Washington Semester
Islam and World Affairs – IWA
Seminar Syllabus (8 Credit Hours)

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This program includes a 3-week travel to the Middle East

Course Description
The Islam and World Affairs (IWA) program is a unique course of study that combines academic and professional experience in Washington, D.C. with a field practicum in the Middle East designed to explore conflict and peace. The IWA seminar focuses on Islam in the contemporary world, covering both Muslim-majority societies and Muslim minority communities in the West. Special attention will be given to the theoretical and practical challenges and opportunities to the changing politics of the Muslim world and their implications for regional and world peace.

Course Objectives
This course will:

- Improve student understanding of the link between Islam and world affairs through experiential education and active learning.
- Investigate the sources of tension and the opportunities of peacemaking in the Muslim world.
- Identify the key forces that shape Muslim identities, particularly in the West.

Learning Outcomes
At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify key movements and ideas shaping contemporary Muslim discourses on politics, state, peacemaking and conflict resolution.
- Evaluate the prospects of Western Islam and its implications for the West's relationship to the Islamic world.
- Analyze the Arab Spring and its ramifications for conflict and peace.
- Provide examples of the ways in which faith, ethnicity, gender, development, and power impact conflict resolution civilizational dialogue.

Workload and Scheduling
The IWA Seminar is an eight-credit course. This means that all students should expect to be in class eight hours per week. While every student's pace of study is different, a general estimate is that for every hour of in-classroom instruction, the student will be expected to work two hours outside the classroom.

Students are expected to keep their schedules flexible on Wednesday, Thursdays and Fridays in order to accommodate the schedules of guest speakers. Their contribution form a core part of the interactive learning approach in this Washington Semester Program. Preparation through completing required readings is essential for maximizing the opportunities associated with course activities. Students should take notes and ask substantive questions integrating guest speaker insights to the readings and class

discussions. Students will be assessed on their ability to make sense of how all these sources relate to the main learning outcomes of the course. Students will work on Mondays and Tuesdays every week.

Readings

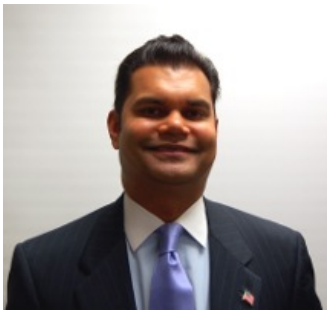
The professor will be assigning current readings that include book chapters, journal articles and primary sources representing ideas of contemporary Muslim thinkers and movements. In additions, the following book will be read extensively.

Said, Abdul Aziz, Nathan Funk and Ayse Kadayifci. 2001. *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: Peace and Practice*. New York, NY: University Press of America.

Class Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are essential requirements of the seminar. Every student must attend all required seminar sessions and arrive promptly. A poor record in either attendance or punctuality will have a detrimental impact on the student's final grade for the seminar. Please make sure to observe the following key procedures concerning attendance and punctuality:

1. Students must allow plenty of extra time to arrive at all seminar sessions promptly. This includes times when class participants gather to go as a group to off-campus meetings.
2. Students should bring with them the weekly schedules indicating the location of (and, if necessary, directions to) every seminar session.
3. Students should always carry identification cards and Metro Fare/Smart card.
4. If a student arrives late for a seminar session that is already underway, he or she must not enter the classroom or briefing room. Late arrivals are discourteous to the speakers, disruptive to the class, and detrimental to the Washington Semester Program's reputation.
5. Once a session has started, students should not leave the classroom or meeting room except in cases of emergency. Unexpected departures from a session already in progress are discourteous and could be interpreted by a speaker as a rude expression of disapproval of his or her views. If, because of a health emergency, a student must leave the classroom during the course of a seminar session, he or she should do so discreetly and politely. If a student must leave a session, he or she should abstain from re-entering the classroom or meeting room. Departures and returns by students during a session, whether to go to the restroom or for any other reason, are discourteous, disruptive, and detrimental to the Washington Semester Program's reputation.
6. Internship search or research project interviews are not valid excuses for absenteeism unless the student has secured prior approval from the seminar professor.
7. If a student misses a seminar session because of an illness or emergency, he or she must inform the professor (preferably via e-mail) before the session or promptly after the session.
8. If a student believes that he or she may have a valid reason to be excused from a session, he or she must seek permission from the professor in advance, via e-mail if necessary.
9. Regardless of whether a student was able to attend all sessions, he or she will be responsible for the material discussed and/or distributed in every session. If a student misses a seminar session, he or she must obtain the notes and any class handouts from that session from other classmates. Indeed, every student in the class should make arrangements with one or two classmates to designate them as her or his "proxies" to take detailed and legible class-notes and to pick up extra copies of any class handouts.



