

## **The Kurds and their Neighbors The Search for Identity and Self Determination**

Fall 2011  
SIS 511.001  
Office: TBA

Mohamed Alaa Abdel-Moneim  
[mohammedalaa@yahoo.com](mailto:mohammedalaa@yahoo.com)  
Office Hours: Monday 10:30am-1:30pm  
Thursday 5pm-8pm  
OR by appointment

This class will focus on ethno-political tensions and conflicts in the Middle East, with particular focus on the Kurds as an identity group. The readings draw on the fields of anthropology, political science, and history, among others. The goal is to introduce students to a toolkit for understanding Kurdish issues in the region, and how this was affected by a number of factors such as foreign influences, regional politics, the development of nationalist movements, the origins of tribal loyalties, etc.

The course will focus on the history and culture of the Kurds, and the rise of Kurdish nationalist movements. It will also stress the response of the various regional governments to Kurdish demands, especially Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. We will also address the role of foreign powers and regional actors.

Class readings and discussions are not only limited to addressing the Kurdish question, although Kurdish identity and role in regional politics will occupy a good deal of the class time. One goal of this class is to provide students with tools to understand and analyze ethno-political problems in the region and propose their possible solutions to them.

Based on this perspective of providing students with a toolkit for analysis and formulating possible policies for reform, the course will be based on class discussions and presentations. Therefore, attendance and participation are central pillars of the course requirements. My perspective is that a class which discusses identity formation, regional politics, historical and societal heritage, and similar issues requires synthesizing the knowledge and perspectives gained from class interactions and discussions. It might be difficult to get everyone equally interested in all the topics we discuss. But it is possible to draw on our diverse interests, collaborate in group assignments, and exchange ideas in class to reach a fuller picture of the topics we discuss.

Assignments will be divided between presentations and written work. Presentations will include presenting course material, plus any other extra material you wish to bring to the attention of the class. We will start the readings by getting a general understanding of the demographic, socio-political, and historic background in the Middle East as an approach to understanding the context of ethno-linguistic conflict in the region.

Following the first 3 weeks, we will start to do more presentations in class as part of class assignments. In week 2, students should sign up for presenting part of the readings in weeks 4

through 9. The purpose is to encourage direct communications and involvement from everyone in the class.

There are 3 written assignments for this course. The purpose of these assignments is to introduce you to different styles of academic and professional writings, and allow you to modify the way you present your ideas and analytical views based on the needs of your audience. The assignments also aim at giving you space to express your interests and make use of the analytical skills and knowledge you gained from this class, through choosing topics that you feel most interested in to present.

The first of these assignments is an op-ed, written for a newspaper such as the Washington Post. The purpose here is to address a current issue and present the readers with a specific perspective to view and understand it in a concise and attractive manner. The op-ed will be due on October 5<sup>th</sup>.

The second assignment is a policy memo directed to decision makers who require information and ideas about the available scenarios for addressing a particular issue, as well as recommendations about which courses of action to follow and what to expect under different scenarios. The policy memo is due on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

The third assignment is an Options Paper/briefing. This is a National Security Council-style paper, providing a concise synopsis, analysis, and recommendations on a critical policy issue concerning minority issues and/or ethno-political conflicts in the Middle East. The Options Paper/briefing is due on the last day of classes – December 7<sup>th</sup>.

Guidelines for writing the three assigned papers are available on Blackboard. Please do not hesitate to utilize the numerous resources available at the AU library and the Writing Center as needed.

*Extra assignments* are always welcome. Please feel free to e-mail if you have an article, a book, or a paper that you working on, that is relevant to our class, and you want to present it before we start discussing our readings. Extra assignments will be graded for an extra credit.

## **REQUIRED BOOKS**

McDowell, David. 2004. A Modern History of the Kurds. London: IB Tauris.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

25%	Op-Ed
25%	Policy Memo
30%	Options Paper/briefing
20%	Attendance and Participation

The topics you choose for your written assignments should be based on the readings, but do not have to be restricted only to the topics discussed in class. That is, you are expected to make use of the tools that you gained in class in order to analyze issues related to ethno-political conflicts in the Middle East, but the topics you choose do not have to be restricted to the minorities and border issues we will be focusing on.

### **Due Dates for the Assignments**

Op-ed	October 5 <sup>th</sup>
Policy Memo	November 9 <sup>th</sup>
Options Paper/briefing	December 7 <sup>th</sup>

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Explore the origins and historical developments of minority issues in the Middle East, with particular focus on the Kurds.
- Gain an understanding of how the creation of the modern nation state in the region, the role of regional and international powers, tribal affiliations, and nationalist movements have affected the course of ethno-political issues in the region.
- Understand how current developments in the region, including pro-democracy uprisings in a number of its countries, could affect minorities.

