

## **GGG 325/533: GEOGRAPHY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

**Fall 2018: Class Meets on Thursday 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm - David King Hall: 2053**

Name	: Maction Komwa, PhD	Office hours	: TR   1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Office	: Exploratory Hall, Room 2414		
Email	mkomwa@gmu.edu		
Phone	: 703-993-5646		

### **Graduate Teaching Assistant [GTA]**

Name: Manqi Li  
Office : Exploratory Hall – 1102  
Office Hours: 3:30 – 5:00 pm [Mondays]  
Email: [mli14@masonlive.gmu.edu](mailto:mli14@masonlive.gmu.edu)

### **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.

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, a student will be able to:

- to compare and contrast patterns of human activity, human-environment relations, economic development, and political organization across the region of the Middle East and North Africa;
- to understand economic, social, and environmental consequences of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization in Middle East and North Africa;
- to develop an understanding of the diversity of the Middle East;
- to develop your critical thinking skills through reading, discussion, and writing;
- to be able to 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.

### **Required Textbooks:**

- Understanding the Contemporary Middle East. Edited by Julian Schwedler. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition
- Atlas of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Hammond. Mapmakers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Additional Readings will be posted through the Blackboard as required.

## Teaching and Assessment

**GGS 325/533** is being offered as a combined undergraduate and undergraduate course. Our weekly meetings will comprise lectures, group or student-led discussions, guest lecturers, and class videos. Active participation is required in all sessions for students to pass this course.

## Grading Policy

The following grading criteria will be used to determine your final grade:

Your performance in the course will be evaluated from the following components

Description	Expected Grade
Critical Response/Reading Response [6]	15%
Map Quizzes [4]	10%
Group Discussion and Simulation Activities	5%
Exam I	15%
Mid Term Exam	20%
Final Group Project for GGS 325   GGS 533 Individual Project	25%
Group Presentation   GGS 533 Individual Presentation	10%

Grading Scale							
Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage
A+	98 -100%	B+	88 – 89%	C+	78 – 79%	F	below 60%
A	93 -97%	B	83 – 87%	C	70 – 77%		
A-	90 -92%	B-	80 – 82%	D	60 – 69%		

## Assignments

### Exams:

There will be 2 Exams [Exam 1, Mid Term. The format of the examination will be Multiple Choice Questions, Fill-in the Blank and Short Answer Questions. Further details of the exam will be discussed during the semester/revision session.

### Group Discussion | Simulation Activities

Additionally, there will be reading assignments from time to time derived from your textbook and assigned articles that will be posted through the Blackboard. Through the discussion/debate and simulation activities, students will have the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of another person’s perspective and to empathize with others.

**Online Class Discussions** – There will be weekly discussions unless otherwise stated through the Blackboard. I will lead the discussion by posting a topic related to the concepts and readings of the week. You will then follow-up with thought-provoking comments that foster interaction and discussion and demonstrate participation in class. Your original post should focus on the topic of the week.

Additionally, I encourage you all to read other student's posts and make a short response to their posts. Be sure to post on time. Late posts will not be graded. Strictly - no make-up for this assignment.

### **Map Quizzes:**

Maps are perhaps as fundamental to society as language and the written word. You will have the opportunity to learn skills on identifying geographical features for the region such as rivers, mountains, cities etc.

### **Final Project**

The final project is a unique opportunity for students to utilize and apply the concepts learned in class. Working in groups of 3-4 (GGs 325 only) (GGs 533 individual project), you will develop a research paper that addresses environmental, economic, cultural and social factors and distribution of resources for a country of your choice. Each group will have a unique country/or sub region for this assigned research project.

**Assignments due dates** – Written assignments will be due according to the dates shown in the syllabus @ 11:59 pm. I do accept late work, but my policy is to deduct 5 points for every day your assignment is late.

### **Classroom Expectations:**

Students are expected to be on time for class. Regular attendance is strongly recommended.

1. Should circumstances arise that make you late, do not disrupt the class as you enter, take the first available seat and do not walk across the room.
2. In the event of any class cancellation, including inclement weather (e.g. snow), the class will resume where we left off, Adjustments, if necessary, will be made later.
3. For each hour of in-class time you should anticipate three hours to complete out-of-class work and preparation.
4. Cell Phones and pagers must be turned off during class. Zero tolerance!

**Academic Honesty:** 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. 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. Make sure you check the instructions through the Blackboard on how to write your term papers. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

### **University Services**

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

- i. Counseling and Psychological Services [<http://caps.gmu.edu/>]
- ii. Learning Services, University Career Services [<http://careers.gmu.edu/>]
- iii. Writing Center [<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>] and other Learning Services within GMU.
- iv. University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu/>
- v. University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>

## **Absences & Accommodations**

Students are expected to attend all classes and to complete all assignments on time. Absences may have an adverse effect on grades in a course including failure.

**Excused absences:** In certain circumstances, absences may be excused. These include:

- **Absence for religious observances:** Students must notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with classes. Students who cannot be accommodated should discuss the matter with a dean.
- **Absence for athletic travel:** Student-athletes must provide their professors with a travel letter at the beginning of the semester which highlights potential absences. Students who cannot be accommodated for some or all absences should discuss the matter with the relevant Academic Coordinator for Student-Athletes.
- **Absence for documented illness:** Students who miss multiple 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 professors. 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.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with documented and qualifying learning, physical and psychological disabilities should contact the Disability Services (ODC), which arranges for reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and University policies. In order to arrange accommodations in each course, the student must present his/her professors with a letter from the ODC outlining the recommended accommodations at the beginning of the semester. Disability Services (ODC) website: <http://ods.gmu.edu/> / Student Union Building I (SUB), Room 2500. Telephone: (703) 993-2474.

## **Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:**

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).

## Course Outline/Schedule

The course instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to the course content and office hours during the course of the term. If these changes are made they will be immediately notified to students through individual emails or the blackboard explaining the nature of the change.

Date	Topic Description	Readings/Due Date
8/30	Introduction & Course Overview	None
9/6	Locating the Middle East [What Is the Middle East? Overview: Region's Pattern of Land and climate geography	Chapter 1 & 2
9/13	The Historical-political Evolution I	<i>Critical Response 1</i> <i>Map Quiz 1</i>
9/20	The Historical-political Evolution II	Chapter 3 <i>Submit your topic</i>
9/27	<b>Exam I</b>	
10/4	The Economies of the Middle East	Chapter 7 & 8 <i>Critical Response 2</i> <i>Map Quiz 2</i>
10/11	Water Issues & Conflict	Check Blackboard for articles
10/18	Population Distribution, Growth and Urbanization	Chapter 9 <i>Critical Response 3</i> <i>Map Quiz 3</i>
10/25	<b>Mid Term Exam</b>	
11/1	Religion and Politics	Chapter 12 <i>Critical Response 4</i> <i>Submit your Research Progress</i>
11/8	The Israel-Palestinian Conflict	Chapter 6 <i>Map Quiz 4</i>
11/15	Migration, Refugees and Borders   Start - Final Group Presentation	<i>Critical Response 5</i> Check Blackboard for articles
11/22	<b>Thanksgiving Recess</b>	
11/29	Final Group Presentation	<i>Critical Response 6 [Optional] – dropping the lowest</i>
12/6	Final Group Presentation	
12/13	Final Group Paper due 11:59 pm [Electronic copy]	

Group Discussion and Simulation Activities will be determined by the Instructor and will be announced in class from time to time. It is your responsibility to attend all classes. All your Critical Response due 11:59 pm.

*Additional reading materials will be posted through the Blackboard accordingly.*