THE GRADUATE CENTER
MES 73000/HIST 78110: HISTORY OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST
(M 6:30-8:30)

Course Description
This course introduces students to major dynamics and issues in the history of the Middle East in the past two centuries and seeks to nurture critical historical thinking about the region. We will touch on a wide range of topics including different forms of colonial intervention, bureaucratic reforms and reforming elites, incorporation into the modern world economy, the move from empire to a new state order, state and nation building, the politics and culture of nationalism, post-colonial states and authoritarian regimes, Islamist mobilization, and recent neo-liberal politics. Proceeding in a roughly chronological order, we will weave thematic discussions related to women and gender, environmental history, urban history, etc. into that framework. All along, a central arching theme of the course will be modernity: how to understand it, what shape it took at different times and places, how it was perceived and experienced, what challenges and tensions it engendered, who were the beneficiaries and losers?

Class discussions will be guided by reading questions provided on Blackboard, one of which students will answer in writing before class. Here are some examples: To what extent was Ottoman reform founded upon emulation of the West? How was WWI a watershed in ME political culture? How unique were Britain’s conduct, and failure, as mandatory power in Palestine; or did they epitomize mandatory policies everywhere and the Mandates system itself? How were women and gender deployed in nationalist and modernizing projects in the Middle East in the inter-war period? What best explains the resilience of late twentieth-century Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes? What has given Islamist movements (of different kinds) their purchase? A decade after the Arab Spring and two after the US invasion of Iraq, in what ways is the Middle East “new,” or is it?

Readings
Course readings (journal articles, book chapters, etc.) are posted on the course Blackboard page under Content or available as CUNY electronic resources (marked ER on the syllabus). All are listed below under the sessions for which they are assigned. You are expected to read at least a number of these critical pieces for each session.

Note, however, that reading these basic narratives is just a beginning—you must proceed from these to the critical readings posted on Blackboard or available as CUNY electronic resources.

**Course Learning Objectives**

1) Students will build a strong grasp of key issues and dynamics in modern ME history.
2) Students will develop an appreciation of scholarly debates and changing historiographical approaches to the ME and will be able to engage critically with relevant scholarly literature.
3) Students will be able to present effectively (orally and in writing) their analysis of various issues in ME history.

**Coursework and Assessment**

1) Regular and punctual attendance and active class participation based on reading carefully the assigned literature are a critical component of this course (30% of grade).
2) In preparation for class, students will submit electronically by class time a careful 2-page answer (with a proper apparatus) to one of the reading questions for that class (at least 8 pieces; 40% of grade).
3) The final assignment is a 6-8 pages argument-based analytical essay (on one of a number of topics I will provide) (due electronically 11/27 or 12/18 depending on topic; 30% of grade).

**CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (8/29): Introduction**

**Week 2 (9/12): Approaches to the Study of the Modern Middle East**

Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, Ch. 4-7.

Gelvin, Introductions to Parts I and II and Ch. 3-4.


**Week 3 (9/19): Nineteenth Century Modernity in Egypt: Liberating? Subordinating? Brutal?**

Cleveland, Ch. 4-6 (relevant parts); Gelvin, Ch. 5-6 (relevant parts).


**Week 4 (9/29): Nineteenth-Century Bureaucratic Reforms and Ottoman Modernity**

Cleveland, Ch. 4-5 (relevant parts); Gelvin, Introduction to Part II, Ch. 5, 6 (section on Lebanon).

Şükrü Hanoğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Introduction and Ch. 4.


Cleveland, Ch. 7-8.

Hanoğlu, Ch. 5, 6.


Elizabeth Frierson, “Gender, Consumption and Patriotism: The Emergence of an Ottoman Public Sphere,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Dale Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, 99-125.

**Week 6 (10/17): Post-WWI: A New State Order; Living with Imperialism**

Cleveland, Ch. 9, 11-12 (or Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*, Ch. 6-8, available as ER)
Roger Owen, “End of Empires,” Ch. 1 in *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern ME*.


**Week 7 (10/24): Post WWI: State/Nation Building in Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia**

Cleveland, Ch. 10, 12 (section on Saudi Arabia).


Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Ch. 3.


Week 8 (10/21): British Mandate Palestine and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel and the Arab Israeli Conflict: A Primer*, MERIP 2014 (relevant parts).


Week 9 (11/7): Nationalism, Political Culture, and Gender Politics in the Inter-War Middle East

(Draw also on readings from the last three classes as needed)

Gelvin, Ch. 13 (“The Invention and Spread of Nationalisms”).


Beth Baron, “Constructing Egyptian Honor,” Ch. 2 of *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender and Politics*.

Arat, “The Project of Modernity” and Chehabi, “Staging the Emperor’s New Clothes” (rerad).


Week 10 (11/14): Nasser-Era Decolonization and Transformations in State and Society

Cleveland, Ch. 15, 16, 17; Gelvin, Ch. 15.


**Week 11 (11/21): Islamic Resurgence and Islamist Politics**

Cleveland, Ch. 18; Gelvin, “Political Islam” (Ch. 20 in 3rd edition, posted on BB).


Asef Bayat, “Does Radical Islam Have an Urban Ecology,” Ch. 9 in *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*.


**Week 12 (11/28): Late 20th-Century Authoritarian Regimes**
Cleveland, Ch. 21, 26; Gelvin, Ch. 15, 19.

Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life*, Ch. 1-3 (Ch. 4-5 optional) (ER).


Adam Hanieh, “Mapping the Neo-Liberal Experience,” Ch. 3 of *Lineage of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*.

**Week 13 (12/5): Entrenched Occupation in Palestine; The US Invasion and the Remaking of Iraq**


Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, Ch. 7 “Iraq: The First Arab Shia State”


Harith Hasan “State Building, Sectarianization, and Neo-Patrimonialism in Iraq,” in *The contemporary Middle East in an Age of Upheaval*, ed. by James Gelvin, pp 201-18.

**Week 14 (12/9): In the Wake of the Iraq War and the “Arab Spring” Uprisings: A new Middle East?**

Gelvin, Conclusion
James Gelvin, “Introduction: A New Middle East?” and “The Syrian Civil War and the New Middle East,” in *The contemporary Middle East in an Age of Upheaval*, pp. 1-20, 185-200.

Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life* (reread relevant chapters).

*Islamism after the Arab Spring: Between the Islamic State and the Nation State* (Brookings Institution Report, January 2017).


Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, Ch. 5-6 (“The Battle of Islamic Fundamentalisms” and “The Tide Turns”).

Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer* (relevant parts).


*Reading questions and a list of further readings/books of interest for each course session will be provided on Blackboard before our first class meeting. I will hand out questions for the analytical essays in early November.*