

Identification	Subject (code, title, credits)	PSIR359 Middle East Politics (3 ECTS)
	Department	Khazar University, Department of Political Science and Philosophy
	Level	Undergraduate
	Term	Fall 2026
	Instructor	Ulkar Rza
	E-mail:	rzayevaulkr@gmail.com
	Classroom/hours	41 Mehseti str. (Neftchilar campus)
	Office hours	
Prerequisites	None	
Language	English	
Compulsory/Elective	Elective	
Required textbooks and course materials	There is no main textbook for this course. Instead, each class will have its own reading materials, which will be sent by the instructor before the class.	
Course outline	This course introduces students to the major political developments, institutions, conflicts, and debates shaping the modern Middle East. It examines state-building and colonial legacies, authoritarianism, nationalism, political Islam, sectarianism, popular uprisings, civil wars, oil and political economy, and the role of regional and global powers. Key theoretical approaches, including Orientalism, postcolonial theory, nationalism theory, and Rentier State Theory, are applied to historical and contemporary case studies. AI use policy: Generative Artificial Intelligence tools may be used only in the following cases: (1) during the stage of developing structure for assignments in order to brainstorm ideas, (2) to find sources (all sources and information acquired from AI must be double-checked, as it frequently presents incorrect information), (3) for grammatical editing of the text, etc. The content of the written essay, the analysis of data, and the interpretation of results must be prepared independently by the student in full. The use of GAI in the preparation of presentations is not permitted. Any permitted of AI must be disclosed and cited accordingly. Students who violate these rules will be held accountable according to the Khazar University AI Policy – the grade for the assignment will be reduced to zero with no chance of resubmission if the assignment proves to be at least 25% AI-generated. Academic honesty: Plagiarism is strictly forbidden, and students are expected to adhere to principles of academic honesty.	
Course objectives	• Develop an understanding of the major political developments and conflicts in the modern Middle East. • Introduce key theoretical approaches to the study of Middle Eastern politics. • Examine political systems, state-society relations, and political movements across the region.	

	• Apply theoretical concepts to historical and contemporary case studies. • Develop students’ ability to critically compare and analyze political developments across different Middle Eastern states.		
Learning outcomes			
Evaluation	Methods	Date/deadlines	Percentage (%)
	Midterm evaluation	To be determined by the Dean’s Office	30
	Attendance in classes		0
	Two Oral Responses	During the semester	10
	Take-home Essay	Will be set during the lesson	10
	In-class presentation	25.09.2026-18.12.2026	10
	Final exam	To be determined by the Dean’s Office	40
	Total		100
Policy			
Tentative Schedule			
Week	Date	Topics	Readings

1	18.09.2026	Orientalism, Colonial Rule, and State-Building	Owen, Roger. 2004. State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East. pp. 1-22 Niva, (1999) "Contested Sovereignties and Postcolonial Insecurities in the Middle East," in Cultures of Insecurity, edited by Jutta Weldes (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 147-160. Thompson, E. (1994). "Gender, War, and the Birth of States: Syrian and Lebanese Women's Mobilization During World War II," in Women and War in the Twentieth Century, edited by Nicole A. Dombrowski (New York and London: Routledge), 198-214. Optional: Said, Edward W. 1978. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books Peter Sluglett, "An improvement on colonialism? The 'A' mandates and their legacy in the Middle East," International Affairs, vol. 90, issue 2 (2014), 413-427. Anderson, L. (1987). "The State in the Middle East and North Africa," Comparative Politics, 20, no. 1, 1-18. Kelidar, Abbas. 2009 "States without Foundations: The Political Evolution of State and Society in the Arab East" Journal of Contemporary History, 28:2, pp. 315-355.
			Hinnebusch, Raymond. 2015. "Change and Continuity after the Arab Uprising: The Consequences of State Formation in Arab North African States," British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 42:1, pp. 1-21 Dawisha, Adeed. 2009. Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: from Triumph to Despair. Princeton University Press, Chapter 1
2	25.09.2026	Military and the Cult of Personality in the Middle East	Sassoon, Joseph. 2016. Anatomy of Authoritarianism in the Arab Republics: New York, NY. Cambridge U Press, Chapters 3 and 6 Optional: Sassoon, Joseph. 2016. Anatomy of Authoritarianism in the Arab Republics: New York, NY. Cambridge U Press, Chapter 4 Akkoyunlu, Karabekir & Öktem, Kerem, 2016. Existential insecurity and the making of a weak authoritarian regime in Turkey. Journal of southeast European and Black Sea studies, 16(4), pp.505-527. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14683857.2016.1253225

