Graduate Seminar on Middle Eastern Politics

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Overview

This course overviews some of the major questions and puzzles in the study of Middle Eastern politics. We will critically evaluate research that uses advanced descriptive, theoretical, and empirical methods of the modern social sciences. Many of the course readings are recent, applied research papers. My goal is to expose students to the frontier of applied research in the field of Middle Eastern politics in order to assist students in identifying opportunities for making their own scholarly contributions. Students will be expected to produce a research paper related to the themes of the course that reflects an appreciation for the empirical and theoretical methods of the social sciences.

Requirements

The requirements of the course are threefold:

1. Class participation: Students are expected to attend and actively participate in seminar each week.

2. Response papers: Each student will write a short (2-3 page) response paper for four weeks in the quarter. These papers can take a variety of forms, including a critique of the week’s readings, an exploration of a particular variable, or an application of theories presented in the readings to a specific country case. Students who write papers for a
given week will also be expected to lead the group’s discussion. Students should post their response papers by 8 pm on Sunday evenings to the “Forums” section of Courseworks.

3. Research project: Each student will write a research paper on a topic to be agreed upon in advance. We will discuss progress on student papers as part of the seminar. A one-page write-up of the paper’s primary puzzle or question is due on April 14th. A detailed bibliography for the paper will be due on April 28th. An outline of the entire paper or draft of a section of the paper will be due on May 12th. Final papers are due June 11th.

Schedule of Readings

The agenda of topics and readings is as follows:

**March 31: Introduction, State of the Field**


**April 7: Historical Perspectives**


April 14: Oil, Colonialism and State Formation


April 21: Why Authoritarianism?


### April 28: The Mechanics of Autocratic Survival


### May 5: Islam and Identity Politics


May 12: Islamists in Government and Politics


Meyersson, Erik. 2014. “Islamic Rule and the Empowerment of the Poor and Pious.” Econometrica. 82.


May 19: Extremism and Political Violence


May 26: Political Attitudes and Behaviors


June 2: Revolution

Bellin, Eva. “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring.” Comparative Politics. 12.


