Political Science 246A
Paths to the Modern World: Islam and the West
Lisa Blaydes*       Gary Cox†

Winter 2017

Class: 1:30 - 2:50 pm, Monday and Wednesday (Encina Central 464)
Office Hours for Blaydes: Monday 10:30 - 11:30 am (Encina West 408)
Office Hours for Cox: Wednesday 10:30 - 11:30 am (Encina West 303)

Course Overview

How and why did Europe develop political institutions that encouraged economic growth and industrialization? And why has the Islamic world lagged in the creation of growth-promoting political institutions? This course uses a comparative approach to understanding two routes to the modern world – the historical experiences of Christian Europe and the Islamic world. This seminar is designed to serve the following goals:

1. To acquaint students with many of the leading theories on the questions of how and why Europe developed growth-promoting political and economic institutions through a comparison with institutional development in the Islamic world.

2. To encourage the development of independent research skills. Students will be exposed to a diverse set of methodological strategies. Students will be expected to develop a research question and produce an original scholarly research paper on the subject of comparative economic and political development.

3. To develop seminar skills. Students will be expected to engage in critical discussions of the assigned readings.

Evaluation

Students are expected to carefully read all assigned material in advance of class and to participate actively in class discussion. In addition, students will be asked to write a research paper on a topic of their choosing. Two written assignments will be required:

1. Annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography lists the key sources to be used for the research paper. Each item will include full bibliographic information (i.e., author, title, publisher) as well as a short discussion of the main topics and arguments covered in the book or article.

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The discussion might also include a reflection on the usefulness of the source. In Week 5, each student will circulate their annotated bibliography and make a short statement about the topic of their research paper for the class.

2. Research paper. The research paper should reflect original analysis and argumentation. In Week 10, each student will make a short statement about the main conclusions of their research paper. A final version of the paper will be due at 5 pm, March 22 (the designated final examination time for our course).

Grades will be assigned based on the following weighting scheme:

10 percent: Annotated bibliography (due February 6)
25 percent: Class participation
65 percent: Research paper (final draft due March 22)

Students will have the option to enroll in PS 246A for 3, 4 or 5 units. The evaluation scheme is common for students enrolled for different numbers of units but the length of the research paper will vary depending on the units. For students enrolled for three units, an 8-10 page paper is required; four units, 10-15 pages; five units, 15-20 pages.

Agenda of Topics and Readings

All readings will be available on Canvas. Readings that will be discussed on Monday will be designated with an (M) and those to be discussed on Wednesday with a (W). The agenda of topics and readings is as follows:

Week 1 (January 9 & January 11): Introduction


Week 2 (January 16 & January 18): State Formation

Blaydes, Lisa. forthcoming. “State Formation in the Middle East.” Annual Review of Political Science. 20. (M)


**Week 3 (January 23 & January 25): Parliaments**


**Week 4 (January 30 & February 1): Public Finance**


**Week 5 (February 6 & February 8): Commerce and Economic Growth**


**Week 6 (February 13 & February 15): Urbanization**


Cox, Gary W. “Political Institutions, Free Trade and the Great Divergence.” Unpublished typescript, Stanford University. (W)


Week 7 (February 22): Universities, the Printing Press, and Knowledge


Week 8 (February 27 & March 1): Military Technology, Organization and Conflict


Week 9 (March 6 & March 8): Culture and Religion


Blaydes, Lisa, Alison McQueen and Justin Grimmer. 2016. “Mirrors for Princes and Sultans: Advice on the Art of Governance in the Medieval Christian and Islamic Worlds.” Unpublished typescript, Stanford University. (M)

Gorski, Phillip S. 2000. “Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700.” American Sociological Review. 65. (M)


**Week 10 (March 13 & March 15): Clash of Civilizations? Islam and the West Today**


**Note for Students with Documented Disabilities**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk, (650) 723-1066.