## **History and Institutions of Asian and African Countries**

## Prof. Paolo Maggiolini

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Course aims: The course aims to introduce and analyse the main historical and geopolitical dynamics that have marked and still characterise the vast Afro-Asian system from the end of the Second World War to the present day. The first part of the course will focus on the macro-region of the Middle East-North Africa (MENA). The second part of the course will focus on the specific study of the main guidelines, challenges and geopolitical events that affect the MENA area, the Horn of Africa and South Asia. The analysis of specific thematic in-depth studies will be useful to illustrate the diversity and complexity of contemporary geopolitical scenarios and the deep diplomatic and political intertwining that is marking the Afro-Asian balance. Particular attention will be given to: a) the study of Afro-Asiatic ethnic-cultural and religious specificities (with particular reference to contexts with a Muslim majority) and of the political-institutional implications of the management of this plurality; b) the analysis of decolonisation processes; c) the study of the multiple concepts of "state" and "nation" that have marked the past and recent history of the Afro-Asian context starting from the most significant experiences in the MENA context; d) the deconstruction of the processes of transformation and evolution of political culture and of the relationship between politics and religion in the areas studied; e) an in-depth study of the main geopolitical dynamics involving these regional systems and some important international players, such as the United States, China, India, EU, Turkey and some Gulf countries.

The general aim of the course is to define and analyse: a) the historical legacies and the open challenges produced by the decolonisation processes; b) the cultural, socio-political and geostrategic characteristics of these regional systems, with particular reference to the MENA area; c) the areas and dynamics of interaction and intertwining from a geopolitical and geo-economic point of view between the areas studied, with particular reference to the influence of some specific external actors.

The course thus intends to provide the necessary tools to be able to carry out a critical reading from within the vast Afro-Asiatic context, with particular attention to the MENA sector, by specifically focussing on the analysis of the complex and stratified structure of interregional relations and of the main geopolitical guidelines and challenges affecting these areas. This will occur in the light of the recent emergence of multiple security crises, of the leading role of new regional actors, of the ever-increasing impact of non-state actors and new phenomena of politicisation of religion, and finally of the current great geopolitical and geo-economic challenges.

Intended learning outcomes: at the end of the course, students will have developed a clear awareness of the ethnic, cultural and religious specificities that characterise the broad Afro-Asian context, with particular reference to the Middle Eastern and North African context. Students will also have developed a specific and critical knowledge of the processes of transformation and evolution underway and of the main geopolitical and geo-economic games involving the Afro-Asiatic world.

More specifically:

1. Knowledge and understanding. Students will have gained full awareness of: 1) the historical-political profiles of the Afro-Asiatic world from the decolonisation phase to the present day; 2) the transformation and evolution processes that have marked recent Afro-Asiatic history, with particular reference to the MENA context; 3) the deep intertwining of regional and international geopolitical dynamics in the Afro-Asiatic world; 4) subject-specific terminology, the main methodological tools of historical-geopolitical analysis and the ethical implications with respect to the topics covered.
2. Ability to apply the knowledge acquired. Students will be able to: 1) 1) structure critical analyses on the extent and impact of current phenomena of transformation in the Afro-Asiatic context (especially in relation to the MENA area); 2) formulate critical analyses through a historical-institutional and geopolitical methodology of the main historical-political parables in the Afro-Asiatic context both from an “inside” point of view and with a regional perspective, thanks to the investigation of specific issues; 3) provide an updated and structured framework of the main political issues within the Afro-Asian world and in relation to the main international political dynamics; 4) use both academic literature and the more popular and journalistic literature in a critical way.
3. Critical analysis and communication skills. Students will be able to: 1) autonomously elaborate hypotheses and reasoned analytical paths relating to the topics studied, thanks to the achievement of a full methodological awareness and ethical implications with respect to the topics covered; 2) autonomously develop evaluations in light of both a long- and short-term perspective; 3) master subject-specific terminology thanks to the acquisition of critical knowledge of the main lines of historical-institutional and geopolitical reflection; 4) sustain reasoned discussions and debates in public based on a critical analysis of the sources and data available, and be able to assess their reliability and validity.

