Hello all, and welcome to DSSX 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 eight 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.

We of course have direct experience from around the globe in the classroom. However, I know many of you have been deployed to this region, of course in Iraq and - if we include it regionally (!) Afghanistan - and beyond. Hopefully we’ll get a good mix of this experience and some new ways of thinking about the region in the classroom.

Instructor Introduction

As many of you know, I am a (relatively!) recent arrival to El Paso, TX from the UK. I have been living and working here for four years. My major research is in U.S. foreign policy and
grand strategy, but as a Brit I have a lot of interest in European security issues, and U.S.
relations with the UK and Europe.

I have taught numerous courses in International Relations (IR) for over eight years, both
face-to-face and online. This is my second-time teaching DSSX 5313 at USASMA.. I am really
looking forward to exploring issues of Middle Eastern strategy and security with you all.

**Teaching Documents**

This *Syllabus* is quite long, but does provide an overview of whole course, how it works,
what it focuses on, and what you need to do to succeed in it. This section gives most of that
information. Then there is a *Full Course Overview (p.9)* which provides details of deadlines,
topics, and questions for each module. Finally there is a *Work Guidance (p.16)* section that
gives 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](mailto: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 trends 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Class Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No Class – get ahead on reading!</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1. What is the Middle East? Geography and History</td>
<td>01.27.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2. The Middle East</td>
<td>World Wars, Cold War, and Beyond</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3. U.S. Interests in the Middle East</td>
<td>02.10.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4. The Middle East Chessboard I</td>
<td>Iran and Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>5. The Middle East Chessboard II</td>
<td>Turkey, the Gulf States, and ‘Outside’ Players</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6. The Middle East Chessboard III</td>
<td>Politics from Below? Insurgency, Terrorism, and Protest in the Middle East</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7. Future Scenarios</td>
<td>Revolt, Resource Wars, Regional Conflagration – or Something Better?</td>
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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.

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*

Maher *Salafi Jihadism*

Stern *Terror in the Name of God*

Hamid *Islamic Exceptionalism*

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

Cagaptay *Erdogan’s Empire*

**Course Requirements, Due Dates, and Overall Grading**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% of Overall Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Activity</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Pieces (3)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>In Modules 1, 3 and 5 – see Full Course Overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assignment Plan</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>03.01.20 11.59pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assignment</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>03.15.20 11.59pm*</td>
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<td>*We might have more leeway here but work to this!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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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 8 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.*

**IMPORTANT** I will work with you on these issues. I know how busy you are, often with full times 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 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.

The Online Learning Community

We do have an online element to our course. This 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. The key thing - be as respectful online as you would offline! Disagreement is healthy and natural; insults and ad hominem are not!

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 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 discussion and assignment topics.

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

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 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.

