Course Subject Matter

This is an advanced undergraduate course which studies the causes and consequences of regional rivalries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Rivalries are a special breed of interstate conflict which involve a small number of states, but are responsible for a significant number of wars, crises, and violent, often militarized, interactions. A rivalry is started and maintained when governments see others as a source of threat, and designate them as such. Incompatible goals that place states on the road to rivalry include spatial issues (such as natural resources or border claims), or positional issues (such as regional dominance or status). Therefore, states might compete over territory or a tangible resource, as well as over non-material factors; this competition might be very intense, whereby states see rivals as principal threats (i.e. the primary source of threat). Moreover, while it might be common to observe rivalries among neighbors, or others sharing borders and resources, non-contiguous states can be rivals and engage in fierce competition that is violent and sometimes militarized. The fact that rivals compete over extended time frames makes sources of threat and issues of contention interconnected and difficult to disentangle; this means that rivalry is often destructive and defiant of a resolution/termination. Finally, rivalries impact the domestic political economy given that they consume national resources. Moreover, rivalries also impact regional orders by augmenting levels of insecurity in the neighbourhood, and consequently become critical in shaping the foreign policy strategies of rivals and non-rivals alike.

Cases studied in the course are not the entire set of active and terminated MENA rivalries. We study selected cases because each represents an issue area to explore.

This course has a basic pre-requisite from the Department, such as POLI 243 or POLI 244. Do note that other courses are offered in the Department on conflict and international relations in the MENA, and this course will largely address materials not offered elsewhere.
**Course Objectives**

In studying MENA rivalries, this course seeks to achieve three goals of equal weight:

1) The first is to contribute to our understanding of the causes and effects of MENA interstate rivalries, with attention to a select number of rivalries. Rivalries are at their essence the outcome of foreign policies interacting; therefore, an important part of the course will be analyzing foreign policy strategies. We will study how various factors can help explain the onset of rivalries (why governments designate others as threats), factors that explain their persistence (why governments continue to dedicate resources to counter their rivals), factors that explain choices of strategy to counter the other (how rivals compete, and what foreign policy strategies are pursued) and factors that explain the termination of rivalries (why they end).

2) The second goal is to develop students’ research skills, and especially how to read, document, and draw inferences from various sources of information. Especially for your papers you shall invest considerable energies in studying newspaper articles, decision-makers’ speeches, government issued documents, among others. As such, this will be a research-intensive course.

3) The third goal of the course is to familiarize students with contemporary MENA politics. You are not expected to come to this class with a deep knowledge of MENA politics, but since this is an advanced course, you are expected to have enough interest to dedicate energy to familiarize yourself with it.

**Realizing Course Objectives**

Lecture materials and readings are complementary not substitute sources of class information. Throughout the course, two methods will help me integrate readings and lectures. First, I will be posting “questions to consider” on the lecture slides uploaded to myCourses: these questions will be guidelines to help you do the readings. Try to answer the posted questions and reflect upon slide contents, even when we shall attend to both in detail during class lectures. This method is aimed to encourage a “self-examination” process (without grading) and see if you are on track with the course materials; you are highly encouraged to share yours findings/answers with me during office hours or in class. Questions on exams will resemble, but not be identical to, these “questions to consider.” The second method is for me to occasionally read segments of selected readings in class. This method will help highlight indicators on the main points of the reading, and connect readings to lecture material.

The class champions critical thinking; to that end we shall aim to unearth assumptions that underlie scholarship on MENA rivalries, as well literature on the political history of the region. We shall also try to make explicit what factors are driving (or have driven terminated) rivalries and explain their effects. Doing the readings on a regular basis and commenting/asking about them helps to make this task more effective. To further consolidate a critical approach, students are encouraged to argue how the material they read is connected.

