“We all live in interesting times.” This quote best describes the politics of contemporary Middle East. Long considered by scholars, journalists, and other observers as a bastion of authoritarian rule as well as a point of origin for Islamic fundamentalism that is considered to be a threat to many Westerners, the region underwent a radical transformation in the past two years as a consequence of the Arab Spring that occurred in January-February 2011. Some observers argue that the Arab Spring has radically transformed the Middle East’s political culture and institutions and that it will open new opportunities for a more liberal, democratic, and peaceful Middle East, as could be seen in countries undergoing transition such as Tunisia, Egypt, etc. However, more pessimistic observers believe that the Arab Spring would only lead into a more turbulent, violent, and less certain Middle East, potentially controlled by Islamic fundamentalist parties which are replacing the secular authoritarian (but pro-Western) regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and so forth. Lastly, ongoing conflicts between Israel and the Palestine Territory, between the different sects within Islam (e.g., Sunni vs. Shi’a), as well as between Islam, other religious minorities, and secularist political actors, and the struggle of women and ethnic minorities to achieve equal rights in economics and politics that have long been denied to them, continued to make the Middle East to be the often chaotic and turbulent region that is known by many of us living in the US today.

This course is an effort to gain an understanding about the history, political culture, and political institutions in the Middle East that have helped to shape (for better or for worse) the politics of contemporary Middle East today. We will examine the historical background of the modern Middle East, its political culture, political economy, the role of Islam and other religious groups, and the role of ethnic minorities and women in Middle Eastern societies in order to understand the political institutions in the Middle East and how they are being transformed within the last two or three decades. We will also examine and evaluate different theoretical explanations that political scientists have developed to explain the political development (and the ongoing political conflicts) in the Middle East. We will take a closer look at the Arab Spring and how it can potentially changes the political culture, political economy, and institutions within the Middle East. Lastly, we will closely the politics of selected Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran) and shows possible examples for these countries to become successful democracies, using the case studies of both a Middle Eastern country (Turkey) and a non-Middle Eastern Islamic country (Indonesia) as potential examples that other Middle Eastern countries currently undergoing political transition post-Arab Spring could have followed.
Course Objectives/Goals:
By the end of this course, students are expected to:

- Understand the history and political culture of the Middle East that became the basis of contemporary political systems and institutions in the region.
- Acquire basic understanding the political economy of the Middle East (esp., the role of oil) and how it affects the political system of the region.
- Understand the role of Islam in Middle Eastern politics, why it became a popular ideology after the 1970s, and the potential repercussions (good and bad) of political Islam in the Middle East.
- Gain an appreciation on the political, class-based, ethno-religious, and gender-based conflicts in the Middle East and how they further complicate Middle Eastern politics
- Understand the role of the Arab Spring in transforming the Middle East’s political culture, system, and institutions as well as its potential repercussions (both good and bad).
- Able to express these newly acquired understanding in-class discussions, class presentations, exams, essays, and other assignments that will be used to evaluate their performance in this course.

Course Requirements:
Students’ performances in this course will be measured using the following methods of evaluation:

- Class attendance & participation: 15 percent
- Class presentation & response essay: 20 percent (10% for class presentation & 10% for the response essay)
- Midterm exam (take home): 30 percent
- Research paper: 35 percent (5% for research proposal, 30% for the paper)

Detailed explanations of each evaluation methods are provided below:

A. Class attendance and participation (15% of final grade).
This course is an advanced, seminar-style class designed for upper-class political science majors. The instructor does not give lectures. Instead, there will be regular class discussions to either discuss the topics addressed in the readings or to discuss the class presentations given by one (or two) of your peers each week. Thus, regular class attendance and participation is essential in order for you to successfully complete this course. Each student is expected to complete all the required readings in this course, averaging about 150 to 200 pages per week. In addition, all students must be actively participate in the weekly class presentations and discussions that follow each presentations.