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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Required and Recommended Readings</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. 01.27.20 (class) What is the Middle East? Geography and History | Explore the geography of the Middle East  
Introduce some of the modern history of the Middle East – including historical roots of current conflicts  
Begin to think about how that history affects the present-day strategic environment | **Required**  
Louise Fawcett *International Relations of the Middle East* 5th edn. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019)  
Introduction pp.1-9 and Ch 2 (Rogan)  
Colbert C. Held and John Thomas Cummings *Middle East Patterns: Places, Peoples, and Politics* 6th edn. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014 p.3-12 (I’ll share this with you)  
**Recommended**  
Theory  
Fawcett *Middle East* Ch 1 (Lawson)  
Geography  
Roderic H. Davison ‘Where is the Middle East’ *Foreign Affairs*  
Cultural/Socio-Economic History  
Michael E. Bonine ‘From Uruk to Casablanca: Perspectives on the Urban Experience in the | Discussion Post:  
Due 02.02.20/replies due 02.04.20 11.59pm  
Where is the Middle East?!  
Or  
Based on your reading, why has the Middle East been so historically important?  
Or  
Briefly explore relations between nationalism, Islam, and statehood after the Ottomans |
| 2. 02.03.20 (class) | \textit{The Middle East | World Wars, Cold War, and Beyond} | Middle East’ \textit{Journal of Urban History} 3,2 (1977)  
Suleman Dangor ‘The Many Voices of Islam’  
Forstenlechner/Rutledge ‘The GCC’s “Demographic Imbalance”: Perceptions, Realities and Policy Options’  
Fawcett \textit{Middle East} Ch 7 (Hinnebusch) and 8 (Mandaville) | \textbf{Required} | Fawcett \textit{Middle East} Ch 3 (Sluglett and Payne) and Ch 4 (Korany)  
Pre-Cold War History  
Nick Danforth ‘\textit{Forget Sykes-Picot. It’s the Treaty of Sèvres That Explains the Modern Middle East}’ \textit{Foreign Policy} (August 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2015)  
Jim Muir ‘\textit{Sykes-Picot: The map that spawned a century of resentment}’ \textit{BBC News} (16 May, 2016)  
Sykes-Picot text  
Sykes-Picot Map  
Yolande Knell ‘\textit{Balfour Declaration: The divisive legacy of 67 words}’ \textit{BBC News} (2 November, 2017) | \textbf{Recommended} |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading Required</th>
<th>Reading Recommended</th>
<th>Discussion Post:</th>
</tr>
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| 3. 02.10.20 (class) | **U.S. Interests in the Middle East** | Explore the history of U.S. policy and strategy in the region  
Analyze U.S. energy security interests in the Middle East  
Interrogate US interests in the Middle East’s complex strategic and geostrategic environment | **Required**  
Fawcett *Middle East* Chs 16 (Hudson), 5 (Luciani) and 10 (Calculli)) – all of them if you can! | Due 02.16.20, replies 02.18.20  
Explore the historical legacy of a pre-Cold War treaty of your choice (e.g. Balfour, Sykes-Picot, Sèvres, Lausanne)  
Or  
Briefly discuss continuity and change in the Middle East after the Cold War  
Or  
Analytically discuss |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. energy security interests in the Middle East</th>
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| **4. 02.17.20 (class)**  
*The Middle East Chessboard I / Iran and Saudi Arabia* |
| Examine the impact of the Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry  
Explore historical and contemporary conflicts in the Middle East in this context  
Examine U.S. involvement and interests in these conflicts  
Think back to the geopolitical context for contemporary conflicts and analyze them theoretically  
Examine the U.S. and other’s efforts to prevent proliferation in the region. |
| **Required** |
| Uri Friedman ‘*What’s the Saudi-Iran Feud Really all about?*’ (links to other resources here) |
| **Highly Recommended**  
*Theoretical Background!* |
| Fawcett *Middle East* Ch 7 (Hinnebusch), Ch 9 (Fawcett), Ch 11 (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami), and ESPECIALLY 14 (Legrenzi) |
| **Recommended** |
| Frontline ‘Bitter Rivals: Iran and Saudi Arabia’ Parts One and Two |
| International Crisis Group ‘*Iran’s Priorities in a Turbulent Middle East*’ |
| Held and Cummings Ch 8 and Ch 9 |
| *Syria* (Explainer)  
*Yemen* (Explainer) |
<p>| Also we can think about fractious and potentially fractious areas like Iraq, Lebanon, Qatar – and sadly many more |
| Seth G. Jones ‘<em>Containing</em>’ |</p>
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<tr>
<th>5. 02.24.20(class)</th>
<th>The Middle East Chessboard II</th>
<th>Explore Erdogan’s shifting regional ambitions and strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore the Gulf states actions in the region and beyond, and their clashes with each other</td>
<td><strong>Required</strong></td>
<td>Fawcett <em>Middle East</em> Ch 17</td>
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<td>Selection from <em>Erdogan’s Empire</em></td>
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<td>Philip H. Gordon and Amanda Sloat ‘The Dangerous Unraveling of the U.S.-Turkey Alliance’ <em>Foreign Affairs</em> (Jan, 2020)</td>
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<td>Zach Vertin ‘<strong>Red Sea Rivalries</strong>’ <em>Foreign Affairs</em> (Jan 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;, 2019)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Readings from last week relevant here, too</td>
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<td>Fawcett <em>Middle East</em> Ch 18 (Hollis)</td>
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<td>Kaya Genc ‘Erdogan’s Way’ <em>Foreign Affairs</em> (Sept/Oct, 2019)</td>
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<td><strong>Libya (Explainer)</strong></td>
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<td>ICG ‘<strong>Tackling the MENA Region’s Intersecting Conflicts</strong>’</td>
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<td>ICG ‘<strong>Intra Gulf Competition in Africa’s Horn</strong>’</td>
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<td>Karim Mezram and Arturo Varvelli ‘<strong>The MENA Region: A Great Power Competition</strong>’</td>
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<td>Final Assignment Plan</td>
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<td><strong>Due 03.01.20, 11.59pm</strong></td>
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<td>Discussion Post: <strong>Due 03.01.20, replies 03.03.20</strong></td>
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<td>Briefly outline the Iran-Saudi Arabia geopolitical rivalry</td>
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<td>Apply an International Relations Theory to contemporary Middle East geopolitics (use the textbook!)</td>
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<td><strong>Or</strong></td>
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<td>Briefly discuss the main dynamics of a regional conflict or tension of your choice (you may include North Africa)</td>
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<td><strong>Or</strong></td>
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<td>Outline and briefly analyze the U.S. role in a MENA conflict/tension of your choice</td>
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</table>
What does Erdogan want?

