Kurds and their Neighbors
The Search for Identity and Self Determination

Spring 2012   Mohamed Alaa Abdel-Moneim
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Thursdays 8:10-10:40   Office Hours: Monday 10:30am-5pm
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                                                      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 the creation of the nation state, foreign influences, regional politics, nationalist movements, tribal loyalties, etc.

The course will focus on Kurdish history and nationalist movements, as well as their political parties and groups. Special attention will be paid to the Kurdish question and Kurdish politics in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. These topics will be addressed with an eye on the role of foreign powers and regional interactions.

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.. 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 more complete 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

(February 9) through 9 (March 22nd). 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 February 23rd.

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 March 29th.

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 topic concerning minority issues and/or ethno-political conflicts in the Middle East. The Options Paper/briefing is due on the last day of classes – April 26th.

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 me 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	February 23rd
Policy Memo	March 29th
Options Paper/briefing	April 26th

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Before discussing the course objectives, I want to clarify the division of the class and course readings in a way that aims to achieve 3 interrelated objectives:

1- PART I – Understanding the Middle East: this part aims at presenting a historical perspective of the rise of nation states in the Middle East, and the relation between states and other social formations, mainly tribes and nationalist movements.
2- PART II – Collective identities: this section presents an anthropological approach for understanding two central concepts in the discussion of state-society relations in the Middle East: nationalism and tribalism. We will also be discussing another important source of identity that has been acquiring central importance in current political discussions, especially after the parliamentary elections in Tunisia and Egypt, guess what? Right, the Islamic identity and perspectives on politics and foreign policy.

The previous two sections will constitute the core parts of the toolkit dimension of this course; that is, the part of the course which will give you the tools for understanding and analyzing state-society relations and ethno-political conflicts in countries of the region.

3- PART III addresses issues related to Kurds in the four Middle Eastern countries with the largest Kurdish populations: Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. This section discusses the historical, political, and policy-relevant issues regarding the relations between the Kurdish minorities and the governments of these four countries.
4- The final part, PART IV, focuses on the Kurdish question and regional politics It addresses the regional dimension and regional politics related to the Kurdish question. This part is where policy analysis comes into perspective. Special attention will be paid to the current developments in the region as the Arab Spring progresses and faces multiple difficulties at the same time. In this section, I look forward to extra presentations and discussions that address developments in the region as they unfold. This is a very rare occasion to study politics as they unfold.

The objectives of the course can be summarized in the following points:

- 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

January 19	Review of the Course
	- Georges Corm. A History of the Middle East from Antiquity to the Present Day. Berkshire: Garnet Publishing. Introduction and Chapter 1. pp. 11-30.
	- Michael Collins Dunn. The Arab World and the Kurds. http://www1.american.edu/cgp/pdf/dunn.pdf.

	- Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield. 2010. Introduction. In Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield (eds). *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*. London: Chatham House. pp. 1-7.

PART I: UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE EAST

1- Understanding Diversity in the Middle East

January 26	- McDowell, David. 2004. A Modern History of the Kurds. London: IB Tauris. Chapters 1-5. - Riad Jabbour. 2010. The Future of Christians in the Arab World. In Betty Jane Bailey & J. Martin Bailey. 2010. "Who are the Christians of the Middle East?" Michigan and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp. 12-21.

2- State Creation and the Kurdish Question

February 2	
	- McDowell, David. 2004. A Modern History of the Kurds. London: IB Tauris. Chapters 6-9. - William Cleveland. 2009. A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Chapter 9. - 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. - Inga Brandell (ed). Introduction and Chapter 10. - Sargis Mamikonian. 2005. Israel and the Kurds (1949-1990). *Iran & the Caucasus* 9(2): 381-399. RECOMMENDED - Rashid Khalidi. 2004. Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East. Boston: Beacon Press. pp. 9-36. - Islamopediaonline.com: Religious Landscape in the Country Profiles. **Extra Assignment**: Presentations on the Demographic and group identity politics in the Middle East from Islamopediaonline or other relevant sources (*Linking past to present*).

PART II: Collective (group) Identities in the Arab world and the Greater Middle East

1- Tribalism as a form of imagined collective (group) identity in the Middle East

February 9	- Ibn Khaldoun. The Mukaddimah: An Introduction to History. 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." - Eickelman. What is a Tribe? Chapter 6. - Tapper, Richard. 1990. Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East. In Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds.). *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press. - Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London, UK: Verso, 1983, Chapter 1 and 2.
2- Nationalism	

February 16	- Martha L. Cottam and Richard W. Cottam. 2001. Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behavior of Nation States. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. pp. 195-240. - Anderson Benedict. 2006. Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. Chapters 5 and 6. - Anderson, Malcolm. 1996. *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. Introduction and Chapter 1. - Martha L. Cottam and Richard W. Cottam. 2001. Nationalism and Politics: The Political Behavior of Nation States. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. pp. 195-240. - Islam and Nation-State Building in Iraq. From islamopediaonline. Available through: http://www.islamopediaonline.com/country-profile/iraq/islam-and-nation-state-building.

