**History of Asia and wider middle east**

## Prof. Paolo Maggiolini

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

The course aims to provide students with the basic historical principles that make the Wider Middle East one of the focal points for international politics and relations. It will explore first the historical forces that shaped the Wider Middle East regional system at the beginning of the 20th century and that are now reconfiguring its balances and hierarchies of power. Secondly, it will study how external powers influence regional dynamics and how relations between Wider Middle East states impact on world politics, with a special focus on south-south relations. It also analyses the modern state- and nation-building processes both from the perspective of states and institutions and that of the numerous societal units that compose its multivocal socio-political and economic fabric. Finally, special focus will be placed on politics, ideology, diversity, and conflict through specific case studies.

*Knowledge and understanding*: the educational goal of the course is to develop knowledge about: 1) the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural composition of Wider Middle East and its political role; 2) the contested nature of the correspondence between territory, identity and modern-states and its geopolitical consequences; 3) the impact of the interaction between state-formation and Wider Middle East states’ foreign politics; 4) the rising role and impact of non-state actors and sub-state actors in regional politics; 5) the rising influence of south-south relations in shaping new balances of power within the Wider Middle East.

*Making judgements*: Regular and active participation in the course’s activities (lectures, reading assignments, and group works and presentations on selected topics) will enable the students to: 1) recall the basic factors that historically shaped the Wider Middle East regional system and its geopolitics; 2) weigh the logics and rationales that have fostered the contestation of state loyalties by sub-state and supra-state identities; 3) making judgements on the causes and unfolding of state-sub-state and inter-state wars in the region; 4) apply appropriate methodology to research and analyse today’s politics and new forms of local governance in the region; 5) compare and critically assess the impact and influence of sub-regional specificities and characteristics on politics and governance in the Wider Middle East.

*Communication and lifelong learning skills*: active and regular participation in the educational activities will enable students to: 1) approach the analysis of the contemporary history of Wider Middle East countries with appropriate ethics and solid and coherent methodology; 2) frame research hypotheses, search solid evidences and demonstrate knowledge of secondary sources; 3) develop analysis and compare different case studies; 4) support coherent results with compelling arguments; 5) organize group work; 6) deliver presentations on the bases of solid evidences; 7) practice in public speaking.

Regular and active participation will also enable students to acquire full ability to communicate and disseminate research results to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The first part of the course will provide students with a full overview of the historical and political context that from the late 19th century until today contributed to shape and reconfigure Wider Middle East hierarchies and balances of power. By moving from the general to the specific and vice versa, special focus will be placed on: 1) the First World War and the making of the modern Wider Middle East; 2) patters and challenges of the struggle for independence in the Wider Middle East; 3) the Wider Middle East and the Cold War; 4) the rise of a “new” Wider Middle East.

The second part of the course will analyse specific fields and topics of Wider Middle East politics and governance. By moving from critical theory to a case-study approach and vice versa, this part will focus on: 1) religion and politics; 2) civil society and political change; 3) conflict and the use of violence; 4) the origins of the Arab Uprisings. The final list of topics and case studies will be provided before the beginning of the course.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

The final reading list will be provided in class at the beginning of the course. Students are invited to get familiar with and regualarly consult:

1. Encyclopaedia of Islam (Brill). You can access it through our online library. It is an invaluable source of consultation.

2. Journals and reviews on history and politics of the Wider Middle East (such as: International Journals of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES), Middle Eastern Studies (MES) and British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (BJMES), all available on JSTOR, etc.).

3. Analysis, articles, commentaries from think tank focusing on politics and geopolitics of the Wider Middle East (such as: Carnegie Middle East Center; Middle East Institute; International Crisis Group; etc.)

***TEACHING METHOD***

*Teaching methods:* lecture-style presentations with the support of slides and multimedia contents; reading assignments given to single students or small groups who will critically read and present results to the class; class discussions of selected topics; group works and presentations in class.

*Learning activities*: the day before each lecture, the students can download the slides on Blackboard. Before each lecture, students are invited to read suggested readings that will be discussed and analysed in class. At the end of the course, group works will be organized on case studies freely selected by students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The method that will be used to assess the knowledge and skills acquired at the end of the course is a final written exam. Details and guidelines will be published shortly before the beginning of the course.

The final written exam will assess: a) the ability to use the theories and approaches discussed in class; b) the development of skills for exemplifying the most important historical processes and dynamics that shaped the Wider Middle East; c) the capacity to analyze, deconstruct and weigh the specificieties and characteristcs of single case studies analysed in class; d) the capacity to compare and weigh the specificities and similarities between case studies analysed in class. The grade will vary from 18 to 30 (cum laude when the student shows an outstanding capacity to manage principles and concepts). Active participation in class, presentations and work groups can contribute to the final assessment.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Notes*: regular updates regarding the course, timetable, final program, list of readings, reading assignments etc. will be always communicated and posted on the Blackboard. Students are encouraged to subscribe to Blackboard.

*Prerequisites*: The course does not require formal prerequisites. Nevertheless, students are invited to acquire some basic knowledge of the history of contemporary Wider Middle East and of the history of international relations. Introductury readings will be uploaded before the beginning of the lectures. More importantly, students must be interested in contemporary history and politics. They must be willing to engage in reading assignments and to follow the main political events and issues developing within the region during the course.

***OFFICE HOURS***

Prof. Paolo Maggiolini receives students by appointment at the Department of Political Science or on request on-line by Teams. Office hours will be communicated at the beginning of each semester.

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)