Excessive number of absences (defined as more than four unexcused absences during the course of the semester) could result in an unsatisfactory class attendance & participation grade. You will receive an automatic grade of C in your attendance & participation grade at the fourth unexcused absence, and it will be downgraded by a letter grade from each subsequent absences, so that by the time of the seventh class, you will receive a failing attendance & participation grade. Excused absence in this course will only be granted for three reasons: 1) Participation in an academic activity (field trip, ROTC, athletic trip, and other academic-related activities) – documented by a letter from the sponsoring person/institution of the activity, 2) Illnesses – documented by a letter from a physician, preferably one
associated with the University of Miami health center, and 3) Observance of a major religious holy day. Any other absences will be considered as unexcused absences.

As part of your class participation, each week (except during the week in which you are giving a class presentation) you are required to write a list of at least one proposition and one question related to the required readings for that week. The proposition and question should be closely related to that week’s readings, which you consider to be important to your classmates and to the instructor. They should clearly identify one (or more) of the author(s) of which the weekly readings are based upon. They must clearly express your agreement or disagreement with the arguments made by the author(s). You should be prepared to elaborate why you agree or disagree with these arguments during the class discussion, in response to inquiries made by the instructor and/or other class members. You should e-mail the list of proposition and question you have made to the instructor by noon of each Wednesday’s class.

B. Class presentation (10% of final grade) and Response essay (10% of final grade)
You are required to give one class presentation during the semester, which will take place in each Monday’s class, between Week #3 and Week #14. In this presentation, you will summarize and critique the arguments made by the authors of the readings we will read for that particular week. The in-class presentation should last approximately 20 to 30 minutes: the first 10 minutes should be a summary of the arguments made by the authors, while the remainder time should be devoted to your analysis and critique of the theoretical arguments, methodology, and empirical evidences made by the authors. Your analysis and critique must be based on the major theories you have learned from the other political science or social science courses you have taken in the past. After you have completed your presentation, you must be prepared to answer questions from the instructor and/or the other class members and response to their counter-arguments and criticisms of your presentation.

You must prepare a 2 to 3 page outline of the arguments made by the authors that should be turn in to the instructor at the end of your presentation. In addition, you must prepare a response essay which should include: 1) a summary of the readings, 2) your analysis & criticisms on these readings, and 3) your response to the questions, counter-arguments and criticisms you have received from the instructor and your classmates. This essay should be turn in one week after your class presentation. The length of this essay should be between 5 to 6 page double-spaced (excluding the title page and bibliography).

C. Midterm Exam (30% of final grade)
There is a take home midterm exam, which evaluates course materials you have learned during the first half of the course (weeks 1 to 7). You are required to write between 2 to 3 short essays selected from a list of possible essay questions. It is due at the beginning of class on Monday, March 4.

D. Research Paper (35% of final grade - 5% for research proposal, 30% for the paper)
In lieu of a final exam, you are required to write an original research paper addressing a research question or puzzle regard the political culture, political economy, social movements, and their impacts on the political systems and institutions within the Middle East. You could write on any topics related to Middle Eastern politics, including (but not limited) to the following:
a) Why does authoritarianism tend to prevail in the Middle East (until very recently)? Does “Arab” political culture help to explain the prevalence of authoritarian rule? Or is it attributed to something else (e.g., ethnic fragmentation/conflict, unequal income distribution, etc)?

b) What are the political and economic implications of the Arab Spring and its consequences both in the short and the long run? What are the implications of the different modes of post-Arab Spring transitions (i.e., relatively peaceful in Egypt and Tunisia, while more violent in Libya and Syria) on these countries’ future political development? What are the political and economic implications of the Arab Spring both within the Middle East as well as globally?

c) Could democracy and democratic political institutions take hold in the Middle East and under which socio-political and historical conditions can democracy be achieved and sustained in the region? Could Middle Eastern countries learn from other Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Turkey, Indonesia) as well as non-Islamic countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, etc. on how to achieve and sustain democratic political systems and in institutions?

d) What is the role of religion/Islam in Middle Eastern politics? Does Islam help to promote or hinder democracy, democratic norms, and institutions?

e) What is the role of oil in Middle Eastern political economy and political system? Does oil help or hinder democratic political systems and institutions in the Middle East? Could Middle Eastern countries develop other economic resources beyond oil?

f) What are the roles of women, ethno-religious minorities, and migrant workers in Middle Eastern politics & political economy? What actions could these groups do to improve their economic and political power in contemporary Middle Eastern societies?

g) Why is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be unresolved after more than six decades? What are the economic, political, historical, as well as religious conditions that helped to prolong the conflict? Is the “two-states” solution still viable as a long-term political resolution to the conflict or is a new and different policy needed to resolve the conflict?

