Aims and Objectives

This course covers topics in Middle Eastern politics from the perspective of general debates in Comparative Politics. The main objective is to critically apply concepts and methods developed in Comparative Politics to the region and to practice the development of research projects in the process. We will focus extensively on the Arab Spring as a challenge for political science research. Participants are encouraged to experiment with and develop research agendas bridging the gap between an area studies approach focusing on the Middle East and Comparative Politics as a cross-regional and cross-cultural research program.

After this course, participants will be able to:

1) Outline the main areas in which Middle Eastern politics has influenced debates in Comparative Politics;
2) Name and engage with the main contributions in each field;
3) Define their own research agenda in relation to these debates.

Readings

We will use the following book in class (an electronic copy will be made available):

This book is merely the basis for a deeper engagement with selected issues. Additional readings will be assigned for specific sessions (see below).

Requirements

1. **Active participation**: Your participation in class discussions is absolutely essential for this class to work. Active participation includes, but goes beyond attendance. Your contributions to class discussions will be used to assess how well you prepared by doing the readings and reflecting on the issue to be discussed beforehand.

2. **Class presentation**: All participants will be asked to take responsibility for one session. This includes a presentation of 20-30 minutes that goes significantly beyond the assigned readings. Excellent class presentations stimulate debate on the issues raised in the required readings by providing additional perspectives.

3. **Reaction paper and book review OR research outline and final paper**: You can choose between writing a reaction paper and a book review, or developing a research outline and a final paper. I highly recommend that those of you who would like to write their MA theses in Comparative or Middle Eastern Politics choose option 2.

   3.1. **Reaction paper and book review**: (1) Reaction paper: Critically engage with the assigned readings for one session. This includes summarizing the readings, putting them in relation to each other, and critiquing them. You are encouraged to use additional sources to support your point (length 2,000 words; to be submitted by email on 15 October 2015). (2) Book reviews: choose two recent books in Middle Eastern or Comparative Politics and write a book review. If you are unfamiliar with the format of book reviews, please consult published reviews before writing yours (length 4,000 words; to be submitted by email on 1 December 2015).

   **OR**

3.2. **Research outline and final paper**: (1) Develop a research outline based on your own research interests in Middle Eastern politics. Good research outlines state a puzzle, a preliminary answer to the puzzle (hypothesis), and a case selection (no required length; to be submitted by email on 15 October 2015). (2) Develop a research paper from the outline (length 4,000-6,000 words; to be submitted by email on 1 December 2015).
Grades
Rubrics with detailed grading criteria will be made available for all assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade composition</th>
<th>Cut-off points:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active participation</td>
<td>A 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class presentation</td>
<td>A- 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td>B+ 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction paper</td>
<td>B 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>B- 78</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>C+ 74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>C 70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>C- 66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>F &lt;=65</td>
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Schedule of sessions

Date       | Topic                                                                 |
-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
1) 7 September | Introduction, assignment of countries and topics                      |
          | Research Design Recap                                                |
2) 14 September | Why compare?                                                          |
3) 21 September | Case selection                                                        |
4) 28 September | Transitology                                                          |
5) 5 October | Authoritarian durability                                              |
6) 12 October | Political economy and development                                     |
7) 19 October | Protest and contention                                                |
8) 26 October | The Military                                                          |
9) 2 November | Arab Spring I: Theoretical perspectives                               |
10) 9 November | Arab Spring II: Breakdown and survival                                |
11) 16 November | Arab Spring III: Beyond breakdown                                     |
12) 23 November | **NO CLASS (MESA Annual Meeting)**                                    |
13) 30 November | Arab Spring IV: Conflict                                              |
14) 7 December | Conclusion                                                            |

Applications

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Detailed schedule:

1) Introduction

2) Why compare?


3) Case selection


4) Transitology

Must read:

Should read:
5) Authoritarian durability

Must read:

Should read:

6) Political economy and development

Must read:

Should read:


7) **The military**

**Must read:**


**Should read:**


8) **Protest and contentious politics**

**Must read:**


**Should read:**


9) Arab Spring I: Theoretical perspectives
• Brownlee et al. 2015, Intro and Chapter 1.

10) Arab Spring II: Breakdown and survival
• Brownlee et al. 2015, Chapters 2 and 3.

11) Arab Spring III: Beyond breakdown
• Brownlee et al. 2015, Chapters 4 and 5.

13) Arab Spring IV: Conflict
• Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Halvard Buhaug 2013. Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Intro and Part II.