Instructor: Dr. Akan Malici  
Meeting Days and Times: Mondays and Thursdays 2:30-3:45pm  
Meeting Location: Johns Hall 109  
Office Location: JH 111JB  
Office Hours: By appointment.  
Office Phone: (864) 770 3688  
Email: akan.malici@furman.edu

Course Overview:  
This course is an introduction to the Politics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a region encompassing the states of the Arab world, Iran, Israel and Turkey. The course will proceed systematically in various steps. First, we will be engaging with some historical, religious and political background of the region. Second, we will be learning some aspects about the political economy of the region. Third, we will be discussing the nexus between Islam, Political Islam and Democracy. Fourth, we will be studying some fundamentals about the Arab-Israeli conflict. And finally, we will be engage the Arab Uprisings which began in 2011. We’ll look at their origins and their implications.

This is, doubtlessly, a lot to cover and we won’t be able to do full justice to the complexities of each theme. Nevertheless, by the end of this course, students are expected to have a more contextualized and better informed understanding of the MENA region, its history, its religious dynamics and its past present and future politics. The students are also expected to employ this basic, but fundamental understanding of the region to make sense and analyze the contemporary issues and developments in the region and the implications they have for world politics more generally.

Course Requirements:  
Before I introduce the specific course requirements, I want to emphasize that for all writing assignments you will be expected to demonstrate good writing abilities. A clear writing style is an absolute prerequisite for you to be able to communicate your substantive points and arguments effectively. It is also very important that you proofread your papers for grammar and style. Once you have finished, let it sit for a few hours and then revisit it. This way you are more likely to detect errors and correct them in time before the due date. All assignments have to be types in 12-point Times New Roman format. The papers are to be 1 ½ spaced with one inch margins. Here are the course assignments for our class:
1. Documentary Discussions (2 x 10 points)
Towards the very beginning of the term we will be watching two documentaries that will introduce us to central and fundamental aspects and concepts of this course. The first documentary is *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* and the second documentary is *Islam: Empire of Faith*. You will have to write a Discussion Paper on each documentary. In your paper you are first to summarize the documentary in about two paragraphs. Then you are to select the three aspects in the documentary that you found to be most important or most intriguing and you are to discuss these aspects. Guiding questions for you are: Why are these aspects important? What is intriguing about them? What is surprising about them? What are the larger implications we can draw from further considerations of these aspects? Towards what end? These are some questions that you can engage, but you don’t have to limit yourself to these. Also, you are encouraged to draw on further sources for your discussion. You should give your papers (creative) titles. Both of these papers must be four pages long.

2. Book Reviews (2 x 15 points)
In order to gain a deeper understanding of a particular issue or country in the MENA region, each student will have to write two book reviews. In these reviews you will have to summarize the author’s main arguments in about two paragraphs, but then move towards a critical engagement with the book. Guiding questions for you are: What is the significance of the book? How does the author support his/her argument? What ‘evidence’ is being used? How do his/her arguments relate to other arguments pertaining to the same issue? Is the author compelling? What are the implications of the author’s argument(s). You can conclude with an evaluation of the book’s merit(s) and shortcomings, whether you would recommend it or not. You should give your papers (creative) titles. Both of these reviews must be four pages long. Every student is expected to stop by the instructor’s office at least two weeks before the due date for each review and discuss the selected book. Here are the books from which you can choose two for your reviews:

3. **Exams (2 x 10 points)**
   The exams are take-home exams and they are based on our readings and class discussions. The dates for the exams are noted in the Course Outline below. On the given date the exam will be handed out in class and it will be due at the following class meeting.

4. **Final Paper (20 points)**
   Every student will author a research paper. The research paper will ask an important question emerging from our readings and discussions. It will start with an Introduction which must lay out the research question/thesis and argue its importance. It will then engage in a brief Literature Review with the purpose to show what is known about the topic. From there it will venture towards an Analysis of the research question. This will constitute the main part of the research paper. The paper will end with a Conclusion and drawn implications. Very early in the semester, every student is to visit with the instructor and discuss possible ideas for his/her research paper. This research paper must be a minimum of 12 pages long. Possible research questions are:
   - Does Islam hinder democracy?
   - What explains the prevalence of authoritarianism in the Middle East?
   - Why is the Middle East economically underdeveloped?
   - Has the Arab Spring turned into an Arab Fall?
   - What was the role of social media in the Arab Uprisings? Was it crucial?
   - What underlies the Arab-Israeli conflict?
   - What are the consequences of colonialism in today’s Middle East?
   - …

