Islam and Politics (Winter 2016)
ISLA 210
SADB 2/36
4:35pm-5:25pm

Associate Professor Khalid Mustafa Medani
Political Science and Islamic Studies
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesdays 2-3pm
Location: 319 Leacock Building

Course Description

This course is designed as an introductory overview of the study of Muslim Societies with an emphasis on the relationship between Islam and Politics. The course begins by critically examining current debates used to study the relationship between Islam and politics in both policy and academic circles including recent developments associated with the uprisings in the Arab world and their aftermath. We will then undertake a broad overview of the different analytical approaches used to study Islamic politics across different countries in both its moderate as well as militant variety. Specifically, we will consider the merits and deficiencies of the cultural, political economy and social movement perspectives utilized to understand political Islam. The second section of the course examines the trajectory of Islamist movements in the Middle East, Africa as well as the phenomenon of transnational Islamic radicalism. The final part of the course focuses on some of the causes (e.g. the cold war, geo-political rivalries) of transnational Islamist activism, and the consequences of the war on international terrorism for the West as well as Muslim societies.

Note: Add/Drop Deadline is Tuesday, January 19th.
The withdrawal with no refund deadline is Tuesday, March 8th

There are four core course requirements:

- One in class mid-term exam, worth 20% of the final grade on Wednesday, February 24th
- One 10 to 15 pages term paper, worth 35% of the final grade, due in class on Wednesday, April 6th. Late papers will lose 5 points per day, including weekends. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, with a medical note.
- A final take-home exam, worth 25% of the final grade. Instructions to be provided on WebCT. This should be handed in by 4pm on Monday, April 18th in the Institute of Islamic Studies on the 3rd floor of Morris Hall.
- Attendance and participation in conferences are required and worth 20% of the final grade.

Term Paper: A major objective of this course is to have students improve their research, analytical and writing skills through the development of an original research paper related to the topic of this course. The research question must be narrow but based on comparing and contrasting different approaches to the study of political Islam (i.e. cultural, political-economy, social movement theory, etc.). Students can either choose to study a particular country or compare two or more Islamist movements across cases.
Note: Each student must individually schedule a meeting with the TA or the instructor to discuss a research question before writing the paper. The paper should be between 10 to 15 double spaced pages and no longer.

Final grades will be calculated as follows: participation and attendance (20%), term paper (35%), in class midterm (20%), and final take home exam (25%).

Class Policies

Paper Policy: Late papers will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 grade per day (e.g. an A- will be downgraded to a B+). All papers should be titled. Papers must be typed, double spaced with one-inch margins, twelve point font. Extensions will not be granted.

Exam Policy: The midterm must be taken at the announced date and time.

Office Hours: Students are strongly encouraged to come to office hours with or without specific questions. I am available at regular office hours as well as by appointment. Kindly schedule an appointment with your TA to discuss research paper proposals as soon as possible.

Final Grades: Students are required to complete all assigned course work in order to receive a passing grade. No incompletes will be given except in cases of genuine emergency.

Please Note:

"McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information)

"L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)"

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”

"Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue)."
Readings

All the journal articles noted in the syllabus will be made available on MyCourses. The required texts below will be available at the Paragraph bookstore.


Useful Online References

http://www.merip.org

http://www.jadaliyya.com/

About the Schedule:

Although it is my intent to cover the material outlined in the following schedule, it is possible that unforeseeable events will necessitate minor changes to, or deletions from, the schedule. However, I will not change due dates or exam dates.
Course Schedule

**Week 1: Islam and Politics: An Introduction (January 7, 8)**

*Discussion of Course Content, Objectives and Assignments


Follow the latest news on Islamic and Middle Eastern and North African politics on merip.org and jadilyya.com

**Week 2: Islam and Politics: Historical Background and Contemporary Debates (January 11, 13, 15)**


Mahmoud Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (Three Leaves Press, 2005). Chapter 1 and 3.


Darry Li, *A Jihadism Anti-Primer, Middle East Report*, vol. 276, Fall 2015

**Week 3: Understanding Islam and Politics in the Aftermath of the Arab Uprisings (January 18, 20)**

*(Discussion conferences begin this week in place of Friday lectures)*


Week 4: Approaches to Conceptualizing Islamic Activism: Social Movements, and the Role of Ideas (January 25, 27)


Week 5: Understanding Islamist Politics in the Context of Authoritarian versus Democratic Regimes (February 1, 3)


Khalid Mustafa Medani, “Between Grievances and State Violence: Youth and Islamist Activism Beyond the Arab Spring.” Middle East Report (Summer 2013). On WebCT.

Week 6: Islamist Activism: Moderates and Militants: The Case of Egypt (February 8, 10)


Week 7: Where Does Support for Political Islam Come from Part I? (February 15, 17)

(In Class Midterm Wednesday February 24th)


Week 8: The Reluctant Fundamentalist? (Where does support for Political Islam come from? Part II) (February 22, 24)

Class discussion of Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist (Anchor Canada, 2008).

**WINTER BREAK FEBRUARY 29th to MARCH 4th**

Week 9: Islam and Politics in Iran and Saudi Arabia (March 7, 9)


Week 10: Political Islam in Africa: Local and International Factors (March 14, 16)


Week 11: The Role of Identity and Social Networks in Islamic Politics (March 21, 23)


Week 12: Islamist Activism and the Role of Gender (March 28, 30)


Week 13: The Motives and Strategies of Transnational Islamic Radicalism (April 4, 6)

Term papers due on Wednesday, April 6th in class.


**Week 14: Conclusion (April 11, 13)**


Review Lecture for the Final Exam

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*FINAL EXAM DUE BY 4PM ON MONDAY APRIL 18th*

Final Exams must be handed in at the Islamic Studies Institute, 3rd Floor, Morris Hall