

## **PS327**

### **A Critical Appraisal of the Arab Spring: 2010-2023**

Seminar Leader: Dr. Usahma Felix Darrah / [u.darrah@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:u.darrah@berlin.bard.edu)  
Course Time: Tuesday 15:45-19:00  
Office Hours: Tuesday 14:30-15:30 or by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course deals with the mass protests that swept across the Arab World in the 2010s as part of a global series of democracy movements. To study this phenomenon, we will look at the historical emergence of modern Arab states within regional systems that share a common language, culture and public space. Students will learn to contextualize the broader Arab region using analytical tools such as the concepts of state formation, the role of geopolitical alignments, the workings of political economy and the social contract, the phenomenon of the rentier state, and the dynamics of the deep state. In examining the protest movements and violence in key Arab countries, students will develop answers to the following questions: How did Arab civil society try to bring about dignity and democracy? How was the counter-revolutionary repression by some Arab states supported by Iran and Russia? What challenges did the upheaval and protracted conflicts in the MENA and Gulf regions present for Western interests and policies? How has US policy, in particular, affected the perceptions and posture of key Arab actors in relationship to the West? Where does the Arab Spring represent a turning point toward a democratic trajectory, and where did it lead to failed statehood? Does the migration fallout from the Arab Spring mark the end of liberal politics in the EU?

### **Requirements**

#### **Academic Integrity**

BCB expects students to adhere to its high standards of academic integrity at all times. Students that fail to meet these standards will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

#### **Accessibility**

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, ([accommodations@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:accommodations@berlin.bard.edu)) to request an official accommodation. Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning.

#### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes. If you cannot attend a seminar, let me know in advance by email stating the reason for your absence. There will be no option of remote participation. BCB does not offer credit for any course in which a student has

missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons. For the full attendance policy please check the Student Handbook.

### **Grade Assessment**

The final grade in this course will be calculated as follows:

- Class participation (25%)* Your individual contribution to this course is important. Our classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to gain knowledge, develop arguments and build an intellectual identity.
- Presentation (25%)* You present for ca. 25-minutes about an issue related to that week's topic (see list below), using PPT and a handout for the class. Afterwards, you will facilitate a class discussion for the remainder of the session.
- Essays (40%)* Each student will prepare two, 2.000-word "briefings in response to a policymaker tasking". Both essays must include the use of analytical tools. The first essay is due on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. The second essay is due on Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Exam (10%)* A 90-minute written examination. This will be a chance to showcase personal opinions and refine your journalistic abilities.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). In cases of illness, you must request a new deadline for an assignment.

## **Weekly Schedule and Readings**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>Nr. 1</b> / Sept. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Course introduction, review of syllabus distribution of tasks	
<b>Nr. 2</b> / Sept. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Arabic as a national and cultural bond Emergence of modern Arab states	Hourani, pp. 353 - 416.
<b>Nr. 3</b> / Sept. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Modernization and Democratization: Terminology and Tools Prelude to the Arab Spring	Plattner and Diamond, <i>Democratization</i> . Walker, <i>Rentier State Theory</i> . Gunitsky, <i>Democratic Waves</i> .
<b>Nr. 4</b> / Sept. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Case Study: Tunisia	Ottaway, pp. 1-50. Ayeb, pp. 467–479.

<b>Nr. 5</b> / Oct. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Case Study: Egypt	Ottaway, pp. 133-160. Howard, 2013.
<b>Nr. 6</b> / Oct. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Case Study: Libya.	Polat, Chapter 8, in: Aktürk / Cherkaoui, 2024.
<b>Nr. 7</b> / Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Case Study: Morocco and Algeria	Ottaway, pp. 161-188. Kilavuz, Chapter 9, in: Aktürk / Cherkaoui, 2024

----- **Fall Break** -----

<b>Nr. 8</b> / Oct. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Case Study: Syria ( <i>first essay due</i> )	Majed, Chapter 5, in: Aktürk / Cherkaoui, 2024 Pierce, <i>The Wages of Neglect</i> .
<b>Nr. 9</b> / Nov. 5 <sup>th</sup>	Case Study: Yemen	Juneau, Chapter 13, in: Kamrava, 2014.
<b>Nr. 10</b> / Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Islamist Movements	Al-Arian, Chapter 4, in: Kamrava, 2014
<b>Nr. 11</b> / Nov. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Western and Regional Policies towards the Arab Spring	Burns, <i>The Back Channel</i> , pp. 293-336. Goldberg, <i>The Obama Doctrine</i> . Steinberg, <i>Regional Power UAE</i> .
<b>Nr. 12</b> / Dec. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Global Effects: Humanitarian Crises, Mass Migration and the Return of Geopolitics	to be announced
<b>Nr. 13</b> / Dec. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Legacy and lessons learned ( <i>second essay due</i> )	Burgat, Chapter 1, in: Aktürk / Cherkaoui, 2024 Bakir, Chapter 4 in: Aktürk / Cherkaoui, 2024
<b>Nr. 14</b> / Dec. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Final Examination	