You should form a set of theoretical propositions/hypotheses from the research questions that you have chosen for your research paper. You will then test your hypotheses by conducting an original research on one or several Middle Eastern countries and analyze whether your hypotheses are supported based the findings of your research.

You are required to write a 3 to 4 pages double-spaced page research proposal detailing research question/puzzle you want to study, why do you want to study it and why is it relevant for political (or social) science, your hypotheses, research methodology, and data sources you are planning to use for the paper. You must include a bibliography listing the preliminary sources that you are planning to use for the research paper. You must include at least five sources in your preliminary biography and it must include one book published by a major university press (e.g., Cambridge, Oxford, Cornell, Princeton, Stanford, Lynne Rienner, Routledge, etc.) OR a peer-reviewed journal article (e.g., Foreign Affairs, World Politics, Comparative Politics, International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Journal of Asian Studies, Middle East Journal, etc.). The proposal is due (hard copy only) at the beginning of March 18 class. Your research paper should be between 15 to 20 double-spaced pages. It is due on the day of the final exam week for this course, at 4 PM Monday, May 6.
Policy on essay submissions:
In order to ensure that student does not commit plagiarism on their essays and other major writing assignments, all students are required to e-mail a soft copy of the final version of their essays to the instructor so that it could be scanned in the Safe Assign academic integrity software on Blackboard. Soft copies of the term papers are due by the beginning of class period on the day the papers are due. The instructor will NOT read and grade your papers as long he has not received the soft file of your essays. In addition to soft copies, all students also need to turn in a hard copy of their papers at the beginning of the class on the day the papers are due.

In compliance with the university’s honor code, the title page of all essays and major written assignments submitted by each student must bear the following statement: “I pledge that this work is entirely my own and that I have abided by the conventions of the University of Miami Honor Code,” followed by a line with the student’s full name and signature. Your essay will NOT be read and graded by the instructor if it does not include this statement.

ALL essays must be submitted to the instructor on the day they are due at the beginning of the class periods. NO extensions will be accepted unless in cases of excused absences and extreme emergencies, and they will only be granted after appropriate documentation (doctor’s letter, coach’s letter, etc.) has been received by the instructor. If an essay is submitted after the final deadline, they will be automatically downgraded by the instructor by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from an A- to a B+) for each day it is late.

Policy on Plagiarism, Academic Honesty and Academic Integrity:
Students should be aware that presenting the work of others so that it appears to be their own work is a violation of moral and professional standards, one that the Department of Political Science and the university treat very seriously. As prescribed by the university’s honor code, all students are forewarned that the department and the university have a zero tolerance policy toward any acts of plagiarism and cheating. Any students that are found guilty of committing plagiarism, cheating, and other acts academic dishonesty will face strict sanctions in the form of an automatic failure by academic dishonesty (XE) in the entire course AND a formal report to the university’s Honor Council. The Honor Council could issue additional sanctions, including but not limited to the dismissal of the student from the university.

Classroom Etiquette:
Please come to the class several minutes before lecture/discussion starts and do not leave the classroom before the class has adjourned. If you know that you will have to be elsewhere during the significant portion of a class period, please request an excused leave from the instructor in advance rather than sneaking in or out of the classroom and disrupt the instructor and your classmates in the process.

As a courtesy to the instructor and to your classmates, please refrain from using your laptops, cell phones, Blackberrys, I-pods, or other electronic devices throughout the class period. Unless you have a medical condition or other documented rationale for using these devices to take your notes, please take your notes the old-fashioned way (using pen and paper). Failure to comply with this policy might result in either the confiscation of your devices by the instructor for the duration of a class session and/or the dismissal of the students from the class. Please create an atmosphere of civility mutual
respect during the class time. The use of profanity, foul language, name-calling, and any obscene gestures during class lectures and discussions are strictly prohibited. The instructor reserves the right to ask any students to leave the classroom should there be any serious violations to this policy.

