

# Freshman Seminar: Everyday Political Life in the Authoritarian Middle East

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Political Science 44N

Class: 9:30 - 11:00 am Tuesday and Thursday

Office Hours: 11:15 am - 1:15 pm Thursday (Encina 408W)

## **Introduction**

This seminar examines the everyday political lives of individuals living under the authoritarian governments of the Middle East. We will examine how individuals respond to state policy, use informal channels to influence politics, challenge various forms of repression, and organize Islamic political opposition. Readings examine political life in six Middle Eastern countries: Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. This is a seminar and students will be expected to meaningfully participate in class discussions.

## **Review Papers**

Students will be asked to submit three short papers in the form of book reviews over the course of the quarter. These are 3-5 page analytic pieces that are to critically respond to the assigned reading. Students who have written review papers for a particular week will be asked to lead the discussion. Review papers are due on Tuesdays at the start of class.

## Final Project

Each student will submit a final project which (a) discusses political life under authoritarianism in a Middle Eastern country other than Egypt or (b) compares some aspect of authoritarianism or life under authoritarianism in two or more Middle Eastern countries. Students with a special interest in non-Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes may contact me about other potential projects including comparisons with countries outside of the region. Students must provide a brief outline of the paper along with a bibliography by the end of week 8. Papers should be no more than 15 pages long. In the final week of class, students will present the basic findings from their project in a short (10 - 15 minute) presentation.

## Evaluation

30 percent: Class participation  
10 percent: Book Review I  
10 percent: Book Review II  
10 percent: Book Review III  
40 percent: Final paper and presentation

## Agenda of Topics and Readings

The following books are for purchase:

- Bayat, Asef. 1997. *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deeb, Lara. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ghannam, Farha. 2002. *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ismail, Salwa. 2006. *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Makiya, Kanan. 1998. *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Singerman, Diane. 1996. *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton: Princeton

University Press.

Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. 2002. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press.

We will also be reading the following article:

Wedeen, Lisa. 2007. "The Politics of Deliberation: Qat Chews as Public Spheres in Yemen." *Public Culture*.

The agenda of topics and readings is as follows:

Week 1: Discussion of Syllabus; "The Politics of Deliberation"

Week 2: *Remaking the Modern*

Week 3: *Avenues of Participation*

Week 4: *Mobilizing Islam*

Week 5: *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters*

Week 6: *Street Politics*

Week 7: *Republic of Fear*

Week 8: *Ambiguities of Domination*

Week 9: *An Enchanted Modern*

Week 10: Student Presentations