Suhail Khan, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Global Engagement and former White House advisor spoke to the class about being republican and Muslim and about his work with President Bush during the September 11 crisis

10. This is a 15-week semester. A student will lose a percentage point every time any of these rules are violated. Earning participation points will depend on each student's contribution to the class as per the standards below.

Class Participation and Professionalism

This seminar is predicated on all the students' collective dedication and commitment to the sessions. The seminar sessions can only be as good as the students make them through their active and polite participation. Accordingly, a good record of participation and professionalism is an easy way to do well in the participation portion (15%) of the final seminar grade. On the other hand, a poor record of participation and professionalism will not only make a student lose these fifteen percentage points, but could also have a further detrimental effect on his or her final grade.

All students must observe proper professional and diplomatic etiquette when raising questions and participating in the seminar sessions and class discussions to ensure constructive interaction with guest speakers, other students, and the professor. Accordingly, in order to avoid misunderstandings about the nature of the seminar sessions and to avoid the repetition of some truly regrettable incidents, please read and observe carefully the detailed description of the proper etiquette for this course, provided below. Should a student have any doubts after reading the following rules, he or she should speak with his or her professor. The professor is the ultimate judge of what constitutes appropriate behavior in the classroom.

- The Washington Semester Program relies on the good will of guest speakers who volunteer time out of their busy schedules to meet with our students. Students *must* be attentive and show *utmost respect*. <u>During sessions, students must not converse or spend any time on browsing the Internet or checking their text-messages</u>.
- Students should not make gestures or pass notes to each other, unless extremely necessary for the orderly conduct of the class.
- During sessions, students should also avoid any outward demonstrations of disagreement, displeasure, or boredom (such as loud sighing, yawning, or stretching). Some speakers will share views that students might find extremely disagreeable. Any attempt at reaction by name calling will not be tolerated in this class and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- The meetings with guest speakers are <u>not debate club sessions</u> in which the students try to change a speaker's mind or another student's opinion. Actually, one of the main purposes of inviting guest speakers is to expose students to different perspectives. Every student should keep an open mind, listen to what the speakers have to say, and try to understand the speaker's perspective before asking questions. Students must keep in mind that some speakers may express very controversial views. Yet, the sessions with guest speakers must not become arguments. Students will have plenty of time during class discussions to talk about the presentations made by guest speakers.
- Students should not hesitate to ask questions of the speakers, but they must do so politely. The questions should be

Washington Semester students after a candid conversation with Dr. Mona Makram-Ebeid, former members of the Egyptian Parliament, about the challenges of political reform, the Arab spring and Coptic-Muslim tensions.

phrased as inquiries for further information or for clarification of information already provided, not as criticisms or challenges. All students should remember that they are being graded on their professionalism and diplomatic tact because this is part of the Washington, D.C. experience. In the real world, all professionals (whether diplomats, advocates of NGOs or politicians) must be able to work effectively and negotiate constructively with people with whom they may have serious differences of opinion.

- Unless the speaker explicitly asks for questions during his or her initial presentation, all students should wait until the speaker finishes his or her presentation, and then raise their hands and wait for the speaker's acknowledgement. The speaker may become sidetracked if interrupted, and the group will thereby be prevented from enjoying the benefit of a clear and comprehensive presentation of the speaker 's perspective.
- Once a student has asked a question, he or she should not interrupt the speaker's response, but should wait until the speaker finishes (even if the speaker seems to have misinterpreted the question) before asking a follow-up question, if necessary. All students should be considerate towards their classmates by observing a limit of one follow-up question when other students have also raised their hands. If you wish to ask more than one follow-up question, please look around the class to make sure that no other classmates have raised their hands to ask questions. More than one follow-up question may lead to a one-on-one debate, pre-empting the time for questions by other students.

