



Department of Geography & Geoinformation Science

The Geography of North Africa and the Middle East

GG5 518-001

Fall 2021

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

EXPL. HALL 2310

Contact Details for Instructor		Contact Details for GTA	
Name	: Maction Komwa, PhD	Name	Szandra Peter (PhD Student)
Office	: Exploratory Hall, Room 2414	Office	GTA Offices
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Phone	: 703-993-5646	Office hours	
Credit hours	: 3.00		

Office hours [Virtual office hours: Thursdays and Fridays: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm] or in-person by appointment

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

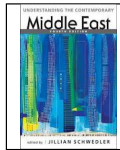
This course provides an overview of the dynamic region known as the “Middle East and North Africa.” Considering the extensive media coverage and ongoing interest (military and otherwise) in the region, we will consider mainly the environmental, economic, political, and social elements. We begin by examining 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



Understanding the Contemporary Middle East. Edited by Julian Schwedler. 5th Edition

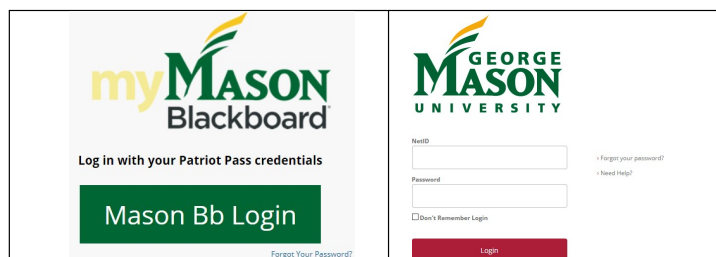
Additional readings and lecture notes and videos will be posted via the Blackboard. For full details on how to access the Blackboard please, read Technology Requirement Section below:

Instructional Methodology

- This is a traditional-hybrid course meaning – an instructional delivery method which combines face-to-face and the remainder of the coursework is either online or virtual class meeting (“synchronous or asynchronous learning). Our scheduled meeting day and time – Mondays (3:00 pm – 4:15 pm).
- We will meet only once a week and any additional material/lectures/will be delivered through the Blackboard.
- During our classroom meeting, students should act responsibly and adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines. Again, we will always be a good model by wearing a face mask in public indoor spaces (and outdoors when appropriate) and maintaining a 6-foot physical distance from others. For details follow university guidelines through this link: Check this link for details: <https://www2.gmu.edu/Safe-Return-Campus>.

Technology Requirements

- As a student participating in this “Distance Learning” course, or considering taking this type of course, it is expected that you have the following:
 - Internet Connection
 - Access to high speed connection such as Cable, DSL, or Satellite is recommended
 - Internet Browser Support include:
 - Internet Explorer latest version
 - Safari version latest version
 - Google Chrome latest version and Firefox latest version
 - 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; | Phone: 703-993-8870.
- Access to software
 - You will need to have access to the most up to date:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader. [https://get.adobe.com/reader/;](https://get.adobe.com/reader/)
 - Windows Media Player: <https://windows.microsoft.com/enus/windows/downloads/windows-media-player/>
 - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

- MS Word, Excel, etc.
 - Self-direction, motivation, time management and online communication skills.
 - Participate in online course discussion during the week throughout the semester.
- If you do not have the above basic requirements of skills, your success in this course may be impacted.
- Required equipment necessary for this course thus including hardware and software (e.g. MS word, etc.), speakers, microphones, or webcams, etc. are the responsibility of the student.

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.

Description	% grade
<p>Reaction and Analysis short papers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	15%

<p>Map Quiz</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	10%
<p>End of Chapter Quizzes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some of the Chapters will be selected for formative assessment. Quizzes are designed to ensure that students have read and understood the readings, practice and prepare you for exams, and help you revise the key points from the chapter. ○ The quizzes will focus on the material only from that chapter and assigned readings. ○ Plan your time accordingly since there is no option for make-up. Once the quiz is closed, it is closed for that week and for the rest of the semester. 	5%
<p>Discussion Forum Posts (Both initial and Responses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a discussion forum beginning week 1 – through week # 11. 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. 	5%
<p>Discussion Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. 	5%
<p>Exams [% will vary see below]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be two-non-cumulative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exams will take short-answer and essay type questions. ○ Breakdown for : EXAM I [10%] EXAM II [15%] 	
<p>Project Research Paper (Draft 3% and Peer-Review (2%) & Research Paper20%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate students will demonstrate their writing skills through a research paper. Research paper will address any topic dealing with domestic political issues in MENA or any issue that has been discussed in class and the student would like to extensively expand beyond the readings and the textbook. Detailed info will be posted through the Blackboard. The research paper will have 15 pages (excluding cover page and reference section) with 10 peer-reviewed articles; double-spacing in APA format. 	25%
<p>Presentation</p>	10%

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			

Exams

As indicated above, there will be 2 Exams to be administered in this course (see details in the table above). The exam will be mostly objective in nature with questions that will allow students to analyze, apply, and synthesize lecture, videos and homework concepts and reading material. *Exams will take short-answer and essay type questions.*

Exam rules: You will not be allowed to collaborate, use of cellphone, or surface the internet during the exam. These and other Honor Code will result in a zero grade for the exam. Excused absence for the exam will require seeking permission from the instructor otherwise the policy of no make-up for the exam will be administered.

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 | 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.

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>.

Recording and/or sharing class materials

Some kinds of participation in online study sites violate the Mason Honor code: these include accessing exam or quiz questions for this class; accessing exam, quiz, or assignment answers for this class; uploading of any of the instructor’s materials or exams; and uploading any of your own answers or finished work. Always consult your syllabus and your professor before using these sites. As a faculty member whowill

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.

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.

