**Department of Political Science**

**George Washington University**

**International Relations of the Middle East**

Spring 2025

**Course: PSC 6478-10**

**Time: Mondays, 5:10- 7:00PM.**

**Location: GOV 101**

**Instructor:** Sina Azodi, Ph.D.

Email: [sinas69@gwu.edu](mailto:sinas69@gwu.edu)

**Office Hours:** By Appointment. Email me to set up an appointment. I respond to inquiries as quickly as I can.

**Course Description:** This is a graduate seminar on the international relations of the Middle East. We will be focusing on the questions of how states developed, nature of conflicts in the region and how the regional order has shifted over time. We will further draw on advanced theories of international relations and apply them to the international politics of the Middle East. Additionally, we will analyze how concepts such as *ideology, identity* and the interaction between *domestic and international politics* shape the formulation of foreign policy. We will consider major theoretical frameworks, namely Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism, to understand the region’s international politics and Great Power involvement, and how these approaches can equip us with necessary tools to better understand real-world decisions and outcomes. We will further discuss some of the contemporary pressing issues in international relations of the Middle East

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this class, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate the international relations of the Middle East.
2. Understand what different theories of International Relations (IR) contribute to our understanding of international politics within and about the Middle East
3. Critically analyze historical perspectives and shifts in the balance of power within the Middle East.
4. Evaluate the impacts of global conflict and of colonial and outside powers in the process of state-making in the Middle East.

**Texts and Readings**

**Required Texts**:

1. Cooper, Andrew Scott. *The oil kings: how the US, Iran, and Saudi Arabia changed the balance of power in the Middle East*. Simon and Schuster, 2012.
2. Gause III, F. Gregory. *The international relations of the Persian Gulf*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
3. Halliday, Fred. *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology.*(Available through Gelman’s website)
4. Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza. *The Shia revival: How conflicts within Islam will shape the future*. WW norton & Company, 2007.
5. Patrikarakos, David. *Nuclear Iran: the birth of an atomic state*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020 (First edition is OK.)
6. Tessler, Mark. *A history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*. Indiana University Press, 2009.
7. Wawro, Geoffrey. *Quicksand: America’s Pursuit of Power in the Middle East.* New York: Penguin Press, 2010
8. Khalidi, Rashid. *Sowing Crisis : The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2009. (Available through Gelman’s website)

**Grade Scale for this graduate course:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs Improvement** | **Low Pass** | **Fail** |
| A 96%-100% | B+ 87%-89% | B- 80%-83% | C 74%-76% | F Under 70% |
| A- 90%-95% | B 84%-86% | C+ 77%-79% | C- 70%-73% |  |

**Grading Criteria**

Attendance and Participation 20%

Analytical briefs 20%

Take-home exam 30%

Final Peper 30%

**Attendance** is mandatory, especially because we meet once a week. Students are expected to attend the class, having read the assigned readings in advance. I understand that unforeseen events happen. If you are feeling sick and going to miss a class due to illness, please write me a note and let me know that you will not be attending. Unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

**Participation** is mandatory. I expect all students to participate in the discussion both positively and actively. This is a discussion led class, meaning that majority of the class is dedicated to student discussion, with the instructor interjecting as needed. Remember, **Simply talking is not participation**. You are required to contribute to the learning objectives of this course. Students should engage in a lively discussion of points raised by the instructor and your peers. Remember, this is an academic environment, so **thinking out of the box is strongly encouraged**.

When discussing the issues, please respect others’ opinions even if you disagree with them. I do not tolerate disrespectful opinions in the class.

**Analytical briefs:** Two *Analytical briefs* will be due on designated dates (see class schedule). Students will write a two-page double-spaced response to a question posted on Blackboard. Use Chicago-style, endnotes. You will lose points if you don’t follow the prompt.

**Take Home exam.** More details will be announced as we approach the date. Take Home exam will be due on **March 17, 2025 ,** at 11:59PM.