### **INTENDED OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- Conceptualize for analysis the concepts of group identity, nationalism, and tribal loyalties, and their reflections in the Middle East
- Account for the effects of cultural relativism, political systems, and historical dynamics in analyzing political outcomes in the region
- Understand how groups in the Middle East define themselves in terms of tribes, state, ethnicity (Arab/non-Arab, etc.), religion, etc.
- Understand the role of (relative) history and discourse in inter-communal relations.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students are required to adhere to the Academic Integrity Code, which can be found at: (<http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm>).

### **CLASSROOM PROTOCOL**

Students should attend all classes and should arrive ready to discuss the material. Students should arrive on time and stay in class until it ends. If circumstances require an absence, please

contact me about it before class. Students should be respectful of the opinions of each others, and should show respect by being attentive to comments by the instructor and their peers.

This class abides by the University’s Academic Integrity Code which can be found at:  
<http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/regulations/reg80.cfm>.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

August 31 <sup>st</sup>	<p>Review of the Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Georges Corm. A History of the Middle East from Antiquity to the Present Day. Berkshire: Garnet Publishing. Introduction and Chapter 1. pp. 11-30.</li> <li>- Albert Hourani. Barakat, Halim. The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1993. <a href="http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7d5nb4ss/">http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7d5nb4ss/</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>PART I: Understanding Minority Issues in the Middle East</b>	
<i>1- Understanding Diversity in the Middle East</i>	
September 7 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- McDowell, David. 2004. A Modern History of the Kurds. London: IB Tauris. Chapter 1.</li> <li>- Riad Jabbour. 2010. The Future of Christians in the Arab World. In Betty Jane Bailey &amp; J. Martin Bailey. 2010. “Who are the Christians of the Middle East?” Michigan and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Pp. 12-21.</li> <li>- The Arab World and the Kurds. <a href="http://www1.american.edu/cgp/pdf/dunn.pdf">http://www1.american.edu/cgp/pdf/dunn.pdf</a>.</li> </ul>
<i>2- State Creation and International Influences in the Middle East</i>	
September 14 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- William Cleveland. 2009. A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Chapter 9.</li> <li>- Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson. 2006. “The Roots of Arab Bitterness.” In Karl Yambert (ed). The Contemporary Middle East: A Westview Reader. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. pp. 27-40.</li> <li>- Inga Brandell (ed). Introduction and Chapter 10.</li> <li>- Sargis Mamikonian. 2005. Israel and the Kurds (1949-1990). <i>Iran &amp; the Caucasus</i> 9(2): 381-399.</li> </ul> <p><b>RECOMMENDED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rashid Khalidi. 2004. Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East. Boston: Beacon Press. pp. 9-36.</li> <li>- Islamopediaonline.com: Religious Landscape in the Country Profiles.</li> </ul> <p><b>Extra Assignment:</b> Presentations on the Demographic and group identity politics in the Middle East from Islamopediaonline or other relevant sources (<i>Linking past to present</i>).</p>
<b>Collective (group) Identities in the Arab world and the Greater Middle East</b>	

