GO 365 ISLAM AND POLITICS IN THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST  
Spring 2010

Class meetings: Tue and Thu 12:40-2 p.m., Library 213. 
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Office Hours: Wednesday 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: 
This course traces the different ways in which Islam has informed politics in the modern Middle East. Starting with the intellectual engagements of Islamic scholars with political modernity in the late nineteenth century, we ask how and why Islam came to play such an important political role in the contemporary Middle East, and investigate its relationship with nation-states, colonialism, democracy and modern governments. We will study the growth of Islamist movements that focus on social welfare, on alternative economic models, on creating Islamic states, and on participating in democratic political orders. We will also discuss Islamic responses to feminism and human rights, Islamic ‘culture wars,’ new Islamic media and televangelists, the rise of jihadism and transnational Islamist networks. We will draw on examples from Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and occasionally Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS: 
This is an upper level seminar in which we will be exploring classic as well as cutting-edge writings on Islam and politics, and my aim is to give you a solid grounding in the many roles religion plays in the politics of modern Muslim countries and the tools to understand the dynamics underlying some of the most controversial contemporary debates on Islam in the political process.

We will structure our discussion of the readings each week around the following main questions: Why did Islam become politically important in this case? In what form did it play a political role – through its religious institutions? As the basis of a group’s identity or as something that rallied community sentiment? As a set of values and moral guidelines that were important to people? Who has the authority to say what the Islamic way is in this case, and why is this interpretation persuasive or relevant in a given time and place? Does the Islamic tradition prove itself to be flexible for political mobilization, and is it more amenable to a status quo or an oppositional political interpretation in this case? What does this case/set of cases teach you about the possible political uses of Islam?

The most fundamental requirement is that you do the readings thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss them critically. Attendance and punctuality are important – students who miss more than one class will have their participation grade reduced by one point for each further class missed, and latecomers will be marked absent. If you are absent for more than one class you will also be required to come in to office hours by the following week prepared to answer a few questions about the missed week’s readings.

Your participation will form an important component of the class, and therefore of your grade (15%) and you may be called on to discuss a particular question relating to any reading due for a particular class. Students who do not demonstrate that they have done the readings and are able to engage in discussion should expect an unsatisfactory grade by mid-semester.

Your first assignment will be to write a critical review paper of any one session’s readings (to be selected by the second session of the semester) and present your paper in the relevant class (20% of class grade). Please come to the second class session prepared to pick a day’s reading, with no more than one student per day. Your review paper should be in the form of an essay of about 4-5 pages (double spaced, Times
New Roman 12 point font, one inch margins). It should not summarize the readings but should analyze them with regard to the “main questions” of the course (above).

Your second assignment will be a short take-home midterm essay assignment with a choice of questions asking you to analyze and pull together readings from the first six weeks and to apply some of their insights to other cases (30% of class grade). Your final assignment will be a research paper of 10-15 pages in which you apply the insights of the approaches to Islam and politics you have learned to a case of your choice, which may be an Islamist movement, or a study of Islam in the political process of one or more states, or an analysis of the role of Islam in a particular political debate (e.g. women’s rights or human rights) in the Middle East (35% of class grade).

You are encouraged to keep up with news reports on Islam in the political process in the New York Times, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times, Economist, Financial Times, Guardian and the news wires (AP, Reuters, etc). As an extra credit assignment you may pick a news article of at least 500 words that is specifically about Islam in the politics of a particular country and write a 2-3 page essay analyzing the assumptions the article makes about Islam and politics and considering how the insights you have acquired through the course readings would help you interpret that article. You will also be asked to briefly discuss that article with your classmates. A well-written and analytical essay will get you an extra 5% for the class; an unsatisfactory essay will not get any credit.

CLASSROOM COMPORTMENT AND CIVILITY:
No laptops may be used during class unless you have a certified medical requirement. Cell phones must be turned off and any student observed using a cell phone will be asked to leave the class and marked absent for the day. Please be sure to use the facilities before class as students constantly entering and leaving the classroom is disruptive to discussion and the learning process and will result in a poor participation grade.