Learning skills and communication skills will be stimulated through PowerPoint presentations, targeted readings, recordings, and multimedia resources made available online on the course page, and always available to all enrolled students on Blackboard. Furthermore, these will be developed through classroom discussions, group work and targeted exercises during modules 1 and 2. These activities will be aimed at verifying effective understanding of the topics covered, at allowing students to practice public speeches, as well as providing an opportunity to update students' knowledge of the dynamics taking place during the course.

At the end of the course, students will have gained knowledge and specialised analytical skills in the field of Afro-Asian studies. Knowledge of specialist terminology, combined with mastery of the main methodological tools of historical-institutional analysis and the ethical implications of the topics covered, will allow students to communicate in an informed and autonomous way both orally and in writing. Furthermore, students will have acquired full ability to communicate both according to the timing of academic research and to those of dissemination in specialist and non-specialist fields.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Based on the objectives and the intended learning outcomes, the course is structured into two modules.

Module 1 starts from the experience of decolonisation in Asia and Africa and then focuses on the study of the Middle East and North Africa from the end of the Second World War to the present day.

The purpose of the first module is twofold: 1) to provide a common basis of knowledge of the main historical and political-institutional dynamics, of the processes of transformation and of the evolutionary dynamics that have marked the independence of Afro-Asiatic countries; 2) investigate historical and institutional knowledge of the Middle East and North African area as the heart and bridge between the African and Asian worlds.

i) Course content of Module 1:

1. The cultural, religious, ethnic and political-institutional geographies of the Afro-Asiatic world.

2. Decolonisation: implications, legacies, ideas and impact of nationalisms on the independence of Afro-Asian countries.

3. The Sixties and Seventies: revolutions, crises and consolidation in the regional assets of the Middle East and North Africa.

4. Middle East and North Africa between the Eighties and Nineties: from the hope of post-Cold War reorganisation to the Arab Revolts.

5. Uprisings and transformations and conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (case studies: Israel-Palestina; Afghanistan; Iraq; the war in Syria; the war in Lybia).

The second module will be held during the second semester and will have a seminar approach with precise lines of study of the main geopolitical aspects and dynamics that affect and intersect the Horn of Africa, the MENA area and South Asia. Starting from an extensive reading of the main political, geopolitical and security issues affecting these large areas, the module will focus on the analysis of specific themes. In this way, the module intends to stimulate a more detailed knowledge of politics and geopolitics in the Afro-Asian context, by establishing analytical paths for the analysis of specific issues. During the second semester, students will be able to further exercise their ability to move from the macro to the micro-level and vice versa. In particular, the second module has the following aims: 1) to guide students in the investigation of some fundamental issues in the political and institutional life of Afro-Asiatic countries; 2) develop specific and personal knowledge capable of moving from the internal to the regional and international level in the context of individual dynamics, as well as in the context of the political and geopolitical processes and issues that are influencing the recent history of the vast Afro-Asian situation.

ii) Contents of the second module and possible further information that will be presented in class (the calendar and final list will be communicated in the first module):

1. Introduction to the main political and geopolitical dynamics of the Horn of Africa area, the MENA countries and South Asia.

2. China and its geopolitical guidelines by sea and land.

3. The US position in the Middle East from George W. Bush to Trump.

4. China and the African continent: focus on the Horn of Africa.

5. The leading role of Turkey and the Gulf countries in the Afro-Asiatic context.

6. The geopolitics of the straits.

7. The threat of jihadist terrorism in Asia and Africa.

8. Russia in the Middle East and North Africa.

9. Relations between India and the Middle East.

10. Hydro-politics and water security: the case of the Nile basin.

***READING LIST***

All students will be required to study the textbooks contained in the reading list of the first module. In addition, each student will have to study the common readings of the second module, choose one of the in-depth studies discussed during the second semester (two readings for each in-depth study). The final list and calendar of the in-depth studies will be communicated at the beginning of the course.

