

HIST 491-1: The United States and the Middle East

TTh 12:30-1:45pm, Burkhardt 102

Instructor: Dr. Yaron Ayalon, yayalon@bsu.edu

Office hours: TTh, 11-12 at BB 234, appointment strongly recommended (see below)

For many, thinking about the United States in the Middle East evokes scenes from 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the current conflict with the Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, or Da'esh). Others may think of the Cold War or the US' involvement in peace negotiations between Israel and the Arab world. The story of the United States in the region, however, begins much earlier, with the arrival of American missionaries in Syria in the first half of the nineteenth century.

This course will be divided into two parts: In the first, we will survey the history of American involvement in the Middle East, from early naïve educational and cultural beginnings, to active political and military involvement. We will read three main texts about the story of the US in the region, as well as other articles and primary sources. In the second part, each of you will work on a major, final project, and will get to present it in class. Class discussions will focus on the particular topics that interest you, and will be given to you at a later date. Reading assignments in the second half of the semester will be relatively light, to allow you time to focus on your own research.

Previous knowledge about the Middle East is not a prerequisite for taking this course. Those who have not taken a class on the Middle East or cannot otherwise demonstrate knowledge of the history of the region from the rise of Islam to the 19th century will be required to do extra reading (see more info on that below).

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you will have

- acquired a deep understanding of the history of and the problems and challenges that make up US-Arab and US-Middle Eastern relations, and thus of Middle Eastern history and politics in general.
- gained a better sense of the work of historians and the attention to details and integrity needed especially when dealing with politically sensitive issues.

- further developed your research and writing skills, or other creative skills, or both

Grading and Requirements:

The maximum number of points you may earn for this course is 500. Grading will be distributed as follows (see below for explanation of each section):

Attendance – 50 pts

Participation – 50 pts

Midterm exam – 150pts

Final project – 250pts

Your final grade will be determined by your points balance as of 05/02/2014, according to the following key: 470 points or above: A *** 450-469: A- *** 430-449: B+ *** 410-429: B *** 390-409: B- *** 375-389: C+ *** 355-374: C *** 340-354: C- *** 330-339: D+ *** 300-329: D *** less than 300: F.

You will not receive a final grade lower than what your total number of points is worth according to the key above, but I may decide to give you a higher grade.

What if I'm "borderline"? How do I get bumped up?

If you are 10 points or less from the next grade, here's what I'll look at to determine whether to bump you up:

1. Have you attended class regularly and submitted all assignments?
2. Have you actively participated in class?
3. Have you done reasonably well on all assignments except one, which caused your average to be lower?
4. Do I know you? Did you come talk to me during the semester? Did I get a chance to know you beyond the numbers? Don't wait till the last week. This is true for everyone, and especially important if there are personal reasons that might impair your performance.

Requirements:

Attendance – you are expected to show up to all classes. I treat our classes as if they were a personal appointment with each one of you, and expect you to do the same. If you cannot come to class for whatever reason, please e-mail me *in advance* to let me know about it.

I will be checking attendance randomly via a sign-in sheet. You have 3 grace absences for whatever reason during the semester (absence = your signature does not appear on a sign-in sheet for one of the classes in which students were asked to sign one). You will lose 10 points with each absence beginning the 4th, and you will automatically receive an F grade for the course once you have reached 8 absences. There are no exceptions to this policy and no “excused” absences that do not count toward the 3 allowed ones. You are advised to use your grace absences wisely, including for illness.

No cellphones, no texting during class! Phones and related accessories should not be visible during class and must be either turned off or on silent mode. If you have special circumstances that require you to receive a call/text during class, please let me know in advance and make sure to sit by the door so you can exit without disrupting the class.

I allow the use of laptops/ipads etc. in class, but I ask you to refrain from using them for any purpose but taking notes or looking up a name/place mentioned in class online. This means no facebook/twitter/youtube etc. As with cellphones, please keep them on silent mode.

Participation – you are expected to read/watch all assigned texts/videos as elaborated in the schedule below and as I will mention in class from time to time, and participate in class discussions that will be integrated within lectures. Readings and videos are not only essential to the understanding of course material; they also complement the information provided in lectures. The more elaborate or analytic your arguments and ideas in class are, the higher your grade for participation will be. The key I’ll use for giving points for this item is: 0 if you never said a word throughout the semester, 50 if you said something meaningful (beyond “yes” or “I agree”) in at least 70% of the classes.

