We will study Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and the Israel-Palestine conflict both to learn about the central issues in each country’s politics, and to gain insight into some key questions about politics in the region as a whole. These include:

- The effect of religion on Middle Eastern politics and the potential for democracy in Arab countries and in Iran:

  1) Most Arab regimes are secular, and while they hold elections, there is no reasonable prospect of the populace being allowed to choose the king or president who possesses most of the power. The regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran combines an elected president and parliament with an unelected Supreme Leader (a cleric) and an unelected Council of Guardians, both of whom can overturn legislation passed by the president and parliament, as well as disqualify candidates for office. Although the Supreme Leader in Iran is a religious official and Arab kings and presidents are not, some authors have argued (at least before Iran’s 2009 presidential elections) that politics has been more competitive, and popular participation in politics greater, in Iran post-revolution than in many secular Arab countries, a claim we will evaluate by comparing Egypt and Iran.

  2) Civil liberties, particularly the right of people to live, dress, worship, socialize, and marry as they see fit, are an essential part of democracy. The Iranian government has interfered extensively in people’s personal lives to make them more “Islamic,” to a degree much greater than is the case in secular Arab regimes. In this type of Islamic political system, are attempts by middle-class, Westernized Iranian youth to dress as they please, to go out in public with members of the opposite sex, or to have premarital sex, a political act – a form of rebellion against the state – as many such youth claim?

  3) In Arab regimes where some level of competition for parliamentary seats is allowed, Islamist groups which seek a larger role for Islam (as they define it) in public life, have won many seats in parliament, but government repression prevents them from acting freely or winning as many seats as they otherwise might. This raises two key questions: a) Are the views and goals of these groups compatible with democracy? B) If not, would allowing these groups to participate in politics lead them to moderate their anti-democratic positions? Drawing largely on the example of European Communist parties, which many believe shifted from the goal of violent revolution to peaceful reform when they became a legal part of European politics, many scholars
have argued that allowing Arab Islamist groups to compete in elections will lead them to moderate their views. Others have argued that excluding them from politics will lead Islamist activists to become more radical, and perhaps even join violent movements. We will address these issues in detail in our first paper, in which you will read extensively about the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s positions and activities in the Egyptian parliament, critically evaluate the “participation-moderation” thesis, and write a memo to the Obama administration suggesting whether the U.S. government should pressure the Mubarak government to lift limits on the Brotherhood’s political participation.

- The role of oil in supporting authoritarianism and undermining tendencies toward democracy. Is there a causal connection between the reliance of Iran and many Arab economies on oil and the lack of democracy in these countries? We will examine this issue in some detail in Iraq, looking both at how the country’s dependence on oil might undermine democracy, and at how struggles for control of oil have greatly exacerbated Kurdish-Arabic struggles in post-2003 Iraq.

- The role of “stateness” and electoral systems on sectarian conflict. Iraqi politics since 2003 has periodically been characterized by high levels of violence between religious and ethnic groups, including heavy reliance of Arab Sunnis and Shi’a on non-state sectarian militias for protection against and violence against each other. This violence is now decreasing, but voting behavior is still largely dictated for all Iraqis by ethnic/religious identity, with almost all political parties based explicitly on and appealing almost exclusively to people of only one religious or ethnic group. Was this a “natural” and inevitable result of decades of sectarianism in pre-2003 Iraq? Or did the collapse of the state, the dissolution of the army, and the choice of the electoral system for Iraq’s “founding” 2005 election significantly increase the propensity for people to identify and organize along sectarian lines.

While this is not a course on U.S. foreign policy, U.S. policy affects politics in much of the Middle East more directly than in almost any other country in the world. The most obvious example of this is in Iraq, where the U.S. decision to invade, and the way the invasion and its immediate aftermath were carried out, completely reshaped Iraqi politics. Similarly, the possibility for a final peace settlement between Palestinians and Israelis is strongly affected by decisions that the U.S. makes, and the shape of Iranian politics may well be deeply changed by U.S. decisions on how to approach Iranian nuclear development. As a result, we will spend some time examining the ways that U.S. choices have affected Middle Eastern politics and may do so in the future.

A key goal of this class is to sharpen your ability to understand and assess the validity of complex and competing arguments. Each person in the class will be responsible for making a presentation (titled “Discussion” in the syllabus) which requires explaining, understanding, and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of such arguments. On September 10 we will analyze as a class two competing arguments on whether the invasion of Iraq could be justified as a
humanitarian intervention as a model of how this kind of argument analysis and critique should be carried out.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are two papers, a discussion presentation, and a final exam. The first paper (30%) is a 10-12 page paper assessing the prospects for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to be a democratic actor and the persuasiveness of the “participation leads to moderation” thesis. The second paper (30%) is a 13-15 page paper on reasons for sectarian voting in Iraq. 15% of your grade will be based on your oral presentation of the discussion question, and the final exam is worth 25%.

