

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

Fall 2017
Tuesday 4:30pm

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Liz Mason-Deese
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OFFICE: Exploratory Hall 2413
HOURS: M 1-3pm, TH 1-3pm
and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: 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 its 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 ever issue facing the region; therefore we will take a thematic approach and incorporate different places into the discussion of various spatial processes. We will focus on some central threads: nature-society relations, constructions of race and gender, relationships to land and territory, political geography, and the region’s place in the global economy. We will examine these themes through readings, films, short response papers, and a final research project.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

We will be reading a graphic novel: *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Pantheon, 2004) by Marjane Satrapi. All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

There are several broad objectives for this course:

- 1) to develop your critical thinking skills through reading, discussion, and writing;
- 2) 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;
- 3) to understand economic, social, and environmental consequences of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization in Middle East and North Africa;
- 4) to understand how these forces coalesce to shape different geographies of (un)sustainable development and political organization throughout the diverse regions of the Middle East and North Africa.

EXPECTATIONS: You are required to attend each class, read the assigned material carefully, and participate constructively in class discussions. With the goal of building a conducive environment for discussion, I expect you to be respectful of opinions and comments that differ from your own, to refrain from interrupting others, and to be conscious of not dominating the

discussion. You are responsible for following the syllabus, keeping track of assigned readings, and turning in assignments by the posted deadline.

POLICIES

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE: This course will be a mixture of lecture and discussion, therefore attendance and constructive participation are essential. This means evaluating when to speak (answering and asking questions), when to listen carefully to your peers and instructor, and how to respond respectfully and thoughtfully to the ideas presented by others. Napping, chatting, and using phones during class time distract everyone; violators will be asked to leave in such cases. In order to make discussions productive for everyone, please 1) come to class on time; 2) come prepared by doing all of the assigned readings and with questions and thoughts ready for discussion; 3) be respectful of other participants. If you have concerns about your participation, or want to know how to participate effectively, please see me. Participation is worth **20%** of your final grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Although you can work in groups to develop and share ideas, graded work is done individually and evaluated on that basis. When you draw on the work of others, be sure to cite authors appropriately. You are expected to adhere to the principles of the George Mason Honor Code and any plagiarized assignments will automatically receive a 0. If you have any questions about citations or plagiarism, please come speak to me or see: <http://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have a disability and require accommodations, please meet with me early in the semester so we can discuss your learning needs. If you wish to request reasonable accommodations, you will need to register with Disability Services (<http://ds.gmu.edu/>). All information will be kept confidential.

COMMUNICATION: If you have a question, please send me an email at lmasonde@gmu.edu. Be advised that I usually do not check email between 9pm and 9am, please do not wait until the last minute to contact me. Additionally, you are responsible for checking your email/Blackboard notifications on a regular basis for announcements about the course.

ASSIGNMENTS

READING RESPONSES [20%]: All of the readings, other than *Persepolis*, will be available on Blackboard or through the links provided on the syllabus. You are expected to have completed the readings by the date assigned and come to class ready to discuss them. You are required to turn in **TEN** reading responses during the semester. Reading responses must be typed and turned in on paper in class and respond to that date's readings. If there are two readings assigned for the day, your response only needs to address one of the readings. If there are more than two readings assigned for a date, your response can respond to any two of the assigned readings. Responses will be graded on a ✓+, ✓ and ✓- scale based on the completeness of the response. Your top ten grades will count toward your final grade. **Late reading responses will not be accepted.** Responses should be approximately 500 – 750 words and must contain the following four, clearly demarcated, sections:

Heading: Your name, date, reading response number, and **complete citation information** for the reading.

Part 1: Briefly summarize the text in YOUR OWN WORDS. Include the main argument or ideas, as well as key evidence or information. If the text introduces new concepts or key words, identify and find them.

Part 2: Your reaction: does this text challenge or reaffirm your previous ideas on the topic? Are you convinced by the argument? Why or why not?

Part 3: One or two questions for class discussion. For example, questions could be about understanding a particular argument, debating ideas expressed in the text, or relating readings to one other.

MAP QUIZZES [10%]: There will be 3 map quizzes during the semester. The quizzes will cover countries, major cities, and bodies of water and other physical features in the region. Map quizzes are worth a total of 10% of your final grade.

MIDTERM [20%]: The midterm exam will be online and will be due **Friday October 13 at 11:59pm**. The exam will consist of short answer questions on key terms, historical events, and geographic concepts from the first half of the course. These will come from the readings, lectures, and other class activities.

COUNTRY REPORT [30%]: In groups of two, you are required to complete a 10-12 page report on a particular country in the Middle East or North Africa. In the report, you will be required to provide a detailed map of your country, and address questions about the country's history, culture, economy, and contemporary conflicts. More information, including a detailed prompt and rubric will be available on Blackboard. The final report will be due on the date of the final exam (**December 19**) and will be submitted over Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENT VALUE

Map Quizzes (3)	10%	Participation	20%
Midterm	20%	Final Project	30%
Reading Responses (10)	20%		

GRADING: The following scale will be used to determine your final letter grade.