## **Assignment Topics**

(or propose an own topic in consultation with instructor)

### Sessions 4 - 9

1. Describe the political and economic conditions in one of the Arab countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria or Yemen) before the uprising. What type of order existed there? How can this form of governance be characterized?
2. Describe the deep state dynamics in one of the Arab countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Algeria or Morocco). Explain their composition, their aims, methods and some relevant social repercussions.
3. Describe how civil society grew and evolved in one of the Arab countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria or Yemen). Emphasize its most important manifestations (ex. the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet or the Egyptian labor movement). Explain whether these developments are sustainable.

Session 10

4. Compare the attempts of various Islamist parties to govern in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco. Highlight their elections and their policies, as well as their exit from power. Discuss whether this is a promising trajectory for democracy.

Session 11

5. Compare and contrast the foreign policies of Turkey and Iran in regard to the Arab Spring. Please explain the broader effects of a “Shiite Crescent” and the Turkish coup attempt of 2016.
6. Compare and contrast the foreign policies of key Western states towards the Arab Spring. What challenges did the upheaval and protracted conflicts in the MENA and Gulf regions present for Western interests and policies?
7. Compare the foreign policies of the Arab Gulf states towards the Arab Spring. To which extent can we speak of a counter-revolution?

Session 12

8. Analyze the global implications of the Arab Spring in terms of state behavior. Highlight any changes in the conduct of hostilities or compliance with international humanitarian law.
9. To what extent does the mass migration from the Arab Spring mark an end to liberal politics in the EU?

**Required Course Readings** (no purchase required)

Aktürk, Sener and Cherkaoui, Tarek (editors). *The Arab Spring: Past, Present and Future*. Istanbul, World Research Centre, 2024.

Ayeb, Habib (2011). "Social and Political Geography of the Tunisian Revolution". *Review of African Political Economy*. 38 (129): 467–479.

William Burns, *The Back channel—A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for Its Renewal*. New York, Random House, 2019.

Diamond, Larry. (May 2011). "A Fourth Wave or False Start?". *Foreign Affairs*.

Goldberg, Jeffrey, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, April 2016.

Hourani, Albert. *History of the Arab Peoples*. Harvard University Press, 2002.

Howard, Phillip N. (2013). *Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring*.

*Oxford Studies in Digital Politics*. Oxford University Press.

Gunitsky, Seva (2018). "Democratic Waves in Historical Perspective". *Perspectives on Politics*. 16 (3): 634–651

Mehran Kamrava (editor). *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East*. Oxford University Press. 2014

Ottaway, David and Marina. *A Tale of Four Worlds: The Arab Region After the Uprisings*, Oxford University Press, 2019.

Pierce, Anne. "The Wages of Neglect in Syria". *The National Interest*, January 2014.

Plattner, Marc F. and Diamond, Larry. "Democratization in the Arab World?". *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13/4 (2002).

Steinberg, Guido. "Regional Power UAE". *SWP Research Paper* (10), July 2020.

Walker, Scott (June 2023). "Rentier State Theory 50 years on: new developments". *Frontiers in Political Science*.

### **Recommended Readings / Research tips**

Bianco, Cinzia. *The Gulf monarchies after the Arab Spring: Threats and security*. Manchester University Press, 2024.

Cook, Steven. *False Dawn: Protest, Democracy, and Violence in the New Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2017.

Gordon, Phillip, *Losing the Long Game: The False Promise of Regime Change in the Middle East*. St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2020.

Lynch, Mark. "The New Arab Order: Power and Violence in Today's Middle East", *Foreign Affairs*, Sept./Oct. 2018.

Lynch, Mark. *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*, Public Affairs 2016.

Mandelbaum, Michel. *Mission Failure: America and the World in the Post-Cold War Era*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Muasher, Marwan. *The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism*. Yale University Press, 2014.

Sayigh, Yezid. "The Changing Role of the Egyptian Military under El-Sisi", *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*, December 2023.

Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Wikipedia, "Arab Spring" - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab\\_Spring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring)

United Nations International Organization for Migration, World Migration Report 2020.