Books to Be Purchased


I EXPECT YOU TO HAVE DONE THE READING LISTED FOR EACH DATE ON THE SYLLABUS BEFORE CLASS MEETS ON THAT DATE.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Th Sept 3: Introduction

**EGYPT**

T Sept 8: Basics of Egyptian Politics


- “Pharaohs in Waiting,” Mary Anne Weaver, *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2003, excerpts (ER)

Th Sept 10: Dry-Run of How to Present Arguments in the Discussions: In 2003, Was It Reasonable To See a Western Invasion of Iraq as a Justified Humanitarian Intervention?


The 2005 Egyptian Elections and Their Aftermath


• “Egyptian Women Demand Mubarak Apology Over Vote Violence,” *Khaleej Times*, May 30, 2005 (ER)


• “Damanhour: By Hook or By Crook,” Joshua Stacher, *Middle East Report*, Spring 2006 (ER)


T Sept 15: Does Participation in Politics Moderate Islamist Parties? How Moderate and Democratic is Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood?


• The Open Meeting with Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri Part 2, April 2008, excerpts from sections on the Muslim Brotherhood’s party program (transl. Langohr) (ER)

Th Sept 17: Is the U.S. Position on Egyptian Democratization and the Brotherhood Changing?


• “Condoleezza Rice’s Remarks from her Cairo Speech at the American University in Cairo, June 20, 2005 (ER)

• “Obama Shifts Tone Toward Islamic Parties,” Eli Lake, Washington Times, June 5, 2009 (ER)

Discussion 1: Analysis and comparison of the Rice and Obama Cairo speeches

IRAQ


• The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division, Anderson and Stansfield, 14-25, 32-40, 50-64, 69-80


T Sept 24: Two Wars, and Sanctions


• A History of the Modern Middle East, William Cleveland, (Westview Press, 2000), 463-469 (ER)


T Sept 29: Why War in 2003?


• “An Unnecessary War?” John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, Foreign Policy, January/February 2003 (ER)

• Excerpts from “Statement of Judith S. Yaphe to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States” (the “9/11 Commission), July 9, 2003 and from The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, pp. 65-66 (both on ER under “Statement of Yaphe”)

**Discussion 2:** Was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 the act of an aggressive, irrational leader, or a rational decision? Could conventional deterrence have prevented Saddam Hussein from using or sharing nuclear or chemical weapons with others in 2003, making war then unnecessary?

**Th Oct 1: The Major Iraqi Players in 2003**


- “Iraq’s Shi’ites Under Occupation,” International Crisis Group, September 9, 2003, 7-11, 15-20 (ER). We will be reading many excerpts of reports from the International Crisis Group. To find them, go to [http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm). On the pull-down menu “Reports by Country” on the left-hand side of the page, go to “Iraq.” At the bottom of the new page you will see a list of all the reports on Iraq (and in later sections of the syllabus do the same for “Iran” and “Israel/Occupied Territories”). When you first try to open a report the website will ask you to register and create a password in order to give you access – this is free, and you will not receive any emails from ICG, nor will they give your data to anyone.

- The Future of Iraq, 91-92, 95-96


**T Oct 6: The Effects of State Collapse and The Electoral System on Sectarian Violence**


-----------------------------------T OCT 6 – PAPER #1 DUE-----------------------------------
Th Oct 8: The Rise, Fall, and Uncertain Future of Shi’a-Arab Sunni Conflict

- “Excerpts from the Blog ‘Baghdad Burning,’” Riverbend (ER)
- “Iraq’s Civil War, the Sadrists, and the Surge,” International Crisis Group, February 2008, 2-7 (ER)

Discussion 3: Sectarianism in Iraq Before and After 2003

Th Oct 13 – COLUMBUS DAY BREAK


- The Spirit of Democracy, Larry Diamond, (Times Books, 2008), 74-79 (ER)
- “Sharing Alaska-Style,” Steven C. Clemons, New York Times, April 9, 2003 (ER)
- “Can Iraq Overcome the Oil Curse?” Robert Looney, World Economics, January-March 2006, 32-37 (ER)
If the Oil Is Under Your Soil, Should You Get to Keep It? Questions of Distribution (T Oct 20)


Discussion 4: Kurdish Power and Desires Post-2003

IRAN

Th Oct 22: The Pahlavi Shahs

- The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War, 140-148

T Oct 27: The Islamic Revolution & Khomeini’s Rule

- Modern Middle East, 148-161
- Reconstructed Lives: Women and Iran’s Islamic Revolution, 54-71, 107-131, excerpts (ER)

Th Oct 29: Politics and Social Life in Iran Since the Revolution

- Modern Middle East, 161-166
- Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution, Nikki Keddie, (Yale, 2003) (ER)
- “Political Participation in Revolutionary Iran,” Mohsen Milani, in Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform, ed. John Esposito, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997) (ER)
Discussion 5: Is Iran post-1979 more democratic than it was under the Shah? Is it more democratic than secular authoritarian Arab countries?

