Syllabus/Course Outline
Independent Study - Middle East/North Africa
Spring 2015
(INST 4392/MLINS 6392)

(Subject to change/revisions)

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(Or By Appointment)

Course Description

Never before has the Middle East and North Africa been as important and central to a wide range of U.S economic, political, social, and security interests. This course aims to engage the class in a seminar-style discussion each week on the current “hot” issues confronting the U.S. For the core of the course, we will address four main topics:

- The Syrian Civil War and its genesis;
- The Arab-Israeli dispute and current turmoil/challenges/opportunities
- The Arab Spring & its current manifestations/ permutations
- The Iran nuclear issue

In addition, it seems as if events break forth with lightning speed these days. So the issues may change suddenly and drastically, and the course will evolve/adjust through the semester as events unfold and become the center of media attention. I am also open to detours to discuss and mull over issues/topics/interests which you all as students might wish to raise.

Students With Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations for this class is requested to speak with me as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Additionally, students will need to register with the Counseling and Disability Services Office in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.
READING

Reading materials will be adjusted over the semester as current events warrant. Thus far there will be three required books:

Required Texts:  


Other required course readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Current Events Reading: In addition to course readings, students will be expected to keep up with Middle East & North Africa issues during the term. Students can select any daily/weekly source of news and analysis on international issues and events, e.g., *NYT, Washington Post, Time* or *Newsweek, U.S. News, Foreign Policy*, etc. The key will be to keep up with it on a daily/weekly basis. See list of source media, attached.

PAPERS and GRADES

The student will read the required materials and view the required videos/films during each of the four segments. The student will be expected to conduct their own independent research into the issues presented, seeking alternative views.

The student will have a meeting with the professor near the end of each segment, at which we will discuss and analyze the topic, and the student will offer his or her view of the issues and what policy responses might be made.

Thereafter, the student will draft within the following week a 3-5 page analysis of the issues studied in the given course segment, and suggested US policy responses. The course grade will be based on 4 total papers, worth 25% each.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a representation of another person's work as your own (for example, directly quoting from another source without using quotation marks). See the University of St. Thomas' Regulation on “Scholastic Dishonesty” for discussion and range of available penalties. Plagiarism will be punished to the maximum extent possible. If a student is found to have committed an act of scholastic dishonesty, I will recommend the most severe penalty.
The Course

The course will have four core segments. These may switch around depending on whether new events needing our close attention unfold in one or another of the topics. Almost certainly, the readings listed below will change with events and updating by me; new readings will usually be handed out in class, and posted on Blackboard as well:

I. The Syrian Civil War

Required Reading:

- Calabrese, John, “The Regional Implications of the Syria Crisis,” Middle East Institute, December 21, 2012 [BLACKBOARD]
- Salem, Paul, “Syria and Geneva II,” Middle East Institute, November 7, 2013 [BLACKBOARD]
- “Syria Crisis: Guide to Armed & Political Opposition,” BBC News, 091713 [BLACKBOARD]
- “Who, How and Where (Arms to Syria),” The Economist, July 6, 2013 [BLACKBOARD]

II. The Iran Nuclear Imbroglio

Required Reading:

- Iran: The Nuclear Challenge, Council on Foreign Relations. Students can buy a copy in their preferred format through this link on our website: http://www.cfr.org/iran/iran-nuclear-challenge/p28330 [Excerpt on Blackboard]
- “Q&A: Iran Nuclear Crisis,” BBC News, Nov. 24, 2014
III. The Arab-Israeli Dispute

Required Reading:


Learning Each Others’ Historical Narrative: Palestinians & Israelis, Bar-On, Dan & Adwan, Sami, Peace Research institute in the Middle East (March 2003) [BLACKBOARD]


*We will also view the movie “Exodus,” and a PBS documentary on the 1967 Six-Day War.*

IV. The Arab Spring – Four Years After

Required Reading:


Jones, Seth & Berman, Sheri. Martin, Arab Spring: Two Views (two articles), *Foreign Affairs*, Jan./Feb. 2013 [BLACKBOARD]


V. Review / Valedictory

A. Final Exam

**Middle East News Sources**


*Al-Bab.com* (background info on MENA region): www.al-bab.com/

*Al-Jazeera News* www.aljazeera.com

*An-Nahar Net*(Lebanon) http://www.naharnet.com

*Al-Ahram (Egypt)* english.ahram.org.eg

*BBC Online* Middle East coverage: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/middle_east/

*The Economist* www.economist.com

*Haaretz* www.haaretz.com

*Jerusalem Post* www.jpost.com/

*The Independent* Middle East coverage: http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/

*Middle East International*, online edition: http://meionline.com/front.html

*Middle East Report:* www.merip.org/mer/middle_east_report.html


*Washington Post* www.washingtonpost.com