



Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science

The Geography of North Africa and the Middle East

GGs 325-001 [3.00 Credits] Fall 2022

Class meets on Mondays: 3:00 pm - 4:15 pm

EXPL. HALL 2103

Contact Details for Instructor			
Name	:	Maction Komwa, PhD	
Office	:	Exploratory Hall, Room 2414	Office Hours: Thursdays – 1:20 pm – 3:00 pm or by appointment
Email	:	<a href="mailto:mkomwa@gmu.edu">mkomwa@gmu.edu</a>	Phone: 703-993-5646

### Course Description

The course covers, environmental, economic, and social factors of differentiation of regional structure and distribution of resources in North African and Middle Eastern countries.

**Recommended Prerequisite:** 6 credits of Geography or courses related to Middle East, or permission of instructor.

### Course Overview


This course provides an overview of the dynamic region known as the “Middle East and North Africa.” Considering the extensive media coverage and ongoing interest (military and otherwise) in the region, we will consider mainly the environmental, economic, political, and social elements. We begin by examining the very definition of the region as a coherent unit, as well as its physical and cultural landscapes. Then we explore the economic, political, social, and environmental processes underpinning change and conflict in the region. This course is designed to give you an overview of a geographical approach to studying the Middle East and North Africa. Although this is a course in regional geography, it is not possible to examine every country nor to exhaustively cover every issue facing the region; therefore, we will take a thematic approach and incorporate different places into the discussion of various spatial processes. We will examine these themes through readings, films, short response papers, and a final research project.

### Course Objectives

Upon course completion, you will be able to:

- identify and describe various geographic features of the Middle East and North Africa
- compare patterns of human activity and human-environment relations.
- critically analyze economic & political dynamics across the region of the Middle East & North Africa.
- examine economic, social, and environmental consequences of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization in Middle East and North Africa.
- develop an understanding of the diversity of the Middle East.
- critically examine what you hear about the Middle East and understand some of the many perspectives that exist on the region so that you can critically evaluate what you hear.
- develop your critical thinking skills through reading, discussion, and writing.

### Required Textbook and Instructional Materials

	<p><a href="#">Middle East Patterns: Places, People, and Politics</a> by <a href="#">Colbert C. Held</a> (Author) Publisher: Routledge; 6th edition ISBN-13: 978-0367319977 ISBN-10: <a href="#">0367319977</a></p>
---	---

Additional readings and lecture notes and videos will be posted via the Blackboard. For full details on how to access the Blackboard please, read Technology Requirement Section below:

## Learning Management Systems

- Blackboard is our course management system which provides access to course materials, assignments, and class discussions. You will log in to Blackboard using your George Mason username and password through this link: <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>.
- If you have computer problems, please contact ITS Support Center\_ <http://itservices.gmu.edu>; Email: [support@gmu.edu](mailto:support@gmu.edu); | Phone: 703-993-8870.

## COVID-19 Requirements

There are currently no Covid-19-related university-wide policies that will affect teaching and learning, however, students are encouraged to check the [Safe Return to Campus](#) site to keep track of any updates and changes.

## Course Communication Policy

- Students are required to regularly check their George Mason email/Blackboard for announcements or updates related to the course.
- All students are expected to use their George Mason email account for all course communication. I will not acknowledge any email that is sent through other platforms.
- You should feel free to send me email if you have any questions regarding something that you do not understand. Although I will not instantly answer your e-mail, I will reply to your e-mail within 24-48 hours and if you don't get my response please feel free to remind me or ask to confirm if I have received your email.
- Please do not wait until the day of the work is due to ask questions.

## Course Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Students are expected to submit high quality assignments during this course via the Blackboard. All assignments are to be completed according the dates outlined in the syllabus.

