



Syllabus | DSS 5313: Strategic Survey of the Middle East

Instructor | Dr. Paul Ashby

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Course Dates | January 22nd, 2019 – March 10th, 2019

Classes | Online!

Note | Please let me know if you spot any errors or confusions

General Helpful Info

Course and Instructor Introduction

Hello all, and welcome to DSS 5313 'Strategic Survey of the Middle East'. This course aims to provide you with an overview understanding of the major security, military, and strategic issues in the Middle East. This is a region that is rich in history, geostrategically crucial, and sadly broiled in complex, storied, intersecting conflicts and instability. We cannot do justice to such a complex part of the world in seven weeks – but we will do the best we can to get at some of the major issues. We will especially think about U.S. interests, and why the U.S. has been and is so involved in the region – and whether that will continue.

I am a relatively recent arrival El Paso, TX from the UK. I have been living and working here for over three years. My major research is in U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy, especially in North America. I

have always been interested in 'big-picture' U.S. involvement in the Middle East, but this course gives us the opportunity to go more in-depth.

I have taught numerous courses in International Relations (IR) for seven years, both face-to-face and online. This is my second-time teaching DSS 5313 online, and I'll be simultaneously running at the Sgt. Major's Academy at Fort Bliss here in El Paso. I am really looking forward to exploring issues of Middle Eastern strategy and security with you all.

Teaching Documents

There are three very important teaching documents on this course. This **Syllabus** provides an introduction to the course and an overview of how it works and what it focuses on. The **Full Course Overview** provides an at a glance document for dates, deadlines, topics, and questions for each module. The **Work Guidance Document** provides helpful advice on how to do well in each of the pieces of coursework.

Contacting Dr. Ashby

The best way to contact me is via email (again, pdashby@utep.edu). If your question might help others, you can use the Help Board for the course in **Blackboard** - our online 'classroom' where we will be working together. I will always try and respond to you within 24 hours.

Course Overview: Key Info

Course Description

This course is an overview of some of the key history, trends, and strategic issues in the Middle East. This region is always of particular interest to those studying U.S. foreign policy, strategy, and national security because the U.S. is so involved there. It has an extremely large military footprint in the region, and of course has intervened in numerous countries in recent times, expending blood and treasure. Despite (or in part because of...) ever-expanding U.S. involvement, the region continues to experience significant upheaval.

We will think both about why this is, with a legitimate focus on U.S. national security with regards terrorism and energy security, but also some of the deeper trends that pull the U.S. in.

However, we also consider the region on its own terms. It of course has a rich, deep history, and complex social, economic, religious, and strategic issues. Better understanding these will allow us to better understand the challenges the U.S. faces there, as well as being important to our own wider knowledge of the world.

Course Objectives

After completion of the course students will be able to:

- Think critically about the Middle East as a geographic entity;
- Be more aware of some of the historical and cultural trends in the Middle East;
- Understand the historical roots of Middle Eastern challenges;
- Discuss and think critically about the U.S.' key strategic interests in the Middle East;
- Explain contemporary geopolitical splits in the Middle East, especially Iran-Saudi Arabia;
- Analyze specific conflicts in the Middle East, and how they relate to deeper trends;
- Explore the complex, intersecting issues of insurgency, ethnic conflict and terrorism in the Middle East;
- Explain and think critically about nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, especially with regards to Iran;
- Consider the possibility of resource wars in the Middle East;
- Evaluate why the Middle East is currently in such turmoil and where this might be headed;
- Reflect on the best paths for future U.S. strategy in the region, including whether a significant drawdown of the U.S.' presence is necessary and/or achievable

Course Module Breakdown

Here is a simple breakdown of the weekly modules on the course.

Week	Module	Date Starts
1	What is the Middle East? Geography and History	01/22/19
2	The Middle East World Wars and Cold War	01/28/19
3	U.S. Interests and Middle East Geopolitics	02/04/19
4	Strategic Challenges I War and Conflict in the Middle East	02/11/19
5	Strategic Challenges II Terrorism, Insurgency, and Ethnic Conflict in the Middle East	02/18/19
6	Strategic Challenges III Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East	02/25/19
7	Future Scenarios Revolt, Resource Wars, Regional Conflagration – or Something Better?	03/04/19

Textbooks and Readings

We will use the following text extensively as a textbook. It is quite focused on theory, but that will help you be more analytical with the empirical material and think about *why* things are happening. You should be able to pick up used copies, though do note they can take longer to arrive! However, if you can please do get the latest (fourth) edition.