T Nov 3: Changes in Civil Liberties (and Socioeconomic Conditions) 1979-2009

- *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, Nikki Keddie, 285-302 (ER)

Discussion 6: Changing in Women’s Rights Over Time in Iran

Th Nov 5: Iran and Its Foreign and Nuclear Policies

- “U.S. – Iranian Engagement: The View from Tehran,” International Crisis Group, June 2, 2009, 2-6 (ER)
- “Tehran’s Take,” Mohsen Milani, *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2009 (ER)
- “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities,” National Intelligence Estimate, November 2007 (ER)

Discussion 7: What Are the Goals of the Iranian Regime?

Discussion 8: What Are the Sanctions on Iran?

Discussion 9: Have Sanctions Actually Hurt Iranians, or the Iranian Regime? Would Different Kinds of Sanctions Be Better?

T Nov 10: Is a U.S. or Israeli Attack on Iran Advisable?

- “The Case for Bombing Iran,” Norman Podhoretz, *Commentary*, June 2007 (ER)
• “Time For An Israeli Strike?” John Bolton, Washington Post, July 2, 2009 (ER)

• “Stalin, Mao, and….Ahmedinijad?” Fareed Zakaria, Newsweek, October 29, 2007 (ER)

• “They Are Not Fanatics,” Mohamed ElBaradei, Newsweek, June 1, 2009 (ER)

• “They May Not Want the Bomb: And Other Unexpected Truths,” Fareed Zakaria, Newsweek, June 1, 2009 (ER)

• “Apocalypse Not,” Michael Desch, The American Conservative, May 18, 2009 (ER)

• “Will Iran Be Next?” James Fallows, The Atlantic, December 2004 (ER)

• Excerpts from “Study on A Possible Israeli Strike on Iran’s Nuclear Development Facilities,” Anthony Cordesman and Abdullah Toukan, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 14, 2009 (ER)

Discussion 10: Can More Economic Pressure Be Brought to Bear on Iran?

Discussion 11: Podhoretz’s Argument in Favor of A U.S. Attack on Iran

Discussion 12: Is Iran A Rational Foreign Policy Actor? Part I

Discussion 13: Is A U.S. or Israeli Attack on Iran Practical? What Could Iran Do to Retaliate?

Th Nov 12: Are There Other Options? Unconditional Engagement or Engagement with Pressure?

• “U.S. – Iranian Engagement: The View from Tehran,” International Crisis Group, June 2, 2009, 6-10, 13-16, 20-23 (ER)

• Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East Dennis Ross and David Makovsky, (Viking, 2009), 216-233 (ER)


Discussion 14: Iran’s View of the U.S.-Iran Relationship

Discussion 15: Is Iran A Rational Foreign Policy Actor? Part II
Discussion 16: No Carrots, No Sticks, No Preconditions: Tirman’s Argument

Discussion 17: Tirman vs. Makovsky/Ross

Israel-Palestine

T Nov 17: The Rise of Zionism and the Formation of Israel

- “The Jewish State,” Theodor Herzl, in *The Zionist Idea*, 204-225 (ER)

Discussion 18: Herzl’s and Jabotinsky’s Arguments for Zionism


- Bickerton and Clausner, 143-150, 187-188 (ER)
- Bickerton and Clausner, 190-193 (ER)

Discussion 19: Marketing the Settlements in the U.S.

Discussion 20: Christian Zionist Support for West Bank Settlements

T Nov 24: The Emergence of Hamas, and the Oslo Accords

- Bickerton and Clausner, 276-283, 327-334 (ER)
• “Camp David II: Assumptions and Consequences,” Shibley Telhami, Current History, January 2001 (ER)


-------------------------------------T NOV 24: PAPER #2 DUE-------------------------------------

----------------------------------------TH NOV 26 – THANKSGIVING----------------------------------------

T Dec 1: Hamas Wins the Elections, International Isolation, and the Gaza War

• Bickerton and Clausner, 353 and 363-369


• “After Gaza,” International Crisis Group, August 2, 2007, 11-15 (ER)


• “Ending the War in Gaza,” International Crisis Group, January 5, 2009, 3-6 (ER)

• “Gaza’s Unfinished Business,” International Crisis Group, April 23, 2009, 1-5, 18-22 (ER)

Th Dec 3 – T Dec 8: Will Israel Stop Building Settlements? Will Hamas Change Its Position on Israel?


• “Movement and Access Restrictions in the West Bank,” World Bank, May 9, 2007, 1-11 (ER)

• “Stop the Deceit and Whitewashing,” Ha’aretz Editorial, January 30, 2009 (ER)

• “Israel to U.S.: Stop Favoring Palestinians,” Barak Ravid, Ha’aretz, June 1, 2009 (ER)

• “Playing the Jesus Card,” M.J. Rosenberg, Foreign Policy, July 24, 2009 (ER)


• “In Two Settlements, A Sign of Hope for A Deal,” Ethan Bronner and Isabel Kershner, New York Times, July 26, 2009 (ER)

Discussion 21: Outpost Settlements and Resistance to Israeli Withdrawal

---------------------------------------M DEC 14, 2:30 p.m. FINAL EXAM---------------------------------------