**Southwest Asia and North Africa:**

**Politics and Societies Syllabus**

**(Version 2)**

**Module:**

YSS2236: Southwest Asia and North Africa: Politics and Societies

Semester 2, AY 2022 – 2023

Tuesdays and Fridays, 2:30 – 4:00; YCR-5

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: 4:15 - 5:45, Tuesdays and Fridays, Elm RC2-02-01B.

Please sign up on Calendly:

calendly.com/yncsmonroe/prof-monroe-s-office-hours

**Overview and Learning Goals**

This course introduces students to the societies and politics of contemporary Southwest Asia and Northern Africa. Beginning with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, we will explore the origins and trajectories of the region’s states, markets and social movements. Topics include the rise and fall of Arab Nationalism, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Political Islam, Gender Politics, Sectarian Politics, Authoritarianism and the Arab Spring. Though rooted in the study of peoples and states nestled between Morocco and Iran, this course invites students to compare Southwest Asia and Northern Africa with other regions, and to assess whether and when such regional comparisons and demarcations are analytically useful. Students with all levels of familiarity (or non-familiarity) with the region are welcome.

This module has two learning goals:

1. Equip students with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of politics and societies in Southwest Asia and North Africa.
2. Strengthen students’ critical and intellectual engagement with academic texts, media and art.

**Expectations and Assessment:**

* Attendance / Participation (15%)
* Map Quiz (5%)
* Mid-Term (30%)
* Movie Review (15%)
* Final / Research Paper (35%)

**Attendance / Participation (15%)**

Though I will take attendance each seminar, attendance alone is not enough to satisfy the course’s participation requirement. I expect students to be engaged, attentive and respectful in class. This requires completing all of the assigned readings and preparing questions / comments before class. Students will not get points for simply attending seminar. However, they will have point deductions for missing seminar without first getting permission.

An AD note, medical certificate, or prior permission from the course instructor is required for absences to be excused. **Students will also be given one free pass which they can use to excuse one absence from class or grant them a 24-hour extension on an assignment deadline (no questions asked).** More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade point penalty in their final participation grade.

In the middle of semester, students will be given a “first half” participation grade, worth half of their final participation grade.

We will value a step-up and step-back approach to participation in class. Listening and being attentive to one’s peers is just as valuable as contributing to class discussion. We will also recognize that there are gender, class, race and other factors that make some voices louder than others. Please give credit when credit is due, and be mindful that we all benefit from a more inclusive learning environment. Students will use gender inclusive language in class and in writing assignments.

**Outside of seminar, I expect students to email me a short question / reaction about at least one of the seminar’s assigned readings (three sentences max) before noon on the day of each seminar, starting from the second seminar**. This is an excellent way to come prepared to seminar and will give every student something to contribute to class. All submissions will receive a ‘’check’’, and this will count as a third of a student’s daily participation grade.

**I expect every student to attend at least one office hours session before the end of Week 6 (February 17th). If you cannot make office hours** (**13:00 - 15:00, Monday and Thursdays), please let me know and we can find an alternative time to meet. Students must sign up and book a slot for office hours on Calendly before we meet.**

**Map Quiz (5%): January 27**

Students will have 10 minutes at the start of seminar to place on a map a list of capitals, countries and bodies of water. **I will provide a map with all the relevant geographic locations the week before the map quiz.** The quiz is closed-book.

**Mid-Term (30%): February 17**

Students will have all of seminar to complete a closed-book mid-term in seminar. The mid-term will cover all readings and topics discussed in seminar from Week 1 up to Week 5. Half of the mid-term will consist of terms and short answer questions. **I will provide a list of possible terms that will be on the mid-term and a grading rubric the week before the mid-term.**  Students will have a choice of short answer questions to answer. The second half of the mid-term is an essay. Students will have a choice of essay prompts.

