MDES 345p
POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
FALL 2019

Lecture MWF 10:00-10:50am
Section: 41537R
Location: THH 207

Instructor: Ekin Kurtic
Email: kurtic@usc.edu
Office: Taper Hall (THH) 256L
Office Hours: MW 3.30-5.30pm

Course Description

This course examines the region called the Middle East through the lenses of power relations and authority. The course is divided into four main parts. First, we will reflect on the relationship between power and knowledge. We will critically elaborate on the question of what the Middle East is and how relations of power and colonial histories are implicated in the construction of the region. In this first part, we will also discuss the role of the social and cultural representations of the Middle East in this construction. Second, we will look at the role of histories of colonialism and nation-state making in shaping the rule and governance in the region. We will particularly focus on the governing of the populations and space and on the everyday workings of the bureaucracy. Third, we will examine how appeal to power and authority in the Middle East operate and manifest in the following selected realms: Gender and Sexuality; Medicine; Expertise and Infrastructure; and Environment. Finally, we will delve into the different forms of resistance to power in the region, ranging from everyday micropolitics to social movements. We will also examine the transnational links between social movements by focusing on the relation between the Black Power movement and the Palestinian struggle.

Learning Goals

• To be able to critically reflect on the construction of the region called “the Middle East” and on the problems with this designation.
• To elaborate on the forms of power and politics implicated in the ways of representing and ordering the region.
• To conceptualize power and authority not only as a limiting but also enabling force.
• To consider the longstanding and complex dynamics between power and resistance in the region.

Course Materials

All the textual resources will be posted on the course website. Please download and/or print the
readings and bring them to class. You will need to have them and your notes with you in order to participate in class discussion.

Requirements and Grading

Class Participation (10%) You are required to regularly and actively attend every class meeting including lectures and discussion sessions.

Leading Discussion (15%) You are required to lead one Friday discussion session. In leading the discussion you will provide your brief, critical reflection on the weekly theme of the readings and the theme of the lectures; point to your peers’ posts you find striking, crucial and/or problematic; raise questions to discuss; and moderate the discussion. You are required to share the discussion question(s) with me before midnight on Thursday. I will reply Friday morning with suggestions.

Weekly Posts/Reading Responses (20%) As of the third week of the classes, you are required to post a reading response on the course website each week (approximately 200-250 words). The posts need to summarize the main points of the weekly readings and closely engage them by raising original questions and/or critiques. In your posts, you are also encouraged to connect the weekly readings to the readings and lectures of the previous weeks. The posts will be visible to all students taking the course. You are also required to read other students’ posts and bring your reflections into the class discussion. Weekly posts/responses are due every Thursday by noon.

Term Paper (20%) You are required to write a short term paper (approximately 5-7 double-spaced pages). In this paper, you will provide a close analysis of a Middle East related book, news article series, film and/or documentary (based on your own selection) in response to the question of how the region and/or corresponding country in the region is conceptualized and represented in the textual/visual media. In your analysis, you will need to refer to the course readings. The term paper is due on Friday, September 27th.

Final Paper (35%) You are required to write a final paper (approximately 12 double-spaced pages). In the final paper, you are required to do close textual analysis of course readings and to critically reflect on the selected course theme(s) in response to one of the two questions that will be provided by the instructor ahead of time. The final paper is due on Saturday, December 12th.

Course Policies

Class Participation: This is a lecture and discussion based course. You are required to regularly and actively attend every class meeting. You are expected to have carefully read all the textual material and have critically engaged them. Every Friday, discussion sessions will be held based on the content of the required readings and weekly lectures. The discussions will be moderated by one of the class participants and they will take place in an inclusive environment supported by principles of equal participation, collective learning, and mutual respect.

Lateness Policy: Late submissions are not accepted except with the prior permission of the instructor or with a doctor’s note. An assignment handed in late without instructor’s permission
or doctor’s note will be marked down one half-grade for each day it is late.

**Academic Integrity and Codes of Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100- behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity [http://equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu) or to the Department of Public Safety [http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us](http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us). This is important for the safety of the whole USC community.

Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [http://sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems and Accommodations**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute [http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali](http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information [http://emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Course Schedule**

**PART I CONSTRUCTING THE MIDDLE EAST**

**WEEK 1 Introduction and Region-Making**

August 26 – Introduction and Course Overview

August 28 – Politics of Region Formation


**August 30 – Is there a Middle East?**


**WEEK 2 Socio-Cultural Construction of the Middle East**

**September 2 – No Class: Labor day**

**September 4 – Orientalism**


**September 6 -- Discussion Session**
PART II: COLONIAL POWER AND NATION-STATE FORMATION

WEEK 3 Colonial Power and Representing the Middle East

September 9 – Exhibiting Egypt


September 11 – Ordering Egypt


September 13 – Discussion Session

WEEK 4 Governing Gaza within the Mandate System

September 16 – Production of Bureaucratic Authority


September 18 – Practice of Government and Bureaucratic Authority


September 20 – Discussion session

WEEK 5 Nation-State Formation in Turkey

September 23 – Nationalism and Population Politics


Optional:
September 25 – Building a National Space


September 27 – Discussion Session

* Term paper is due on September 27th *

PART III: FACES OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

WEEK 6 Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East

September 30 – Liberating Muslim Women?


Optional:

October 2 – Sex/gender transgression


October 4 – Discussion Session

WEEK 7 Medical Authority

October 7 – Medical Modernity and Statecraft

**October 9 – State Medicine in Wartime**


Optional:

**October 11 – Discussion Session**

**WEEK 8 Expert Power and Technopolitics**

**October 14 – Dams, Mosquitoes, and Expertise in Egypt**


Optional:

**October 16 – Building Roads, Establishing Expert Power**


**October 18 – No Class: Fall Recess**

**WEEK 9 Governing the Environment I**

**October 21 – Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East**


October 23 – Environmental Conflicts and Justice


Optional:

October 25 – Discussion Session

WEEK 10 Governing the Environment II

October 28 – Politics of Nature and Sustainability


Optional:

October 30 -- Energy and Climate Change


November 1 – Discussion Session

PART IV: RESISTANCE TO POWER AND AUTHORITY

WEEK 11 Everyday Politics

November 4 – Mundane Politics of the “Informal People”


**November 6 – Women and Youth: Everyday Spaces of Agency**


**November 8 – Discussion Session**

**WEEK 12 Feminist Movements and Transnational Networks**

**November 11 – Feminist Movements**


Optional:

**November 13 – Black Power and Palestine**


**November 15 – Discussion Session**

**WEEK 13 Social Movements and Protests**

**November 18 – Arab Spring I**


Optional:

**November 20 – Arab Spring II**


**November 22 – No Class: Professor at a Conference**

**WEEK 14 Social Movements and Protests -- Continuing**

**November 25 – Gezi Park Resistance in Turkey**


**November 27 & 29 – No Class: Thanksgiving Break**

**WEEK 15 Social Movements and Protests – Continuing**

**December 2 – The Rojava Experience and Democratic Autonomy**


**December 4 – Discussion Session**

**December 6 – Final Discussion and Course Summary**

* The final paper is due on Saturday, December 12th *