AIMS & OBJECTIVES
This course is designed to provide you with an overview and understanding of the complex political landscape found in the contemporary Middle East (including North Africa). You will be introduced to the historical background of state formation in the region, including the important and enduring legacies of European colonialism and the Cold War. We will explore varying systems and institutions of government across the Middle East, and the role of actors such as state bureaucracies, monarchs, tribes, the security services, as well as political parties and social movements. The international relations of regional nations feature heavily as well as the role of key international actors in the Middle East. We will look in depth at questions of political economy and economic development in the region, including the role of oil, urbanization processes, and associated demographic factors. We will examine the role of religion in the politics
of the region, with a particular focus on Islam and Islamist groups/movements. The status and role of women in Middle East society and politics will be considered alongside coverage of ethnic and religious minority groups. We will look at the role of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in shaping regional dynamics over the past century. Needless to say, the region has experienced particularly pronounced upheaval in recent years, and this class will explore in detail the circumstances surrounding events such as the Arab Uprisings of 2010-11; the subsequent civil wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen; and the rise of ISIS.

COURSE FORMAT & REQUIREMENTS
The class will consist of a mixture of lectures, group discussion (general & text-based), and independent study/investigation. It is vital that, as an absolute minimum, you complete your weekly reading assignments and show up to class ready to discuss the week’s material & readings.

Your grade for the course will be derived from the following elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Intention/motivation essay</td>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Country profile</td>
<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Social media/web.tech practicum</td>
<td>March 23</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Research paper</td>
<td>Apr 27</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Final Exam</td>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Participation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** Note: you cannot pass the course without completing all assignments **

Intention/motivation short essay
For this assignment you are asked to write a short (1 full page or 400-500 words) essay discussing why you are taking this class; what questions you hope to have answered through the class; and how you see it fitting into your own educational and professional development. Are their specific assumptions, knowledge gaps or interests that you bring with you into the class? What do you think is the most important dimension of the Middle East as a region?

Country profile (2500 words)
Each student in the course will choose a Middle Eastern country of specialization over the course of the semester. For this assignment you will write an initial baseline assessment of your country that summarizes the main issues and recent developments in each of the following areas: politics (including international relations), economics, security, society/culture, natural environment. Your profile should conclude with an assessment of likely trends and prospects over the course of the next five years.
Social media/web/tech practicum
This assignment is designed to help you gain and develop skills relating to creating, manipulating, and critically engaging with knowledge-oriented content online. You will be asked to undertake a task such as creating a multimedia web story/essay using Medium (medium.com), curate and annotate a social media debate using Storify (storify.com), attend and live tweet (twitter.com) a relevant conference or event, cross-referencing other participants and attendees, or creating/significantly revising a Wikipedia (wikipedia.com) article. These are just a few examples of the kinds of activities that would be appropriate for this assignment. Please discuss your options with the instructor.

Research paper (3000-5000 words)
This is your opportunity to write a longer, research-style paper on a topic of your choice, building on or complementing topics you have addressed in your earlier assignments. This is an opportunity to develop a more detailed analysis of a particular group or country, but conceptual topics and theoretical essays are also welcome. You are required to choose your topic in consultation with the instructor, and I will give you guidance as to how you should formulate your question and where to get started in terms of sources. It is expected that you make full use of a range of research resources for this paper and that you relate the research you present to the key themes discussed in class.

Final exam
The final exam will be a written examination taken in class, consisting of a combination of short answer identification terms and essay questions. Further details will be provided in class.

Class participation
This component of your grade represents a combination of attendance and class participation as assessed through in-classroom participation (including regular updates to the class regarding your country of specialization) and contributions to Twitter discussions using the hashtag #MENApol (and it would hurt to make sure you also mention @pmandaville in Tweets just to make sure I see them).

Grading scale
When it comes to converting number grades to letter grades, I use the following widely-employed scale:

98+ = A+  
90-92 = A-  
88-89 = B+  
83-87 = B  
80-82 = B-  
79-77 = C+  
73-77 = C  
70-72 = C-  
60-69 = D  
Below 60 = F

Please note that it is an official policy of the Schar School that Government & International Politics (GVIP) majors must obtain a minimum grade of C in this course in order for it to fulfil GVIP degree requirements.
Writing Guidelines
Your written assignments for this class will be graded according to the following criteria. The relative weight given to each of these categories will vary depending on the nature of the assignment.

1. Clear and sound content, including a well-stated thesis, related points to support that thesis, and applicable, logically presented, and specific evidence; clarity of argument.
2. Depth of engagement with ideas; originality; seriousness of thought; conceptual complexity.
3. Well-organized structure; text “flows” with coherent and effective transition between and among ideas; appropriate voice, tone, and style for audience and purpose (e.g. no slang); accurate word choice.
4. Sufficiently and consistently cited and documented; one style of citation used throughout the paper; references adequate number and appropriate type of sources; uses quotations and reference marks appropriately.
5. Correct mechanics including grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation.