**Movie Review (15%)**

Each student must write **one** movie review about one of the module’s movie screenings. The movies, the date of their screenings and the review due dates are as follows:

1. The Battle of Algiers, **Due: February 3rd** 
   1. Content Warning: **There is one scene involving torture.**
2. A Separation, **Due: March 10th**
3. In Between, **Due:** **March 31st** 
   1. Content Warning: **There is one scene of graphic sexual violence (47 – 50th minutes of the film).** Viewer discretion is advised. Students can skip this scene and not lose track of the story.
4. The Square, **Due:** **April 14th** 
   1. Content Warning: **There are scenes of graphic violence against protesters.**

The movie review should have a very brief synopsis of the film. The review should describe the film’s central themes, the questions it raises, and how it engages with the topics and readings discussed in the module. The review should cite at least two of the readings / sources in the syllabus. Please see the rubric on the Canvas. **Max word count: 1,000 words.**

**Final / Research Paper (35%)**

1. Final

Students have the option to take a final. The final will cover Weeks 6 to 13. Like the mid-term, the final will be closed-book and consist of short answers and essay questions. **I will provide a list of possible terms that will be on the final and a grading rubric the last week of the semester.**  The final will be conducted electronically and will be due during finals weeks.

Available: May 2nd at 9:00 am

Due: May 2nd at 5:00 pm.

1. Research Paper, **Due: April 28**

Student can write a research paper on a topic of their choice, so long as it pertains to the politics and societies of the SWANA region. Those who write research papers must meet with me at office hours by week six to discuss their topic. **Max word count: 5,000 words (excluding works cited page).**

**Grading:**

All assignments should be posted onto Canvas by the stipulated deadline. Your assignment will be considered late if it misses the deadlines set above. You have one free pass which allows you to submit an assignment within 24 hours after the deadline without any penalty. This pass is non-transferable. For every other late assignment, you will pay a penalty: Your grade for the assignment will go down by one grade point (e.g. from A to A-, A- to B+) if you do not submit by the deadline, and then continue to fall by an additional grade point per 24 hours after the deadline.

For all assignments, students will be scored out of 100 according to the following rubric:

A+ : 100-97

A : 96-93

A- :92-90

B+ :89-87

B: 86-83

B-: 82-80

C+: 79-77

C: 76-70

D+: 69-60

D: 59-51

F: <=50

**Seminar Structure:**

We will meet twice a week for approximately ninety minutes. The first five minutes of the Tuesday seminar will focus on SWANA in the news. Each seminar will start with quick mini-lecture summarizing the seminar’s readings. The bulk of seminar will consist of discussing the assigned readings and in-seminar activities.

Students are encouraged to keep up to date with news from the region by checking the following sites:

* Al-Jazeera English: <https://www.aljazeera.com/>
* Al-Monitor: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html>
* BBC Middle East: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world/middle_east>
* Middle East Research and Information Project: <https://merip.org/>

Students can also keep up to date on the region by attending events and readings publications from NUS’ **Middle East Institute**: <https://mei.nus.edu.sg/>

**Computer Policy:**

I strongly encourage students to put their laptops away in seminar, and take notes in notebooks and print the readings if possible. For students who absolutely need their laptops, I request you leave the computer on airplane mode. This will help you (and students peering at your screen behind you) stay engaged in class.

**Required Books:**

* Cleveland, William L., and Martin Bunton. *A history of the modern Middle East*. Hachette UK, 2016.
* Aly, Abdel Monem Said, Shai Feldman, and Khalil Shikaki. *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and peacemaking in the Middle East*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013.
* Nasr, Vali. *The Shia revival: How conflicts within Islam will shape the future*. WW norton & Company, 2007

**Citations:**

Students must cite using the Chicago Manual of Style in each of their written assignments.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a very serious offence that goes against the ethos of academic honesty within Yale-NUS College.

We provide below a list of resources that explain what constitutes plagiarism. You are also reminded of the serious consequences in case you are caught plagiarizing. All student papers will be submitted to turnitin.com for a plagiarism check. Any suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Committee.

In this regard, we reproduce here a passage on Academic Integrity from the College Website:

“Yale-NUS College expects its students to abide by the highest standards of academic integrity as a matter of personal honesty and communal responsibility. Acting with academic integrity requires that (a) students do their own work, (b) students not interfere with the work of others, (c) students accurately and honestly represent the content of their work, and (d) students properly attribute others’ work.

Violations of the College’s academic integrity standards undermine both the community and the individual growth of students. Accordingly, they will be addressed with the utmost seriousness and sanctions ranging from grade penalties to expulsion. Examples of violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, copying or sharing homework answers, submitting work completed for one course as ‘new’ work for another course, or fabricating or falsifying research data.

Professors are obligated to refer suspected lapses in academic integrity to the College’s Committee on Integrity and Discipline (CID), which follows a set of policies and procedures approved by the faculty when investigating and adjudicating cases. To learn more about these policies and expectations, visit the Student Life – Academic Integrity website.”

