# History of Islamic Asia – Regional Studies (Middle East)

## Prof. Andrea Plebani

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

The course aims to introduce and analyse the main historical and political dynamics of Muslim-majority countries within the Asian continent, with specific reference to the so-called Broader Middle East. There will be a particular focus on: (a) analysing ethno-cultural and religious features; (b) the main geopolitical dynamics involving the countries in question; (c) deconstructing the main processes of transformation and development of political culture and of the relationship between politics and religion in the Islamic Asian area.

i. *Knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will have gained detailed awareness of the ethno-cultural and religious features of the Middle East in its broader sense, acquiring specific knowledge of the historical-political profiles of a number of case studies, to be examined individually. Students will also have developed specific and critical knowledge of the processes of transformation and development that have marked the history, including contemporary, of the countries in question.

ii. *Ability to apply knowledge*

Students will be able to: 1) construct critical analyses on the scope and impact of the current phenomena of transformation in the areas under examination, by preparing independent evaluations from both a long- and a short-term perspective; 2) provide an updated and structured framework for the main political and geopolitical issues influencing the transformation and evolution of the Greater Middle Eastern region; 3) use current literature as well as journalistic and multimedia material in a critical way.

iii. *Critical analysis and communication skills*

Students will be able to: 1) independently develop hypotheses and well-reasoned analytical pathways in the study of Islamic Asia (and of the Broader Middle East specifically), having learned the appropriate methodology; 2) master specialist terminology in the field of Islamic studies; 3) conduct well-reasoned discussions based on the critical analysis of available sources and data.

Learning skills and communication skills will be stimulated through PowerPoint presentations, targeted readings and multimedia resources available on the course's Blackboard page, and always available to those who cannot attend. In addition, these resources will be developed through discussions, aimed both at verifying effective understanding of the topics covered and updating students' knowledge of the dynamics under way during the course.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Based on the expected learning outcomes and objectives, the course is composed of two modules.

The first module offers a broad overview of the contemporary history of the main countries of Greater Middle East.

i. *Module 1 syllabus*:

1. The Middle East today: The transformation of Middle Eastern political spaces between the end of the nineteenth century and WWII.
2. Nationalism, independence, development and decolonisation;
3. The Cold War in the region;
4. The post-Cold War Middle East: from the hopes of the 1990s to the Arab uprisings;
5. Current geopolitical dynamics in the context of the Broader Middle East.

Module 2 is dedicated to analysing specific topics. The aim of this module is to stimulate more detailed knowledge of the history of the Middle East by establishing dedicated and critical analytical pathways on specific issues.

ii. *Module 2 syllabus and possible detailed studies:*

1. The challenge posed by the phenomenon of Jihad and its complex nature;
2. Post-Saddam Hussein Iraq;
3. Iran on the regional and international stage;
4. The Syrian crisis.

***READING LIST***

In addition to the general part of Module 1, students shall choose one of the geographical and/or theme-based studies listed in this section. The final list of studies and the updated reading list will be published on Blackboard during the course.

*Module 1:*

1. Course slides and materials uploaded onto the Blackboard page.
2. M. Campanini, *Storia del Medio Oriente contemporaneo,* Il Mulino, Bologna, latest edition.

*Module 2:*

1. Course slides and materials on the Blackboard page.
2. Students must choose *one* *of the studies proposed* (the final list of the insights and therelative biography will be communicated during the course):

Course slides and specialist studies on geographical areas or specific themes will be made available on the course Blackboard page.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures, testimonies and topic-based seminars.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam aims to verify the ability to critically analyse the course content and reformulate and debate knowledge acquired through discussion of content of a theoretical nature as well as case studies. The objective is to evaluate knowledge acquired through discussion of the main historical references examined and to assess the ability to make multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary links on a historic-political and socio-economic level. The final mark is out of 30.

*The oral examination* consists of four questions: three on the topics of Module 1 and one on the chosen study. The four questions will have different weights: the first three will be marked from 0 (no answer) to 7 (excellent answer) and the final question from 0 (no answer) to 9 (excellent answer).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites for this course. It is recommended, if students consider it appropriate, the reading of an introductory volume on the Islamic world.

Between the different volumes: P. Branca, *I musulmani*, Il Mulino, 2000; R. Tottoli, *Introduzione all’islam*, Istituto per l’Oriente C. Nallino, 2018.

However, intellectual interest and curiosity are assumed, and knowledge of contemporary international history is recommended, obtainable through the History of Civilizations and Political Cultures, History of International Relations and Contemporary History courses (or similar).

Attendance is strongly encouraged.

The updated syllabus, reading list and other documents will be published on the course Blackboard page. The Blackboard platform will also be used to communicate timetable changes and exam information among others. All students (attending and non-attending, *in corso* and *fuori corso*) are invited to register on Blackboard and keep themselves updated.

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.