<i>1- Tribalism as a form of imagined collective (group) identity in the Middle East</i>	
September 21 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ibn Khaldoun. <i>The Mukaddimah: An Introduction to History</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1989. Chapter 2 “Beduin Civilization Savage Nations and Tribes and Their Conditions of Life, Including Several Basic and Explanatory Statements.”</li> <li>- Eickelman. <i>What is a Tribe</i>. Chapter 6.</li> <li>- Tapper, Richard. 1990. <i>Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East</i>. In Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.). <i>Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East</i>. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.</li> <li>- Anderson, Benedict, <i>Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism</i>. London, UK: Verso, 1983, Chapter 1 and 2.</li> <li>- Martha L. Cottam and Richard W. Cottam. 2001. <i>Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behavior of Nation States</i>. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. pp. 195-240.</li> </ul>
<i>2- Nationalism</i>	
September 28 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anderson Benedict. 2006. <i>Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism</i>. Chapters 5 and 6.</li> <li>- Anderson, Malcolm. 1996. <i>Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World</i>. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. Introduction and Chapter 1.</li> </ul>
<b>Kurds in Iran</b>	
October 5 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sandra Mackey. 1996. <i>The Iranians</i>. Preface and Chapter 1 on “The Glory of Persia,” Chapter 4 on “the Faces of Authority: God, King and Cleric,” Chapter 13 on “The Islamic Republic of Iran” and Epilogue.</li> <li>- Kaveh Bayat. 2005. <i>The Ethnic Question in Iran</i>. <i>Middle East Report</i>. Number 237. Winter. pp. 42-45. McDowall (on Iranian Kurds), Chapter 10-13.</li> <li>- Christopher Houston. 2009. <i>An anti-history of a non-people: Kurds, colonialism and nationalism in the history of anthropology</i>. <i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>. pp.19-35.</li> <li>- Lehmann, et al. 1973. <i>The Hereditary Blood Factors of the Kurds of Iran</i>. <i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London</i>. Series B, Biological Sciences. 266 (876) Biological studies of Yemenite and Kurdish Jews in Israel and Other Groups in Southwest Asia. pp. 195-205 (Don’t worry about the medical data tables and jargon).</li> </ul> <p>OP-ED due</p>
<b>Kurds in Iraq</b>	
October 12 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- McDowall (on Iraqi Kurds), Chapter 16-18.</li> <li>- Carole O’Leary. 2002. <i>The Kurds of Iraq: Recent History</i>,</li> </ul>

	<p>Future Prospects. <i>MERIA Journal</i> 6(4) (available online).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carole O’Leary. 2007. Communalism and the Future of Iraq. In MacDonald and O’Leary (eds.). <i>Kurdish Identity: human rights and political status</i>. pp. 168-177.</li> </ul>
October 19 <sup>th</sup>	Kurds in Iraq Continued
<b>Kurds in Turkey</b>	
October 26 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- McDowell. Chapter 19, 20.</li> <li>- Andrew Mango. 1999. Ataturk and the Kurds. <i>Middle East Studies</i> 35(4). October. pp. 1-25.</li> <li>- Thomas W. Smith. 2005. Civic Nationalism and Ethnocultural Justice in Turkey. <i>Human Rights Quarterly</i> 27(2): pp. 436-470. (Available on JStore).</li> </ul>
<b>Kurds in Syria</b>	
November 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Michael Dunn. The Arab World and the Kurds. In MacDonald and O’Leary (eds.). <i>Kurdish Identity: human rights and political status</i>. Chapter 22. pp. 231-236.</li> <li>- McDowall , Appendix on Kurds in Syria.</li> <li>- Mona Sarkis. 2011. The Ethnic and Religious Topography of Arab Syria Many National Souls, but No Nation. Qantara.de. <a href="http://en.qantara.de/wcsite.php?wc_c=16880&amp;wc_id=17145">http://en.qantara.de/wcsite.php?wc_c=16880&amp;wc_id=17145</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>The Kurdish Question and Regional Politics</b>	
1- The Kurdish Question in Regional Politics	
November 9 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Murat Somer. 2004. Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications. <i>Middle East Journal</i> 58(2): pp. 235-253.</li> <li>- Robert Olson. 2000. Turkey-Iran Relations, 1997 to 2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions. <i>Third World Quarterly</i> 21(5): pp. 871-890.</li> <li>- Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield. 2005. The Implications of Elections for Federalism in Iraq: Toward a Five-Region Model. <i>Publius</i> 35(3): pp. 359-382.</li> </ul>
2- Kurds, Minorities, and the “Arab Spring”	
November 16 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scott Petterson. 2011. Arab Spring crackdown damages Kurdistan's image as regional model. The Christian Science Monitor. July 1<sup>st</sup>. <a href="http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0701/Arab-Spring-crackdown-damages-Kurdistan-s-image-as-regional-model">http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0701/Arab-Spring-crackdown-damages-Kurdistan-s-image-as-regional-model</a>.</li> <li>- Sebahat Tuncil. 2011. Arab Spring, Kurdish Summer. The New York Times. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/opinion/18tuncel.html?r=1">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/opinion/18tuncel.html?r=1</a>.</li> <li>- Harem Karem. 2011. Syrian Revolt – Kurds in the Frontline. The Kurdistan Tribune. June 7. <a href="http://kurdistantribune.com/2011/syrian-revolt-kurds-frontline/">http://kurdistantribune.com/2011/syrian-revolt-kurds-frontline/</a>.</li> </ul>
November 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Spring Break holiday – no classes

November 30 <sup>th</sup> and December 7 <sup>th</sup>	Presentations of the Options Paper/briefing. Options Paper/briefing due on December 7 <sup>th</sup>
---	--