

## PS215 Arab Politics

**Lecturer:** Dr. Usahma Felix Darrah / [u.darrah@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:u.darrah@berlin.bard.edu)  
**Course Times:** Tuesdays 1400-1715  
**Office Hours:** By Appointment

### Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the politics of the contemporary Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including the Arab Gulf States. The 22 countries that make up the Arab League (AL) are very diverse, but they share a common language and a public space. First, we will explore Islam and its historic development, as well as the interaction of Arab peoples with European and American power. Second, we will use foundational concepts from history, political science, sociology and political economy to study the emergence of modern Arab States and their role in International Relations. This will include Arab relations with Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, we will focus on internal and development issues that drive regional politics in the Maghreb, Egypt, the Mashreq and the Arab Gulf States. Our course has a lecture-seminar framework, and students are expected to do assigned readings and debate on the various issues.

### 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 (20%)	Your individual contribution to this course is very important. Our classroom is a protected space, and you should feel free to gain knowledge, debate, argue and build an own intellectual identity.
Presentation Nr. 1 (25%)	Together with another student, you will present for ca. 20-minutes about an issue or reading related to a weekly topic.
Presentation Nr. 2 (25%)	Together with another student, you will present for ca. 20-minutes about an issue or reading related to a weekly topic.
Quiz Nr. 1 (10%)	Terminology I
Quiz Nr. 2 (10%)	Map Test
Quiz Nr. 3 (10%)	Terminology II

### 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 or an accommodation agreement, you must request a new deadline for an assignment.

### Weekly Schedule and Readings

Classes	Topics	Readings
Nr. 1 / Sept. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Introduction / The Arabic Language	-
Nr. 2 / Sept. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Pre / Early Islamic Period (570-632 CE)	Drennan, <u>An Introduction to Islam</u> .
Nr. 3 / Sept. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Umayyad "Silver Age" (632-750 CE) Abbasid "Golden Age" (750-1258 CE)	Drews, <u>Judaism, Christianity and Islam</u> , Chapt. 21
Nr. 4 / Sept. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	The Arab Translation Movement Andalusia (711-1492 CE)	Watt, <u>Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe</u> Film: Short History of the Moors
Nr. 5 / Sept. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Decline and Stagnation in Dar al-Islam European Colonialism	Lewis, <u>What Went Wrong?</u> (summary) Said, <u>Orientalism</u> (summary) Esposito, <u>Islam and Politics</u> , Chapter 2.
Nr. 6 / Oct. 7 <sup>th</sup>	Israel and Palestine I: Seeds of Conflict	Smith, <u>Palestine and Arab-Israeli Conflict</u> , Chapt.2
Nr. 7 / Oct. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Modern Arab States and Panarabism	Hourani, <u>History of Arab Peoples</u> , Chapter 21. Esposito, <u>Islam and Politics</u> , Chapter 3 + 4
<b>Fall Break (20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> October)</b>		
Nr. 8 / Oct. 28 <sup>th</sup>	The Legal Status of Arab Women	guest lecture
Nr. 9 / Nov. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Egypt and the Sudan	Esposito: <u>Islam and Politics</u> , Chapter 5 + 6.
Nr. 10 / Nov. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Syria and Iraq	Ottaway, <u>A Tale of four Worlds</u> , Chapter 4.
Nr. 11 / Nov. 18 <sup>th</sup>	The Maghreb States: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia	Ottaway, <u>A Tale of four Worlds</u> , Chapter 7
Nr. 12 / Nov. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Arab Gulf States: Saudi-Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain	Ottaway, <u>A Tale of four Worlds</u> , Chapter 5.
Nr. 13 / Dec. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Israel and Arab States II: Failed Peace Process and Rise of Kahanism	Smith, <u>Palestine and Arab-Israeli Conflict</u> , Chapters 10 + 11.
Nr. 14 / Dec. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Political Islam: Muslim Brotherhood, Jihadism, Shiite Crescent	tba

**Assistance:** Students should not hesitate to seek assistance from me. It is always best to ask before rather than after assignments and tests. If you have concerns about the course, please email me or make use of office hours.

**Cell Phones:** Please silence your cell phones and keep them out of sight during class.

## **Written Assignment Topics**

(either instructor will assign a topic or you propose an own topic)

### Course Readings

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

Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Charles D. Smith. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, St. Martin's Press, 2020.

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

David Drennan, *An Introduction to Islam*. La Trobe Journal, 2012.

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Knopf Publishing. 1979.

Ellen Lust (Ed.) *The Middle East*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring", *Comparative Politics*, 44 (2): pgs. 127-149.

Halim Barakat. *The Arab World: Society, Culture and State*, University of California, 1993.

John Esposito, *Islam and Politics*. NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984.

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

Montgomery Watt, *Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, University of Edinburgh Press, 1972.

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

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

P.M. Holt (Ed.), *Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Robert Drews, *Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to the Beginnings of Modern Civilization*, Vanderbilt Press 2011.

Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. NY: Routledge.

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