**Arab Politics and Society**
Rutgers University, Spring 2010 (790/685:385)
M/Th 10:20-11:40am, Beck Hall Room 253

Instructor: Andrew M. Spath; email: spath@rci.rutgers.edu
Office Hours: M 12-2p at GSL Office; Th 12-2 @ Hickman Office (and by appt.)
Course Website: [http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~spath/385.html](http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~spath/385.html)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**
This course will critically examine the role of society in the politics of Arab states of the Middle East. As an alternative to exploring the governing institutions of these countries and the history of state development in the region (790:351), we will instead focus on the social forces affecting political development and change in Arab societies. This focus allows us to examine how interaction between individuals in society, and the groups they compose, shape politics in these countries.

More specifically, the course will utilize theories from comparative politics to study: key concepts like ‘nation’ and ‘collective identity,’ social structures (i.e. tribes, the family, ethno-confessional groups, social classes), the politics of culture, the role of religion in society, social activism and political mobilization, gender and sexuality, the Western notion of civil society and its relevance to prospects for democracy, and more.

Literary works and films that reflect Arab culture and social life will necessarily be woven into the course when possible. Three language modules will introduce students to the Arabic language around a particular theme *(see Handout 2 on website)*.

**REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:**

Exams:
- Exam 1 .................................................................20%
- Exam 2 .................................................................20%
- Exam 3 (*Cumulative Final*) ...............................25%

Paper:
- Critical Paper (*handout 1.1 on website*) ..........15%
- Peer Review (*handout 1.2 on website*) ...............5%

Online:
- Online participation (*below*) .........................15%

*Note that attendance (*below*) also factors into your grade, but does not constitute a set percentage of the total grade.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**
Attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed **one unexcused absence, NOT including exam days**. Further absences will result in a reduction to the student’s final grade. I will take attendance randomly throughout the term to enforce this policy.
ONLINE PARTICIPATION:
Students are required to sign up for an account at www.wordpress.com with the e-mail address provided on the first day of class. I will then add you as an ‘author’ on the course blog so you have posting privileges.

A blog for this course is used for many purposes – I will communicate course announcements here, and you may find it a good place to ask administrative questions; to discuss topics and issues covered in class or in the readings; to clarify in writing an argument you were making (or wanted to make in class); to set up study times; to consult one another’s help or advice; and to post news or other materials you find interesting and relevant to the class.

Participation on the blog constitutes 15% of your course grade. In order to fulfill this requirement, you are REQUIRED to:

• Create ONE unique post of your own (choose one of the following):
  o You can post an article from a periodical, a newspaper, or scholarly journal and analyze or comment on it. (200 words)
  o You may write a response to the readings or lecture for the most recent class. This should be an analytical response, not a summary. (300 words)

• Respond to THREE posts that your classmates have contributed. These responses should be thoughtful and analytical.

Your unique post is worth 6% of your grade, and the three responses are each worth 3%, making a total of 15% for the four total posts. All posts (for grading) must be submitted by April 25 at 10pm.

REQUIRED TEXT:

**All other readings are posted on my website. I will give you the password to these readings on the first day of class.**

The readings are an integral part of this course. You are required to know the key arguments and concepts from the readings and will be tested on them in the exams.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
Academic integrity is expected and required of all students. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism and violations of academic integrity do not excuse guilt of committing these offenses. To avoid committing any offenses, intentional or not, see the academic integrity code: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/.
Course Schedule:
All readings listed are required. If you are intrigued by a particular topic and wish to do additional reading, see me for recommendations.

PART I: CONCEPTUAL WORK

1. January 21 – Central Questions
   Course introduction, course structure, syllabus review

2. January 25 – Arab Society: A Primer
   Film: The Closed Doors (Al Abwab al Moghlaka)

3. January 28 – What is Society? Why is it Political?
   Fredrick Barth, “Towards Greater Naturalism in Conceptualizing Societies” in
   Conceptualizing Society. pp. 17-33
   Thomas Janoski. Citizenship and Civil Society: A Framework of Rights and
   O”bligations in Liberal, Traditional, and Social Democratic Regimes. Chapter 1,
   “Introduction to Citizenship” pp. 8-17

