 COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores the comparative politics and political development of the Middle East. It is designed to acquaint students with the main political trends and themes of one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world. The main objective of the course is to provide historical background and theoretical tools to answer the following questions: Why do authoritarian states continue to persist in the Middle East despite the worldwide trends for democratization? What strategies do these states adopt to stay in power? How did the rise and spread of popular uprisings in the Arab world since December 2010 affect the domestic politics of the states of the region?

ORGANIZATION AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The classes will consist of lectures intertwined with discussions. Each student is expected to attend the regularly scheduled classes. Whether or not students have previous background, I expect all students to do the required readings and to contribute to class discussions. Recognizing that not everyone feels equally comfortable jumping into discussions, I will call on less-active students to respond during class. Every student will have an opportunity to participate, and I will ensure the scope and pace of the discussions will not be dominated by the select few. Therefore, please come to class prepared.

Since our focus will be on current developments in Middle Eastern politics, I encourage you to keep current on recent developments in the region by following foreign and Turkish newspapers, TV News, and reliable internet sites or blogs. For example, you might want to read a compilation such as Middle East Foreign Policy (http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com) to follow the news through media produced in the region.

For Week 6 you may also want to follow a Middle Eastern blog to have a better understanding of the topic. Some blog examples are available through CNN’s website http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/04/14/bloggers.middle.east/index.html?hpt=Sbin

The required readings assigned for this course will be available in a course pack ready for your purchase at the Cemil Copy Center.
There will be a mid-term during the 4th week and a final exam during the final exam period at the end of the summer semester. Both will be in-class exams and they will consist of essay questions.

**Grading:**

- Regular attendance (10%)
- Informed participation in class discussions (20%)
- One midterm exam (30%)
- One final exam (40%)

**Readings and the Course Schedule:**

**Week One: Introduction and Historical Background**

June 30: Is there a Middle East?

*What do we mean by the term “Middle East”? Why is studying Middle East politics relevant today? What political problems challenge the modern Middle East? What are some possible explanations for these challenges?*

**Readings:**


**July 2: The Modern History of the Middle East**

*How did the states that today compose the Middle East come to be formed? How can learning about the modern history of the Middle East help us navigate its contemporary politics? Is the contemporary Middle East a victim of colonial policies and regimes?*

**Readings:**


Week Two: Politics of Middle East in Comparative Perspective

Why the Middle East stands out as a region where varieties of authoritarian regimes continue to remain in power? Can we talk about Middle Eastern exceptionalism? Where should we look (i.e. economy, religion, history, etc.) to explain this puzzle?

July 7: Democracy Deficit

Readings:

Huntington, S P. (1993) The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, 3-30 University of Oklahoma Press,


July 9: The Persistence of Authoritarianism

Readings:


Week Three: Economic Context of the Politics of the Middle East

Is there a relationship between economic underdevelopment and authoritarianism? To what extent natural resources can hinder democratization processes? Has the presence of oil doomed the Middle Eastern countries? Why? / Why not?

July 14: Economic Development

Readings:


**July 16: Oil and Democracy**

**Readings:**


**Week Four: The Role of Religion in Politics**

**July 21: Islam in the Middle East**

*Does Islam or “Islamic orientations” promote emergence of authoritarianism in the region?*

**Readings:**


**July 23: MID-TERM EXAM ! (in-class)**

28-30 July HOLIDAY NO CLASS!
Week Five: The Issue of Political Institutions and Political Participation

Why have elections in authoritarian regimes? What is the nature of elections in the Arab World? What function does civil society serve in the authoritarian regimes of the region?

August 4: Elections and New Authoritarianisms

Readings:


August 6: Civil society

Readings:


Week Six: The Arab Spring and Its Consequences

August 11: Mobilization and Activism

How do the citizens interact with the political system in the countries of the Middle East? How do they communicate their demands and needs through the system? What tools/mediums do they have to mobilize against their regimes? What strategies can activists’ take? What role do the new social media play?

Readings:


**August 13: Arab Spring: Pathway for Democracy or for New Authoritarianism?**

*What is the “Arab Spring”? Why and how did the politics of the MENA erupt in December 2010? Why did only some Arab leaders fall?*

**Readings:**


**Week Seven: Future of the Region**

**August 18: Prospects for regime change**

**Readings:**


**August 20: Conclusions**

**Readings:**


**FINAL (TBA)**