

# POL S 331: Government and Politics in the Middle East and North Africa

Professor Asli Cansunar

Winter 2021

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E-mail: [cansunar@uw.edu](mailto:cansunar@uw.edu)

Office Hours: Monday 3-5 pm ([Zoom Link](#)), or by appointment

Class Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 11:30 AM - 12:50 PM

Venue: 101 Thompson Hall

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## Course Description

For decades, the Middle East was widely perceived as a bastion of authoritarianism and a hotbed of ethnic and religious politics and political violence. What explains the persistence of these perspectives, and why have citizens across the region risen up to try to overthrow dictators and authoritarian regimes? Why have Islamists gained prominence in many MENA countries? By learning about key questions and debates in the field of Middle East politics, this course aims to give students a critical understanding of politics in the region. The course combines systematic analytical approaches to big questions with concrete knowledge of events and developments in specific countries. Topics include “persistent authoritarianism” in the Middle East, Political Islam, sectarian violence, economic development and underdevelopment, social mobilization, and the foundations of the Arab Spring.

## 1 Course Requirements

**1) Lectures:** Professor Cansunar will lecture on the Monday and Wednesday sessions of the class at the allocated lecture time. In lectures, Professor Cansunar will cover the broad themes for the week’s topics, in addition to various theories, hypotheses, data, and case studies from around the world that speak to these topics. While attendance is not recorded for lectures, Professor Cansunar highly recommends attending them as students’ success in class is largely determined by their level of engagement. Professor Cansunar will provide additional information about the expectations for lectures and in-person (and possibility of move to remote) instruction in Week 1.

The first week of this course will be conducted via live Zoom sessions at the scheduled class times. These sessions will be recorded and will capture the presenter’s audio, video and computer screen. Student audio and video will be recorded if they share their computer audio and

video during the recorded session. The recordings will only be accessible to students enrolled in the course. These recordings will not be shared with or accessible to the public. Students may opt to keep their cameras off or change their Zoom screen name to conceal personal identifying information.

**2) Participation & Quiz Section:** The TAs will conduct Quiz Sections during the allotted class time on Fridays. TAs will lead discussions of the week's readings, focusing mainly on the case studies, and students will be able to ask questions on assigned readings for each week and regarding the discussion questions. The participation grade recorded in quiz section will be based on the discussion question assignments, and attendance in quiz section is necessary to improve the quality of a student's discussion question assignments and understanding of other course material, especially the country case studies. TAs will provide additional information about the policies and expectations of their Quiz Sections in Week 1.

**3) Canvas & Zoom:** Students should familiarize themselves with the course's Canvas website. On the Canvas page for the lecture, students will find course readings, syllabus, and other materials, including the Zoom plug-in and recorded lectures should any remote instruction be required. If students have any questions on course policies, logistics, due dates, etc. they should consult Canvas and the syllabus. Any question that has already been answered on the syllabus, Canvas, or in lecture, or should be directed to a student's TA, is unlikely to receive an email response from Professor Cansunar. Professor Cansunar and TAs will use Canvas to make class announcements and post news items or other links. Students will turn in their discussion question assignments on their Quiz Section's individual Canvas page as managed by their TA, the midterm and final exam will either occur in person in the allotted time in the schedule below or be due online via Canvas given instructions below. As such, students may want to set their Canvas settings to receive notifications via email and/or regularly check the Canvas page.

## 2 The Role of Quiz Section TAs:

### 2) TA Information:

- Rachel Funk Fordham  
Email: rfordham@uw.edu  
Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30 SMITH 30 (Zoom link available upon request)  
AA Section: Fridays, 11:30-12:20, LOW 219 or [Zoom](#)  
AB Section: Fridays, 12:30-1:20pm, LOW 219 or [Zoom](#)

Quiz sections are vital to students' learning and students who do not engage with the discussion in quiz sections will not be successful in this class. Professor Cansunar therefore values the important role that TAs play in the success of his course management and instruction. This course will not be successful without the contributions from TAs, and students should view TAs as their "first line of defense" regarding any challenges that may arise due to the pandemic. First, TAs will be responsible for all of the grading of class assignments (discussion question responses, midterm, and final exam) under the direction of Professor Cansunar. TAs will manage their own quiz section Canvas pages that will be used by students to turn in discussion question assignments, and either in-person or remote midterm and final exams. Any questions about grading

and assignments should therefore be directed to TAs. Second, TAs will manage and operate their own quiz sections during the allotted times that students are registered for on Fridays every week. TAs will not introduce any additional course material or lesson plans during quiz section, but they will often cover material not otherwise covered in lecture, and use that time to answer student inquiries on that week's material from lecture or regarding clarification or discussion on the country case studies and discussion questions. Any questions about quiz section or discussion questions should therefore be directed to TAs. Third, while Professor Cansunar will be in constant management of the TAs, students should view their TAs as the "first line of defense" should problems arise in students' experience with this class or the evolving nature of Covid-19 (see also below). They should avoid reaching out to Professor Cansunar for a matter that can be handled by a TA, they should reach out only to their TA assigned to their registered quiz section, and they should not contact their TA for this class with a matter related to problems in another class. Should students be required to quarantine, they should let their TA know immediately (see also below). Professor Cansunar will provide additional information about the expectations for TAs in Week 1, and TAs will provide additional information about the policies and expectations of their Quiz Sections in Week 1.