For Module 1:

1. Course slides (always accessible on the Blackboard page of the course)

2. J. C. JANSEN & J. OSTERHAMMEL, *Decolonization. A Short History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017. (chs. 2 and 6 available on the Blackboard page).

3. W. R. KEYLOR, *The twentieth-century world and beyond: An international history since 1900*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001. (only ch. 14 available on the Blackboard page).

4. M. CAMPANINI, Storia del Medio Oriente contemporaneo, Il Mulino, Bologna, latest edition. (Only Third and Fourth part).

For Module 2:

1. Course slides (always available on Blackboard).

2. Introductory readings for all students (all readings in this module will be available on the Blackboard page):

a. A. Kabandula & T. M. Shaw, “Rising powers and the horn of Africa: conflicting regionalisms”, *Third World Quarterly*, 39 (12), 2018.

b. N. Janardhan, “Belt and Road Initiative: China’s Diplomatic- Security Tool in the Gulf?”, *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic* Studies, 14 (1), 2020.

c. L. Simón, “Seapower and US Forward Presence in the Middle East: Retrenchment in Perspective”, *Geopolitics*, 21 (1), 2016.

d. T. R. Hamming, “Global Jihadism after the Syria War”, Perspectives on Terrorism, 13 (3), 2019.

3. One of the following chosen by the student (all the readings of this module will be available on the Blackboard page):

1. China and the United States between the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

a. F.G. GAUSE III, “Should We Stay or Should We Go? The United States and the Middle East”, *Survival*, 61(5), 2019.

b. RUIKE Xu & DEGANG Sun, “Sino-American Relations in the Middle East: Towards A Complementary Partnership?”, *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 13(2), 2019.

2. Turkey and the Gulf countries in the Afro-Asiatic context.

a. H. VERHOEVEN, “The Gulf and the Horn: Changing Geographies of Security Interdependence and Competing Visions of Regional Order”, *Civil Wars*, 20 (3), 2018.

b. A. SIRADAĞ, “Turkey-Africa alliance: Evolving patterns in security relations”, *African Security Review*, 2018.

3. The geopolitics of the straits.

a. E. ARDEMAGNI, “Gulf Powers: Maritime Rivalry in the Western Indian Ocean”, Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), ISPI Analysis 321, 2018.

b. J. P. RODRIGUE, “Straits, Passages and Chokepoints: A Maritime Geostrategy of Petroleum Distribution”. *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 48 (135), 2004.

4. The threat of jihadist terrorism in Asia and Africa.

a. A. KELECHI, V. OJAKOROTU, “Terrorism in Africa: A Comparative Evaluation of Al-Shabab and Boko Haram”. *Affrika*; 7 (1), Jun 2017.

b. A. SOUFAN, “Geopolitics and Salafi-Jihadist Strategy”, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 20, 2019.

5. The return of Russia to the Middle East.

a. Z. AKL, “Russia and Post-Arab Spring Political Elites in Egypt, Libya and Syria”. In C. LOVOTTI, Z.A. AKL, Y. CHERIF, C. HARTWELL, M. MILOSEVICH, E. TAFURO AMBROSETTI, V. TALBOT (eds.), “The Role of Russia in the Middle East and North Africa Region. Strategy or Opportunism?”, *EuroMeSCo*, Joint Policy Study, 12, 2019.

b. P. BERTHELOT, “Russia in the Middle East: A New Dominant Actor?”, *Rising Powers Quarterly*, 1(1), 2017.

6. Relations between India and the Middle East:

a. J. SHASHANK, “India and the Middle East”, *Asian Affairs*, 46 (2), 2015.

b. H. A. SEVILLA JR, “Middle East Geopolitics and China-India Strategic Interaction in the New Era”, *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 14, 2020.

7. Hydro-politics and water security: the case of the Nile basin:

a. H. NASR & A. NEEF, “Ethiopia’s Challenge to Egyptian Hegemony in the Nile River Basin: The Case of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam”, Geopolitics, 21(4), 2016.

b. A. Clarke-Sather, B. Crow-Miller, J. M. Banister, K. A. Thomas, E. S. Norman & S. R. Stephenson, “The Shifting Geopolitics of Water in the Anthropocene”, *Geopolitics*, 22 (2), 2017.