Note: to earn points for participation, you must meet with me at least once before spring break.

Meeting with me is easy! Just follow this link to set up an appointment at a time that works for you: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0d4eafab2caafa7-sign>.

Midterm

A take-home open-books midterm exam will take place from Thursday, 2/26 to Saturday, 2/28. The midterm will cover everything we did in class up to that point, and all mandatory assigned

texts (including the 3 books). The exam will comprise 2 parts: knowledge and analysis. In the first, you will have 1 hour to answer 25 multiple-choice questions. You will take the exam on Blackboard anytime within the window of 2/26 (at the conclusion of class) to 2/28 (48 hours later) and will be allowed to use whatever materials you want. In the second part, you will write a response essay to 1 of 3 questions. The essay will be no shorter than 1000 words and no longer than 2000 (about 4 to 8 pages). In that essay you will be expected to make an argument, demonstrate analysis, and explain the “so what” question (that is, why what you say actually matters). More details on the midterm will be distributed a week or two beforehand.

The first (knowledge) part will be worth 50 points (2 points per question); the second (analysis) part will be worth 100 points.

Final project

As soon as possible after the semester begins, you should start thinking about your final project and set up a time to meet with me to discuss it. Options for a final project include:

- a. Research paper – most of you will likely end up choosing this option. Your paper can be on any topic somehow related to the United States and Middle East, and you will need to do some preliminary research to figure this out. You will be expected to write at least 10 pages and no more than 30, using 10 or more sources of which at least 4 must be primary (this is absolute minimum; the more the better). Document your sources using footnotes as is customary in history/the humanities.

Deadline to approve general research topic: Thursday, 2/12/15 (10 points).

Choose a class presentation time (between 3/10 and 4/21), present your study in no less than 10 minutes, choose at least 2 primary sources to share with the class, and answer questions from the other students and me (40 points; class presentation date and primary sources must be chosen and approved by 2/24).

Deadline to submit first draft: Thursday, 4/2/15. Your first draft must include 90% of the text and at least some footnotes (50 points).

Deadline to submit final version: Monday, 4/27/15 (150 points).

- b. Digital history – digital history is the growing field of making history accessible and allowing new and creative inquiries based on technology. Examples for digital history (or digital humanities, in general) projects include Google books

(<http://books.google.com>), the Digital Public Library of America (<http://dp.la>), or the Digital Media Repository at Ball State University. One possible relevant project to our topic would be creating a library of links to primary documents, images, sound bites, and videos about US-Arab relations. In thinking of a digital history project you do not have to be so ambitious, though. If this is something you might want to consider, come talk to me. Similar deadlines as above will apply, and you will need to present your project in class.

- c. Documentary – perhaps you don't think of yourself as a very good writer, but you would still like to show your creativity and original thought in some other way? You may decide to film a short documentary. Documentaries may involve any aspect of US-Middle East relations (including Christians vs. Muslims, Americans and Arabs, etc.). A documentary needs to be at least 10 minutes long, edited professionally (or at near-professional quality), and shot in HD. The university can lend you equipment and there's an array of editing software available for you to use. If this is something you might want to consider, come talk to me. Similar (but slightly modified) deadlines as above will apply, and you will need to present your project in class.
- d. Artistic project – do you have a special talent for music, theater, dance, or other form of art? If you have an idea to incorporate some element this class covers into one of those areas, come talk to me. Similar (but slightly modified) deadlines as above will apply, and you will need to present your project in class.

Note: digital history, documentary, and artistic projects can be prepared and performed in couples. If you and another classmate want to team up for a project, come talk to me together.

Miscellaneous things you should know:

1. I care a lot about how you write. In fact, how you write is more important to me than what you say. I have a website dedicated to improving college students' writing skills (<http://writingmaster.net>). The website has all the information you may need on grammar, style, punctuation, and citing sources. When grading your book report, I will assume you are familiar with the rules described on this website. If you use facebook, I suggest you "like" this site's page (<http://facebook.com/writingm>) and follow it to receive occasional writing and

academic tips. If you find it useful, feel free to spread the word and share this resource with your friends. It is free to use.