4. February 1 – Creation of Arab Collective Identity
   Albert Hourani. A History of the Arab Peoples, Ch.1 “A New Power in an Old
   World” pp. 7-14
   Michael Hudson. Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy. Chapter 2, “The
   Elements of Arab Identity” pp. 33-55

5. February 4 – Nation and Nationalism
   Benedict Anderson “Introduction” and “Cultural Roots” in Imagined
   Communities. pp. 1-36
   Timothy Mitchell. Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity. Chapter 6,
   “Heritage and Violence” pp. 179-205.
   David Crawford. “How ‘Berber’ Matters in the Middle of Nowhere.” MERIP
   pp. 21-25.
PART II: STRUCTURES OF ARAB SOCIETY

6. February 8 – Tribes, Villages, and Cities
   ** Language Module Day (Arabic Poetry)


7. February 11 – Social Class

   Barakat. Chapter 5, “Social Classes: Beyond the Mosaic Model” pp. 73-96

   Samih K. Farsoun. Chapter 1 “Class Structure” in Arab Society: Class, Gender, Power, Development. pp. 11-28

8. February 15 – Religion

   Short Film (5 min.): The Hajj (National Geographic)

   Barakat. Chapter 7, “Religion in Society” pp. 119-147


9. February 18 – Family & Patriarchy

   Barakat. Chapter 6, “The Arab Family and the Challenge of Change” pp. 97-118


10. February 22 – EXAM 1
PART III: SELECT TOPICS ON THE POLITICS OF SOCIETY

11. February 25 – Rethinking Identity & Nation: Crisis and Disintegration?


12. March 1 – Politics and Culture I


Sherifa Zuhur. “Singing a New Song: Bonding and Breaking with the Past” in On Shifting Ground, pp. 36-60.

13. March 4 – Politics and Culture II
Film (selection): Umm Kulthum: A Voice Like Egypt

Raymond Baker. “Combative Cultural Politics: Film Art and Political Spaces in Egypt” Alif: The Journal of Comparative Poetics No.15. pp. 6-34

14. March 8 – Gender and Sexuality
As’ad AbuKhalil. “Gender Boundaries and Sexual Categories in the Arab World,” Feminist Issues, pp. 91-104.

Bruce Dunne. “Power and Sexuality in the Middle East”, MERIP, pp. 8-11.

Abdessamad Dialmy. “Moroccan Youth, Sex and Islam”, MERIP, pp. 16-17.


15. March 11 – Women in Arab Society
Film: Four Women of Egypt


Spring Break (March 13 – 21)

16. March 22 – Social Effects of Islam
   **Critical Paper Draft 1 Due (in class, 2 copies)**


17. March 25 – Islamic Radicalism
   John Esposito. Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam. Chapter 2 “Jihad and the Struggle for Islam” pp. 26-70. (I am also including the third chapter titled “The Armies of God” on the readings website if you are interested)

18. March 29 – Minorities, Immigration, & Exiles
   **Language Module Day (Differentiating Terms)**
   Michael Hudson. Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy, Chapter 3 “Cultural Pluralism in the Arab World, pp. 56-81

   Ben-Dor and Bengio. Minorities and the State in the Arab World. Chapter 10, “The State and Minorities Toward the Twenty-First Century: An Overview.”


19. April 1 – EXAM 2
PART IV: CIVIL SOCIETY, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND ACTIVISM

20. April 5 – Civil Society Today
A. Richard Norton, Civil Society in the Middle East, “Introduction” pp. 1-25


21. April 8 – Civil Society towards Democracy?
**Peer Review Due (in class, 2 copies)**


22. April 12 – Society and the State
Joel Migdal State in Society: studying how states and societies transform and constitute one another. Chapter 1, “A Model of State-Society Relations”


23. April 15 – Social Change through Activism
**Language Module Day (Arabic Script)**

Charles Tilly. Social Movements. Chapter 1 “Social Movements as Politics” and Chapter 6 “Democratization and Social Movements”


24. April 19 – Violence and Contention

25. **April 22 – Women’s Rights Movements & Activism**
   **Critical Paper Final Draft Due (1 copy)**


26. **April 26 – Culture and Framing in Social Movements**


27. **April 29 - War and Community**
   Film: Forget Baghdad

   Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning* (selection on website)

28. **May 3 – Buffer/Review Day**

   **Final Exam:** Friday, May 7th, 8-11 a.m.