### Reading Reflection and Review of Current Events (10%)

- These papers will consist of reaction to topics discussed in class, series of movies, and documentaries).
- In these reaction papers, you will submit a short paper, no more than two pages summarizing the real and ethical issues directly from unfiltered voices of the people.
- Some of the issues regarding the documentaries, movies would be posted first on the blackboard for a moderate online discussion which you should all participate. This could also help you hear voices of your classmates before you analyze and submit your reaction paper.
- By the end of the course through these short reaction papers, you will be able to explore the social & historical contexts and learn the truth about the area despite the exotic stereotypes associated with the region.
- Another sub-category of the assignment will be on analyzing current news events.
  - Students are expected to be familiar with current events for the region related to the topics being discussed. Students are encouraged to check out world news such as The New York Times; The Washington Post; The Christian Science Monitor; The Wall Street Journal; The Christian Science Monitor; The Financial Times; The International Herald Tribune; The BBC; The Guardian; al Arabiya; al Jazeera among many other news outlets.
  - Students are then expected to evaluate the news source critically by asking additional questions such as:
    - *What news stories tend to dominate the headlines? Who is the intended audience of the source? Are the sources bias in reporting? Give evidence. Are there any other sources that might be read to complement your news source to gain a balanced perspective on issues in the region? Are there any implications that you foresee for such kind of writing or reporting?*

### Map Quiz (10%)

- You will build your map literacy and ability to analyze spatial information through these assignments. Knowing geographical location, place, regions, movement of objects from one location to another, etc. are part of the geography themes that you will learn from these activities.
- You will then be able to understand the spatial nature of geography and how each place, or region is examined, analyzed, and compared with other places or regions.

### Discussion Forum Posts (Both initial and Responses) (5%)

- There will be 5 discussions beginning week 3 – through week # 13. I will lead the discussion by posting a topic related to the concepts and weekly reading(s) or assigned documentary/movie.
- You should demonstrate engagement with course readings by your own contribution through this participation /discussion forum.
- You will satisfy the discussion if you first post your own thoughts about the subject then respond to the viewpoints of other classmates. Your contribution will be rated according to the content, critical thinking and concept application based on the criteria outlined in the grading rubric. All discussion postings (initial and response to classmates) will be graded on a 5-point scale, 5 being excellent (Total of 10 points). To earn possible full points, you will need follow the instructions and grading rubric and submit your post on time.

Through these online discussions, you will have the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of another person’s perspective on the subject matter being discussed for that specific week.

### Discussion Leaders (5%)

From time to time, the Instructor will assign students to lead a discussion from the assigned weekly readings. As a Discussion Leader, it will be your responsibility to summarize the most important points from these readings. You will also formulate questions in advance and post them through the Blackboard as part of your talking points during the class discussion. Your grade will include the level of your class engagement.

### Exams [% will vary see below]

- There will be three non-cumulative Exams
  - Each exam will contain objective (multiple-choice) and short-answer questions, Fill-in the blank questions
  - EXAM I [15%]; | EXAM II [20%]; | FINAL EXAM 25%

### ArcGIS Story Maps Presentation (10%)

- Country Profile Group Project – you will demonstrate your understanding and application of key concepts discussed in this course. Country Profile Project that is presented as a recitation of encyclopedic facts will get a zero grade. You will choose your topic that relates to the general discussion of that country’s:
  - Population Geography
  - Cultural Geography
  - Economic Geography
  - Urban/Environmental Geography

### Grades will be assigned based on the distribution scheme below

Range (%)	Letter Grade	Grade description	Range (%)	Letter Grade	Grade description
>=93	A	Excellent	77 - 79.9	C+	Above satisfactory
90 – 92.9	A-	Very Good	70 - 76.9	C	Unsatisfactory
87 - 89.9	B+	Good with merit	60 - 69.9	D	Unsatisfactory
83 - 86.9	B	Good	<60	F	Failure
80 - 82.9	B-	Above satisfactory			

### Late/Make-up Assignments Policy

- Due dates for all assignments are provided in the course schedule as well as the Blackboard. Unless otherwise specified all assignments are due on those dates. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the assignments are submitted by the established due date.
- Late submission to a given assignment have 5 points deducted from their possible score for each day the submission is late. Late work will only be accepted by the instructor at the instructor's discretion.
- SafeAssign - all written work that you submit in this course will go through SafeAssign software (through the Blackboard) to facilitate the instructor’s routine checks for academic integrity.
- In some subjects/assignments no late assignments will be accepted for credit. Such assignments include discussion forum and end of chapter quiz.