Is Russia resurgent in the Middle East? Does it matter either way?

Briefly discuss a terrorism, insurgency, or ethnic conflict challenge in a Middle East/North Africa country of your choice.

Are the Middle East’s people the strategic key to its future? (See next week)

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**6. 03.02.20 (class)**  
The Middle East  
Chessboard III  
Politics from Below?  
Insurgency, Terrorism, and Protest in the Middle East

Explore the intersecting phenomena of terrorism, insurgency, and ethnic conflict in the Middle East.

Discuss the legacies of the Arab Spring and the future of protest/change.

**Required**

Terror/Insurgency

Shadi Hamid and Rashid Dar  
‘Islamism, Salafism, and Jihadism: A Primer’ Brookings (July 15th, 2016)

Seth G. Jones et al  
‘The Evolution of the Salafi-Jihadist Threat’ CSIS (November 20th, 2018)

Al Jazeera  
‘The Rise and Fall of ISIL explained’
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<td><strong>Protest</strong></td>
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<td>Fawcett <em>Middle East</em> Ch 15</td>
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<td>Marwan Muasher <em>The Next Arab Uprising</em> <em>Foreign Affairs</em> (November/December, 2018)</td>
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<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
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<td>Fawcett <em>Middle East</em> Ch 7 (Hinnebusch) and Ch 8 (Mandaville) if you haven’t already</td>
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<td><strong>Global Terrorism Index 2017</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Global Terrorism Index 2019</strong></td>
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| 7. 03.09.20 | Question whether there is a growing risk of resource wars in the Middle East | **Required** |
|   |   | Feel free to pick what most interests you, though try to read two at least. |
|   |   |   | **Final Course Evaluation:** Please complete the evaluation survey provided by UTEP |
Work Guidance

Purpose of this Document

This document offers guidance on the coursework you will complete for DSSX 5313 'Strategic Survey of the Middle East.

Contacting me for Advice

Please do email me if you ever need help or advice with any of the work. You may consult me at any point about any of the work. I definitely encourage you to contact me about the topics and issues you are considering for your Assignments. Obviously, the sooner you consult me, the more I can help, and the quicker you can get cracking! Again, I encourage all of you to do this, but especially those who choose the more 'open' assignment questions where you decide an issue / institution to discuss, so we can talk through your choices.

Tasks and Assessments

Classroom Activity

This should be a grade booster. Contribute in class and you can pick up 10 extra points!

