STPEC 491H
The Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings

Social Thought & Political Economy (STPEC)
Spring 2016

Instructor: Omar S. Dahi
Email: odahi@hampshire.edu
Tuesdays 6:00-8:30 PM
Machmer Hall room E-33

Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

The Uprisings that swept the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have had a profound impact on the political economy of authoritarian regimes within the region as well as academic frameworks used to explain them. However, the optimism of the Arab uprisings was quickly replaced with more sober and pragmatic thinking about the future brought upon by the realities of regime resilience, the challenges of democratic transformation, and the myriad domestic and international forces engaged in counter-revolutionary activity. This course examines the economics of the MENA region and asks the following questions: Do the uprisings represent failures of the developmental state, neo-liberalism, or authoritarian regimes? How does human development within MENA compare to other regions in the developing world? To what extent does either religion or oil explain economic outcomes? What impact will the upheaval associated with the uprisings themselves have on the economies of the different countries? What are the long-term legacies of the Arab Uprisings? The course will explore these questions through theoretical readings, case studies from Syria, Egypt, and the Gulf.

Course Goals

- To introduce students to the main political economy themes and debates on the modern Middle East
- To develop students ability to use political economy and comparative economic analysis to pose and answer their own questions about the modern Middle East
- To develop students critical reading, writing, and speaking/presentation skills

Different Abilities

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), please notify me within the first two
weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements:

Class Dynamics

The content and format of this course may lead to a number of discussions about gender, class, race and other important and sensitive issues. Students are expected to engage in these conversations sensitively and with openness to critique. Discussion and debate is encouraged, but personal attacks or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. If you feel you cannot speak in class, please talk with the instructor privately after class to figure out strategies that might help.

Grading

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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
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<td>Final Presentation</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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<td>Think Pieces</td>
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<th>Grade</th>
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Attendance and Participation (25%): This includes thoughtful comments and questions during class time to support discussion, contribution to small groups, and attendance. See above for attendance policy.

Final Paper (25%): Students will write a 10-12 double spaced pages final research paper on a topic of their choice. Detailed guidelines on the final paper will be provided as the semester progresses.

Final Presentation (25%): Students will present the findings from their research paper in the last week of classes. Detailed guidelines on the presentation will be provided as the semester progresses.

Think Pieces (25%): Students are expected to submit 5 think pieces through the semester, out of a possible 11 class meetings where readings are due. It is up to you which week you would like to submit a piece. A think piece is a 1-2 page condensed essay, reflection and critical engagement with the readings of the week. I call them ‘think pieces’ rather than ‘response papers’ to stress the fact that they should not be summaries and reactions but display active engagement, critique, making connections, and synthesis.

Attendance Policy

Since this class meets once a week, you are allowed only one absence. Missing more than one course meeting will result in a drop in your attendance grade (25% of total grade).

Arriving more than 5-10 minutes late or leaving the classroom for an extended period of time during class meeting hours may result in you being marked absent for that day. Repeated late arrivals will also result in you being marked absent. If you have to miss class due to an emergency such as an illness, and you have already used up your one absence I may require that you or someone on your behalf document the reasons behind the absence.

**Technology Policy**

All required readings will be uploaded to Moodle. You do not have to buy a textbook for this class. You can bring your computers or tablets to class but you can only use them to follow course readings. Using them for any other purpose (including researching course related issues) may result in you being marked absent for that class meeting.

Please turn your cell phone off or to silent during class.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating yourself about the University’s official policy on academic honesty. You can read it in full at: [http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/rights/acad_honest.htm](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/rights/acad_honest.htm)

**Course Calendar**

**Tentative Schedule:** All readings will be available as pdf or .doc files on Moodle. You are expected to print out the course reading and bring it to class. I may change readings throughout the semester so please check Moodle for updates. Readings should be completed for the date they appear on the calendar.

**Class 1: January 19th**
*Introduction and overview of the course*

**Class 2: January 26th**
*Oil & Rentier State theories part I*

- Hage, Ghassan 2013. “The Arab Social Sciences and the two critical traditions”

**Class 3: February 2**
*Oil & Rentier State theories part II*

Class 4: February 9
Islam and culture

• Saba Mahmood, “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt,” Social Research, 70:3 (Fall 2003)

Tuesday February 16: Monday schedule, no class

Class 5: February 23
Colonial origins of Modern Middle East


Class 6: March 1
Developmentalist era, part I


Class 7: March 8
Developmentalist era, part II


Tuesday March 15: Spring Break
Class 8: March 22
Neoliberalism, part I

- Elyachar, J., Rethinking Anthropology of Neoliberalism in the Middle East. A Companion to the Anthropology of the Middle East, pp.411-433.

Class 9: March 29
Neoliberalism, part II


Class 10: April 5
Egypt: labor unions, the uprising and authoritarian resurgence


Class 11: April 12
Capitalism and Class in the Gulf


Class 12: April 19
Syria, the refugee crisis, and the disaster in the Levant


Class 13: April 26
Presentations & Last Day of Class