5. **Class Attendance and Participation (10 points)**
   It is of crucial importance that you attend class and participate actively. You are expected to read all the assigned readings BEFORE the class meeting and you are to be able to discuss them. You cannot achieve a satisfactory score in this category if you merely “sit in.” I expect the following from you:
   - **Preparation** — your contributions demonstrate that you carefully read the assignment and engaged in it.
   - **Quality of Your Argument** — your contributions are original, accurate and relevant to the subject matter under consideration and you reason by reference to proper evidence. Quality of Your Expression — your contribution is intelligible, concise, and addressed to your peers and the instructor.
   - **Contribution to the Process** — knowledge is a cumulative achievement. Therefore, your contributions should demonstrate that you are listening to other students’ comments, take their ideas into consideration when responding, respect them, and criticize their arguments (not them!) constructively.
   - **Critical Thought** — your contributions show critical awareness, do not reiterate conventional and/or common wisdom and avoid basic logical fallacies.
Academic Openness — the etymology of the term “education” is Latin (ex-ducere) and translates into “leading yourself out of yourself.” Be open for alternative and dissident arguments as this is very important for our intellectual maturation.

Unexcused absences will result in a loss of points towards your final grade (1 point per missed class). Excused absences are those that are accompanied by a written explanation, together with legitimate supporting documentation. For example, if you miss a class due to extracurricular activities, please provide a letter from the faculty member organizing the event; if for medical reasons, a letter from your doctor and so on.

**Grading and Late Papers**

Your final grade is a composition of the items described above. Late papers are generally not tolerated and will lead to a deduction of 2 points per day on that particular assignment. Here is the grading scheme:

- 95-100 = A
- 90-94 = A-
- 88-89 = B+
- 85-87 = B
- 80-84 = B-
- 78-79 = C+
- 75-77 = C
- 70-74 = C-
- 68-69 = D+
- 65-67 = D
- Below 60 = F

Any student with a disability or special need should speak with me as soon as possible so that we can make any necessary arrangements or accommodations.

**Classroom Courtesy**

Computers are not allowed in the classroom. Members of the class will be expected to exhibit appropriate behavior to the instructor and each other. Most importantly, students are required to give to others the respect and consideration they would wish for themselves. At its best, a classroom operates as a marketplace of ideas, where open discussion permits students to digest and evaluate information. Students must realize that while it is permissible to question a competing point of view, it is never appropriate to allow the conversation to degenerate into personal attacks. It is also expected that students will exhibit good manners, listen when others are talking, and generally behave in a professional manner. Students who behave inappropriately may be asked to leave the classroom and will have points deducted from their final grades.

**Academic Honesty**

Cheating on a test or other assignment will result in an automatic loss of all points for that assignment and possibly an F for the entire course. Cheating includes looking at notes/readings during closed-book tests. Cheating also includes copying any part of a classmate’s work or plagiarism of any kind. If you have any questions concerning what constitutes cheating and/or plagiarism, please consult with me.
# I. THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE MENA REGION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 January (Monday):</td>
<td>Introduction and Course Overview</td>
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<td>Edward Said – On Orientalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 January (Monday):</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Holiday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 February (Monday):</td>
<td>“Islam: Empire of Faith” (PBS Documentary); Finish Documentary in your own time at: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHhbSvOcz4g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHhbSvOcz4g</a></td>
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<td>[Documentary Paper 1 Due; about “Muhammad: Legacy … “]</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 February (Monday):</td>
<td>tba.</td>
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**Recommended materials for this section:**


# II. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MENA REGION

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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[Documentary Paper 2 Due; about “Islam: Empire of …”]

Giacomo Luciani. 2013. “Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East.” In International Relations of the Middle East, edited by Louise Fawcett. Oxford University Press.


22 February (Monday): tba.

Recommended materials for this section:

III. ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY


7 March – 11 March: Spring Break

14 March (Monday): tba. [Exam I Due]

17 March (Thursday): Professor Away at Conference.

**Recommended materials for this section:**

**IV. POLITICAL ISLAM**


25 March – 28 March: Easter Break

Tariq Ramadan on Head to Head (Al Jazeera) Is Political Islam Dead?

4 April (Monday): tba. [Book Review 2 Due]

**Recommended materials for this section:**

V. THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

7 April (Thursday): Introduction to the Conflict. Promises and Betrayals Documentary. Online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67wXlfoWQNM


Recommended materials for this section:
The 50 Years War: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvccRa4MAUg
The War in October: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5Iu1QM2oeE (this is the first of three parts)

VI. THE ARAB UPRISINGS AND BEYOND


21 April (Thursday): The Death of Fear – The Tunisian Uprising
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7CuSADLyA0

25 April (Monday): tba.

Recommended materials for this section:
John Esposito, Tamara Sonn and John Voll. 2015. *Islam and Democracy After the Arab Spring*. Oxford University Press.

2 May (Monday): **Final Paper Due**