**Final Paper:**  Students will submit a 20-25 page paper - double spaced- at the end of the semester. Come see me to discuss your final paper topic first. A draft proposal of your final paper is due on March 31, 2025. Submit a hard copy to me in class. Final papers are due on Monday, May 5, 2025 at 11:29PM EST.

Technological

As a student, it is necessary to possess baseline technology skills in order to participate fully in the course. Please consult the [GW Online website](https://online.gwu.edu/technical-requirements-and-support) for further information about recommended configurations and support. If you have questions or problems with technology for this course, please consult the Technology Help link in the left navigation menu in our course in Blackboard.

You should be able to:

* Use a personal computer and its peripherals.
* Use word processing and other productivity software.
* Use the webcam and microphone on your device.
* Use your computer *to* upload recordings and images to your computer.
* Seek technology help by contacting [GW Information Technology](https://online.gwu.edu/student-support) (202-994-4948).

If you have any problems with the software in this course, please reference the Technology Help link in the left navigation menu in our course on Blackboard.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The University wishes to remind students of the GW Code of Academic Integrity, which states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

Please feel free to come and see me if you have any questions.

**AI Policy**

We are entering a new technological era with the rise of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT and other large language models, that are driving an ongoing conversation about their academic uses. We are also learning about the potential benefits and misuse of AI and how it can be applied in the classroom. Learning to use generative AI is an emerging skill, however, we must use generative AI tools effectively and responsibly.

* Copying and pasting all or part of generated content without proper attribution to the GAI tool. If you **copy anything from a generative AI tool**, you absolutely must cite it. Otherwise this is in direct violation of the honor code [Code of Academic Integrity](https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs4831/files/2022-08/code-of-academic-integrity-final-2022-20223-1.pdf).

**Support For Students Outside the Classroom**

*DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)*

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. Any student with three final examinations within a twenty-four hour period is entitled to take an alternate exam at a mutually-agreed time and place. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

***UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300***

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

* crisis and emergency mental health consultations
* confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

**htt**[**p://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices**](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices/)

**University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays**

In accordance with university policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: students.gwu.edu/accommodations-religious-holidays

**Late work policy:** Deadlines for written work should be taken very seriously. Unexcused late submissions will lose a third of a grade for each day they are late (e.g. A >>> A-). Extensions will only be granted in case of emergency, and with the instructor’s prior approval. **I reserve the right to reject any late assignment after 72 hours**. Come see me if you have a question.

**NOTE: ISSUES WITH TECHNOLOGY including but not limited to, your laptop breaking down, spotty WIFI or cellular connection, are not a good excuse for not submitting your assignments.**

Makeup exams: There are none, with the exception of extraordinary circumstances. Those include, but are not limited to family or medical emergencies. The instructor, nevertheless, reserves the right to require documentation for those circumstances. Please note that routine doctor’s appointments are not “emergencies.” Bottom line: **Do not skip your exam unless it is truly an unforeseen emergency situation.**

**Note:** *I reserve the right to change the schedule if deemed necessary.*

**Schedule of the Class:**

**Week 1: 01/13/2025**

**Introduction**

Baunov, Alexander. Putin Chose Ukraine Over Syria. Foreign Affairs. December 26, 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russia/putin-chose-ukraine-over-syria>

Nasr, Vali. In Post-Assad Middle East, Iran’s Loss Is Turkey’s Gain. Foreign Policy. December 10, 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/12/10/syria-assad-turkey-erdogan-iran-geopolitics-middle-east-rivalry/>

Azizi, Hamidreza. How Iran Lost Syria. Foreign Affairs. December 24, 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/syria/how-iran-lost-syria>

Parsi, Trita & Petti, Matthew. *No Clean Hands: The Interventions of Middle Eastern Powers, 2010-2020.* <https://quincyinst.org/report/no-clean-hands-the-interventions-of-middle-eastern-powers/>

**Week 2: 01/20**

***Inauguration Day***

**University Holiday- No class.**

**Week 3 : 01/27**

**Advanced IR Theory**

Halliday, Ch1

Mearsheimer, John. Ch2

Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144–72. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100007814>.