3	02.10.2026	Arab-Israeli Wars I: The Question of Palestine	Caplan, Neil (2020). The Israel-Palestine Conflict. Contested Histories. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell. Chapter 6 Hermann, Tamar. (2013). "Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism: Possibilities of Recognition", Israel Studies, Vol. 18, Issue 2, pp. 133–147. Optional: Ben-Israel, Hedva. "Zionism and European Nationalisms: Comparative Aspects." <i>Israel Studies</i> 8, no. 1 (2003): 91–104. Ghanem, As'ad (2013). "Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview", Israel Studies, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 11-29. Baumgarten, Helga (2005). "The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism, 1948-2005", Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 34, Issue 4, pp. 25–48.
4	09.10.2026	Arab-Israeli Wars II	Caplan, Neil (2020). The Israel-Palestine Conflict. Contested Histories. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell. Chapters 7-9 Optional: Dawisha, A. (2009). Arab Nationalism in the 20th century: From triumph to despair. Chapters 5-10
5	16.10.2026	Midterm Exam	
6	23.10.2026	Political Islam I	Hirschkind, Charles. 1997. "What is Political Islam?" MERIP. Vol. 27 https://merip.org/1997/12/what-is-political-islam/Links to an external site. Afary, Janet. "Iranian Revolution". Encyclopedia Britannica, 27 Jul. 2026,
			https://www.britannica.com/event/Iranian-Revolution. Al-Anani, Khalil. 2015. "Upended Path: The Rise and Fall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood" The Middle East Journal, 69:4, pp. 527-543. Optional: Clark, Janine. 2004. "Social Movement Theory and Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and the Middle Class in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen". Comparative Political Studies 37:8, pp. 941-968. Abrahamian, Ervand. 2009. "Why the Islamic Republic has Survived." Middle East Report 250. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27735276

7	30.10.2026	Political Islam II	Masoud, Tarek. 2008. “Islamist Parties: Are They Democrats? Does It Matter?” Journal of Democracy, 19:3, 2008, pp. 19-24. Jillian Schwedler, 2007. Jillian Schwedler, “Democratization, Inclusion and the Moderation of Islamist Parties,” Development 50:1, 2007, pp. 56-61. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.development.1100324 White, Jenny. 2008. “Islam and politics in contemporary Turkey”. In R. Kasaba (Ed.). The Cambridge History of Turkey. Chapter 13 Optional: El-Husseini, Rola. 2010. “Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal” Third World Quarterly 31:5 Cesari, J. (2018). Unexpected Convergences: Religious Nationalism in Israel and Turkey. Religions, 9(11), 334. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9110334
8	06.11.2026	Sectarianism	TBD
9	13.11.2026	The Arab Uprisings	Bayat, Asef. 2017. Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. pp 8-27 Gelvin, J. L. (2015). The Arab uprisings: What everyone needs to know (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. pp 51-70 Optional: Bayat, Asef. 2017. Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, Gelvin, J. L. (2015). The Arab uprisings: What everyone needs to know (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
10	20.11.2026	Civil War in Syria and Iraq	Gelvin, J. L. (2015). The Arab uprisings: What everyone needs to know (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. pp 126-140 CFR Editors. (2019, October 15). Syria’s Civil War: The descent into horror. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/articles/syrias-civil-war Plunkett, T. (2026, June 18). The Invasion of Iraq - The 10 best and 10 worst U.S. foreign policy decisions. The 10 Best and 10 Worst U.S. Foreign Policy Decisions. https://www.cfr.org/ten-best-ten-worst-us-foreign-policy-decisions/the-iraq-war/ Optional: TBD

11	27.11.2026	The Gulf: The Rentier State Theory	Hazem Beblawi, “The Rentier State in the Arab World,” Arab Studies Quarterly 9: 4 (1987), 383-398. Mitchell, T. (2009). Carbon democracy. Economy and Society, 38(3), 399–432. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140903020598 Koch, N. 2025. “Authoritarian Developmentalism in the Digital Age: Selling Techno-Futures and State Capitalism in the Gulf.” World Affairs 188: e70043. https://doi.org/10.1002/waf2.70043. Optional: Timothy Mitchell, “Ten Propositions on Oil,” in A Critical Political Economy of the Middle East and North Africa, edited by Joel Beinin et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 68-84. Hend Aly, “Royal Dream: City Branding and Saudi Arabia’s NEOM,” META 12: 1 (2019), 99-109.
12	04.12.2026	Middle East and Great Power Politics	TBD
13	11.12.2026	TBD	TBD
14	18.12.2026	Reviewing and Conclusive remarks	
15	25.12.2026	Final Exam	