You are encouraged to share with us materials that you have read and find pertinent to our subject matter. I will do my best to attend to them in lectures and have us engage them as a group.
## Methods of Assessment

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<th>Method</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper One on a MENA sub-state rivalry</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>March 10th</td>
<td>The paper should be 3000 words, excluding references and footnotes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper Two on the Iran-Israel rivalry</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>April 7th</td>
<td>The paper should be 5000 words, excluding references and footnotes.</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>University Scheduled</td>
<td>Inclusive of all class materials</td>
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The final exam is designed to have you think of class materials in broad terms and compare cases.

Research papers are designed to have to focus on a case/theme and to get to know any or all three following dimensions: its empirical dynamics, what it represents for rivalry studies, and how it impacts the neighbourhood and/or global relations.

During the term, we shall have discussion sessions in lieu of lectures to allow you to discuss lecture materials, readings, and ongoing paper-related research.
**Course Contents**

All reading materials will be available on myCourses in pdf format, or will be linked to electronic versions available through the McGill Library.

Readings are integral to understanding class subject matter, and are complementary not supplements to lectures. Information on the exams should come exclusively from lecture notes, materials provided on lecture slides, and assigned readings.

**Important:** in addition to the articles and books assigned below, you will find on myCourses MISC readings that include decision makers’ speeches, highlights on official documents, and specialized reports’ commentary.

Final session will be dedicated to an overall review and discussion prior to Final Exam

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<td>Why do states become rivals?</td>
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<td>Background conditions and triggers (immediate factors)</td>
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<th>Sub-state rivalries involving non-state actors</th>
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<th>Part 6</th>
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<td>The burdening effects of similarity</td>
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<td>Kaye, Dalia Dassa, <em>Israel’s Iran Policies After the Nuclear Deal</em> (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016).</td>
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<td>Part</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Part 9</td>
<td>The Iraq-Kuwait rivalry</td>
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| Part 12 | Intersecting MENA rivalries  
Guidelines for the Research Papers

In the research papers should be concerted practice on how to read different materials such as government documents and media statements, decision makers’ biographies, primary resources, and others. From such documents we shall work to help you make assessment on how rivalries started, why relationships merit designation as rivalries (e.g. what thresholds do they meet), what sort of rivalries are these (main ones or not), how to read complex relations in distant histories and relate them to contemporary politics, etc.

Case-related articles or books in this syllabus (i.e. not the ones on the theoretical dimensions of rivalry analysis) should not be used in your research papers.

In each answer, you should provide evidence from pertinent sources; we shall explain how to do that during lectures, but one important source would be direct quotes or statements from decision makers – since they are the part allocation resources to counter the other.

The paper is a chance for you to spend time researching and exploring a dimension of rivalry analysis related to this course. You will appreciate the time spent researching and writing if you start early and not last minute; when you are late to start working on the papers, myself or the TA might not be available, or you might have other commitments to attend do. The interaction of unforeseen circumstances is likely to leave you frustrated and stressed, and makes unpleasant a thinking process that otherwise would have been very enjoyable. So, start early on your research papers.

I recommend the following to help you produce a paper. Start with a general idea on how to answer the relevant questions, write something however minimal and go for more research, and then back to writing, and so forth. You will need to present an official proposal, which will help you organize your time. You might have another process in writing, and so the purpose of writing frequently while researching is to keep you engaged in the ideas of the paper. Moreover, try to finish the paper before the deadline by a significant time frame, and dedicate time to reading and editing it; editing our own work and still findings ways to improve is a challenging task – even when we know that it produces clear(er) arguments. Keep in mind that the reader will not be with you while reviewing your work, and cannot ask for clarifications; so, try to write as if you are not your audience, and think about what people might want to know to make more sense of your work. Finally, it is a challenge to write concise papers, editing will help you pay attention to the word limit.

At any point during your thinking and writing, you are more than welcome to chat with me or contact the TA (contacts available on myCourses). Come and ask any/all the questions you have; do so, however, with ample time. So, avoid last minute attempts at catching up.