Jameel Johnson, President of Prince George's Muslim Council in Maryland and former chief of staff of Congressman Gregory Meeks, talked about his experience in cultural diplomacy on behalf of the U.S. with Muslim majority countries

- The students must consider all the remarks made by guest speakers "not for attribution." The students must never refer either to a specific previous speaker by name or even in a general fashion to “a previous speaker” when questioning another speaker. For example, instead of saying “Ms. X, you advocate dialogue with Iran, but one of our previous speakers told us that such a course of action is nothing but appeasement.” Use a much more diplomatic style such as “Ms. X, how would you respond to those who argue that dialogue with Iran is not an effective course of action?” By using the latter style—that is, by not volunteering the information from other speakers, and by placing some distance between the policy choices and the student’s personal opinion—a student can ask a very probing and challenging question without antagonizing the guest speaker.

- The class discussions that the professor will lead will require the active and polite participation of all students, but these discussions should not necessarily be considered as debate club sessions. While students should feel free to express their opinions, no one should monopolize the discussion, seek to impose his or her views, or seek to “score points." In fact, the class discussions will not always seek to produce a consensus, but rather foster the free and cordial consideration of all the different viewpoints, and thus allow each student to form his or her own opinion.
- When raising questions, students should try to use information from the readings, but must never preface their questions by saying "one of our assigned readings states. . . ." Sometimes some readings will be assigned in advance of a briefing to foster active interaction with a speaker. Students should use the material in readings to question the speaker without indicating that the material was assigned reading. Again, we do not want a speaker to believe that he or she was set up.

In sum, all students must behave professionally and show respect for all the participants in the IWA learning community. Observance of these standards will ensure a positive experience for all involved. NOTE: The class participation segment may also include short written assignments in preparation for a class discussion or simulation. "Participation Essays" must be submitted electronically. Papers that miss the electronic deadline will be considered late. While these "Participation Essays" will not be graded, they must be submitted by the deadlines provided in the weekly schedules in order for the student to receive credit. All participation essays will be kept by the professor as evidence of every student's record of participation and as a sample of the student's writing.

Gamal Abdel Gawad and Dina Shehata of Al-Ahram Center for Strategic and Political Studies speak to the class in Cairo about opposition politics, the prospects of reform for Egypt and the world

Term Project

The term project is an essential part of this seminar. Students will choose between four major projects designed to maximize the benefit of their Washington Semester experiential learning. Your choice of activity will be assessed on the basis of how you integrate academia to a real life setting and how you connect your activity to your academic and/or professional career. Therefore, you will have to work out the particulars of your choice with the professor. This will start with submitting a one-page synopsis of your plan in the second week of the semester.

1. Citizen Diplomat: Identify an area of increased (or reduced) tension between two countries, nations or communities (one at least has to be Muslim). Develop a program to promote further understanding. The activity could include a cultural exchange event or a panel discussion that brings representatives of the two sides of a given dispute.
2. Blog: Based on your monitoring of current events, write a weekly blog on a topic related to your Washington Semester learning experience. This focus of the blog could be purely educational or it could pursue other intellectual interests (public discourse and/or policy discussion).
3. Political activity: Since this is an experiential learning program in the epicenter of world politics and many public policy events, NGO activities and government decisions are related to Islam, the Middle East and peacemaking. It would be worthwhile to engage the actors whose views and actions shape public opinion and government policy choices. Examples of appropriate activities (whose substance must relate to an aspect of Islam and world affairs) include:
    - Monitor and engage an organization whose work is relevant to the seminar topics.
    - Write letters to elected officials advocating certain policies.
4. Service Learning: You can learn about peace advocacy through volunteering for an organization of your choice. Alternatively, you can choose service in an intercultural communication setting, such as a community center, which by itself is a step toward promoting coexistence.

Assessment and Grading
Class attendance and participation are crucial elements of the seminar; and being prepared by keeping up to date with the readings are essential to getting the most from the guest speakers and class discussions. The exams will require student integration of learning from speakers. The exams will also emphasize comprehension of the required readings.