**Required Readings/Textbooks:**
The following books are the required readings for the course. They are available to be purchased at the University of Miami Bookstore. I realize that some of these texts might be too pricey for you, so as alternatives, you are welcome to either: 1) purchase the texts from Internet providers such as Amazon.com - which usually are available at a fraction of the price charged by the bookstore or 2) Read them at the Richter Library, in which they all are available on 3-hour reserve. At the very least, you must have a copy of the Schwedler & Gerner’s text, which will be our main textbook for the first half of the course when we discussed general aspects of Middle Eastern politics.


**Journal Articles**
In addition to the above textbooks, some the assigned readings in this course are drawn from various articles in peer-reviewed academic journals. The instructor will make post these articles on the course Blackboard.
WEEKLY OUTLINE OF TOPICS, READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

PLEASE NOTE:
1) You are expected to read all readings for the upcoming week’s topic approximately one week before they are discussed in class (e.g., read week #2 readings during week #1).
2) The instructor reserves the right to change any of the readings listed below and/or add new reading assignments into the course schedule at anytime during the semester. Changes/additions in major readings (e.g., journal articles) will be announced approximately one week before it is discussed in class, while changes/additions in minor readings (e.g., newspaper articles) can be made by the instructor within 24 hours before the next class meeting.

Week #1 (January 14 & 16): Introduction to the course
Required reading:
Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 1 (“Introduction” by Jillian Schwedler), and chapter 2 (“The Middle East: A Geographic Preface” by Ian R. Manners and Barbara McKean Parmenter).

Week #2 (January 21 & 23): Historical Background of the Middle East
Required reading:
Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 3 (“The Historical Context” by Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr.) and chapter 5 (“International Relations” by Mary Ann Tetreault).

Week #3 (January 28 & 30): Politics and Political Culture of the Middle East
Required reading:
Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 4 (“Middle Eastern Politics” by Deborah J. Gerner and Philip A. Schrodt).


Week #4 (February 4 & 6): Political Economy of the Middle East
Required reading:
Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 7 (“The Economies of the Middle East” by Agniezska Paczynska) and chapter 8 (“The Political Economy of Middle Eastern Oil” by Mary Ann Tetreault)

Week #5 (February 11 & 13): Role of Islam in the Middle East
Required reading:
Brown, read all chapters.

Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 12 (“Religion and Politics in the Middle East” by Jillian Schwedler).
Week #6 (February 18 & 20): Ethnicity and Gender in the Middle East  
**Required reading:**  
Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 10 (“Kinship, Class, and Ethnicity” by Laurie King-Iriani) and chapter 11 (“The Role of Women” by Lisa Taraki).

Week #7 (February 25 & 27): Israeli-Palestinian Conflict  
**Required reading:**  
Schwedler & Gerner, chapter 6 (“The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” by Simona Sharoni and Mohammed Abu-Nimer)

Week #8 (March 4 & 6): The Arab Spring  
Take Home Midterm Exam is due at the beginning of class on **March 4.**  
**Required reading:**  
Lynch, all chapters

SPRING RECESS (March 9 – 17)

Week #9 (March 18 & 20): Post Arab Spring Transition (The Peaceful Path) – the case of Egypt  
Research Paper Proposal is due at the beginning of **March 18** class.  
**Required reading:**  
Rutherford, all chapters

Week #10 (March 25 & 27): Post Arab Spring Transition (The Violent Path) – the case of Syria  
**Required reading:**  
Wedeen, all chapters

Weeks #11 (April 1 & 3): Last Bastion of Authoritarianism – Part I (Iran)  
**Required reading:**  
Arjomand, all chapters

Week #12 (April 8 & 10): Last Bastion of Authoritarianism – Part II (Saudi Arabia)  
**Required reading:**  
House, all chapters

Week #13 (April 15 & 17): Possible Democratic Future – Part I (Lessons from Turkey)  
**Required reading:**  
Yavuz, all chapters

Week #14 (April 22 & 24): Possible Democratic Future – Part I (Lessons from Indonesia)  
**Required reading:**  
Hefner, all chapters

Research paper is due in my office (314Q Jenkins Building) at **4 PM, Monday May 6** (both soft and hard copies).