All papers should be thoroughly proofread before being handed in, and will be marked down for excessive typographical errors. Students often ask if the quality of their writing will affect the grade they receive. My answer to this question is an unequivocal “yes”! This does not mean that I employ a standard grade deduction for bad grammar. Rather, how well you write has an enormous impact on criteria 1, 3 and 5 specified above. In short, if the writing is poor, then you are likely to be unable to clearly communicate a well-stated thesis.

References and citation
Unless otherwise specified, it is expected that your written work will make proper use of references and citations, particularly in assignment #4. Your ability to learn from, integrate, and synthesize other sources in the context of your own arguments is a large part of what you will be graded on. In particular, any time you use the words or ideas of another author, you must provide a reference. Whenever another author’s exact words are used, they must be set apart from your text "in quotes," with a proper foot/endnote or parenthetical citation included.

Learning to make proper use of referencing and citation systems is a part of your overall education at college. For this class, we require you to use either the Chicago citation Style, with in-text citations and an accompanying list of references at the end of your paper. A quick guide to this system is available at:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
Since you are using in-text citations + a reference list you should pay attention to those items denoted T and R in this citation guide.

Papers that do not make proper use of the Chicago citation system will be marked down or returned to students for revision prior to being accepted as complete. In short, your paper cannot and should not be regarded as finished until you have finalized and formatted all citations in one of the approved citations styles.

**Required Sources**
For the most part, it is up to you to determine how much supporting material you need to make your argument effectively. Suffice it to say that it will be obvious if your topic is poorly or narrowly researched, or if the exact same book gets referenced over and over again! Evidence of wide and diverse reading always comes through and, inevitably, has a positive impact on your grade.

As a general guideline, I require you to use at least four sources. Of these, at least one should be an online source, and another two should be academic/scholarly books or journal articles found in the library or accessed via the electronic journal service. Your textbooks and assigned readings do not count, nor do encyclopedias. In fact, at this level you should move away from using encyclopedias and dictionaries for anything other than the most basic of factual information. This includes Wikipedia. Since Wikipedia entries represent open source material that has not been subjected to scholarly peer review, **it is not acceptable to cite Wikipedia as an academic source.**

**Bibliography/list of references**
Please include a full bibliography at the end of your term paper—again, formatted according to one of the standard bibliographic styles. Do not simply list authors and book titles or make up your own system of listing sources.

**Other technical requirements**

- Make sure your name, assignment title, paper title and course/section number are all on the paper!
- **All assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard via the MyMason portal by the time class meets on the day they are due.** Further technical details will be provided in class. Unless I expressly give you permission, *e-mail submissions sent directly to me are not acceptable.*
- Technical problems with your computer (e.g. “I don’t know what happened to the file, it somehow got deleted!”) are not an acceptable excuse for not submitting an assignment when due. You are expected to practice good “IT hygiene” by making regular backups of your work.

If you want to show me an outline of your paper before you start writing (and I would encourage you to write an outline; it helps to keep you on track), I am always happy to
provide feedback. It’s best to e-mail it to me (along, of course, with a note of your title/topic). I do not, however, read paper drafts.

**Late work policy**
Late work will have one letter grade deducted for each day it is overdue. This turns into an F very quickly, so make sure you meet your assignment deadlines! Unless an exemption has been granted by the instructor on an individual basis, a final grade for the class will not be issued unless all assigned work has been completed. This means you cannot just skip an assignment if you calculate that you can still pass the class by not handing it in.

**CLASS COMMUNICATIONS**
Outside the classroom I use e-mail as the primary form of communicating with you. I will set up a class e-mail list based on your GMU e-mail addresses. If you do not use your GMU account as your main e-mail address, it is your responsibility to set up your GMU e-mail so that it forwards to whatever account you prefer to use. If not, then you should at least check your GMU account several times per week. I accept no responsibility for the consequences of missed e-mail communications! Major class announcements will also be posted on the course’s Blackboard site, so you would be well advised to check this on a regular basis.

When you do e-mail me, please be sure to remind me of the course, section and (if applicable) the assignment to which you writing in reference. And please keep your style courteous and professional.

**REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED TEXTS**
The two **required** texts for the class are:


These books are available for purchase from the campus bookstore or the usual online book vendors (e.g. Amazon, Barnes & Noble).

Additional class readings will be accessed as PDF files from a class filestore. These are marked below in the class schedule with a 📄 and you can access them at the following URL: [http://bit.ly/2jj0Jex](http://bit.ly/2jj0Jex)

Each file is named according to the last name of its author and abbreviated title in lower case letters followed by the file type suffix (e.g. halliday_orientalism-and-critics.pdf).
Other texts you might find useful include:


You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with and follow current events related to the Middle East. The *New York Times* is an excellent source of world news and should be read regularly, as well as current affairs websites such as [www.foreignpolicy.com](http://www.foreignpolicy.com)

The following blogs and online magazines are also recommended as reliable sources of commentary and discussion on Middle East affairs from a variety of perspectives:

Jadaliyya (co-founded and edited by Schar School faculty member Prof. Bassam Haddad) [http://www.jadaliyya.com](http://www.jadaliyya.com)

Project on Middle East Political Science [http://pomeps.org](http://pomeps.org)

The Arabist [http://arabist.net](http://arabist.net)

Informed Comment [http://www.juancole.com](http://www.juancole.com)
ATTENDANCE
Attendance at each class session is mandatory (see University policy in your Student Handbook), and you will be penalized for persistent unexcused absences. Students are expected to inform the instructor before any anticipated absence or as soon as possible afterwards in emergency situations. Absence from class does not relieve you of the obligation to complete and graded work or assignment associated with that particular class. Quiz/exam make-ups are not routinely offered, and you must have a seriously good reason for missing them.

