Dr. Randall S. Geller  
The Making of the Modern Middle East  
NEJS 185B  
M, T, Th 11a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

(Please note this is a preliminary syllabus. We may alter it based on student input and interests; for example, we may rely more on two textbooks rather than a wide variety of articles. We’ll discuss options the first day of class.

Everything we read will be accessible online, and only books will be necessary for purchase. Finally, we will probably be able to get Ebrary versions of books assigned to the Brandeis Library so you may not have to buy anything).

One hundred years ago, the borders of modern Middle Eastern states did not exist. With the conclusion of World War I in 1918, however, the European powers divided up the territories of the former Ottoman Empire and created new borders, new states – and new conflicts. Beginning c. 1918, we will explore the development of each Middle Eastern country’s unique identity and history and how Middle Eastern countries interact with one another, and with the outside world, today. In this context we will explore the differences between Sunnis and Shiis, Middle Eastern minorities such as Druze, Christians, Alawis, and Ismailis, and the differences between Arabs, Turks, Persians and Kurds. The role of oil, the emergence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the growth and development of political Islam, and the causes and effects of the turmoil in the Arab world, Iran, and Turkey in the last several years will all be considered as part of this class. The class will include extensive readings, lectures, and class discussions, and relevant video footage will be used to illuminate the region’s unique history and political style.

Special attention will be given to ethnic and/or religious minorities in each Middle Eastern country under investigation in this class. We will use a textbook, William L. Cleveland and Martin P. Bunton’s A History of the Modern Middle East (Westview Press, 2012- 5th edition) as well as a variety of articles from academic journals and chapters from books. Newspaper and/or magazine articles of contemporary significance and relevance will be suggested as well as we approach a particular week’s assignment.

As the semester progresses inevitably more time is spent on certain topics, and less so on others. This means that some times we will not stick precisely to the syllabus as currently constituted; we may spend more time on a particular country than intended based on student interest as well as based on the course of contemporary events. Thus the syllabus may be slightly adjusted to reflect such minor changes as the semester unfolds. This is to be expected and you will always be informed of any changes several weeks before they happen.

Class requirements will include 2 papers of about 5-7 pages each, a final exam, and class participation. Attendance in class is important and you are strongly
encouraged to attend every class, if possible. Since it’s the summer office hours are pretty informal and we can meet right after class, for as long as you like or need, or by appointment.

Your grade will be computed on the following basis: two papers of about 5-7 pages each, a short answer final exam, and class participation. Each paper will be worth 25% of the grade, the final exam is worth 30% of the final grade, and class participation is worth 20% of your final grade.

Papers should be double-spaced and in 12 point format. Essays should include citations from the assigned sources – the Cleveland and Bunton book, the assigned articles, and class lectures. When citing class lectures, please provide the date of the lecture as well as the lecturer’s name (myself). As a general rule, 2 to 3 citations per page should suffice.


It is highly recommended to keep up with news about the contemporary Middle East. Articles will be discussed in class on a regular basis. Some newspapers/websites to keep track of might include The New York Times and the Washington Post from the U.S., The Daily Star (Lebanon), Al-Ahram (Egypt), and Ha’aretz and the Jerusalem Post (Israel). There are, of course, many others as well.

The Middle East news site “Al-Monitor” is highly recommended.

**Week 1 - June 6, 8, and 9 – Introducing the Modern Middle East, World War I, and begin Modern Turkey**

**Readings:**

1). Cleveland and Bunton, pp. 35-93


2). David Fromkin, “How the Modern Middle East Map Came to be Drawn: When the Ottoman Empire Collapsed in 1918, the British Created New Borders (and Rulers) to Keep the Peace and Protect their Interests,” The Smithsonian, 22:2, May 1991.

3). Please get a head start and begin reading on Turkey

**Week 2 - June 13, 15, and 16 – Turkey and Iran**
**Readings on Turkey:**

1. Cleveland and Bunton, (on Turkey) pp. 289-324, 331-349, 504-528, 941-955
2. Eric Lawlor, "His Name Meant 'Father Turk,' and that he was," *Smithsonian*, 26:12 (March 1996)

https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/28/how-happy-is-the-one-who-says-i-am-a-turk/

**Readings on Iran:**

1. Cleveland and Bunton, pp. 349-363, 528-551, 675-716, 955-966, 996-1006


Emile Hokayem, “Iran, the Gulf States and the Syrian Civil War,” *Survival*, 56:6 (2014), 59-86

**Week 3 - June 20, 22, 23 – Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon**

**Egypt - Readings:**


**Syria:**

**Readings:**


**Lebanon**

**Readings:**

1). Cleveland and Bunton, pp. 419-425, 608-617, 738-755, 966-973

Omri Nir, “The Sunni-Shii Balance in Lebanon in Light of the War in Syria and Regional Changes,” Middle East Review of International Affairs, 18:1 (Spring 2014), 54-75


**Week 4 - June 27, 29, 30 – Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia**

**Iraq**

**Readings:**

1). Cleveland and Bunton, pp. 385-404, 597-604, 821-847, 861-882, 976-995


**Jordan - Readings:**

1). Cleveland and Bunton, pp. 399-403, 604-608


**Saudi Arabia**

**Readings:**

1). Cleveland and Bunton, pp. 430-443, 763-786, 1026-1029


**Week 5 - July 6, 7, and Friday July 8 – Israel and the Palestinians, Middle East Overview and Review, and final exam**

Asher Susser, “Israel's Place in a Changing Regional Order (1948-2013),” *Israel Studies*, 19:2 (Summer 2014),

Efraim Inbar, "Implications for Israel in a Transformed Middle East," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 19:1 (Spring 2015), 74-78