Discussion Pieces

In Modules 1, 3, and 5, you should post a response to the Module Discussion Questions. This should be 700–900 words. This seems like a lot, but you do have a couple of weeks to complete them, and you’ll be surprised how quickly that word limit can be reached given the questions you are answering. I have changed the name of these exercises from Posts to pieces. That gives you an idea you are aiming for something thoughtful here!

You also must read your classmates' pieces and reply to at least two. Especially try to follow up on any responses to your posts.

Your main discussion piece should provide a clear, concise, and direct answer to the discussion question. You should draw in and apply ideas from the required readings, and extra marks can be secured with supplementary materials and outside sources. Provide references for all material that you paraphrase or quote directly. Try to add a bit of depth for the top marks – extra sources, explaining a process, noting complexity, applying an understood concept or theory...

Like your main discussion piece, your replies should be well written and offer something substantive. For example, in a reply you can: expand on a point; provide an example or an additional argument; ask a question; answer a question; suggest other areas to think about; or, in a considerate and constructive way, argue against a point. They don’t have to be long at all, just show you are engaged in the discussion.

Remember you are aiming to show your understanding, and ability to critically analyze the topic. I will provide materials and guidance each relevant week to get you thinking about the things to look out for and focus on in the discussion.

Each week’s discussion is graded out of 10. To receive a mark of 9 or higher you must submit your posts on time and:

☐ Provide a direct and insightful answer to the discussion question in your main discussion piece.

☐ Within the answer demonstrate you have engaged with and understood the week’s reading.

☐ Contribute at least 2 replies to classmates' main pieces, which significantly advance the conversation.

☐ Include supporting evidence that is specific and compelling. Provide references in Chicago, APA, or MLA where needed.

☐ Write clearly, smoothly, and precisely, avoiding errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or syntax.

To aim for the 10, you should:

☐ Go beyond the Required Reading with an extra source or two!

☐ Show analysis and/or depth. Explain a process, go off the beaten track with deeper empirical material, accurately apply a theory or concept, critique a source, show how
there are complexities, nuances, difficulties, and/or competing interpretations. You
don’t have to do all of that! Just aim to give it some pizazz!

Make your replies really substantive, and show extra effort in them (provide
references, make an analytical point, show some extra evidence)

If you are new to Discussion Pieces and would like some more advice, please email me.

Final Assignment Plan

Please produce a one-two page plan for your Final Assignment. It is due Sunday 1st March,
2020, 11.59pm.

Planning is essential for the Assignment. You are eventually going to write a 2500-3500
word piece on your chosen prompt or topic for the Final Assignment itself. Planning can
help with a crucial thing in Assignment writing – STRUCTURE!

Over 1-2 pages, you should set out to achieve three things when planning – what prompt or
question you want to tackle, the central points or points to argument you want to make,
and how you want to structure your paper to achieve this. I WILL PROVIDE A TEMPLATE
FOR YOU TO USE FOR THIS!

☒ What will your introduction be? Do you have an argument in your paper? Or
something you want to explore in more depth?

☒ What will choose to focus on? Why? What will you leave out for space?

☒ What is the key context you need to give for your paper/assignment? Do you have a
theory or concept you want to apply or use?

☒ How will you build your answer or argument through structure? What will your sub-
headings be? How will you connect your work?

☒ What is some of the core content you will feature? What references have you found
already? What do you need more of?

☒ What will you conclude?

We can discuss this in Blackboard, or by email. I will look out for plans that are more
advanced and cohesive than others, but really doing this is its own reward! It should be
another grade booster, too.

Final Assignment

You are required to complete a Final Assignment at the end of the course. It should be:

☒ between 2500-3500 words (with a 10% leeway)
☒ 12 font
☒ Times New Roman
☒ default Word margins
☒ Any images or figures clear and presentable
The Final Assignment is currently due 15th March, 2020 by 11.59pm. Work to this deadline. There might be some flexibility with it, but we are working in a different part of term this time, and I don’t want to give you a nasty surprise by giving you a falsely long due date!