Neither Professor Cansunar nor the TAs will be in a position to offer students individual technology support, medical advice, or any alterations to UW, state, and federal policy with respect to the pandemic – we advise students to consult other UW and IT resources as needed to address specific problems related to accessibility or access, especially regarding use of Zoom should a shift to remote learning be required; and continually update themselves on Covid-related policies on campus.

### **3 Course Evaluation:**

1. Quiz Section Participation and Assignments (30%)
2. In-class midterm exam (30%), Monday, February 7
3. Final exam (40%), Wednesday, March 16, 2022

### **Class Schedule**

**Monday, January 3: Introduction and Overview** (Lecture on Zoom)

No readings

**Wednesday, January 5: States and Institutions I** (Lecture on Zoom)

**Required readings**

Ellen Lust. "The Middle East". In: ed. by Ellen Lust. SAGE Publications, 2019. Chap. States and Institutions, pp. 132–169.

**Monday, January 10: States and Institutions II** (Lecture on Zoom)

**Required readings**

Eva Bellin. "The robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in comparative perspective". In: *Comparative politics* (2004), pp. 139–157.

Larry Diamond. "Democracy's Past and Future: Why Are There No Arab Democracies?" In: *Journal of democracy* 21.1 (2010), pp. 93–112.

**Wednesday, January 12: Religion, Society, and Politics (Lecture on Zoom)**

**Required readings**

Robert Lee and Lihi Ben Shitrit. "The Middle East". In: ed. by Ellen Lust. SAGE Publications, 2019. Chap. Religion, Society, and Politics in the Middle East, pp. 169–200.

**Monday, January 17: No Class**

**Wednesday, January 19: Actors, Public Opinion, and Participation (Lecture on Zoom)**

**Required readings**

Janine A. Clark. "The Middle East". In: ed. by Ellen Lust. SAGE Publications, 2019. Chap. Actors, Public Opinion, and Participation, pp. 201–232.

**Monday, January 24: Secularism vs Conservatism (Lecture on Zoom)**

**Required readings**

Nilüfer Göle. "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The making of elites and counter-elites". In: *The Middle East Journal* (1997), pp. 46–58.

Eva Wegner and Francesco Cavatorta. "Revisiting the Islamist–Secular divide: parties and voters in the Arab world". In: *International Political Science Review* 40.4 (2019), pp. 558–575.

**Wednesday, January 26: Social Change in the Middle East (Lecture on Zoom)**

**Required readings**

Valentine M. Moghadam. "The Middle East". In: ed. by Ellen Lust. SAGE Publications, 2019. Chap. Social Change in the Middle East, pp. 233–260.

**Monday, January 31: No Class**

**Wednesday, February 2: The Political Economy of Development in the Middle East**

**Required readings**

Melani Cammett and Ishac Diwan. "The Middle East". In: ed. by Ellen Lust. SAGE Publications, 2019. Chap. The Political Economy of Development in the Middle East, pp. 269–306.

**Monday, February 7: In-Class Midterm**

**Wednesday, February 9: The Long Divergence**

**Required readings**

Timur Kuran. *"The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East"*. Chapters 1-2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

**Monday, February 14: Early Islamic Institutions: Inheritance Rules, Legal System and the Courts, and Partnerships**

**Required readings**

Timur Kuran. *"The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East"*. Chapters 3-5. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

**Wednesday, February 16: Early Islamic Institutions: Public Goods and Civil Society**

**Required readings**

Timur Kuran. *"The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East,"*. Chapters 6-7. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

**Monday, February 21: No class**

**Wednesday, February 23: Social Movements 1: The Arab Spring**

**Required readings**

Jason Brownlee et al. *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform, Chapter 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

"Karama Has No Walls" (26 minutes); Yemen

*Content warning: violence, police brutality*

**Monday, February 28: Social Movements 2: Turkey, Erdogan, and Gezi Protests**

### Required readings

Mine Eder. "The Middle East". In: ed. by Ellen Lust. SAGE Publications, 2019. Chap. Turkey, pp. 269–306.  
Erdem Yörük. "The Long Summer of Turkey: The Gezi Uprising and Its Historical Roots". In: *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113.2 (Apr. 2014), pp. 419–426.

### Wednesday, March 2: Islam and Gender

#### Required readings

Lisa Blaydes. "How Does Islamist Local Governance Affect the Lives of Women?" In: *Governance* 27.3 (2014), pp. 489–509.  
Suad Joseph. "Women and politics in the Middle East". In: *Women and power in the Middle East*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. Chap. Overview, pp. 21–58.

### Monday, March 7, 2022: Radicalization

#### Required readings

Richard A. Nielsen. *Deadly Clerics: Blocked Ambition and the Paths to Jihad, Chapters 1 and 2*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge University Press, 2017. DOI: [10.1017/9781108241700](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108241700).

### Wednesday, March 9, 2022 Wrapping up

### Wednesday, March 16, 2022: 2:30-4:20 p.m. FINAL EXAM

## Grade complaints

You have the right to dispute a grade if you disagree with it. You must do so in writing, no more than 3 working days after we have returned the exam/paper to you. Upon receiving your appeal, your TA will re-grade the entire exam. Note that as your TA re-evaluates the exam, they may realize that while we were too strict with some answers, we were too generous with others. Your overall grade may go up, but it may also go down.

## Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#).

## COVID-19

We are all in this together! In this class, masks covering nose and mouth are required, and eating and drinking are prohibited. The instructor and TAs have the authority to cancel class if students do not comply. Non-compliant students may be reported to the Community Standards and Student Conduct office.

If you have symptoms, do not come to class and do get tested. For FAQs about COVID-19 and UW Policy, go [here](#).

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