This course addresses some broad questions about the Middle East region, its long history of inter-state and internal conflict, and the impact of the region’s instability on global security. It considers why the region is fraught with conflict, with attention to historical factors and more recent socio-economic trends. It considers the roles of extra-regional powers, particularly the US, Russia and China, and how their interests and global interests are affected by the chronic crises in the region. A major theme is efforts to build a sustainable regional security architecture. The course takes a thematic approach, rather than a chronological survey of conflicts.

**Topics to be addressed:**

- sources of conflict in the region
- military and security capabilities of states and non-state actors
- the roles of outside actors, including arms sales, security cooperation, mediation
- the search for a regional security system

**Learning Outcomes**

Students should deepen their knowledge of one conflict-fraught region, as part of their larger pursuit of International Security studies. It is an opportunity to apply some of the conceptual and practical lessons from other ISEC courses to the Middle East region. Students will be expected to demonstrate mastery of key players in the region, the causes and consequences of instability in the Middle East region, and to develop policy-relevant thinking about options for the US and other outside actors to help shape and improve the security environment in the Middle East region.

**Requirements and Grading:**

Class members are required to complete all assigned readings prior to class meetings; to class prepared to participate fully and thoughtfully, to contribute constructively to discussions and exercises, and to complete all required writing assignments prior to the beginning of class meetings. Writing assignments will be framed either as brief policy memos based on case materials, or as analytic comparisons of two or more cases, or two or more conceptual or operational problems.

Grading for the class will break down roughly as follows:
Participation in class discussion: 40%
Three Analytic Papers 60% (20% each)

Course grading is not a curve; class members are not competing with each other for marks. Course members are encouraged to work collaboratively, even though two papers will be individual authored, and two as a group exercise.

**Academic Accommodations for a Disability:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

**Schar School Policy on Plagiarism:**

The following is Schar School policy on plagiarism:

“The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of F. This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1, J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Codes; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. ([http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook))”

**Course Requirements**

Students will produce three 5-8 page papers

1. deep look into one of the conflicts/wars and how regional militaries performed
2. analysis of outside mediation efforts and peace efforts in one or more crises
3. policy memo on options for improving regional security cooperation, architecture
The course will be divided into three modules:

**Weeks 1-4  The Inside Story**
Focus on Arab, Israeli, Turkish and Iranian perspectives: how do they tell the story?

The current landscape of the ME and its conflicts
Underlying causes, factors that perpetuate conflict
The history and legacies that haunt the region – the Arab-Israeli Wars, Arab ideologies
The status of the armed forces and security communities in key countries
Security Capabilities of non-state actors; ISIS, Hizballah, militias
Iran-Saudi geopolitical rivalry, competition for leadership
Local solutions to current sources of instability

**Weeks 5-9  Outside in: The Roles of Extra-regional powers: part of the problem or part of the solution??**

The Legacy of Colonialism
American Primacy – CENTCOM, regional security cooperation, status of agreements
Russia and China – their strategies and objectives
The roles of outsiders and security legacies of:
- Iraq Wars 1990 and 2003
- Syrian War
- Yemen

**Weeks 10-14  The Search for a Regional Security Architecture**

Past efforts to create a new regional security order:
- Baghdad Pact/Middle East Defense Organization (1950s)
- ACRS (Arms Control and Regional Security Multilateral Working Group) (1992-)
- Gulf Cooperation Council and US Strategic Cooperation
- Manama Dialogue
Regional Cooperation on Non traditional Security Issues (water, climate, health)
Global Consequences of Middle East Instability

**Required Readings (partial list)**
Students are not required to purchase books for this course; most materials for general class discussion will be available on line. Students will be expected to read additional books for specific writing assignments.
The Century Foundation, Editor Michael Hanna
https://tcf.org/content/report/new-security-solutions-middle-east-crisis/
chapters to be assigned, available online

Michael Yaffe, The Gulf and a New Middle East Security System

University of Nebraska Press, 2002
Chapters to be assigned; no need to purchase

Country Military Surveys from IISS, Military Balance, various years

James Quinliven, Coup Proofing: Its Practices and Consequences in the Middle East,
International Security, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Fall 1999)
https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/016228899560202

Ellen Laipson, Prospects for Middle East Security Sector Reform,
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00396330701437751?needAccess=true

Additional Readings on Iraq, Syria, Yemen and the Iranian Nuclear issue to be assigned.