Mearsheimer, John. “Liberal Theories of Peace.” In *Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*, 188–216. Yale University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv5cgb1w.10>.

G. John Ikenberry, The end of liberal international order?, International Affairs, Volume 94, Issue 1, January 2018, Pages 7–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>

Russett, Bruce, Christopher Layne, David E. Spiro, and Michael W. Doyle. “The Democratic Peace.” International Security 19, no. 4 (1995): 164–84. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539124>.

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics." *International organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425.

Byres, Andrew & Schweller, Randall. *Trump the Realist*. July 1, 2024. Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/donald-trump-realist-former-president-american-power-byers-schweller>

Walt, Stephen. Has Trump Become a Realist?. April 18, 2017. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/17/has-trump-become-a-realist/>

**Week 4 : 02/03**

**Emergence of Modern Middle East**

Halliday, Ch. 3 & 8

Sluglett, Peter. “The First World War in the Middle East. By Kristian Coates Ulrichsen.” *International Affairs (London)* 91, no. 5 (2015): 1163–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12406>.

Fawcett, Louise. "States and Sovereignty in the Middle East: Myths and Realities." *International Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2017): 789–807.

Sluglett, Peter. "The Mandate System and the New Middle East Order."  
*Diplomatic History* 25, no. 3 (2001): 325-337.

**Week 5 : 02/10**

**Middle East During the Cold War**

*Halliday, Ch. 4*

*Khalili, Rashid.* The Sowing Crisis. Ch. 2-5 (available through Gelman’s website)

Roham Alvandi, Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The Origins of Iranian Primacy in the Persian Gulf, Diplomatic History, Volume 36, Issue 2, April 2012, Pages 337–372, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2011.01025.x>

Skim: Paper Prepared in the Department of State

Washington, July 19, 1968 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v21/d30>

**Week 6: 02/17**

**President’s Day: No class**

**Week 7: 02/27**

**Analytical Brief 1 due.**

**International Relations of the Persian Gulf**

Gregory Gause, International Relations of the Persian Gulf

Gause, F. Gregory. “Ideologies, Alignments, and Underbalancing in the New Middle East Cold War.” PS: Political Science & Politics 50, no. 3 (2017): 672–75. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517000373>.

**Week 8: 03/03**

**Israel-Palestinian Conflict**

Tessler, Mark. *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Ch. 1,4,7, 10,14.

Barnett, Michael, Lynch Marc, Brown, Nathan and Shibley Telhami. “Israel’s One State Reality.” May/June 2023. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/israel-palestine-one-state-solution>

Lynch Marc & Telhami, Shibley. The Two-State Mirage: How to Break the Cycle of Violence in a One-State Reality. Foreign affairs. March/ April 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/two-state-mirage-gaza-palestinians-lynch>

Walt, Stephen. “The World Won’t Be the Same After the Israel-Hamas War.” *Foreign Policy.* November 8, 2023. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/08/israel-hamas-gaza-war-geopolitics/>

Maria Fantappie and Vali Nasr. The Dangerous Push for Israeli-Saudi Normalization. Foreign Affairs. July 11, 2024.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/dangerous-push-israeli-saudi-normalization>

David Petraeus, Meghan L. O’Sullivan and Richard Fontaine, "Israel’s War of Regime Change Is Repeating America’s Mistakes." Foreign Affairs, June 17, 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/israel-war-regime-change-repeating-americas-mistakes-david-petraeus>.