Course slides, readings, and specialist study materials by geographic or thematic areas will always be available on the Blackboard page of the course. For each material, the lecturer will specify what parts should be considered an integral part of the examination content or a simple in-depth study proposal and further source of information.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lectures, guest speeches, thematic seminars, class presentations and group work. Class discussions on the dynamics and processes taking place in the Afro-Asiatic context, with particular reference to the MENA countries, the Horn of Africa and South Asia.

Each lesson (of the first and second modules) is structured into sharing the reading list materials and slides during the week: 1) one week before the lesson the updated slides of the lesson will be downloadable on the Blackboard page of the course. It is advisable for students to go through them before lectures; 2) at the beginning of each lesson the lecturer will introduce the main contemporary dynamics - updated to the period in which the lecture takes place – that are linked to the topics to be discussed and addressed, so as to favour the progressive development of the ability to move along long and short periods between the internal, regional and international dimensions, also practicing analytical and research skills; 3) at the end of the lecture, some short and simple readings (completely optional, but recommended) will be available on the course's Blackboard page in order to allow students to autonomously explore some of the main topics that will be covered during the following lesson. These reading cues are also intended to stimulate critical discussions in class and may provide students with an opportunity for class presentations.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam is usually oral but there is also a mixed formula for students interested in replacing part of the exam with the writing of a final paper. Any changes and updates on methods, times and organisation will be communicated at the beginning of the course so that all students, attending and non-attending, can be informed, updated and can decide how to organise their study activity. The exam consists in verifying students’ knowledge and competences through multiple assessment methods: 1) testing the ability to critically analyse the contents of the course and re-elaborate and argue the knowledge acquired through the discussion of both more general historical-institutional notions and of the themes highlighted by the study chosen by each student; 2) verifying and assessing the acquired knowledge through a discussion of the main theoretical and methodological references examined; 3) assessing the ability to make multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary connections from a historical, political, geopolitical point of view; 4) assessing the ability to intervene in an informed and motivated way in the methodological and scientific debate relating to the problems examined during modules 1 and 2. The oral exam includes at least 4 questions. The first two questions will always focus on an in-depth analysis; they aim to assess and verify students' critical and autonomous analytical skills and can become a critical discussion on the topic selected by the candidates. The second part of the exam (at least 3 questions) will instead aim to test the study of the topics covered in the first module. The 4 questions will equally contribute to the final mark (i.e. each question will be assessed on a scale ranging from 0 to 7.5 points). In case of an excellent exam, the assessment of the in-depth question (quality of critical analysis, independent judgment, ability to draw links with the topics of the first module) will determine the awarding of honours. The final mark is on a 30-point scale.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Since the aim of the course is to introduce students to Afro-Asiatic history by encouraging their progressive acquisition of general and specific knowledge of the main political-institutional and geopolitical dynamics, there are no formal content-related prerequisites. However, a general knowledge of international contemporary history and international relations is recommended and students' interest in contemporary politics reflection is expected, in addition to their willingness during the course to read and update their knowledge about the main current events in the studied area, using the materials that will be made available on Blackboard.

Attendance is highly recommended, and students will be able to access different activities in class. Updated course content, reading list, instructions, in-depth study materials, and slides will always be published on the Blackboard platform of the course. The week before the lecture students will be able to download the slides of the lesson from the Blackboard page of the course. Students are recommended to read the slides before the lectures and go to class with this material in order to optimise note taking and actively participate in the lecture. The day following each lecture there will always be short and simple recommended readings (completely optional and always available in the Materials section) aimed at allowing students to independently develop a preliminary knowledge of the topics that will be addressed during the following lecture. These readings are also intended to stimulate class discussion.

The Blackboard platform will be used as the tool to communicate changes in schedules, information on exams, on the final course content and more. All students (attending and non-attending, current and supplementary year) are invited to register on the Blackboard page of the course and keep up to date.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board