Yale NUS College Library, “Yale-NUS Policies on Academic Integrity.” (2014). In Avoiding Plagiarism. Retrieved from <https://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/avoiding-plagiarism/>

**Learning and Disability:**

Students with learning disabilities should contact their Vice Rector’s office for support and guidance.

**Content Warnings:**

We will discuss difficult topics – violence, poverty, discrimination, exploitation and other facets of abject human cruelty. One aim of this module is to understand how these outcomes arise in SWANA and beyond. This requires reading texts, watching movies and discussing subjects that will and should make you feel uncomfortable. When possible, I’ve added content warnings for readings, podcasts and movies that discuss or depict extreme violence. I ask that you view and make this class as a “brave space” – a space where we can respectfully and thoughtfully discuss important but uncomfortable topics, a space that pairs scientific inquiry with ethical sensitivity.

If you do not think you are in the right space this semester to handle this material, then this might not be the right module for you right now. Please feel free to drop the module and take it at a better time.

Please note that the assigned readings may change throughout the term. I will let you know if they do. **The readings and** *A history of the modern Middle East* **are on e-reserves. The other required books are not.**

**Week 1**

**January 10: What is Swana?**

* Culcasi, Karen. "Constructing and naturalizing the Middle East." *Geographical Review* 100, no. 4 (2010): 583-597 (14 pages).
* Manners and Parmenter, 2008. *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*. Third Edition. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008. *Chapter 2. The Middle East: A Geographic Preface by Ian Manners and Barbara McKean Parmenter*. 9 – 37 (28 pages).
* Cleveland, W.L. and Bunton, M., 2016. Sixth Edition. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 1 (18 pages).
  + Students are encouraged (but not required) to read Chapter 2 (15 pages) for an overview of Islam and its practices.

**January 13: Swana before the break-up of the Ottoman Empire**

* Cleveland, W.L. and Bunton, M., *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 3 (35 – 48) , Part II (53 – 55), Chapter 4 (58 – 75), Chapter 5 (76 – 96), Chapter 6 (96 – 102; 108 – 110), Chapter 7 (111 – 114; 119 - 123) (68 pages).
* Weber, Stefan. Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808 – 1918). Vol. 1. *Murals as Expressions of Ottoman Identity* (434 – 441) (8 pages).

**Week 2**

**January 17: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Chapter 8 (124 – 134; 137 - 138), Chapter 9 (139 – 159) (33 pages)
* Patel, David .S., 2016. Repartitioning the Sykes-Picot Middle East? Debunking Three Myths. *Middle East Brief,* 103, 1-9 (9 pages).

**Seminar Activity**: **Discussion of passage from Isabella Hammad’s *The Parisian* (p. 161 – 171).**

* **Note: Students should bring the passage (electronically or hard copy) to seminar. Students do not need to read the passage before seminar. In seminar I will provide an overview of the novel, its characters and the passage’s context.**

**January 20: The Rise of (Pan-Arab) Nationalism and Independence**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Chapter 11, Chapter 12 (206 – 219; 222 - 225) (38 pages)
* Lawrence, Adria. *Imperial rule and the politics of nationalism: Anti-colonial protest in the French empire*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. Introduction. 1 – 49 (48 pages).

**Seminar Activity**: Group Project – Unpacking Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism

*Note: Professor Monroe will hand out a map with all relevant geographic features for next week’s map quiz.*

**Week 3**

Happy Chinese New Year! No class on January 24th

**January 27: Nasser and the Promise of (Pan-Arab) Nationalism**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Chapter 15, Chapter 16 (307 – 320), (32 pages).
* Lustick, Ian S. "The Absence of Middle Eastern great powers: political “backwardness” in historical perspective." *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 653-683 (30 pages).

**Map Quiz!!**

**Week 4**

**January 31st: The Fall of (Pan-Arab) Nationalism**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Chapter 16 (320 – 327), (7 pages)
* Kanafani, Ghassan. *Men in the Sun, and Other Palestinian Stories*. 21 – 74 (53 pages)

**Seminar Activity: Mini-Book Club Discussion of *Men in the Sun.* Students *are* expected to have read *Men in the Sun* before seminar.**

**February 3rd: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Part I)**

Aly, Feldman and Shikaki. *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East. Chapter 1 (1 – 39),* Chapter 2 (46 – 64) (57 pages).

* Chapter 2 pages 65 – 79 are optional but highly recommended.

