The International Politics of the Middle East, POLI 4040

Spring 2012
1:30-3:00 TTh, 104 Audubon Hall

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Course Objectives: This course examines contemporary security conditions in the greater Middle East region, including conventional arms balances, weapons of mass destruction, guerrilla war, terrorism, and economic and political conditions affecting security. It focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on threats to US security interests in the region.

Readings: All readings listed below are available in electronic form either online (the Wikipedia articles) or on the Moodle webpage for this class, which also contains the class handouts and powerpoints. For help with Moodle, see http://itsweb.lsu.edu/Moodle/Assistance/item3400.html. The background readings listed in section I, below, are essential for understanding most of the subsequent readings. Read them before the semester starts. I will not cover them in class.

Grades: You will have a midterm exam (Thursday, March 8), a final exam (Monday, May 7, 3-5 pm), and a term paper (due Thursday, April 19). The best two of your three grades will each count for 40% of your final grade; the worst will count for 20%. Exams will consist of definitions and essay questions. They will not be cumulative. I give makeups only under exceptional circumstances and only with prior permission from me. If you want to take this class for Honors College credit, see me.

Term Paper:

Your term paper can be on almost any topic related to security in the greater Middle East, including one of the region’s many wars or other crises, a regional guerrilla or terrorist group, security conditions affecting a particular country, or issues affecting past or present US security. Do not choose a topic covered extensively in class lectures or readings. Your paper must go well beyond what is covered in class readings. If you have any doubt about the suitability of a topic, see me before you start.

You must submit a one-paragraph (i.e., at least five sentences) summary of your proposed paper by Thursday, February 2, along with its title, the names of at least six books, articles, or websites you plan to use, and your email address. I will not grade this, but you must get my approval on it before starting your paper.
Your paper must be 13-17 double-spaced pages in length, including notes and/or bibliography but not cover page. I will grade it mainly on the depth and insightfulness of your analysis, though I will also consider its organization, quality of sources, and writing style (for native English speakers only). Your paper should be factual and analytical, not opinionated. At least four of your sources must have been published in 2006 or later. The paper is due on Thursday, April 19, with no exceptions. Late papers will receive at least one letter grade off. See my handout “Guidelines for Writing Term Papers” for tips on finding sources and organizing and writing your paper.

Schedule of Readings (read in the order listed):

I. Background Readings
- Wikipedia articles “Indo-Pakistani Relations” and “Civil War in Afghanistan.”

II. The Conventional Military Balance and the Revolution in Military Affairs
- Wikipedia article “Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.”

III. Weapons of Mass Destruction: Nuclear Weapons
IV. Weapons of Mass Destruction: Chemical and Biological Weapons, Missiles
- Wikipedia articles “Chemical Warfare” and “Biological Warfare.”

V. Weapons of Mass Destruction: Countermeasures
- Wikipedia articles “Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” “Chemical Weapons Convention,” “Biological Weapons Convention,” and “Missile Technology Control Regime.”
- James Dobbins, et. al., Coping With a Nuclearizing Iran (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011), pp. 71-109 only.

VI. Asymmetric Threats: Guerrilla War
- Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), pp. 81-128 only.

VII. Asymmetric Threats: Terrorism
- Wikipedia article “Hamas.”

VIII. Economic Aspects of Security
IX. Domestic Political Aspects of Security