**Week 9: 03/10**

**Spring Break No class**

**Week 10: 03/17**

**Oil Politics and the Persian Gulf**

**Take home exam due at midnight.**

Cooper, *Oil Kings.*Ch. 1,2,3,7 ,9 10

Snider EA. International Political Economy and the New Middle East. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 2017;50(3):664-667. doi:10.1017/S104909651700035X

Cooper, Andrew Scott. 2008. Showdown at doha: The secret oil deal that helped sink the shah of Iran. *The Middle East Journal* 62, (4) (Autumn): 567-591, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/showdown-at-doha-secret-oil-deal-that-helped-sink/docview/218535530/se-2>

**Week 11 : 03/24**

**Saudi-Iranian Rivalry**

Al-Badi A. (2017) Saudi-Iranian Relations: A Troubled Trajectory. In: Ehteshami A., Quilliam N., Bahgat G. (eds) Security and Bilateral Issues between Iran and its Arab Neighbours. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43289-2_9>

Huwaidin, Mohamed Bin. "The security dilemma in Saudi-Iranian relations." *Review of History and Political Science* 3, no. 2 (2015): 69-79.

Nasr, Vali and Fantappie, Maria. *A New Order in the Middle East?* Foreign Affairs. March 22, 2023.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/iran-saudi-arabia-middle-east-relations>

Divsalar, Abdolrasool and Alghanam, Hesham. The Strategic Calculus behind the Saudi-Iranian Agreement. April 9, 2023. <https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/the-strategic-calculus-behind-the-saudi-iranian-agreement/>

Divsallar, A. (2023). The Militarization of Iran’s Perception of Saudi Arabia. The Muslim World (Hartford), 113(1–2), 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12465>

The Impact of the Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement on the Middle East Conflicts. Crisis Group. April 19, 2023

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran-saudi-arabia/impact-saudi-iranian>

Great Expectations: The Future of Iranian-Saudi Détente. Crisis Group. June 13, 2024.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran-saudi-arabia/b92-great-expectations-future>

Bust of slain commander forces cancellation of soccer match between Iranian and Saudi teams. CNN. October, 3, 2023.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/03/football/saudi-iran-soccer-soleimani-bust-intl/index.html>

**Week 12 : 03/31**

**Sectarianism and Identity Politics**

Halliday, Ch.7

Nasr, *The Shia Revival.*  Ch. 1,5,6,7

Nasr, Vali Iran. Among the Ruins: Tehran’s Advantage in a Turbulent Middle East.   
*Foreign Affairs*. February 13, 2013. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-02-13/iran-among-ruins>

Nasr, Vali. All Against All: *The Sectarian Resurgence in the Post-American Middle East.* Foreign Affairs. January/ February 2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2021-12-02/iran-middle-east-all-against-all>

Gause III, F. Gregory. "Beyond sectarianism: The new Middle East cold war." *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper* 11 (2014): 1-27.

**Week 13 : 04/07**

**Iran’s Nuclear Program**

Patrikarakos, David. *Nuclear Iran: the birth of an atomic state*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020 (First edition is OK.) Ch.1-10

Sagan, Scott D. "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb." *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996): 54-86. [muse.jhu.edu/article/447446](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/447446).

Sagan, Scott& Kenneth Waltz. “A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster”

<http://www.rochelleterman.com/ir/sites/default/files/Sagan_Nuclear_Iran.pdf>

Azodi, Sina. What Would Iran Do With the Bomb?. Foreign Policy. September 17, 2024.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/09/17/iran-nuclear-bomb-program-regional-global-impact/>

**Week 14 : 04/14**

**Analytical Brief II due.**

**Guest Speaker**

**Week 15: 04/21**

**United States in the Middle East**

Quicksand: America's Pursuit of Power in the Middle East

Aslan, Reza. “An American Martyred himself for the People of Iran. Here’s his story.” October 13, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/an-american-martyred-himself-for-the-people-of-iran-heres-his-story/>

O’Brian. Robert. *Return of Peace Through Strength*. Foreign Affairs. July/August 2024**.** <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/return-peace-strength-trump-obrien>

**Week 16 : 04/28**

**Final paper Presentations.**