Important details:
- Papers must be printed on paper and delivered in class during the specified time. No other mediums of delivering papers are acceptable. Any paper delivered after that date and time will be considered late; late papers will lose 10% per 24 hours delay.
• Complementary to the above (not a substitute), within 48 hours of the paper submission, a word version of the papers should be emailed to me (imad.mansour@mcgill.ca).
• Each paper should not exceed its word limit. Any paper that exceeds the limit will be penalized by 1% per word.
• Paper margins must be at least one inch; and the font must be at least 12.
• Papers must be double spaced.
• Reference should be placed on a separate page at the end of the paper.
• References and footnotes are not included in the word count.
• No one style of referencing is preferred; but whichever one you choose, make sure that it is applied consistently throughout.
• The paper should have a cover letter which includes: student name, student ID, word count, and title of the paper.

Substance of the research papers

In the research papers, answers should be properly documented. You should attach your sources of information to the paper. This means that you should not rely on undocumented quotes or unclear sources of ideas and arguments that you pick up from the internet. Rather, you must spend time reading documented materials - which means that you can trace them to somebody or some institution.

You are required to attach electronic copies of the references to the word version of the paper which you will email to me. These references should be clear. The evaluation of the paper in good part rests on how it reflects your reading of the sources which you used, and – importantly – how you drew conclusions from leadership speeches or government declarations or other similar documents.

Paper One: a MENA sub-state rivalry involving a non-state actor

A facet of MENA (and other regions globally) politics that has been seriously understudied relates to sub-state rivalries between the government and a non-state actor. Specifically, these are actors who do not have the political and institutional resources which governments can claim, neither do they have recognition as “sovereign” actors. Yet, regardless of legal categories and bureaucratic details, some non-state actors have been rivals to governments, and in some cases, they have been principal rivals - i.e. the most important source of threat for the state’s government and one worthy of resources and effort to counter.

Rivalry analysis is first and foremost about the relationship between units. This emphasis on relationship opens the door to investigate how non-state actors are relevant analytical units, why they have been rivals to governments ruling over Westphalian states, and how have they been rivals (i.e. the instruments and strategies they deployed). Your paper should start from the ideas above, and investigate all the dimensions below:
- Dimension One: case selection:
  - why is this non-state actor selected for analysis?
  - why are they rivals, and what sort of rivals; i.e. is it a principal non-state rivalry for the state? how do you know? If the actor is not a principal rival for the state, then why choose a non-principal rivalry?

- Dimension Two: onset
  - when did the rivalry start? how do you know?
  - what are they competing over?
  - is the rivalry ongoing? How do you know?
  - how do statements of the rivalling parties frame/explain the other actor to be a rival?

- Dimension Three: dynamics
  - what have been forms of confrontation/strategies used, and in what theatres?
  - what is the extent to which the state has gone to deal with the rival (e.g. extermination, leadership decapitation, fluctuating harassment, guerrilla warfare, co-optation)
  - what is the non-state rival's external support, if any?
  - what sort of coercive resources does the non-state actor control (e.g. fairly constant, increasing, decreasing, fluctuating)? Why?

- Dimension Four: termination or retreat
  - has the rivalry ended? How do you know?
  - has the rivalry significantly retreated but without a “visible” end? What indicators do you draw on?
  - for sub-state rivalries that have ended or retreated in intensity, what was the “winning” strategy for the state and/or the nonstate group? Presumably, 1) these strategies are different and 2) one or both sides will underperform - how does that work out in the case?

