

Syria: History, Politics and Society

Dr. Yakub Halabi

Course Number: 702.2042

Class Time: TBA

Class Location: TBA

Office Hours: by appointment

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This course explores the modern history, domestic and foreign politics and social structure of Syria. The course examines these issues in light of the international and regional environments, ideologies and economic conditions in which modern Syria was established and has evolved. We will study the various political, sectarian, and cultural trends which have contributed to the ways in which modern Syria has developed, highlighting the changing relationship between the state and society, the impact of Western economic, political and culture on the Syrian nation, the linkage between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the domestic political arena in Syria, the search for Syrian political and cultural unique identity, and finally, economic transformation and development. We will investigate the formation of the Syrian state and the ruling regimes, societal power bases and systems, socio-political movements and ideologies, legitimacy and modern state power, and the scope and opportunities for political participation, liberalization and inclusion/exclusion. Finally, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the Syrian civil war that erupted in 2011 and will try to understand why the Syrian uprising has so far failed in achieving the goals of regime change and democratization.

Trip to the Golan Heights, which will include a lecture and a meeting with a group of local residents in one of the Druze villages: Date: TBA.

Requirements:

- 1) **Class participation (attendance and active participation) (20%):** This course will be conducted in a seminar format. All students should be prepared to contribute to each class discussion by raising questions and comments about the readings.
- 2) **Four assignments (20%) (2-3 pages double-spaced):** each student should submit four assignments. In the assignment you are expected to analyze the main ideas of the author and provide a critique of the text. The assignments are evaluated based on the student's critical analysis of the text and the contribution of this analysis to the class discussion. Each assignment should be handed in at the beginning of the lecture, on the day in which we discuss that specific text.
- 3) **Presentation (10%):** Each student should present one reading from the syllabus (8-10 minutes). You should make the presentation on a reading other than those picked up by

you for the assignments. Each presentation will be followed by Q&A. It is highly recommended that you present a reading that relates to your final paper topic.

- 4) **Take-Home Midterm exam between weeks 6-7 (20%):** The midterm covers all the course material up to week 6. You will be given 3 essay questions and will be required to answer two. You are limited to write up to 4 pages double-spaced to answer each question.
- 5) **Final Paper (30%):** The final paper should be on a course-related topic of your choice and between 3000-3200 words in length, excluding bibliography and footnotes. You are encouraged to consult with me about your topic. You are required to pose a research question and collect evidence that enables you to answer the research question. Submission of the paper is divided into two deadlines. **You must submit the paper-topic and research question by Week 9.** The final paper is due two weeks from the last day of the classes. Please submit the paper to me electronically in addition to a hard-copy in my mailbox.

I. Introduction:

- Khoury, P. S. (2014). *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, Princeton University Press. (Introduction), Pp. 1-26.
- Khoury, P. S. (1983). *Urban notables and Arab nationalism : the politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, New York, Cambridge University Press. Chap. 2. (Pp. 26-52).

II. Syria under the French Mandate:

- Khoury, P. S. (2014). *Syria and the French Mandate*, . Chaps. 8,9&13.
- Miller, J. L. (1977). "The Syrian Revolt of 1925." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8(04): 545-563.

III. The formation of the modern Syria:

- Hinnebusch, R. (2008). "Modern Syrian Politics." *History Compass* 6(1): 263-285.
- Heydemann, S. (1999). *Authoritarianism in Syria : institutions and social conflict, 1946-1970*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press. Pp. 1-29.
- Hinnebusch, R. A. (2001). *Syria : revolution from above*, London; Routledge. Pp. 1-47.

IV. State and Identity formation: the rise of Pan-Arabism and Syrian nationalism:

- Mufti, M. (1996). *Sovereign creations: pan-Arabism and political order in Syria and Iraq*, Cornell University Press. Pp. 19-65
- Ma'oz, M. (1972). "Attempts at creating a political community in modern Syria." *The Middle East Journal*: 389-404.
- Batatu, H. (1999). *Syria's peasantry, the descendants of its lesser rural notables, and their politics*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press. Chap. 12.