REQUIRED READINGS:
Readings consist of book chapters and academic articles and are on e-reserve unless otherwise noted on the syllabus. Several readings are on Blackboard and can be downloaded in PDF format, for your convenience. A couple of readings are on closed three hour desk reserve, and you should plan to get these several days in advance of the class for which they are due. No excuses will be accepted for an inability to access these readings.

Islam, modernity and political thought
Tuesday January 26:
Class introduction. Be sure to do the following background readings in preparation for the first class, particularly if you have no background in Islamic studies or Middle Eastern history. Esposito and Voll Islam and Democracy Ch 2, “State and Opposition in Islamic History.” Albert Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, Ch 1, “The Islamic State”

http://quod.lib.umich.edu.lucy2.skidmore.edu:2048/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;rgn=full%20text;idno=heb00896.0001.001;didno=heb00896.0001.001;view=image;seq=00000013;node=heb00896.0001.001%3A4

Thursday January 28:
Albert Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age. Ch 5 “Jamal al-din al-Afghani” (e-book on library site)

**Islam, the West and anti-colonialism in the 20th Century:**

*Tuesday February 2:*

*Thursday February 4:*
Selections from Charles Wendell Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna (to be distributed in class)

**Contesting Islam’s place in modern state politics**

*The role of Islam as law and ‘national’ religion in modern Middle Eastern states*

*Tuesday February 9:*
Hourani *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. Ch 5, “Muhammad Abduh.”
http://quod.lib.umich.edu.lucy2.skidmore.edu:2048/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb00896
http://www.escholarship.org/editions/view?docId=ft4q2nb3gp&chunk.id=ch03&toc.depth=1&toc.id=ch0 3&brand=ucpress

*Thursday February 11:*

**Radical Islamic protest as class struggle?**

*Tuesday February 16:*

*Thursday February 18:*

**Redefining jihad: Islamist violence in the 20th Century**

*Tuesday February 23:*

*Thursday February 25:*
Ideals and realities of Islamic theocracies:
**Tuesday March 2:**
Khomeini Islam and Revolution Ch 2 “The Necessity of Islamic Government.”

**Thursday March 4:**
Madawi al-Rasheed A History of Saudi Arabia Chs 3-5 (Blackboard)

Mobilizing Islam in civil society and politics:
The growth of a ‘civic Islam’:
**Tuesday March 9:**
**MIDTERM ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED AT END OF CLASS.**

**Thursday March 11:**

**MIDTERM ESSAY DUE FRIDAY MARCH 12 BY 5 P.M.**

SPRING BREAK MARCH 14-21 – NO CLASS.

Islamist party politics and ‘post-Islamism’
**Tuesday March 23:**

**Thursday March 25:**

The political economy of Islamism:
**Tuesday March 30:**
Thursday April 1:
OR

Women and Islamist politics:
Tuesday April 6:

Thursday April 8:
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS.

Contemporary cultural politics of Islamism:
Tuesday April 13:

Thursday April 15:
Fulla and Islamic pop culture http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/move-over-barbie
Hossam Hagg “Ithagebti, bravio aleiki” (“You veiled, brave!”) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOfEfiNDy54

A New Global Muslim Public?
Tuesday April 20:

Thursday April 22:
Anderson and Gonzalez-Quijano, “Technological Mediation and the Emergence of Transnational Muslim Publics” in Salvatore and Eickelman, eds. Public Islam and the Common Good. (Blackboard)
Jihadism in a Global Era: Local or Transnational, Old or New?

Tuesday April 27:
Marc Sageman Leaderless Jihad, Ch 2 “The Globalization of Jihadi Terror” and Ch 4 “Radicalization in the Diaspora” (Desk reserve)

Thursday April 29:
Marc Lynch, “Al-Qaeda’s Constructivist Turn” (Praeger 2005) (Blackboard)
Faisal Devji Landscapes of the Jihad, Ch 4 “Media and Martyrdom” (desk reserve)

Tuesday May 4:
Class wrap-up and presentation of student research in progress.

Tuesday May 11:
FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5 P.M.