Nuclear Politics of the Middle East

Class Location: xxx
Time: xxx

Course Description: Why do states seek to acquire nuclear weapons? Why do states choose to give up seeking nuclear weapons? Does the acquisition of nuclear weapons make a country more secure, or does it increase the possibility of nuclear war? Should the United States try to stop the spread of nuclear weapons? In the Middle East, Israel is the only country that has an extensive, established nuclear arsenal, but they do not declare that publicly, following a policy of “amimut” (opacity/ambiguity). Israel uses force to stop other countries from acquiring the bomb. It first bombed Iraq’s nuclear reactor in 1981 to stop Saddam Hussein from building a nuclear weapon, and more recently bombed Syria in 2007 to stop its nuclear activities. The US has also gone to war to stop Iraq from acquiring nuclear weapons (allegedly). In Iran, the US and allies have worked together to block it from getting nuclear weapons with sanctions and the Iran nuclear deal, and the US has repeatedly threatened war. Libya secretly arranged to get a nuclear capability from A.Q. Kahn in the late 1990’s, was caught, peacefully stopped, and later, the regime was overthrown. Saudi Arabia helped Pakistan build nuclear bombs, and likely has access to those bombs, but the U.S. looks the other way. In short, the high stakes nuclear politics of the Middle East are complicated and always rapidly changing. This course examines the intricate history and current nuclear capabilities within the Middle East, with an eye toward understanding nuclear arms control efforts, current nuclear strategies, and current technological realities that are important for various strategies. This course explicitly evaluates US policies toward the Middle East. Some questions addressed: Would the further spread of nuclear weapons cause peace or war in the Middle East? What strategies would nuclear weapons support? Is there a robust taboo against the use of nuclear weapons, and would this “taboo” hold in the Middle East? Could the Middle East ever become a nuclear weapons free zone as many have proposed? What should the US do to shape the nuclear future of the Middle East in line with US interests?

Course requirements:
1.) Students **must attend** class and read assigned materials in *advance* of class. Readings complement lectures and films, and attending class will be essential for doing well on the two essay exams and for writing the paper. Reading before class will help you understand the lecture. Attendance will be taken often, but not always, by the use of **quick pop quizzes sometime during class.** There also will be in-class debates, with all in-class activities (debates and participation) worth 20% of your final grade. You can miss two pop quizzes with no penalty, as we will drop two lowest pop quiz grades, but excellent attendance with good answers on the quizzes will help your overall participation grade.

2.) Take two exams: midterm worth 20% and the final worth 30% of your final grade. These are essay exams, and require clear, analytic essay writing.

3.) Complete one 7–10 page **analytical research paper**, worth 30% of your grade, also the basis for your debate position. You will be required to turn in a very detailed outline for this paper in week 8—failure to do so will result in the subtraction of 5% of your grade on this paper.

4.) Overall—attendance, debating and “over-the-top” research will be fully factored into your grade.

**Due dates:**

1.) Midterm exam Week 5 (20%)
2.) Paper outline due Week 8
3.) Paper due Week 9 (30%)
4.) In-class debates: Week 9 & 10 (Debates & Participation = 20%)
5.) Final exam: xxx (30%)

**Estimated Student Workload:** Student workload involves 120 hours for this 4-credit class: Class attendance is required = 30 hrs; Weekly reading and film viewing in advance of class = 50 hours (~5 hours per week); Prep for in-class midterm = 5 hours (if weekly reading has been done); research paper and debate prep = 25 hours (across more than five weeks); Two hour final exam prep = 10 hours. (This class will take you approximately 8-12 hours per week; no week should be more than 15 hours if you keep up with the work. If you have difficulty with keeping up, please discuss in office hours.)

**Grades:** Grades will be determined in line with department guidelines: [https://polisci.uoregon.edu/grade-meanings-and-learning-outcomes/](https://polisci.uoregon.edu/grade-meanings-and-learning-outcomes/)

**Required Reading:**


2.) All other readings found under modules by week on Canvas.
3.) *The New York Times* (and/or the *BBC.*) This course will often address current events. You are **required** to read relevant articles in *The New York Times* regularly because this is the paper in the U.S. to read if you are a student of international politics. This will be explained in class.

4.) Occasional additional (usually short) current readings will be assigned—you will be notified by e-mail and you should check the Canvas site regularly.

**Course Web Site:** There is a [Canvas web site](#) for this course. Be sure you receive my frequent e-mails from Canvas sent to your uoregon email account. All e-mails will also be posted as announcements.

**Learning Outcomes and Critical Skills:** This class will provide students with an advanced understanding of the history and politics of nuclear weapons within the Middle East, and students will come to understand the political process of making U.S. foreign policy in the area of national security in the Middle East.

Students will be able to:

- Describe the history and politics of nuclear acquisition within Israel, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Libya, and how the U.S. has shaped these developments over the past 50+ years
- Summarize, orally and in writing, a range of views about nuclear proliferation and what the U.S. should do about it, using theories and understanding nuclear strategy choices
- Apply various and competing theories, models and concepts to current events and changing political conditions to better understand what is happening, and what is likely to happen, and U.S. policy options

To build these skills, students will:

- Do all readings in advance of class to prepare for brief reading quizzes. These quizzes will emphasize key concepts, history and theories that students will need to demonstrate mastery of on essay exams. Students will be given comprehensive review sheets of terms and sample questions before each exam, (largely based on reading quizzes and other material emphasized and explained in lecture and readings). If students complete the readings, attend lecture and review before the exams, the students should be prepared to demonstrate mastery of the material.
- Be guided and required to complete a research project about a case study of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, and will present findings orally in debate format, as well as preparing a formal research paper.