**Due: Movie Review of The Battle of Algiers**

**Week 5**

**February 7th: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Part II)**

* *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East,* Chapter 4, 118 – 149 (31 pages).
* *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 17 (21 pages)
* Oppenheimer, Shaina. ‘A Life-and-Death Matter’: How Israel Helped Singapore When It Needed It The Most. *Haartez.* Mar 2020.

**February 10th: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Part III)**

* *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, Chapter 7 (231-51); Chapter 9 (306 – 319), Chapter 10 (331 – 348) (46 pages).
* *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 23 (28 pages)
* Kraft, Dina. Israel Celebrates 50 Years. *Associated Press.* 1998.
* Friedman, Thomas. What in the World is Happening in Israel? *New York Times.* Dec. 2022.[*https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/15/opinion/israel-palestinians-arabs-jews.html*](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/15/opinion/israel-palestinians-arabs-jews.html)

**Week Six**

**February 13th: Modernization and Secularism in Turkey**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 10 (166 – 175), Chapter 14 (261 – 271) (19 pages)
* Pevnser and Riesman, 1958. Lerner, Daniel. "The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East." *The Grocer and the Chief Parable,* 19 - 49 (30 pages).

**Possible in class exercise: Analyze chapter 63, 64 of Cities of Salt (about the discovery of the radio). Need to tell students about it.**

*Note: Professor Monroe will hand out a list with all possible short answer terms and a grading rubric for next week’s mid-term.*

Students will be given their “first half” participation grade, worth half of their final participation grade.

**February 17th: Mid-Term. Good Luck!!!**

**Enjoy Semester Break!**

**Week 7**

**February 28th: Political Islam and Democracy**

* Said Ali, Abdel Monem. 2007. “Understanding the Muslim Brothers in Egypt.” Crown Center for Middle East Studies, *Middle East Brief* 23 (8 pages).
* Schwedler, Jillian. "Can Islamists Become Moderates: Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis." *World Politics*. 63 (2011): 347 – 76 (29 pages).
* Esen, Berk, and Sebnem Gumuscu. "Rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey." *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016): 1581-1606 (25 pages).

**March 3rd : Iran and Shi’ite Islamist Movements (Part I)**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 2 (30 – 32), Chapter 3 (48 – 52), Chapter 6 (102 – 108), Chapter 8 (134 - 137), Chapter 10 (176 – 181), Chapter 14 (273 – 285), (31 pages)
* Nasr, Vali. *The Shia Revival* 2006. Chapter 1, (32 pages). – move chapter 2 here.

**Week 8**

**March 7th: Iran and Shi’ite Islamist Movements (Part II)**

* Nasr, Vali. *The Shia Revival* 2006. Chapters 2, 3, 4 (68 pages).
* *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 18 (23 pages).

**March 10th: Saudi Arabia and the Rentier State (Part I)**

* *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Chapter 7 (114 – 116); Chapter 12 (219 – 222), Chapter 20 (21 pages).
* Yergin, Daniel. The Prize – Part 5: Crude Diplomacy (60 minutes).
  + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7g5UMxDZIg>
* Friedman, Thomas. 2017. “[Saudi Arabia’s Arab Spring, at Last](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/23/opinion/saudi-prince-mbs-arab-spring.html).” *New York Times.*
* Abullah Al-Arian, Abdullah. “[Seventy Years of the New York Times Describing Saudi Royals as Reformers.”](https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/34727) Jadaliyya, 2017. (2 pages)

**Seminar Activity: Consultants and the Resource Curse**

**Due: Movie Review for A Separation**

**Week 9**

**March 14th: Saudi Arabia and the Rise of Islamist Terrorism (Part II)**

* Hegghammer, Thomas. 2010. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979.* Cambridge University Press. “Al Qaida in Saudi Arabia,” pp. 99 – 112 (13 pages).
* Menoret, Pascal. "The Suburbanization of Islamic Activism in Saudi Arabia." *City & Society* 29, no. 1 (2017): 162-186 (24 pages).
* Gerges, Fawaz. “ISIS and the Third Wave of Jihadism.” *Current History* 113, no. 767 (December 2014): 339-343 (4 pages) .

**March 17th: Why Sectarian Conflict? (Part I)**

* Ashutosh Varshney. “Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict.” In The Oxford Handbook on Comparative Politics, edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009: ch. 12 (274-294) (20 pages).
* Cammett, Melani and Sukriti Issar. “Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon.” *World Politics* 62, no. 3 (July 2010): 381 – 421 (40 pages).