The assignment questions are very much designed to provoke your critical analytical skill! However, if you want to tweak a question, or even design your own, you can do that. You must check your idea with me first though, as it has to allow you to meet some course objectives.

You may consult me at any point about the topics and issues you are considering for your assignments, via email. Obviously, the sooner you consult me, the more I can help, and the quicker you can get cracking! I encourage all of you to do this, but especially those who choose the more 'open' assignment questions where you decide an issue / institution to discuss, or those of you creating your own topic, so we can talk through your choices.

I do recommend getting going early. Having a plan early will help later, and it gives you more time to gather material. Make a one-page plan with a structure for your paper: an intro, sections, conclusion. Note the major points you want to cover. Feel free to share this with me.

Prompts

You may choose from the following assignments, or design your own in conjunction with me through the Plans. You can use a Discussion Piece prompt, tweak one, tweak one of the below, or even pursue your own topic!

Here are few more suggested prompts.

1. Critically assess the U.S. effort against ISIS. Think about mistakes, challenges, opportunities and/or long-term efforts of the U.S. here. Have an eye to the geopolitics and complexity of the region.

2. Complete a preparatory summary of U.S. interests, major strategic issues, potential developments, and Command requirements for the United States Central Command’s (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). The aim is to aid the CENTCOM Commander draft the 2020 Posture Statement, focusing on the most important issues.

3. Prepare a briefing on a major strategic / political issue for the U.S. Ambassador to an area country. What is the issue? What are the implications for the U.S., its interests, and strategy? What should US policy alternatives / suggestions be?

4. How should the U.S. approach bilateral challenges with Turkey? Outline what these challenges are in light of Turkey’s strategic importance and the U.S.’ anti-ISIS campaign.

Grading

The Assignment will be graded out of 100, using the criteria in the table below. I will provide both an overall score and explanatory feedback for your mark. As you can see, it is critical thinking that receives the most marks, but all the elements are important. Without a good
answer structure and flowing writing, even the best analysis is going to be detrimentally affected. Bad presentation and lack of clarity will let down even the most excellent research. Hence the ‘Percentage Guide’ is not a hard and fast representation of the amount of marks each element will be worth, but a rough guide to the importance of each element in the overall mark.

*Assignment Marking Guide*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of Assignment</th>
<th>Quality Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument / Structure / Writing</td>
<td>Quality assignments will be well-written, clear, coherent, and well-structured. A clear sense of a developing answer, with an introduction, main body, and conclusion, should be obvious to the reader. Points should develop logically, with each sentence / paragraph relating to the one before it, and the one following it. Sub-headings should be used where appropriate. At the top level there will be a clear sense of academic style present in the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content / Analysis / Critical Thought</td>
<td>The assignment provides a thorough response to the task, displaying an analytical approach. The analysis will be clear, logical, thoughtful, thorough, and well supported by evidence. In addition to showing an ability to explain and understand core material in a clear and precise manner, the best pieces of work will offer some form of argument towards the assignment question or task. They will marshal a wide range of research material, and be able to synthesize it into a coherent response. They will consider differing viewpoints / consequences / implications on a topic and /or issue. They will show an ability to understand the nuances of a topic by critically analyzing material, for example highlighting strengths and weaknesses in differing viewpoints, or exploring multiple implications of a policy issue. Importantly the best assignments will use this analysis to serve the argument or response. At the top range of marks an indication of strong independent thinking or originality will be present in the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Referencing</td>
<td>Assignment makes use of at least 6 relevant, in-depth scholarly or government sources. Research is accurate and sufficient to support points/arguments made (evidence!). Referencing is consistent and accurate. At the top range of marks a willingness to go beyond what is required of a good answer and away from the Reading List will be shown (i.e there will be significantly more than 6 references!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation / Spelling &amp; Grammar</td>
<td>Formatting makes the assignment highly readable. Graphics (if any) are high resolution and add value to the written material. There are minimal errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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syntax. The essay is coherent and easily readable.