Tentative Course Calendar | Weekly Schedule

Week #	Lesson Description Assignments
Introduction to the Middle East and North Africa	
Week 1 (Aug 23 >>)	
Readings	Start Reading Chapter 1: Where is the Middle East?
Discussion	Self-Introduction through the Discussion Forum
	Map Reading (No grading)
Topography & Landforms	
Week 2 (Aug 30)	
Readings	Chapter 1 Locating the Middle East <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying boundaries Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent Nile River Civilization Video: See How Life Has Changed in the Middle East Over 58 Years https://youtu.be/rI1P-EjpA54?t=9 Source: National Geographic
Discussion	Discussion # 1
Assignment	Map Assignment # 1 due 9/5
Patterns of Time: Historical-Geographical Foundations and Context	
Week 3 (Pre-Recorded – No class Meeting on Sept. 6)	
Readings	Chapter 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arab Spring of 2011 and Popular mobilization The Historical-political Evolution North Africa and the African Transition Zone
Discussion	Discussion # 2
Assignment	Reaction and Analysis # 1 due 9/12
Patterns of Peoples, Cultures, and Settlements: A Demographic Overview	
Week 4 (Sept 13>>>)	
Readings	Chapter 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population Dynamics and Urbanization in MENA Population Growth, Urbanization and Challenges of Unemployment Exam 1 Review
Assignment	Discussion #3 Practice Quiz
EXAM 1:	
Week 5 (Sept 20 >>>>)	
Readings	Chapter 9 – Population analysis for MENA using GIS continued
Discussion	Discussion # 4
Assignment	Exam 1: Sept 20 Map Assignment # 2 due 9/26
Water Issues & Conflict	
Week 6 (Sept 27)	
Readings	Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution and access to fresh water Water shortages and diversion Water conservation in the region Rivers of Dust: The Future of Water and the Middle East https://fpif.org/rivers-of-dust-the-future-of-water-and-the-middle-east/
Assignment	Reaction and Analysis # 2 due 10/3

Week #	Lesson Description Assignments
Economic Geography of the Middle East and North Africa	
Week 7 (Oct. 4)	
<p>Readings</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p>Chapter 7 & 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New Oil Boom • Labor Migration and Remittance • Economic Crisis and Structural Adjustment <p>Discussion # 5</p> <p>Practice Quiz # 2</p>
International Relations Issues Arab Spring –Democratization	
Week 8 (Oct. 12) Monday classes of Oct 11 meet on Oct 12	
<p>Readings</p> <p>Assignment</p>	<p>Chapter 5</p> <p>Strategies for Reviving the International Relations/Middle East Nexus after the Arab Uprisings https://search-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/docview/1908295060/fulltextPDF/CF739582C8F54331PQ/1?accountid=14541</p> <p>Beyond Arabism vs. sovereignty: relocating ideas in the international relations of the Middle East https://www-cambridge-org.mutex.gmu.edu/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/74CB492DEC091483C9FBEC2E34DBA098/S0260210511000465a.pdf/beyond_arabism_vs_sovereignty_relocating_ideas_in_the_international_relations_of_the_middle_east.pdf</p> <p>Reaction and Analysis # 3 due 10/17</p>
Israel and Palestine: One Land, Two Polities	
Week 9 (Oct. 18 >>>>).	
<p>Readings</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Assignment</p>	<p>Chapter 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Israel & its Neighbors • Israel -Palestinian Conflict • The history and dynamics of the conflict • One Land Two People • The Rocky Road to peace <p>Four videos that explain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/views-israeli-palestinian-conflict</p> <p>Discussion # 6</p> <p>None</p>
The Role of Women	
Week 10 (Oct. 25 >>>>)	
<p>Readings</p>	<p>Chapter 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and empowerment in an economic and social system • Building the Nation through Women <p>Additional articles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Middle East's Women Are Championing Their Own Change: https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/07/middle-east-women-are-championing-their-own-change • Women and Islam: http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2510 Source: The Oxford Dictionary of Islam (n.d) • What factors determine the changing roles of women in the Middle East and Islamic Societies? http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/questions/women/ • Women's Rights in the Muslim World: Reform or Reconstruction?:

	<p>Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa: http://165.22.29.48/index.php/ALR/article/view/221/220</p> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Women Take the Wheel to Protest Religious Ban on Driving: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/saudi-women-take-the-wheel-to-protest-religious-ban-on-driving <p>How Muslim women's fashion is shaping conversation around creativity and power: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-muslim-womens-fashion-is-shaping-conversation-around-creativity-and-power</p>
Assignment	Final Reaction and Analysis # 4 due 10/31
Religion and Ethics	
Week 11 (Nov 1 >>>)	
Readings	<p>Chapter 12 (Section Patterns: Religions & Patterns: Ethic Groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secular States vs. Religious States • Spatial diffusion of religion <p>Additional Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 5 Pillars of Islam: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=verbum • The Wrong Threat: The United States and Islamic Fundamentalism: https://www-jstor-org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/40209411?pg-origsite=summon&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents
Discussion	Discussion # 7
Assignment	Exam Review Final Practice Quiz Draft for Graduate Students due 11/ 7
Exam 2	
Week 12 (Nov 8 >>>)	
Readings	Chapter 12: Religion and Ethics continue
Discussion	Exam 2 [11/8] Peer-Review for Graduate Students
Presentation #1	
Week 13 (Nov 15 >>>)	
Assignment	Group Presentation
Presentation #2	
Week 14 (Nov 22 >>>)	
Assignment	Group Presentation
Week 15 [Dec 6]	Reading Day Final Research Paper for Graduate Students due Dec 8
Week 16 – Dec 13	Final Exam for GGS 325 Students only [3:00 – 4:15 pm]

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