

Freshman Seminar: Everyday Political Life in the Authoritarian Middle East

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Political Science 44N

Class: 10:00 am - 12:50 pm, Fridays

Office Hours: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm, Mondays (Encina 408W)

Introduction

This seminar examines the everyday political lives of individuals living under the authoritarian governments of the Middle East. Why focus on the everyday political struggles and practices of non-elite members of society? A primary objective of this course is to demonstrate that the large-scale social and political forces governing the Middle East can be examined by studying politics from the bottom up. We will explore how individuals respond to state policy, use informal channels to influence politics, challenge various forms of repression, and organize Islamic political opposition. Readings will primarily be works of political ethnography which examine social and political life in five Middle Eastern countries: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.

Evaluation

15 percent: Book Review I
15 percent: Book Review II
15 percent: Book Review III
15 percent: Book Review IV
40 percent: Class participation

Book Reviews

Students will be asked to submit four short papers in the form of book reviews over the course of the quarter. These are 3-4 page analytic pieces that are to critically respond to the assigned reading. We will discuss the criteria for evaluating the book reviews on the first day of class. Students will select which weeks they will write reviews. Students who have written review papers for a particular week will be asked to post their papers on the course website by 8:00 pm the evening before class and to actively lead class discussion the next day. All students will be expected to log-in and read the week's review essays before the start of class the next day.

Class Participation

Participation is a vital component of the course. Students are expected to attend all classes and be prepared for all class discussions. Class participants should exhibit respect for others and their views.

Agenda of Topics and Readings

The following books are available for purchase and will also be on reserve in the library:

- Bayat, Asef. 1997. *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bengio, Ofra. 1998. *Saddam's Word: Political Discourse in Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Deeb, Lara. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ghannam, Farha. 2002. *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ismail, Salwa. 2006. *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Makiya, Kanan. 2004. *The Monument: Art and Vulgarity in Saddam Hussein's Iraq*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Singerman, Diane. 1996. *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. 2002. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press.

The agenda of topics and readings is as follows:

- Week 1: Background Lecture and Discussion of Syllabus
- Week 2: State-led Development: *Remaking the Modern*
- Week 3: Informal Politics: *Avenues of Participation*
- Week 4: Islamist Recruitment: *Mobilizing Islam*
- Week 5: Geography: *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*

Week 6: Poverty and Political Activism: *Street Politics*
Week 7: Political Discourse: *Saddam's Word*
Week 8: Authoritarian Art and Propaganda: *The Monument*
Week 9: Political Culture: *Ambiguities of Domination*
Week 10: Gender and Modernism: *An Enchanted Modern*

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 (phone: 723-1066, 723-1067 TTY).