

# **The United States and the Arabs- A Graduate Course**

**Faculty of International Studies  
University of Jordan**

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The relevancy of the United States in relation to the politics of the Middle East began with the end of the Second World War. Historically, the relationship between America and the Arabs has been a dynamic one. To understand the regional dynamic and inter-Arab politics, it is vital to comprehend America's participation therein.

This course traces the origin and the evolution of the relationship between America and the Arabs. It also focuses on the twin objective of America in the region: oil and the security of Israel and how they complicated the interaction between America and the Arabs.

More specifically, the course will answer key questions such as: how and in what way does America formulate its policies vis-à-vis the Arab world? Is there a unified Arab position with regard to American foreign policy in the region? What is the role of the Arab public opinion in American-Arab relations? How and in what ways does Israel affect American attitudes toward the Arab cause? Can the Cold War provide the framework to understand the involvement of great power intervention in the region? Have the Arabs succeeded in influencing the American position toward the region and if yes under what condition? Why has the United States failed at peacemaking in the Middle East? How has the war on terror helped create new fault lines in the region? What is the true American position regarding the Arab Spring and democracy? Upon completion of this course, students will be better able to:

1. Understand and articulate the multiple theories used to analyze and explain the involvement or American-Arab relations.
2. Analyze contemporary issues that have been contentious between the Arabs and America.

3. Engage in scholarly debate, both oral and written, over the best way to understand the condition of American-Arab relations.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Attendance and participation	(10%)
Research paper (due on week 14)	(15%)
Presentation of research paper	(5 %)
Mid-term (during week 8)	(20%)
Book Review (due on week 15)	(10%)
Final exam	(40%)

## **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Students are required to attend all classes and prepare for each class by reading the assigned texts. Students are responsible for all readings on the syllabus, regardless of whether or not we cover all of the assigned readings in each class. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed, including handouts, announcements, etc. Since the topics are generally controversial and multi-faceted, students are encouraged to raise important issues in class and to make comments on the readings. Students are also responsible for reading about current affairs. At times, we will focus on issues in the news, depending on their relevance to our course readings.

Students are strongly encouraged to take part in class discussion. Every student begins the semester with a C for discussion. This grade improves during the semester when the student contributes constructively in class discussion. The lecturer reserves the right to call on students to participate even if their hands are not raised. Students should remember that this course is designed for civilized discussion. All opinions and ideas should be listened to with respect. Any student that demonstrates an ill-mannered attitude will be asked to leave the class.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is a crucial part of the advancement of knowledge. Students are expected to be familiar with the University policy on academic integrity. Students are responsible for learning the documentation and acknowledgment of sources required in academic discourse. Any infringements—intentional or not—will be taken seriously and risk a failing grade for the course. Cheating on written exams is prohibited. If a student is caught cheating by classmates, or from any other source, he or she will fail the exam. There is zero tolerance for cheating.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Week 1: Introduction and Overview:**

### **Week 2: The Transformation of the Arab Idea of America: A historical perspective**

#### **Readings:**

Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S. - Arab Relations, 1820-2001* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), pp.1-17 and 147-203

James Gliven, "The Ironic Legacy of the King-Crane Commission," in David Lesch (ed.), *The Middle East and the United States* (USA: Westview, 2007) pp.13-30

### **Week 3 & 4: Conflicting Interests and the Imperative of the Cold War**

#### **Readings:**

Avi Shlaim, *War and Peace in the Middle East: A Concise History* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 1-60.

Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), pp. 40-69

Mitchell Bard, *The Arab Lobby: The Invisible Alliance that Undermine America's Interests in the Middle East* (New York: Harper, 2010), pp.37-67

### **Week 5: The Arab Cold War and the American Factor**

#### **Readings:**

Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.1-25.

Malik Mufti, "The United States and Nassarist Pan-Arabism," in David Lesch (ed.), *The Middle East and the United States* (USA: Westview, 2007), pp.141-160.

**Week 6: 1967 War, a watershed in the Arab-American Relations**

**Readings:**

Fawaz Gerges, "The 1967 War: US Actions and Arab Perceptions," in David Lesch (ed.), *The Middle East and the United States* (USA: Westview, 2007), pp13-30

Stephan Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp118-166

Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S. - Arab Relations, 1820-2001* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010), pp.259-99

**Week 7: The American Moment: hegemony in the Middle East and its retreat**

**Readings:**

Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.72, No.3, 1993, pp.22-49.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Tale of Two Wars, the Right War in Iraq and the Wrong One," *Foreign Affairs*, June 2009

**Week 8 : MID-TERM EXAM**

**Week 9 & 10: America and the Gulf Security**

**Readings:**

Jon Alterman, "The Gulf States and the American Umbrella,"

<http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2000/issue4/jv4n4a8.html>

David Lesch (ed.), *The Middle East and the United States* (USA: Westview, 2007) pp.315-437

**Week 11: America, the Arabs, and Illusion of Peacemaking**

**Readings:**

Steven Cook and Shibley Telhami, "Addressing the Arab-Israeli Conflict," in Richard Haass and Martin Indyk (eds.), *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President* (USA: The Brookings Institute and the Council on Foreign Relations, 2008), pp.131-159.

Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2008), pp.75-124.

## **Week 12: The Israel's Factor**

### **Readings:**

Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (California: UNC Press, 2008), pp.77-115.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, the Israel Lobby, *London Review of Books*, 2006.  
<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby>

Martin Kramer, "The American Interest: A Realist Case for the U.S.-Israel Alliance,," *Opinion Journal Federation*, November 2006.

## **Week 13: The Arab Public Opinion and America**

### **Readings:**

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Islamist Perceptions of US Policy in the Middle East," in David Lesch (ed.), *The Middle East and the United States* (USA: Westview, 2007), pp.504-534.

Shibley Telhami, *The Stakes: American in the Middle East, The Consequences of Power and the Choice for Peace* (USA: Westview Press, 2002), pp.1-66

## **Week 14: The Arab Spring and the Issue of Democracy**

### **Readings:**

Amy Hawthorne, Can the United States Promote Democracy in the Middle East?

<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/2002-HawthorneCurrentHist.pdf>

Brian Katulis Democracy Promotion in the Middle East and the Obama Administration, A Century Foundation Report

Augustus Richard Norton, America's Approach to the Middle East: Legacies, Questions, and Possibilities

**Weeks 15 & 16: Presentation of Research Papers**

**FINAL EXAM**