- No make-up Exams or extensions on assignments will be given without a valid reason that is supported by documented evidence.
- Work is **NOT** accepted via e-mail, unless the instructions specifically say otherwise. Submit your work through the Blackboard accordingly.
- Please do not wait until the last minute (11:59 pm – Eastern Time) for you to complete your assignment - computers are machines and sometimes they cannot be reliable (e.g. power outage, wireless connection problem etc.) and cannot be held accountable for your excuse.

### **A “Life Happens Pass”**

You will be given a “Life Happens Pass” for only 1 written assignment. This kind of arrangement is due to the unprecedented period that everyone is going through (COVID-19). Therefore, an automatic 72-hour extension will be given as long as you inform your instructor in writing.

### **Incompletes (IN) Grades**

Incomplete (IN) grades will be assigned only in cases of compelling and documented need, in accordance with policies set forth in the University Catalog. For details regarding incomplete grades, please visit Undergraduate Academic Affairs through this website: <https://chssundergrad.gmu.edu/other-forms/incompletes>

### **Student Responsibilities**

- Review the course material and follow the course calendar.
- Work at full pace to avoid missing class activities.
- Be active participants in discussion forum throughout the course period.
- Communicate with you instructor to ask for help or clarification of an assignment or class activities.
- Respect the privacy of other classmates and the instructor in this virtual classroom.
- Re-read your responses in the discussion forum carefully before postings them.
- Express differences of opinion in a polite and sensible way.
- Keep an open mind to the constructive criticism from classmates and use it to improve your work.
  - We are in this class to share information and learning from each other.
  - By sharing and discussing each other’s ideas, you will be able to examine your own thoughts and feelings hence, making the course interesting and enjoyable!
- Use good grammar and spelling in all your assignments and discussions.
- Write your message in formal language

### **Academic Integrity**

George Mason University operates under an honor system, which is published in the University Catalog and deals specifically with cheating, attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. You are therefore expected to take this course in adherence to GMU and Department standards for Academic Integrity. Please familiarize yourself with the honor code, especially the statement on plagiarism (<http://www.gmu.edu/org/honorcouncil/guidelines.htm>). I will respond to acts of academic misconduct according to university policy concerning plagiarism. In such cases Plagiarism will result in a failing grade of the assignment in question and/or for the course.

### **Disability Accommodations**

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability, marital status, pregnancy status, or genetic information. George Mason University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations.

## **Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence**

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434) or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730 or emailing [cde@gmu.edu](mailto:cde@gmu.edu).

## **Student Privacy**

George Mason University strives to fully comply with FERPA by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. Please see George Mason University’s student privacy policy <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/privacy>.

## **Name and Pronouns Use**

Mason is a community of learners of all genders and gender expressions. If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me through the Self-introduction Assignment [Check Blackboard – Discussion Board] and indicate how best to address you in class and via email. I use [He / him / his] for myself and you may address me as “[MK]”, “Dr./Prof. [MK]” in email and verbally. If you are in transition of changing your name and gender pronouns, please keep me posted during the semester so that I can address you accordingly.

## **Recording and/or sharing class materials**

Electronic video, image capture, and/or audio recording is not permitted during in-class meeting unless the student obtains permission from the instructor.

As a faculty member who will spend a lot of time creating course material for classroom use, unauthorized sharing of any of my course materials outside the class would violate important ethical standards including the Mason Honor code.

## **Undergraduate Course Repetition**

Beginning fall 2018, there is a limit of three graded attempts for this course. A “W” does not count as a graded attempt. Please see AP. 1.3.4 in the University Catalog and consult with your academic advisor if you have any questions.

## **Withdraw from a course**

If for some reasons you decide not to continue with this course, students should follow the official GMU procedures and policies of course withdraw. By informing the instructor your intention to withdraw from the course or by just stop attending - “**NOT SUFFICIENT**” for GMU to accept the withdraw from the course. If your name still appears on the official roster for the class and you have earned a “0” grade, you will get “F” as your final grade.