Overall, students will learn and apply leading theories of nonproliferation, and theories of nuclear strategy, to the history of the Middle East. This course investigates major aspects of the causes of international conflict and cooperation in security, especially in relation to nuclear weapons. This course will help students develop the critical skills of identifying, describing and defining basic factual information about the international political system and its ability to
control nuclear proliferation, especially as the United Nations and Middle Eastern states interact with the U.S. over nuclear issues. Most importantly, at this time, U.S. foreign policy seeks to advance U.S. national security in the region by selectively stopping nuclear proliferation using treaties, inspections and coercion, but this system may be changing, and students will come to understand how and why. Students will also learn more generally to analyze national security issues broadly using political science concepts, theories and methods. Students will learn to use arguments and evidence effectively to communicate original analysis of political phenomena, and demonstrate critical thinking, reading, writing and debating skills through collaborative debate projects, essay exams and individual research projects using both primary and secondary sources, and presenting work in an academic format.

**Title IX:** I am a student-directed employee. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see Employee Reporting Obligations. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender based violence, may seek information on safe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, titleix.uoregon.edu, or aaeo.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office (541-346-8136), AAEO office (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect.

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu. I really would like to make this course fully accessible to students of all different abilities. Please discuss with me any accommodations, or any other help you need accessing the course, or demonstrating your mastery of course materials.

Academic Misconduct: The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

**Course Policy:**
**Late or missed assignments will be penalized.** Late assignments lose a FULL letter grade each day (even an hour over counts as a day late). Hand in even late assignments in order to pass the class. In many cases, arrangements can be made for conflicts with the paper deadlines or with other deadlines—but PLAN IN ADVANCE. Advance planning is essential to being a responsible person.
I. Nuclear Politics in the Middle East:
Week 1: Overview of the main issues of the Course; Historical Background of the region and nuclear pursuits in the region.


4.) HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal, “A Political Plan For A Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East” July 2013, pp. v-10, on Canvas.


6.) On Thursday we will watch and discuss some parts of the BBC documentary on the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Watch it first in full: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQh6yovxBag Other versions/films on the Yom Kippur War are on Canvas to compare. Each history there is quite different—watch closely and notice how almost all versions do not even mention the existence of nuclear weapons in Israel at the time. Were nuclear weapons irrelevant? Or what? We will discuss fully.

Week 2: Israel and the Bomb: amimut (opacity); U.S. foreign policy and U.S. acceptance of a secret nuclear bomb; does Israel need a bomb? What is the NPT and why did Israel refuse to sign this important treaty?

anachronistic, undemocratic, and violates current international nuclear norms. Blurb on this excellent book here:
http://cup.columbia.edu/book/9780231136983


3.) Read overview and skim primary documents about Nixon, Kissinger and Golda Meir negotiating and devising the policy of Amimut here at the National Security Archive: “Israel Crosses the Threshold II: The Nixon Administration Debates the Emergence of the Israeli Nuclear Program” : http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb485/


Week 3: Current Nuclear Norms: A Nuclear Taboo, or a Tradition of Non-Use? Are nuclear strategies and norms different for regional powers in the modern era? Deterrence vs. “Posture Optimization Theory”


Week 4: Iraq: Saddam Hussein and the pursuit of nuclear weapons by Iraq.


5.) The National Security Archive: Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction (Read overview and skim primary documents): [http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/)

**Week 5: MIDTERM and Intro to Iran Nuclear Deal**

**Midterm in class on Tuesday**, bring green exam booklets to write exam essays.

Thursday—Intro to the Iran Nuclear Deal, see:
1.) The White House: *The Historic Deal that Will Prevent Iran from Acquiring a Nuclear Weapon*: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-deal](https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-deal)


**Week 6: Iran, the Nuclear Deal, and what next? Bomb Iran?**


**Week 7: Libya: A Nonproliferation success—but was it diplomacy or coercion, both? Or something else?**


**Week 8: Syria, Saudi Arabia and the problems of legal pursuit of nuclear power; nuclear power—good for global warming, but very risky for proliferation**

1.) “Syria was building atomic plant when Israel bombed site” *Reuters*, May 18, 2011: http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/syria-was-building-atomic-plant-when-israel-bombed-site

2.) We will watch 2007 attack on Syria video analysis: “Syrian non-compliance and Israeli attack on reactor”: http://vimeo.com/42788410


Paper Outline Due: xxxx

Weeks 9 & 10: Three Debates: All must Participate, based on research papers.

1.) Israel: Should Israel give up its bomb to strengthen the nuclear taboo in the region? Should the U.S. pressure Israel to join the NPT and give up its nuclear weapons? Could the US work toward a Nuclear-Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East?

2.) Iran: Was the Iran nuclear deal as excellent as its supporters and US allies say? Or a disaster? Could it be re-installed or fixed? Will there be war with Iran?

3.) The future of the region? The future of the Middle East is nuclear free vs. nuclear weapons will proliferate—there is no nuclear taboo. (Including debating nuclear power as much as possible—nuclear power is necessary and can be safely regulated vs. No nuclear power, it cannot be made safe from proliferation.) We will address country by country, in research teams.

Papers due, and review for Final ....

FINAL EXAM: Two hours, short and long essay questions. xxxx