- Louise Fawcett [ed] [*International Relations of the Middle East*](#) (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016)

There are a few online sources we'll use, and I'll be trying to upload some readings from some books I have. If you can buy, rent, or find copies of the below in libraries they are all very helpful:

Held and Cummings [*Middle East Patterns*](#)

Gresh and Keskin [*US Foreign Policy in the Middle East*](#)

Mishra [*From the Ruins of Empire*](#) (great on the modernity of fundamentalist political Islamism)

Gelvin [*The Modern Middle East*](#)

Bacevich [*America's War for the Greater Middle East*](#)

Coll [*Ghost Wars*](#)

[Work](#) from [Jason Burke](#)

Maher [*Salafi Jihadism*](#)

Stern [*Terror in the Name of God*](#)

Lynch [*The New Arab Wars*](#)

Hamid [*Islamic Exceptionalism*](#)

Abouzeid [*No Turning Back*](#) (narrative of Syrian civil war)

Course Requirements, Due Dates, and Overall Grading

This course has a number of tasks and assessments, which will be due and weighted as follows:

Activity	% of Overall Grade	Due Date
Introductory Post	5%	01/27/19 11.59pm
Discussion Posts (4)	35%	Each week in Modules 2, 3, 5 and 6 – see Full Course Overview
Mid-Course Exam	30%	02/17/19 11.59pm
Final Assignment	30%	03/08/19 11.59pm
Total	100%	

The achieved grades will be given numerically in percentages on the UTEP grading scale:

59 & below (F)

60-69 (D)

70-79 [C]

80-89 (B)

90-100 (A)

See [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#) for more information on grading at UTEP.

Late Policies

As this course lasts only 7 weeks, it is *essential* to be organized and manage your time wisely.

If you require an extension on course work because of extenuating work, health or family reasons, email me **at least 24 hours before** the relevant assignment deadline. Briefly explain your situation and request an extension of a specific length (e.g. 1 day). I will reply as soon as possible. Depending on the case, you may need to submit supporting documentation (e.g. a doctor's note).

In cases where an extension has not been arranged and no contact has been made between myself and the student, work submitted late will be subject to a penalty of 5% per day.

Assignments will not be accepted after they are 5 days late and there has been no communication between us; they will be given a grade of 0.

IMPORTANT I will work with you on these issues. I know how busy you are, often with full time jobs and other courses. All I ask is that you make sure you let me know what is going on!

Academic Integrity

As a UTEP student, you are expected to demonstrate academic integrity. In particular, you must properly identify and provide references for *all* material that you quote or paraphrase.

Cheating, plagiarism and collusion are all violations of the UTEP [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#). Again, for more on this see the relevant section of the [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#). Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for disciplinary action.

We will cover proper referencing a little below and 'in class'. However, if you have any questions or concerns about this please do let me know. If in doubt – check!

Evaluations

We will have an official evaluation near the completion of the course through UTEP.

UTEP greatly appreciates your input and opinion on courses. From a personal perspective, I take your feedback seriously and will always try to incorporate it into the course where appropriate. We therefore greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete these evaluations.

Course Expectations & Key Coursework Advice

Expectations

My Expectations of You...

My expectations are fairly straightforward - I expect you to try your best on this course, participate in 'class', keep to deadlines, and complete the work required! As this is a graduate course, the reading is both extensive, and absolutely crucial. This is the key thing I expect each week – for you to have completed the reading. Not reading will show up in your Discussion Posts, and it will affect your grade there,

in the Mid-Course Exam, and in the Assignment.

Some weeks do have a lot of readings. As long as you have read *something* that you can then discuss, that is fine. Do try to keep up as much as possible with the textbook readings (where relevant) each week. Endeavor to read as much as you can! The more you read, the better prepared you will be, and the better able to marshal a fuller understanding of the topic and the course overall. Most weeks the readings assigned are selected because they cover a wide breadth of the topic, and/or the aspects of a debate.