There are eight cases on sub-state rivalries from which to choose for your paper:
Oman - Dhofar Liberation Front (and its successors)
Egypt – The Muslim Brotherhood
Morocco - POLISARIO
Algeria - Islamic Salvation Front
Tunisia - Ennahda
Turkey - PKK
Iran - Mujahideen-e Khalq
Saudi Arabia - Al Sahwa

If you are interested in exploring other cases, you must obtain the approval of the course instructor. To propose your case for evaluation, present a 250-word typed and printed explanation (in addition to five bibliographical references) by February 11th at the latest.
Paper Two: the Iran-Israel rivalry

This regional rivalry is a significant hostile relationship between states that do not share borders, have a history of cooperation, share social traits, and in some measure have no “objective” reason for them to be serious respective threats. All the above make the IRA-ISR rivalry an interesting case. Through studying it we shall see what role leaders play, but since leaders have changed throughout the course of this rivalry, we shall emphasize why ideas are important drivers of rivalry – especially societal ideas.

We are going to also try and investigate this rivalry’s effects. These include local effects, such as on the foreign policies of regional states as well as alliance patterns and conflict formations; global effects, such as the role of major powers in MENA politics; in addition to lasting effects on the societies of both (whose ideas underpin the rivalry relationship but also have been impacted by it over time). In analyzing how societies matter, we pay attention to circularity in the argument, while simultaneously also focusing on how state leadership engages societies and frames strategic choices in relevant symbols, ideas, and histories.

Your paper should start from the ideas above, and investigate all the dimensions below:

- Dimension One: onset
  - what is the background against which the rivalry started (such as perceptions of decision makers of the other being hostile and poses a threat)?
  - what factor(s) triggered this rivalry: what are immediate causes for them to evaluate the other as a threat?
  - why do they see each other as Principal Rivals?

- Dimension Two: persistence and dynamics
  - why does the rivalry persist?
  - what did leaders say/do to mobilize political and material resources to counter the rival?
  - how has the rivalry played out: in the Levant, in cyberspace, other?
  - (following from the previous) through what means has the rivalry manifested itself: cyberwar, support of allied actors and states, etc.?
  - what are effects on the foreign policies of non-rival states?
  - what are effects on extra-regional actors’ interests and interventions in local politics?
Important Notices

Ensuring an inclusive and safe environment:

I aim for the materials to be accessible to every member of the class. To that end, and to provide relevant assistance to help students succeed, you are welcome to discuss special arrangements with the course instructor.

Various student bodies and institutional offices at McGill can offer relevant support, including:

- **Office for Students with Disabilities - OSD (514-398-6009).** The OSD works with faculty and staff across both campuses to support students with disabilities and the implementation of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning ([https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/](https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/)). We can collaborate to make required arrangements as accommodating as possible.

- **Office of the Dean of Students ([https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/contact](https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/contact)).**

- **Counselling and Mental Health:** The professionals at the McGill Counselling Service provide a variety of services and interventions designed to support the unique needs of university students. They work with individuals dealing with a wide range of psychological, emotional, and academic challenges to alleviate distress, promote selfunderstanding, and develop effective solutions to the obstacles impeding their success and growth ([https://www.mcgill.ca/counselling](https://www.mcgill.ca/counselling)).

- **SACOMSS (the Sexual Assault Centre of McGill Student Society)** is a SSMU student service that offers information and support on sexual assault. SACOMSS runs a helpline and walk-in service. See [http://www.sacomss.org/](http://www.sacomss.org/) for more information.

- **The Office of the Ombudsperson** is mandated to provide informal, confidential, neutral intervention in situations of conflict. The Office of the Ombudsperson offers support for a variety of conflicts that arise in the university setting, and can be contacted for information, to clarify policy and procedure, to assist in both informal conflict resolution and official grievance processes, and more. More information on the Office of the Ombudsperson is available at [http://www.mcgill.ca/ombudsperson/](http://www.mcgill.ca/ombudsperson/). The Ombudsperson can be reached at 514.398.7059 or at [ombudsperson@mcgill.ca](mailto:ombudsperson@mcgill.ca).

Submitting assignments:

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).

Acknowledgment:

We would like to acknowledge that McGill University is located on land, which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg nations. McGill honours, recognizes and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

Academic Integrity:

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/).