The Comparative Politics of the Middle East, POLI 4061

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

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Course Objectives: This course examines domestic politics in the contemporary Middle East. It focuses on the types of political systems that exist in the region and the recent changes that have occurred as a result of the Arab Spring. It also provides a detailed overview of recent political situation in the various countries of the region.


Grades: You will have a midterm exam (Thursday, October 11), a final exam (Monday, December 3, 12:30-2:30 pm), and a term paper (due Thursday, November 15). 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 and will not be cumulative. I give makeups only under exceptional circumstances and only with prior permission from me. To take this class for Honors College credit, see me.

Schedule of Readings (read in the order listed):

I. Introduction (August 21-28).
   • Long, Reich, Gasiorowski, Government and Politics, ch. 1. (Read the new edition version posted on Moodle.)

II. Monarchies (August 30-September 20).
   • Long, Reich, Gasiorowski, Government and Politics, chs. 4, 6, 10, 15.
III. Authoritarian Republics (September 25-October 25).
- Wikipedia articles “Ba’athism” and “Nasserism.”
- Long, Reich, Gasiorowski, Government and Politics, chs. 5, 9, 13, 16, 17, 14, 7, 3.
- Sassoon, Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party.

IV. Pluralistic Regimes (October 30-November 13).
- Long, Reich, Gasiorowski, Government and Politics, ch. 11.
- Long, Reich, Gasiorowski, Government and Politics, chs. 2, 8, 12.

V. The Arab Spring and its Aftermath (November 15-29).
- Daphne McCurdy, “Morocco’s New Elections: Just Like the Old Elections?” Foreign Policy, November 28, 2011.

Term Paper: Your term paper can be on almost any topic dealing with domestic politics in the Middle East, such as a study of an important leader or political organization or a major domestic political event like the Algerian revolution or the Lebanese civil war. Do not choose a topic covered extensively in class or in the readings. You must go well beyond the material contained in any class readings pertaining to your topic. If you have any doubt about the suitability of a topic, see me before you begin.

Your paper must be 13-17 double-spaced pages in length, including notes and/or bibliography but excluding the cover page. You must submit a one-paragraph (i.e., at least five sentences) summary of your paper to me by Tuesday, September 11, including its title and the names of at least six books, articles, or websites you plan to use, including at least four published after 2005. The paper is due on Thursday, November 15. Late papers will receive at least one letter grade off.

I will grade your paper mainly on the depth and insightfulness of your analysis, though also on 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 after 2005.

The best places to look for source material are the LSU library catalog and the databases available at www.lib.lsu.edu/databases, especially LexisNexis Academic. The reference librarians in Middleton Library can help you use these resources effectively. Browse the following journals: Current History, Middle East Journal, International Journal of Middle East Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Middle East Report, Middle East Policy, and Journal of Palestine Studies; most are available at www.lib.lsu.edu/epubs/ejournals.html. Internet searches
can be useful, though quality and reliability vary greatly. Once you have found a few good sources, use them to find others, e.g., by continuing to search with the same keywords, looking in other issues of the same journal or magazine, looking at footnotes or the bibliography in books and articles, looking near a book in the stacks, or using the library catalog to search for other books with the same subject classification. Do not cite class readings, local newspapers, Wikipedia, or other encyclopedias, though you can use them for general information.

For an excellent guide to writing a research paper, see http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/, especially “The Writing Process” and “Academic Writing.” Use a separate cover page giving the title, your name, the date, and the class name and number. Break your paper up into separate sections with section titles. Include a proper introduction and conclusion, as explained in http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/1/. Organize your paper to flow smoothly from one section to another. Express your ideas clearly. Each paragraph should express a single idea and should not be too long, as explained in http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/. Avoid run-on sentences. Use proper writing style, as explained in http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/, “Mechanics” and “Grammar.” Do not plagiarize, as explained in http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/. Plagiarism usually is easy to spot and may lead to expulsion from LSU. Quote only when necessary, as explained in http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/. Cite your sources and any quotations correctly, using either MLA or Chicago style, as explained in http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/ or http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/. If you use endnotes or a bibliography, put them on a separate page. Proofread your work, using a dictionary or dictionary.com when necessary. Be sure your paper is neat and clean. Keep an extra copy. For help with your writing, make an appointment with a tutor at http://exc.lsu.edu/writing.html. Remember: Good ideas are wasted if they are not clearly presented.