## **Student Support Services**

George Mason University has several academic support and other resources to facilitate your success. Some of these resources are presented below:

- i. Counseling and Psychological Services: (See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>)
- ii. Learning Services, University Career Services: <http://careers.gmu.edu/>)
- iii. The Writing Center (See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>)

- iv. University Catalog: (See <http://catalog.gmu.edu/>)
- v. University Policies: (See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>)
- vi. Student Support and Advocacy Center: See <http://ssac.gmu.edu>)

### **Absences & Accommodations**

- **Religious Holidays:** Please refer to George Mason University's calendar of religious holidays and observations (<http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/>). It is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments.
- **Absence for documented illness:** Students who miss multiple virtual classes due to prolonged illness should seek medical care and provide documentation of such to the Dean's Office, which will communicate with the student's professor(s). A prolonged absence may necessitate the student's withdrawal from the course or from the University for the semester.
- **At the discretion of the professor:** There may be cases where an absence is undocumented but is, nevertheless, excused by the professor (e.g., absence due to a death in the family). Students should initiate a conversation with their professors about the nature and duration of the absence, in advance of the absence whenever possible.

When absences are excused, students remain responsible for all assigned work, and shall be provided with the opportunity to make up, without penalty, any work that they have missed.

Week   Date	Textbook Chapters & Supplemental Readings	Homework   Activity Due date
1	8/22	Course Familiarization [i.e. Check Blackboard, Syllabus, interact with classmates prior to the start of the semester)
	<b>Physical and Cultural Geography</b>	
	8/24	Chapter 1: Tricontinental Junction: An Introduction - Preview
		Self-Introduction – 8/31
2	8/29	Chapter 1: Setting the Boundaries. Early Empires
	& 8/31	Chapter 1: The Ottoman Empire, European Colonialism & Emergency of Modern States
		Discussion # 1
<b>Chapter 2: The Face of the Earth</b>		
3	9/5	Topography & Landforms -An overview
	9/7	Regional Landforms
		Discussion # 2 Reading Reflection #1 -- 9/11
4	9/12	Middle East Water Issues
	9/14	Patterns of Climate and other Environmental Aspects
		Map Quiz 1 -- 9/18
<b>Chapter 3: Patterns of Time Historical-Geographical Foundations</b>		
5	9/19	Patterns of Time Historical-Geographical Foundations
	9/21	Patterns of Time Historical-Geographical Foundations
		Reading Reflection #2 --9/25 Topic Description for Final Project -- 9/25
6	9/26	Patterns of Time Historical-Geographical Foundations
	9/28	<b>Exam I</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Patterns of Peoples, Cultures, and Settlements: A Demographic Overview</b>		
7	10/3	Population and People   Culture and Society
	10/5	Patterns of Religions
		Reading Reflection #3 – 10/9
8	10/11	Geographies of Language and Ethnic Groups
	10/12	Human Development, Cities & Settlements
		Discussion # 3
<b>Chapter 6: Riches Beneath the Earth</b>		
9	10/17	Petroleum Production and Patterns of Reserves
	10/19	Global Economic Relationships   OPEC
		Reading Reflection #4 –10/23
10	10/24	Core Regions and Geography of Tourism
	10/26	Economic Development and Social Inequality
		Map Quiz 2 –10/30
<b>Chapter 8: The Earth and State: Geopolitics</b>		
11	10/31	The State in the Middle East
	11/2	Peace Treaties
		Discussion # 4
12	11/7	Regional Linkages and Arab Spring
	11/9	<b>Exam II</b>
<b>Chapter 9: The Earth and State: Conflicts on the Ground</b>		
13	11/14	The Arab-Israel Problem
	11/16	The Iran-Iraq War  The Gulf Crisis and Terrorism
		Discussion # 5
14	11/21	Final Presentation
	11/23	Thanksgiving – No Classes
15	11/30	Final Presentation Final Exam Review
	12/5	Reading Day – No Classes
Exam Week 12/12		Final Exam

*Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.*