

# Heidelberg College

## Fall 2008

POL 380-2

### Politics of the Middle East

T, Th 2-3:15 PM

Aigler, Room 203

Instructor: Dr. Marc O'Reilly

Office Hours: M-W-F 1-2 PM, T-Th 4-5 PM, and on Appointment

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### Course Content:

This class examines the contemporary Middle East, a region of the world known for its conflicts, religious fervor, authoritarianism, oil, and terrorism. Although these characteristics, many of them the result of Western intervention in the previous century, spotlight negative trends in the Middle East, the region possesses a proud history replete with noteworthy political, military, economic, and cultural achievements that continue to impact Middle Eastern life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Arab states make up the majority of countries in the region. Other states include Turkey, Iran, and Israel, governed by Turks, Persians, and Jews respectively. With this information in mind, this course will provide a primer on the Middle East. As such, students in this seminar will read about and discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict, disputes between Shi'a and Sunni, political Islam, Islamic militancy (i.e., Jihadism), the politics of oil, foreign (especially American) involvement in the Middle East, and political as well as economic development in the region.

### Required Readings (available at the Heidelberg College Bookstore):

- David S. Sorenson, *An Introduction to the Modern Middle East: History, Religion, Political Economy, Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008).
- Robin Wright, *Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008).
- Fawaz A. Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2006).
- Additional photocopied readings will be provided throughout the semester.

## Course Requirements:

Exam: Students will write a cumulative, Take-Home Final. The exam will be of the essay kind. We will review material before the exam. **OBJECTIVES:** The exam enables you to synthesize, analyze, and comprehend all of the course material examined throughout the semester. FINAL EXAM DUE DECEMBER 10.

Paper: Students must turn in a 12-15 page term paper on some Middle East issue. Please let me know ASAP what your topic will be. You will turn in a full draft. Also, you will read a couple of other papers written by your classmates and write or type up comments. You will provide constructive criticism so that papers can be improved. I will read all the drafts and offer my own thoughts on how each of you can modify your paper. Once your draft has been returned to you, you will meet with me so that we can discuss your work. As for the assignment itself, you will write up an analysis of the issue that you have researched throughout the semester. I will provide you with instructions on how to organize and write your paper. If you have questions regarding the assignment, please raise them in class, speak to me during office hours, or e-mail me. You can turn in an early draft of your paper at any point during the term. **OBJECTIVES:** The paper allows you to improve your analytical and writing skills. By turning in a draft, you will have an opportunity to revise your work using student and instructor comments to guide you. By rewriting your paper, you should be able to ameliorate it and thus earn a better grade than you would have otherwise. DRAFT DEADLINE: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2. PAPER DEADLINE: DECEMBER 10.

Useful newspapers, newsmagazines, news sources, and journals include *The Daily Star* (Beirut), *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), *Gulf News* (UAE), *Al-Jazeera* (Qatar), *The Jerusalem Post*, *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), *The Economist*, *BBC*, *Middle East Report*, *Middle East Insight*, *Middle East International*, *Middle East Economic Digest*, *The New Republic*, *The Middle East Journal*, and *Middle East Policy*.

\*\*\*Remember that the Academic Success Center can assist you as you write your semester paper and prepare for your final exam\*\*\*

Oral Presentation: Students must present their research to the class (on either November 13, 18, 20, 25, or December 2) by way of a 10-15 minute presentation. After each presentation, there will be a 5-10 minute question and answer session. I will provide you with instructions on how to prepare your presentation. **OBJECTIVES:** Presentations allow you to organize your thoughts effectively, enable you to try out your ideas before an audience, and improve your oratorical skills.

Participation: Students must attend class regularly (I will keep track of your attendance), provide input (in the form of questions and answers) during seminars, respect classmates and the instructor, and conduct themselves in a mature and responsible way. **OBJECTIVES:** Improve your oratorical, analytical, argumentative, persuasion, and listening skills and recognize the importance of proper comportment and etiquette in the classroom.

## Distribution of Grades

Final Exam	35%
Paper	35%
Oral Presentation	20%
Participation	10%

Unexcused late papers and exams will be docked one grade (A to A-, for example) for every day past the deadline. Also note that any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive an F for the assignment and can be dismissed from Heidelberg College.

## Class Outline and Reading Assignments

WEEK 1: **Introduction.** Reading: Sorenson, *An Introduction to the Modern Middle East*, Introduction.

WEEK 2: **Foundations.** Reading: Sorenson, chs. 1-4.

WEEK 3: **Iran & Iraq.** Readings: Sorenson, chs. 8-9; and “Security Better, Politics Still Stuck,” *Economist* (Xerox).

WEEK 4: **Israel & Palestine.** Readings: Sorenson, chs. 14 & 16; and “Reconciliation Delayed Yet Again,” *Economist* (Xerox).

Thursday: Kristen Lindsay, Heidelberg’s Director of Career Development, will speak to the class about job opportunities for students with Political Science and related majors.

WEEK 5: **Syria & Lebanon.** Reading: Sorenson, chs. 12-13.

WEEK 6: **Egypt & Jordan.** Reading: Sorenson, chs. 10 & 15.

WEEK 7: **Arab Gulf States.** Readings: Sorenson, chs. 5-7; Kenneth Pollack, “Drowning in Riches,” *New York Times* (Xerox); and Robert F. Worth, “Qatar, Playing All Sides, Is a Nonstop Mediator,” *New York Times* (Xerox).

WEEK 8: **Turkey.** Readings: Sorenson, ch. 11; and “A Narrow Scrape for Democracy,” *Economist* (Xerox).

FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 16-19

WEEK 9: **The Future of the Middle East (Part I).** Reading: Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, Prologue, chs. 1-5.

October 22 is the last day to drop the course.

WEEK 10: **The Future of the Middle East (Part II).** Readings: Wright, *Dreams and Shadows*, chs. 6-10; Max Rodenbeck, "War and Peace," *New York Times* (Xerox); "More U-Turns, Please," *Economist* (Xerox); and Marc J. O'Reilly, *Unexceptional: America's Empire in the Persian Gulf, 1941-2007* (Xerox).

SEMESTER RESEARCH PAPER: DRAFT DUE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2

WEEK 11: **Islamic Militancy (Part I).** Reading: Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist*.

WEEK 12: **Islamic Militancy, (Part II).** Reading: Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist*.

Tuesday: No class (Dr. O'Reilly out of town)

WEEK 13: **Oral Presentations.**

WEEK 14: **Oral Presentations.**

THANKSGIVING BREAK: NOVEMBER 26-30

WEEK 15: **Oral Presentations.**

REVISED PAPER: DUE DECEMBER 10

FINAL EXAM: TAKE-HOME ESSAY DUE DECEMBER 10