Important! You must keep up with the weekly readings. However, it is key to do more than this for your Assignment work. **Definitely** contact me for some pointers. Doing this provides evidence of your work, effort, and understanding, and deeper material for your answers to particular assignment, presentation, and exam topics.

Reading is the **key** to success! In my experience, there is almost always a correlation between those who demonstrate they have read carefully and widely during the course, and the highest marks!

... and what you can expect of me

You should always feel comfortable approaching me for help, guidance, and advice. If you do need something, let me know! I will endeavor to respond to any email queries within 24 hours.

Instructions and what you need to do to perform well on the course, and in particular assessment tasks, should be clear from the material provided to you.

I will endeavor to provide assessment feedback within seven days of the due date. I will let you know if there is any likely delay to that.

If there is anything you are unsure of, let me know!

General Advice for Assessed Work

Each assessment is designed for me to gauge your understanding of the material and your ability to explain and synthesize it. However, in the Discussion Posts, and especially the Final Assignment, the higher marks will be picked up when you show your ability to analyze and think critically about the topics we have covered. The course questions are all intended to provoke you to think through the particular topic in an analytical way. Often you will be trying to argue for or against a position, showing why a certain point stands,

providing evidence for a claim, and showing you understand the reasons why things happened. Again, as mentioned above, your **research and reading are the bedrock** upon which all good work is based for all the tasks, so be sure to keep up with reading, and research widely for your Assignment.

Referencing

Correct referencing should be used in each and every piece of work, **including** the Discussion Posts. I do not mind which style you use - MLA, Harvard, Chicago - as long as you are consistent and accurate in each piece of work. You can post referencing questions to the Help Board if you have any.

See [here](#) for some referencing guidance. Again, we will cover this a little more 'in course', and please ask questions if you need to!

Submission of Work, and Further Guidance

Everything will be submitted via Blackboard, and the links for Discussion work will be in each relevant module. It should be clear once you are in there!

For the Mid-Course Exam and the Final Assignment, you will be able to submit your work in the '**Assignments: Submission and Guidance**' section of our Blackboard page. The instructions should be clear, but please email me if you have any questions prior to submission.

The Online Learning Community

This course relies on the participation of all the people in the class to make it successful. You should actively engage in the course and be courteous and thoughtful at all times. Before you begin the course, take a few minutes to review the [core rules of online communication](#).

While distance education offers greater flexibility than traditional classroom learning, it requires **significant motivation and self-discipline**. In short courses like this one, it is vital that you keep up with the readings and assignments. Again, if, because of work, illness or family emergency, you find yourself struggling to keep up with what is expected, please email me as soon as possible, and 24 hours prior to any assignment or coursework deadline.

Again, if you require content-related help and support, please use the

Help Discussion forum. If you are wondering about something, probably other people are wondering too, and you are helping everybody out by being the brave one who actually asks!

If you would like to discuss more individual issues and concerns, please contact me via email.

Other Important / Helpful Information

Disability Statement

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. If you have a condition that may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, it is your responsibility to contact [**The Center for Accommodations and Support Services**](#) (CASS) at **(915) 747-5148** (voice or TTY) or [**cass@utep.edu**](mailto:cass@utep.edu).

You are also encouraged to discuss this in confidence with me, preferably before classes begin.

Copyright & Fair Use

Much of the material that is posted within this course is protected by copyright law. These materials are only for the use of students enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further retained or disseminated.

Library & Writing Center

The [**Online Library Resource Center**](#) is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Center provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies.

The short video tutorials [**available here**](#) provide an overview of library resources and how best to navigate them.

Click this link for the [**INSS Library Guide**](#).

The INSS librarian, Angela Lucero, is extremely helpful, and can assist you with any issues around resources and reading materials. She can be contacted at [**ajmartinez5@utep.edu**](mailto:ajmartinez5@utep.edu).

The [University Writing Center](#) offers both online and face-to-face consultations; online consultations require a reservation.

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