readings assigned for that day. Avoid writing summaries of the readings. Note: the more an entry identifies and engages the *KEY* ideas of a given assigned text the greater is its appropriateness.
- **A Short Paper:** Find a contemporary article in the mainstream media that displays Islamophobic biases in terms discussed by Kumar in her book, Islamophobia. Proceed then to write a 500-word essay describing what you consider to be the Islamophobic features of the piece. Explain why you think the latter are indeed examples of Islamophobia in terms discussed in class. You may submit this short paper any time during the discussion of the book but no later than a week after we as a class have finished reading this book.
- **Quizzes:** There will be a total of 5 announced quizzes. Quizzes are given at the beginning of each period and take up about 15 to 20 minutes each. Make-up quizzes are allowed only in cases where a student has encountered an emergency situation beyond their control and where the instructor is notified in advance of such a 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:** Be there and be on time. Regular attendance is a requirement. Absences due to illness require a written confirmation from a healthcare provider. Other emergencies require a satisfactory explanation. All else 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 in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel:610-861-1401). 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.