In addition, you might want to seek the help of the writing center. The Writing Center is a community of Ball State students and faculty who value writing. You may go there to collaborate with one of the center's trained peer tutors on any project for any major. The Writing Center is a comfortable, supportive environment for writers from all communities and backgrounds. It is located in Robert Bell 291. It has both online and face-to-face appointments. To make an appointment, go to ballstate.mywconline.com.

2. I have zero tolerance for violations of academic dishonesty, and especially plagiarism. Even the slightest suspicion of plagiarism, cheating in the form of copying the work of another student, or having someone write an exam for you, or any other violation of academic dishonesty as defined in the University's Student Academic Ethics Policy, will result in an F grade for the course and possible further disciplinary action. For more details, see: <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/studentrights/policiesandprocedures/studentcode/viethicspolicy>.

3. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

4. Questions? Concerns? Suggestions how to make this course better? Just need someone to talk to? Sign up to meet with me at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0d4eafab2caafa7-sign>, or get in touch via email. I respond to emails quite quickly, usually within the same day, and typically within not more than 24 hours (48 hours during the weekend). I'm looking forward to getting to know all of you!

Course Schedule:

Our semester will be divided into two parts. The first will include a survey of the history of US-Middle Eastern relations from the early 19th century to the present day. That part will end with the midterm exam. The second part of the semester will consist of your presentations on your research/creative projects and class discussion about them. It will also be accompanied by short lectures on the relevant topics.

We will be reading mostly from the following 3 books. Please note that 1/3-1/2 of each book you will only be expected to read for the midterm, but not for any specific class (i.e. independent reading):

1. Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of US-Arab Relations, 1820-2001* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010)
2. Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (New York: Beacon Press, 2009)
3. Michael Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 2007)

Used copies of these books are available for considerably less online than in the bookstore (some for as low as \$5 with shipping).

Readings from other sources, as well as videos, images, PowerPoint presentations, and audio files will be available via the Content section of Blackboard. The midterm exam on its two parts will be administered there as well.

Note: the schedule below is subject to change; I reserve the right to make changes to assigned readings, the day each text is assigned, or the topics discussed every week. I will provide an updated schedule for the second part of the semester once it is available.

Week 1 – Introduction, pre-19th century Middle Eastern, Islamic, and American history
Tuesday, 1/6 and Thursday, 1/8

There's no assigned reading for this week; however, if you are not familiar with the history of the Middle East up to the 19th century, you will need to do read the first 4 chapters of the following book (PDF on blackboard). This knowledge will be assumed in class and on the midterm:

William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 1-74.

Week 2 – 19th century: American missionaries in the Middle East
1/13, 1/15

Oren, 79-97, 210-227
Makdisi, 19-53

Week 3 – The US and the Middle East around World War I
1/20, 1/22

Oren, 325-375, 407-419
Makdisi, 118-146

Week 4 – The Question of Palestine and World War II
1/27, 1/29

Oren, 420-445, 475-502
Makdisi, 147-203

Week 5 – The Cold War years, pt. 1
2/3, 2/5

Oren, 506-528
Makdisi, 223-277

Week 6 – The Cold War years, pt. 2

2/10, 2/12

Oren, 528-549

Khalidi, 70-90, 101-114, 140-149, 175-200

2/12: deadline to approve research topic.

Week 7 – The End of the Cold War and Beyond: 1980s-1990s

2/17, 2/19

Oren, 550-580

Makdisi, 321-351

Khalidi, 150-158

Week 8 – The US and the Middle East since 9/11

2/24, 2/26

Oren, 580-594

Khalidi, 207-246

Movie: House of Saddam (HBO production, link on Blackboard)

2/24: deadline to approve class presentation date and primary sources

2/26-2/28: window to take the midterm exam on Blackboard

3/3, 3/5 – no class, spring break

Week 9 –

3/10, 3/12

Week 10 –

3/17, 3/19

Week 11 –

3/24, 3/26

Week 12 –

3/31, 4/2

4/2: deadline to submit first draft of paper/other final projects

Week 13 –

4/7, 4/9

Week 14 –

4/14, 4/16

Week 15

4/21, 4/23

4/27: deadline to submit final version of research paper/other projects