	A	93-100	A-	90-92	(Excellent)	
B+	88-89	B	83-87	B-	80-82	(Commendable)
C+	78-79	C	73-77	C-	70-72	(Average)
D+	68-69	D	60-67			(Marginal)
F	59 and below					(Failure)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings must be completed by class time on the assigned date
*Schedule is subject to change, any changes will be posted on Blackboard

August 29: Introduction to the Course

Go over syllabus in class & introductions

September 5: Locating the Middle East

Bonine, Michael E. 2012. "Of Maps and Regions: Where is the Geographer's Middle East?" In *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, edited by Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, 56–99. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Gregory, Derek. 2012. "Middle of what? East of where?" Essay curated for *Safar/Voyage: Contemporary works by Arab, Iranian and Turkish artists*, at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, April-September 2013.

September 12: Orientalism & the Politics of Representation

Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. [Introduction, pp. 1–28]

Lockman, Zachary. 2004. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 3: "Orientalism and empire"]

September 19: Colonialism, Decolonization, and Space I

Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press: pp. 35-107 ("Concerning Violence").

September 26: Colonialism, Decolonization, and Space II

Gregory, Derek. 2004. *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. [Chapter 5 ("Barbed Boundaries," pp. 76-106) and Chapter 6 ("Defiled Cities," pp. 107-143)]

***Map Quiz 1**

October 3: Spaces of Development

Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapter 1 ("Can the Mosquito Speak," pp. 19-53) and Chapter 7 ("The Object of Development," pp. 209-243)]

October 10: No Class [*Columbus Day Break]

***Midterm Online: Due October 13 at 11:59pm**

Recommended: start reading *Persepolis*

October 17: Gendered Spaces

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others." *American Anthropologist*, 104 (3): 783-790.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2009. "Dialects of Women's Empowerment: The International Circuitry of the Arab Human Development Report 2005." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (1): 83-103.
- Ismael, Jacqueline S., and Shereen T. Ismael. 2008. "Living Through War, Sanctions and Occupation: The Voices of Iraqi Women." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2 (3): 409-24.

October 24: Gendered Spaces II

Satrapi, Marjane. 2004. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon.

October 31: Militarized Space

- Bishara, Amahl. 2015. "Driving While Palestinian in Israel and the West Bank." *American Ethnologist* 42 (1): 33-54.
- Bornstein, Avram. 2008. "Military Occupation as Carceral Society: Prisons, Checkpoints, and Walls in the Israeli-Palestinian Struggle." *Social Analysis* 52 (2): 106-30.
- Khalidi, Rashid. 2014. "Israel: A Carceral State." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 43 (4): 5-10.

***Map Quiz 2**

November 7: Water

- de Chatel, Francesca and Mohammad Raba'a. 2014. "Waterless Wadi Barada: Manufacturing Scarcity in a Syrian River Valley." *Middle East Report* 271. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer271/waterless-wadi-barada>
- Elver, Hilal. 2010. "Turkey's Rivers of Dispute." *Middle East Report* 254. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer254/turkeys-rivers-dispute>
- Sowers, Jeannie. 2014. "Water, Energy and Human Insecurity in the Middle East." *Middle East Report* 271 <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer271/water-energy-human-insecurity-middle-east>

November 14: Urban Spaces

- Beydoun, Ahmad. 1990. "War in the City." *Middle East Report* 162: 16-20.
- Bou Akar, Hiba. 2012. "Contesting Beirut's Frontiers." *City & Society* 24 (2): 150-72.
- Fregonese, Sara. 2009. "The Urbicide of Beirut? Geopolitics and the Built Environment in the Lebanese Civil War." *Political Geography* 28: 309-18.

Nagel, Caroline. 2002. "Reconstructing Space, Re-creating Memory: Sectarian Politics and Urban Development in Post-War Beirut." *Political Geography* 21: 717–25.

November 21: Spaces of Protest I

Al-Ali, Nadjie. 2012, "Gendering the Arab Spring," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 5: 26-31

El-Ghobashy, Mona. 2011. "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution." *Middle East Report* 258.
<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/praxis-egyptian-revolution>

Swanson, Nathan. 2016. "Embodying Tahrir: bodies and geopolitics in the 2011 Egyptian uprising." *Area* 48, 300–307.

Toensing, Chris. 2011. "Tunisian Labor Leaders Reflect upon Revolt." *Middle East Report* 258.
<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer258/tunisian-labor-leaders-reflect-upon-revolt-0>

November 28: Spaces of Protest II

Clark, Jessie Hanna. 2015. "Green, red, yellow and purple: gendering the Kurdish Question in south-east Turkey." *Gender, Place & Culture* 22 (10), 1463-1480

Khalil, Andrea. 2014. "Tunisia's women: partners in revolution." *The Journal of North African Studies* 19 (2): 186-199.

Hafez, Sherine. 2014 "The revolution shall not pass through women's bodies: Egypt, uprising, and gender politics." *The Journal of North African Studies* 19 (2):172-185

Salime, Zakia. 2012. "A new feminism? Gender dynamics in Morocco's February 20th movement." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(5)

***Map Quiz 3**

December 5: Migration, Refugees and Borders

Abdulhadi, Rabab. 2003. "Where Is Home? Fragmented Lives, Border Crossings, and the Politics of Exile." *Radical History Review* 86 (Spring): 89–101.

Jones, Reece, and Corey Johnson. 2016. "Border Militarisation and the Re-articulation of Sovereignty." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41 (2): 187–200.

Quiquívix, Linda. 2014. "Art of War, Art of Resistance: Palestinian Counter-Cartography on Google Earth." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104 (3): 444–59.

December 19: FINAL REPORT DUE