V. The Rise of the Ba'ath Party:

- Heydemann, S. (1999). *Authoritarianism in Syria*. Pp. 30-55
- Hinnebusch, R. A. (2001). *Syria :revolution from above*, Pp. 47-65
- Kerr, M. and C. Larkin, Eds. (2015). *The Alawis of Syria: War, faith and politics in the Levant*, Oxford University Press. Chap. 5.
- Batatu, H. (1981). "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance." *Middle East Journal* 35(3): 331-344.

VI. The Functioning of the Authoritarian Regime:

- Hinnebusch, R. A. (2001). *Syria: revolution from above*, Pp. 66-115.
- Dawisha, A. I. (1978). "Syria under Asad, 1970–78: The centres of power." *Government and Opposition* 13(3): 341-354.
- Wedeen, L. (2015). *Ambiguities of domination: Politics, rhetoric, and symbols in contemporary Syria*, University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-32.
- Batatu, H. (1999). *Syria's peasantry, the descendants of its lesser rural notables*. Chap. 16.

VII. The political economy of Syria I:

- Batatu, H. (1999). *Syria's peasantry, the descendants of its lesser rural notables*. Chaps. 1-4.
- Heydemann, S., Ed. (2004). *Networks of privilege in the Middle East: the politics of economic reform revisited*, Springer. Chap. 1 (by Bassam Haddad.)

VIII. The political economy of Syria II:

- Hinnebusch, R. A. (1997). "Syria: the politics of economic liberalisation." *Third World Quarterly* 18(2): 249-266.
- Heydemann, S. (1999). *Authoritarianism in Syria*, Pp.106-134.
- Perthes, V. (1995). *The political economy of Syria under Asad*, London ; I.B. Tauris. Pp. 23-61.
- Matar, L. (2017). *The political economy of investment in Syria*, Springer. Chap. 1.

IX. Opposition Groups and Regime Stability:

- Sidahmed, A. S. and A. Ehteshami, Eds. (1996). *Islamic fundamentalism*, Boulder, Colo., Westview Press. Pp. 199–214 (R. Hinnebusch).
- Heydemann, S. (1999). *Authoritarianism in Syria*, Pp.162-206.
- Zisser, E. (2004). "Bashar al-Asad and his Regime-Between Continuity and Change." *Orient* 45(2): 239-256.
- Lesch, D. (2005). *The new lion of Damascus : Bashar al-Asad and modern Syria*, New Haven Conn., Yale University Press. Chap 2 (The Asads of Syria).

X. Foreign Policy of Syria

- Hinnebusch, R. A. (2001). *Syria: revolution from above*, Pp. 139-165.
- Lesch, D. (2005). *The new lion of Damascus*. Chaps. 6 and 7.
- Chalala, E. (1985). "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate goals and pragmatic means." *Journal of Arab Affairs* 4(1): 67-87.
- Hinnebusch, R. A. (1996). "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26(1): 42-57.
- *Lawson, F. H. (1996). *Why Syria goes to war : thirty years of confrontation*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press.1-20, 76-98 (Optional).

XI. Sectarianism and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Syria

- Fildis, T. (2012). "Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria." *Middle East Policy* 19(2): 148-156.
- Hinnebusch, R. (2012). "Syria: from 'authoritarian upgrading' to revolution?" *International Affairs* 88(1): 95-113.
- Phillips, C. (2015). "Sectarianism and conflict in Syria." *Third World Quarterly* 36(2): 357-376.
- Lesch, D. W. (2012). *Syria : the fall of the house of Assad*, New Haven, Yale University Press. Chap. 6 (Opposition Mounts).

XII. The Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War:

Lesch, D. W. (2012). *Syria : the fall of the house of Assad*. Chaps. 3.

Haas, M. L. and D. W. Lesch (2017). *The Arab Spring : the hope and reality of the uprisings*, Boulder, CO, Westview Press. Chap. 5.

Carpenter, T. G. (2013). "Tangled web: The syrian civil war and its implications." *Mediterranean Quarterly* **24**(1): 1-11.

Heydemann, S. (2013). "Syria and the Future of Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* **24**(4): 59-73.