**Week 10**

**March 21st: Why Sectarian Conflict? (Part II): Syrian Civil War Case Study**

* Pinto, Paulo Gabriel Hilu. “The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict.”In *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East*, edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, Chapter. 7 (pp. 123-142) (19 pages).
* Gause III, F. Gregory. "Beyond sectarianism: The new Middle East cold war." Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper 11 (2014): 1-27 (27 pages).

**March 24th: Swana Exceptionalism (Part I): Gender Inequality**

* Ross, Michael L. "Oil, Islam, and Women." *American Political Science Review* (2008): 107-123 (16 pages).
* Blaydes, Lisa, and Drew A. Linzer. "The political economy of women's support for fundamentalist Islam." *World Politics* 60, no. 4 (2008): 576-609 (33 pages).
* Eltahawy, Mona. "Why do they hate us?." *Foreign Policy* 193 (2012) (11 pages).
  + Content Warning: This article contains graphic language about sexual assault.
* Mousa, Sara. “Elahawy’s ‘hate’ fuels real war on ‘us’.” *Al Jazeera* (2012) (2 pages). [Link](https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2012/5/8/eltahawys-hate-fuels-real-war-on-us/).
* Abu Lughod, Lila. 2002. “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others.” American Anthropologist. 104:3, pg. 783 – 790 (7 pages).

Sabrina: consider adding something more positive about women’s empowerment in SWANA

* Add NYT article about divorce in Mauritania!

**Week 11**

**March 28th: Swana Exceptionalism (Part II): Economic Stagnation**

* Malik, Adeel, and Bassem Awadallah. "The economics of the Arab Spring." *World Development* 45 (2013): 296-313 (17 pages).
* Kuppinger, Petra, Najib B. Hourani, and Ahmed Kanna. "Crushed? Cairo’s garbage collectors and neoliberal urban politics." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no. sup2 (2014): 621-633 (22 pages).
* The Economist. 2021. Dec. 18. Railway lines once connected the Middle East
  + <https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2021/12/18/railway-lines-once-connected-the-middle-east?gclid=CjwKCAiA-8SdBhBGEiwAWdgtcBJy3-wuaQ6iiR-B0DcTxk1p0x5iQSLpoa856YDoW9l4mHZuZgZtyxoC54UQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds>
* Optional but recommended:
  + Bellin, Eva. *The political-economic conundrum: The affinity of economic and political reform in the Middle East and North Africa*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004. (20 pages).

**March 31st: Swana Exceptionalism (Part III): Entrenched Authoritarianism**

* Bellin, Eva. "The robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in comparative perspective." *Comparative Politics* (2004): 139-157 (18 pages).
* Lewis, Bernard. “Islam and Liberal Democracy.” *The Atlantic* 271 (February 1993): 1 – 19. (19 pages).

**Due: In Between Movie Review**

**Week 12**

**April 4th: Arab Spring: Eruption (Part I)**

* Bellin, Eva. “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons From the Arab Spring,” *Comparative Politics* Vol. 44, Number 2 (January 2012) pp. 127-144 (20 pages).
* Gause III, F. Gregory. "Why Middle East studies missed the Arab Spring: The myth of authoritarian stability." *Foreign affairs* (2011): 81-90. (10 pages).
* Yom, Sean and Gregory Gause. “Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On.” *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74-88. (14 pages).
* *Women of the Midan: A Conversation with Sherine Hafez*, on the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) Podcast (30 minutes)

**April 7th:**

**No class, have a blessed Good Friday!**

**Week 13**

**April 11th : Arab Spring: Blowback (Part II) and SWANA Today**

* Bellin, Eva. “The Puzzle of Democratic Divergence in the Arab World: Theory Confronts. Experience in Egypt and Tunisia.” *Political Science Quarterly* 133, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 435-474. (39 pages).
* Koh, Choon Hwee. “The Middle East: A useful foil for thinking about Singapore’s past and present.” 2020. Academia SG.
* Velloor, Ravi. 2021. Lessons from Sudan for Myanmar’s top brass? *The Straits Times.* Dec, 2021.
* Eyal, Jonathan. China takes another big step in the Middle East vacuum. *The Straits Times.* Dec, 2022.

*Note: Professor Monroe will hand out a list with all possible short answer terms and a grading rubric for the final.*

**April 14: No Class. Good luck with finals!**

**Due: Movie Review of The Square**