The course grade will be broken accordingly:
Quiz: 10%.
Midterm Exam: 25%.
Final Exam: 25%.
Term Project: 25%.
Class Participation: 15%.

The grading system is as follows:

A: > 92	C+: 77-79
A-: 90-92	C: 73-76
B+: 87-89	C-: 70-72
B: 83-86	D: 66-69
B-: 80-82	F: <66

Blackboard and Technical Support
Most of our communication will take place during face to face meetings. Emails and Blackboard announcements will be important too. Please get acquainted with Blackboard features as soon as possible. Also, check Blackboard announcements and email every morning and evening.

American University's Computer Helpdesk provides technical support during the week, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Helpdesk can be reached at **202-885-2550** and via email at helpdesk@american.edu. Please do not hesitate to ask for technical support; the team is happy and ready to support. The Helpdesk's website can be found on: http://www.american.edu/technology/sites/helpdesk/section.cfm?ID=1. For online technical support on Blackboard, see: http://www.american.edu/cte/bb_students.htm.

Dress Code
Proper attire is required for all class sessions. For seminar sessions with guest speakers on or off campus, the dress code is business casual. For men, business casual means slacks or khakis, rather than cargo pants, jeans, or shorts of any kind; closed shoes rather than sandals, flip-flops, or sneakers; and a dress shirt or polo shirt rather than T-shirts or sweatshirts (please avoid wearing clothes with graphics or lettering to seminar sessions), but there is no need for jackets or ties. For women, business casual means slacks or a skirt and a nice top, but no shorts, mini-skirts, T-shirts or sweatshirts (please avoid wearing clothes with graphics or lettering to seminar sessions), and dress sandals or shoes. For certain off-campus sessions, such as those on Capitol Hill, at government agencies, and foreign embassies, the dress code is professional attire. For men, this means a suit or nice slacks, a tie, a jacket, socks and dress shoes; for women, this means a business suit or very nice slacks or a skirt and a nice blouse, or a dress; and dress shoes or dress sandals. Women are advised to acquire a scarf; it may be required during visits to mosques.

Topics and Weekly Schedule
The actual schedule of meetings, reading assignments, visits, and guest speakers will be posted on Blackboard and emailed to students by Friday. The following is a tentative class schedule.

Week 1:
Islam and the West after September 11: From a Clash of Civilizations to a Dialogue of Civilizations

Week 2:
The Contemporary Muslim World: Politics and Culture

Week 3:
Ethnic Conflicts and Post-Colonial States in the Middle East

Week 4:
Competing Ideologies, Regimes and Social Movements

Week 5:
The Abrahamic Concepts of Peace: Salam (Arabic) and Shalom (Hebrew)

Week 6:
Arab-Israeli Peacemaking

Week 7:
Reconciling Islam and Democracy

Week 8:
Islam, Human Rights and Gender Equality

Week 9:
Non-Violence and the Arab Spring

Week 10:
The Rise of Arab Islamists: A New Threat to Peace?

Week 11:
Travel to the Region: Lessons from the Field

Week 12:
Travel to the Region: Lessons from the Field

Week 13:
Travel to the Region: Lessons from the Field

Week 14:
Peaceful Interpretations of *Jihad*

Week 15:
Islam in the West: A Challenge to Domestic Security or an Opportunity for Richer Pluralism?

Week 16:
Conclusions and Course Review

Academic Integrity
Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are very serious matters. The professor is required to report cases to the Dean, which may result in a failing grade for the course. Please read the university's Academic Integrity Code closely, and be sure to clarify any questions. The code is available online at:
http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/index.htm

Environmentally-Friendly Course
This is a Green Course. Blackboard and Email extensively to post handouts, collect assignments, and provide students with feedback on assignments. Paper will be used when necessary. Students are encouraged to buy used books and read assigned articles online. If printing becomes necessary, please use double-sided, single-spaced sheets and reduce the margins. Also, recycle the material after the end of the semester.

Accommodation of Disabilities
Should a student experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with the professor. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support the students to meet the course requirements.
Academic Support Center (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.
Counseling Center (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.
Disability Support Services (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical, or psychological disabilities.