PROBLEMS & DISABILITIES
If you are having problems—academic, medical, or personal—please let me know as soon as possible. I will do my best to help you and be sympathetic, but only if you are forthcoming with me sooner rather than later. In other words, don’t suddenly tell me at the end of the semester that you have been experiencing personal problems for several months.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
HONOR CODE
As in all other aspects of community life at George Mason University, the Honor Code applies in this class. I take it extremely seriously and will enforce it with a zero tolerance policy. The policy endorsed by the members of the School of Policy, Government & International Affairs relative to the types of academic work indicated below is set out in the appropriate paragraphs below. The Honor Code in its entirety can be found in your Student Handbook.

“Quizzes, tests and examinations. No help may be given or received by students during the taking of quizzes, tests, or examination, whatever the type given or wherever taken, unless the instructor specifically permits deviation from this standard.

Course requirements: All work submitted in fulfillment of course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appear on it. Except with permission of the instructor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work previously prepared by another student, and except with permission of the instructor no paper or work of another type submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement of any course in the School of Policy, Government & International Affairs.”

Furthermore, no assistance is to be obtained from [or given to] commercial organizations which sell, lease [or otherwise provide] research help or written papers. With respect to all written work as appropriate, proper footnotes and attribution are required.

This last point is particularly relevant to the preparation of your term papers. Whenever you make use of the ideas of others – either indirectly or in paraphrase – they must be accorded due attribution. *When you use the words of another author, they must be set apart from your own text in the appropriate manner.* Using or adapting large tracts of text from another source and then adding a footnote is not acceptable and will be regarding as a violation of the Honor Code. Direct quotation from sources should be used very sparingly and only in order to support a point you are already making yourself or to make use of a particularly apt turn of phrase. Do not directly quote third party sources to provide basic factual information.
SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, TOPICS & REQUIRED READINGS

**UCME** denotes Schwedler (ed.) *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East* (4th ed)

January 26
**Course introduction & syllabus overview / MENA regional geography**

Reading due: UCME, pp. 1-39

February 2
**The historical context of contemporary Middle East politics / Orientalism and the politics of knowledge production**

Reading due: 1. UCME, pp. 41-88  
2. View YouTube video “Edward Said on Orientalism” at [https://goo.gl/h1iKZ4](https://goo.gl/h1iKZ4)  

February 9
**The politics of the Middle East & North Africa | Egypt | Jordan**

Readings due: 1. UCME, pp. 89-137  
2. GPME, pp. 407-437; 111-136

February 16
**International relations and the MENA Region | Turkey**

Readings due: 1. UCME, pp. 138-173  
2. GPME, pp. 203-232

February 23
**The Israeli-Palestinian conflict | Israel | Palestine**

Readings due: 1. UCME, pp. 175-221  
2. GPME, pp. 137-202
March 2
**Economies of the Middle East & North Africa | Yemen**

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 223-258
2. GPME, pp. 377-403

March 9
**The oil factor in Middle East political economy | Saudi Arabia | The GCC**

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 259-286
2. GPME, pp. 307-376

March 16
**NO CLASS (GMU Spring Break)**

March 23
**Demography, urbanization and social class in MENA | Algeria**

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 287-313
2. GPME, pp. 491-518

March 30
**The politics of identity, ethnicity and kinship | Lebanon**

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 315-344
2. GPME, pp. 79-110

April 6
**Women and gender in Middle East society & politics | Morocco**

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 345-376
2. GPME, pp. 519-546

April 13
**Religion and politics: Islamism and beyond | Iran**

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 377-401
2. GPME, 271-306

April 20
The role of media & information technology in MENA society and politics

Readings due:
2. Listen to Status interview with Chris Toensing on “The State of Reporting on the Middle East” at https://goo.gl/Md74L3

April 27
From the Arab Uprisings to ISIS | Tunisia | Iraq | Syria

Readings due:
3. David Ignatius, “How ISIS Spread in the Middle East,” *The Atlantic*, online at: https://goo.gl/px3KBx
3. GPME, 463-490; 235-269; 47-77

May 4
Prospects for Middle East politics | Libya

Readings due:
1. UCME, pp. 439-443
2. GPME, pp. 439-461

May 11
**FINAL EXAM (7:30pm-10:15pm)**

*Note: exam time differs slightly from regular class meeting time!*

(Exam review session will be scheduled for week of May 8)