ECONOMICS 215: Economic History of the Middle East

Prof. Mohamad M. Al-Ississ  
Office: Abdul Jamil Latif, Office # 1039  
Email: alississ@aucegypt.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:30 am -1:00 pm (Otherwise by appointment)

Course Description: This course takes an analytic journey through economic history of the Middle East. It starts by analyzing the causes that led the Middle East to ascend to the helm of scientific and intellectual pursuit in the 9th & 10th centuries and its deterioration thereof after. Second, it examines the nineteenth century which witnessed a period of stimulating economic reform activity in the Middle East after decades of stagnation. During this period, there were attempts to reform the taxation system, create modern industry, invigorate the agricultural practices, and integrate commercially and financially with the rest of the world. These attempts dictated the economic, social and political trajectory of the region into the twentieth century and beyond. Economics 215 analyzes the motivations behind these reform attempts, assesses their success, evaluates their impact, and ascertains their consequences. Third, the course discusses the enabling circumstances that led the region to fall under colonial control, and scrutinizes the empirical and theoretic economic impact of colonialism. Finally, the course studies the post-independence economies of the region inspecting the leading industrialization strategy and exploring the economic and political effects of natural resource wealth, namely oil. The course concludes with an overview of the current challenges and future trajectory of the region.

Format: The class will be a combination of regular lectures by the professor and class discussions. The professor will highlight key points, explain theoretic frameworks and lead the discussions. One or more students will present an overview of the topic each lecture providing a critique of the readings, stressing key points and raising discussion questions. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO COME TO CLASSES HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE MATERIAL AND EAGER TO ANALYZE IT.

Course Prerequisites: Comfort with economics (preferably introductory level economics), basic knowledge of the Middle East, curiosity, and a good sense of humor!

Course Requirements: Active attendance and participation, map quiz, at least 10 quizzes on the readings, a presentation, and a final exam.

Class Attendance: Regular attendance is essential to success in the course. 15% of your grade will be based on your participation. Class attendance means your alert, active, and respectful presence in class. I have a zero tolerance policy towards disrespectful presence in the class. I take this very seriously, and ask you to do so as well. Use of mobile phones and other materials not
relevant to the course while in attendance is prohibited and will be enforced. I will treat you as intelligent and mature adults and will expect nothing less from you.

**Grading:** The grading rubric is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus Quiz</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading quizzes</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Letter grades will be assigned as follows:*

- A 90-100
- A- 87-89
- B+ 84-86
- B 80-83
- B- 77-79
- C+ 74-76
- C 70-73
- C- 67-69
- D+ 64-66
- D 60-63
- D- 50-59
- F 49 and below

Decimal marks 0.5 and above will be rounded up, and decimal marks 0.49 and below will be rounded down. **ALL GRADES ARE FINAL.**

**Missed Quizzes & Exams:** Taking the quizzes and exams is mandatory. Unacceptable excuses for missing a test include: extracurricular commitments, malfunctioning car, job interview, temperamental alarm clock, nonrefundable airline ticket, multiple exams in one day, and uncooperative weather. An unexcused absence will count as a zero.

**Textbooks:** The textbook for the course is:

The course schedule below lists the chapters in the textbook and other sources that will be covered by each lecture. IT IS REQUIRED TO READ THE MATERIAL PRIOR TO CLASS. YOU WILL BE COLD CALLED EACH CLASS TO DISPLAY UNDERSTANDING OF THE READINGS.

Lecture 1: Sep 5-- Introduction

Lecture 2: Sep 8 --The Middle Eastern Economy: Historical Overview


**Topic I. The Rise And Fall Of Middle Eastern Economic Advancement**

Lecture 3: Sep 12 -- The Islamic World’s Golden Age …

- Chaney, 2008, “Tolerance, Religious Competition and the Rise and Fall of Muslim Science.”

Lecture 4: Sep 15 -- … its Decline,


Lecture 5: Sep 19 & Sep 22 -- …and What Explains the Reverse in Fortunes.


**Topic II: The Middle East in 1800: The Need for Reforms and Their Impact**

Lecture 6: Sep 26 -- The Middle Eastern Economy in 1800: A Snapshot


Lecture 7: Oct 3 -- The Need For Reforms

East”.


Lecture 8: Oct 4** -- The Economic, Social and Political Consequences Of Reforms Across The Middle East

- Owen (1993): The Economic Consequences of the Age of Reforms, pg 57-82.

**Special Focus: Taxation**

Lecture 9: Oct 13 -- Special Focus on Taxation: the Principle–Agent Framework, Moral Hazard, Adverse Selection, Credible Commitment, and Property Rights (I)


Lecture 10: Oct 17 -- Taxation continuation

Lecture 11: Oct 18** -- Special Focus on Taxation: the Principle–Agent Framework, Moral Hazard, Adverse Selection, Credible Commitment, and Property Rights (II)


**Special Focus: Trade**

Lecture 12: Oct 20 -- Trade between the Middle East and Europe


Lecture 13: Oct 31 -- Special Focus on Trade: Basic Trade Theory and Welfare Impact

**Special Focus: Finance**

Lecture 14: Nov 1 -- Special Focus on Finance and its Role in Development


Lecture 15: Nov 3-- Financial Reforms and Debt: The Ottoman Empire

Lecture 16: Nov 10 -- Financial Reforms and Debt: Egypt


Lecture 17: Nov 14 -- The Levant & Iraq In The Second Half Of The Nineteenth Century


Lecture 18: Nov 17 -- Economics & History: Bridging the gap …

**Topic III: Colonialism**

Lecture 19: Nov 21 -- The Economic Impact of Colonialism


Lecture 20: Nov 28 --The Ottoman Empire: Bankruptcy and Consequences


Lecture 21: Dec 1-- Egypt & the Levant at the end of the Nineteenth Century


**Topic IV: The Middle East Post-Colonialism**

Lecture 22: Dec 5 -- Economic De-colonialism and Import Substitution Industrialization

Lecture 23: Dec 8 -- The Resource Curse: Oil and Dutch Disease


Lecture 24: Dec 12 -- The Political Economy of “Rentier States”


Lecture 25: Dec 15 -- Overview of the region’s development, current challenges and the path forward & Recap


** Out of sequence meeting day (i.e. Lecture on a day other than Monday & Thursday)
*** No class on Sep 29, Oct 10, Oct 24.
I reserve the right to call for make-up classes on Saturdays and Tuesdays.