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### PSC 395.01: Crises in the Middle East

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**CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**  
**PSC/HIST 395/01A**

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**Instructor**

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Syllabus:

This course will examine current developments in the Middle East region, broadly defined to include the countries of the Arab League plus Israel and Iran. The Middle East has been marked by political violence, economic stagnation, and significant involvement by outside powers. Our survey will look at the current flashpoints in this turbulent region, and attempt to place them within the context of US foreign policy interests. At the end of this course, students should be familiar with these key crises, the main participants, and efforts to resolve the underlying tensions.

Course Requirements:

You class grade will consist of the following elements

- Classroom participation: 10%
- Three written memos: 30%
- Mid-term exam: 25 %
- Final Project: 35 %

Readings:

- Monte Palmer: Politics of the Middle East, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Thomson, 2007
- Ian Bickerton, Carla Klausner: Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Prentice Hall, 2005.
- Reza Aslan: No god But God, Random House, 2005
- Elaine Sciolino: Persian Mirrors, Simeon Shuster, 2000.

In addition, those reading items marked by an \* are available on library/electronic reserve (ppwd: cme395), or at the specified internet address, or from the instructor.

## **PART ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

### **WEEK ONE**

August 29: Welcome and Introduction

-Overview

-Class procedures

Aug. 31: Why the Middle East Matters

-The Lessons of 1979

Video: "The Middle East in Transition: U.S. Interests in the Middle East"

Readings: Palmer, Introduction.

### **WEEK TWO**

September 5: Overview of American Foreign Policy

-US Foreign Policy and the Middle East

Readings:

Henry Kissinger: "Does America Need a Foreign Policy" Chap.1.

([www.nytimes.com/books/first/k/kissinger-01policy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/k/kissinger-01policy.html))

## **PART TWO: THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL CRISIS**

September 7: Overview: The Lesson of the Tortoise and the Scorpion

Readings:

Bickerton/Klausner: Chap. 1 and 2.

### **WEEK THREE**

Sept. 12: The Palestine Narrative: From Arafat to Hamas

Readings: Bickerton/Klausner: Chap.3; \*Tom Friedman, "The Teflon Guerrilla" from From Beirut to Jerusalem, 1989.

Sept 14: The Israeli Narrative: David Ben Gurion and The Iron Wall

Readings: Palmer, Chap. 3; Bickerton/Klausner, Chap. 4 and 5; \*Friedman, "Crosswinds" From Beirut to Jerusalem.

### **WEEK FOUR**

Sept. 19: Guest Lecturer: Sally J. Cummins, U.S. State Department

Sept. 21: Guest Lecturer: Prof. Samir Bitar

### **WEEK FIVE**

Sept 26: The Escalation to Nowhere: The Issues

Readings: Bickerton/Klausner, Chaps. 6, 7, 10.

Sept 28: The War after the War: The Real Issues

Readings: Bickerton/Klausner, Chaps. 12, Conclusion, Epilogue.

\*\*\*\*\* **First Paper Due**\*\*\*\*\*

### **PART THREE: ISLAM AND ISLAMISM**

#### **WEEK SIX**

October 3: The Religion: Understanding the Prophet

Readings: Reza Aslan, Prologue, Chap. 1-3

Oct. 5: Islamism: What Bin Laden Really Means

Readings: Aslan Chap. 4 and 7. \*Bernard Lewis, "The Rise of Terrorism" from the Crisis of Islam (2004).

#### **WEEK SEVEN:**

Oct. 10: What Went Wrong: The Arab Social, Economic and Political Conundrum

Readings: Reza Aslan, Chap. 6; \*The Economist: "Self-doomed to Failure: Arab Development" July 4, 2002. [www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=1213392](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=1213392).

Oct. 12: Why Do They Hate Us?

Readings: Reza Aslan, Chap 7; \*Lawrence Wright, "The Looming Tower", Chap 1. [www.nytimes.com/2006/08/06/books/chapters/0806-1st-wrig.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/06/books/chapters/0806-1st-wrig.html);

\*Michael Slackman, "Braving Jail for Democracy, but Is That a Goal or Tool" NY Times, March 25, 2006.

### **PART FOUR: THE ARAB GUARDIANS: EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA**

#### **WEEK EIGHT**

Oct. 17: Egypt: The Heart and Soul of the Arab World

Readings: Palmer, Chap. 2.

Oct. 19: Saudi Arabia: Oil and Religion Do Mix

Readings: Palmer, Chap. 5.

#### **WEEK NINE**

Oct. 24 :MID TERM EXAM\*\*\*\*\*

Oct. 26: The Other Crisis: Syria ...and Lebanon.

Reading: Palmer, Chap. 4; Bickerton/Klausner, Chap. 9.

### **PART FIVE: THE FUTURE OF FLUIDS: OIL AND WATER**

#### **WEEK TEN**

Oct 31: Our Oil Dialysis Conundrum

Readings: \*The Economist, "Oil in Troubled Waters: A Survey of Oil," April 30, 2005 (also available in Lexis-Nexis search) \*\*\*\*\***Second Paper Due**\*\*\*\*\*

November 2: Water: Thicker than Blood

Readings: \*The Economist, "As Thick as Blood. Water in the Middle East," December 23, 1995 (Lexis-Nexis)

**PART SIX: BETWEEN IRAQ AND A HARD PLACE**  
**WEEK ELEVEN**

Nov. 7: No Class: Vote!

November 9: Desert Storm and the Theme Park from Hell

Readings: Palmer, Chap. 6

**WEEK TWELVE**

Nov. 14: A Self Inflicted Wound

Readings: \*Kenneth Pollack, "Conclusion: Not Whether But When" from the Threatening Storm (2002).

**PART SEVEN: IRAN: THE AXIS OF EVIL MEETS THE GREAT SATAN**

Nov. 16: 1979 Islamic Revolution and the Hostage Crisis

Readings: Sciolino: Parts 1 and 2.

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

Nov. 21: Guest Lecturer: TBA

Nov. 23: No class: Thanksgiving Holiday

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

Nov. 28: Challenges of Iran : From Khomeini to Ahmadinejad

Readings: Sciolino, Parts Four and Five, Epilogue.

Nov. 30: Crisis Exercise

**\*\*\*\*\*Third Paper Due\*\*\*\*\***

**PART EIGHT: CONCLUSION**

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

December 5: US Policy Challenges in the Middle East

Reading: \*P.W. Singer, "The 9-11 War Plus Five: Looking Back and Looking Forward at US-Islamic World Relations" The Brookings Institute, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Analysis Paper #10, September 2006.

([www.brook.edu/fp/saban/singer/20060901.pdf](http://www.brook.edu/fp/saban/singer/20060901.pdf))

Dec. 7: Review and Conclusion.