PART III: Kurds and Nation States in the Middle East

1- Kurds in Iran

February 23	- McDowell. Chapters 10-13. - Sandra Mackey. 1996. The Iranians. 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. - Kaveh Bayat. 2005. The Ethnic Question in Iran. *Middle East Report.* Number 237. Winter. pp. 42-45. - Lehmann, et al. 1973. The Hereditary Blood Factors of the Kurds of Iran. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London.* 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). OP-ED due

2- Kurds in Iraq

March 1	McDowell. Chapters 16-18. - Stefan Wolf. 2010. The relations between states and non-state peoples: a comparative view of kurds in Iraq. In Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield (eds). *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*. London: Chatham House. pp.16-26. - The Battle for Kirkuk: How to Prevent a New Front in Iraq. WINEP.http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2552 Guest Speaker: Rep. Qubad Talbani (Kurdish Regional Government)
March 8	Kurds in Iraq Continued - Carole O'Leary. 2002. The Kurds of Iraq: Recent History, Future Prospects. *MERIA Journal* 6(4) (available online). - Carole O'Leary. 2007. Communalism and the Future of Iraq. In MacDonald and O'Leary (eds.). *Kurdish Identity: human rights and political status*. pp. 168-177.

	- Islam and the Education System in Iraq.From islamopediaonline. Available through: http://www.islamopediaonline.org/country-profile/iraq/islam-and-education-system.
March 15	Spring Break: No Classes
3- Kurds in Turkey	
March 22	- McDowell. Chapters 19, 20. - Andrew Mango. 1999. Ataturk and the Kurds. Middle East Studies 35(4). October. pp. 1-25. - The Turkish Constitution and the Kurdish Question. http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/08/01/turkish-constitution-and-kurdish-question/4eog - Clémence Scalbert-Yücel. 2010. The'liberalization of Turkish policy towards the Kurdish language: the influence of external actors. In Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield (eds). *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*. London: Chatham House. pp. 116-129. - Michael M. Gunter. 2010. Prospects for the Kurdish future in Iraq and Turkey. In Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield (eds). *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*. London: Chatham House. pp. 192-206. - Turkey's Kurdish Achilles' Heel. http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/turkeys-kurdish-achilles-heel-5851 - A flawed example: Turkey will be a better model for its region if it fixes its Kurdish problem. http://www.economist.com/node/21530167 Guest Speaker: Kate Elci, presenting a negotiations simulation between the Turkish government, military, and the PKK, among other actors.
4- Kurds in Syria	
March 29	- Michael Dunn. The Arab World and the Kurds. In MacDonald and O'Leary (eds.). *Kurdish Identity: human rights and political status*. Chapter 22. pp. 231-236. - McDowall , Appendix on Kurds in Syria. - Mona Sarkis. 2011. The Ethnic and Religious Topography of Arab SyriaMany National Souls, but No Nation. Qantara.de. http://en.qantara.de/wcsite.php?wc_c=16880&wc_id=17145. - Robert Lowe. 2010. The Serhildan and the Kurdish National Story in Syria. In Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield (eds). *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*. London: Chatham House. pp. 161-179.
PART IV: The Kurdish Question in Regional Politics	
1- Kurds and Regional Dynamics	
April 5	- David Romano. 2010. The Kurds and contemporary regional political dynamics. In Robert Lowe and Gareth Stansfield (eds). *The Kurdish Policy Imperative*. London: Chatham House. pp. 42-57. - Murat Somer. 2004. Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: Changing Context, and Domestic and Regional Implications. *Middle East Journal* 58(2): pp. 235-253. - Robert Olson. 2000. Turkey-Iran Relations, 1997 to 2000: The

	Kurdish and Islamist Questions. *Third World Quarterly* 21(5): pp. 871-890.
	- Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield. 2005. The Implications of Elections for Federalism in Iraq: Toward a Five-Region Model. *Publius* 35(3): pp. 359-382.
	Policy Memo due
2- *Minorities and the Arab Spring*	
April 12	- Scott Petterson. 2011. Arab Spring crackdown damages Kurdistan's image as regional model. The Christian Science Monitor. July 1st. http:/www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0701/Arab-Spring-crackdown-damages-Kurdistan-s-image-as-regional-model. - Sebahat Tuncil. 2011. Arab Spring, Kurdish Summer. The New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/18/opinion/18tuncel.html?_r=1. - Reformist gains in Kurdish vote shake Iraq's quiet north. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/reformist-gains-in-kurdish-vote-shake-iraqs-quiet-north-1762060.html - *More Readings will be assigned as events unfold!*
April 19	Student Presentations
April 26	Student Presentations