

**GEOG 209- Geography of the Middle East, Spring 2017**  
MW 2:00-3:20, 129 McKenzie Hall

Instructor: Sanan Moradi, office: 202 Condon Hall, email: smoradi@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3:30 - 5:30 pm, or by appointment

**DRAFT - SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**What is this about?**

In this course, we aim to explore various social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental events and processes that construct the “Middle East.” In doing so, we apply a *geographical lens* to understand the various ways in which events and processes materialize, unfold, and interact with one another. We pay particular attention to the *spatiality* of events and processes, meaning that we do not view them in isolation. This would allow us to consider events and processes in light of their layout and interaction across space. We also place special emphasis on the *historicity* of events and processes, meaning that we investigate and analyze events and processes in relation to their deeper historical origins. This approach would enable us to have a better sense of how events and processes came to be what they are. In this course, we intend to critique the stereotypical images that often portray the region as a vast, hot, monolithic desert, filled with oil, bombs, covered women, and bearded anti-Western fanatics. We achieve this through an emphasis on diversity.

Throughout this course, we will investigate some major questions, including but not limited to:

- What ‘is’ the “Middle East?” Why do we call it as such? How was it constructed?
- What concepts and issues are commonly associated with the Middle East? And why?
- What does the political map of the Middle East tell us? And what doesn’t it tell us?
- How are dynamic geopolitical forces (re)shaping the Middle East?
- How do state and non-state (political, cultural, etc.) actors interact with one another?
- What are the congruencies, intersections, conflicts, and oppositions between various identities, and structures of the territorial state?
- How do ethnic/national and religious identities influence events and processes?
- How are ‘new identities’ manifested across space?
- How is the region related and connected to the ‘outside?’
- How is/has been the United States related to the region?

**Reading Material and Methods of Instruction:**

There will be no textbook in this course. Each session will have one required, and one or more recommended readings. Readings will include a wide variety of material, such as academic articles and book chapters, journalistic, and literary pieces and essays. The goal is to incorporate a wide variety of texts and authors from different perspectives and backgrounds. **All the readings will be**

**available to you on Canvas, under ‘Modules.’** Please do the readings **before** class (i.e. be ‘*good citizens*’).

Students are active partners in teaching and learning, not a passive audience of lectures. Thus, students are strongly encouraged to ask questions and contribute to class conversations. You can interrupt me as many times as you please. I love questions. In addition, the class will benefit from guest lecture, videos, and group activities to foster a diverse and interactive learning environment.

### **Grading and Assessment (100% Total)**

The total grade will be based on class participation, quizzes, essays, and exams. **You must turn in all exercises, and take all exams in order to pass the course.** It is expected that the students attend all classes and discussion sections, and submit all assignments on time. Since you have ample warning of due dates, penalties will be assessed for late exercises, unless the circumstances are exceptional. The various components of your grade are described below:

**Attendance and Participation (10%)** are based on students’ attendance in lectures and discussion sections, and their contribution to conversations.

**Pop Quizzes (10%)** are comprised of short questions, or instantaneous group activities asked and prompted in class. ‘Pop quizzes’ will be based on questions about the readings, a section of the day’s lecture, or a general group conversation.

**Assignments (20%)** consist of two medium-length essays on provided topics. Specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas in separate documents.

**Mid-term Exam (15%)** covers the first part of the term, and includes multiple choice, and short-to-medium-length questions. Students will have to bring only a pen/pencil to class.

**Final Exam (15%)** covers the second part of the term (i.e. non-cumulative), and will have the same format as the mid-term. Students will have to bring only a pen/pencil to class.

**Final Project Proposal (5%)** is comprised of one page proposal that includes the topic, and potential sources for your project.

**Final Project (25%)** is a more in-depth inquiry into a specific topic. The students can choose their topic. However, it has to be original (i.e. not done by another person or prepared for another course), and related to the topics discussed throughout the course. More details and ‘how-to’ guidelines will be posted on Canvas.

**Since all due dates are provided in advance, NO LATE ASSIGNMENT will be accepted. Please note, there are NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule unless students can provide documented evidence of an emergency.**

### **Ethical Codes of Conduct and DON'TS**

Respecting the class and your classmates is absolutely essential to the course. Throughout the course, we will have many conversations about many different subjects, some of them controversial. It is your responsibility to make sure that you respect others’ opinions, even if what

they say is the exact opposite of what you believe. In your participation in class conversations, you have to make sure that your speech and practice does not ridicule, insult, or denigrate any racial, ethnic/national, religious, sexual, or other personal or collective identity, value, and belief system. Learning is only possible if we provide a safe and respectful environment for all.

Plagiarism is NEVER acceptable in this class. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Director of Student Judicial Affairs. The student will receive an 'F' for the course if that office finds the student guilty. To educate yourself on this matter, please consult the following link: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>. You are also welcome to get help from your instructor, or your GTF on what constitutes plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

### **Accessibility**

We strive for an inclusive and accessible learning environment. If you have special needs or a disability that impedes your learning due to the physical condition of the classroom, or the structure, content or methods of this class, please come talk to me. You can also reach the Accessible Education Center (formerly, Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoac@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoac@uoregon.edu).

### **Schedule summary and due dates**

4/5	Instructions for assignment 1 handed out in class
4/24	Assignment 1 due in class
4/24	Instructions for assignment 2 and final project handed out in class
5/3	Midterm exam (during usual class time)
5/8	Final Project Proposal
5/24	Assignment 2 due in class
6/5	Final Project due in class
6/14	Final Exam (at 14:45 pm, in class)

**\*The syllabus is open to changes. Any further changes will be announced on Canvas**

**GEOG 209- COURSE SCHEDULE:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic*</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 1: Apr. 3 &amp; 5</b>	Introduction  What is the 'Middle East?'	
<b>Week 2: Apr. 10 &amp; 12</b>	Physical landscapes: land, water, and the environment  Guest lecture: Water in Jordan	
<b>Week 3: Apr. 17 &amp; 19</b>	Social and cultural landscapes: population, languages and religions  Representation and Orientalism	
<b>Week 4: Apr. 24 &amp; 26</b>	The Ottoman Empire and its dissolution  Guest lecture: Israel and Palestine	<u>Assignment 1</u> <b>DUE:</b> <b>Mon., Apr. 24</b>
<b>Week 5: May 1 &amp; 3</b>	States, nations, territories and democracy  Mid-term	<b>Mid-term:</b> <b>Wed., May 3</b>
<b>Week 6: May 8 &amp; 10</b>	Islam, war and peace?  Post-2003 Iraq, and ISIS	Final Project Proposal <b>DUE:</b> <b>Mon., May 8</b>
<b>Week 7: May 15 &amp; 17</b>	The 'Arab Spring' (Tunisia and Egypt)  The Syrian Civil War	
<b>Week 8: May 22 &amp; 24</b>	Refugees and humanitarian crises  Price of bullets: the political economy of war	<u>Assignment 2</u> <b>DUE:</b> <b>Wed., May 24</b>
<b>Week 9: May 29 &amp; 31</b>	Monday: No Class- Memorial Day  Women, marginalized sexualities, and children	
<b>Week 10: Jun. 5 &amp; 7</b>	Of <i>burjes</i> and slums: urbanization and inequality  Music and art	Final Project <b>DUE:</b> <b>Mon., Jun. 5</b>
<b><u>Final Exam</u></b>	<b>Wed., Jun. 14, at 14:45 pm</b>	

\* See Canvas-Modules for course readings