

Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

MDES 3000 (3 Credits)

Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

Over the last two decades, the Middle East has been the stage of some mega events that continue to reshape the geopolitical map of the region. As a peace broker in the region, Jordan provides an excellent site for the study of ways in which geography shapes politics, shifts power configurations, and impacts international relations. Issues of relevance to the theme of the seminar include territorial conflict and state sovereignty, international intervention and dominant paradigm of international relations, geopolitical imagining and refugee crisis, and the impact of political crises on social organization, economy, and human ecology. Students study the nature of dominant International Relations paradigm in the Middle East and geopolitical discourse. In Istanbul, students learn from local academics how Turkey has become a strong geopolitical regional player in Middle Eastern politics and international relations, and the extent to which Turkey is influencing the future political arena of the Middle East. This seminar includes classroom activities (lectures and reading assignments) and incorporates educational excursions, visits to organizations, agencies, critical thinking exercises, voluntary work, and field-based assignments. The Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East seminar has an interdisciplinary, integrative, and critical focus.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify historical and contemporary factors influencing international relations, politics, and future trends of the Middle East;
- Synthesize the local, regional, and international-specific issues shaping the political map of the Middle East, regional and international relations, and the future of the Middle East;
- Assess Turkey's current geopolitical role and in the Middle East and impact in shaping regional politics;

- Compare and contrast Jordan and Turkey's roles and influences on regional geopolitics;
- Formulate a clear conceptualization of the geopolitics, international relations, and the future of the Middle East from hands-on experiential learning approach.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English. Students are exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits.

Course Schedule

Students will be provided a detailed course schedule during orientation on the program. Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Jordan's and Middle East Structure, Politics, and International Relations

This module provides an analytical overview of Jordan's and Middle east political structure, international relations philosophy and approach, and the geopolitical factors impacting the country's relations with its neighbors and the international community.

Session 1: Jordan: Governing System, Political Structure, and Contributing Factors

This session provides an overview of Jordan's governing body, the political structure of Jordan, and Jordan's Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal (PESTEL) Analysis.

Required Readings:

Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index. (2016). Jordan Country Report. Retrieved from: <http://www.bti-project.org>

Sharp, J. M. (2018). Jordan: Background and U. S. Relations. *Congressional Research Service*.

Alon, Y. (2009). *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1-12.

Session 2: Geopolitics of Jordan and Middle East International Relations

This session addresses Jordanian and ME international relations and regional politics. Students will learn factors affecting Jordanian and ME geopolitics and Jordan's international relations philosophy and approach. Recent internal developments in Jordan and in the surrounding environment that affects Jordan's and ME's geopolitics will be analyzed.

Required Readings

Bulent Aras, E. Y. (2017). *The Struggle for New order*. Middle East Policy, Vol 24, Issue 2.

Salloukh, B. F. (2017). "Overlapping Contests and Middle East International Relations: The Return of the Weak Arab State." 50, no. 3, 660-63.

Valbjørn, M. (2015). International relations theory and the new Middle East: three levels of a debate. In *Pomeps Studies 16: International Relations Theory and a Changing Middle East* (pp. 74-79). The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS). Comolet,

- Emanuel (2014) Jordan: *The Geopolitical Service Provider*. Global Economy and Development.
- Ponizilova, M. (2013). *The Regional Policy and Power Capabilities of Jordan as a Small State*. Central European Journal of International and Security Studies, 1.
- Samaan, J. L. (2012). Jordan's New Geopolitics. *Survival*, 54(2), 15-26.

Module 2: Major Actors in a Changing Middle East: Iran, Saudi Arabia, and External Influences

This module focuses on geopolitics and international relations in the Middle East. Sessions address contemporary regional and external factors which shape geopolitics and inform Middle Eastern international relations.

Session 1: Middle East Regional Power Dynamics and Shifts: Saudi Arabia and Iran

This session analyzes the current regional power of the Middle East focusing on Iran and Saudi Arabia. The focus is on the factors shaping contemporary Middle Eastern patterns in international relations.

Required Readings:

- Al Jazeera. (2018). Face to Face: Saudi Arabia-Iran. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2018/04/face-face-saudi-arabia-iran-180425140132414.html>
- The Guardian. (2018). Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry is Key to the Middle East in 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/04/2018-saudi-arabia-iran-rivalry-key-middle-east-year-ahead>
- Osman, T. (2017). Iran's Play for Middle East Leadership. Retrieved from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-01-20/iran-s-play-middle-eastern-leadership>
- Kausch, K. (2015). Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East in *Iran Leveraging Chaos* by Sadjadpour, K. and Taleblu, B.B. FRIDE. Chapter 2
- Kausch, K. (2015). Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia in *Emboldened Yet Vulnerable* by Echagüe, A. FRIDE. Chapter 5.
- Sedghi, H. (2017). "Trumpism: The Geopolitics of the United States, the Middle East and Iran." *Socialism and Democracy* 31, no. 3, 82-93.

Session 2: Regional and External Actors in Middle Eastern Geopolitics (USA, Russia, Turkey)

In this session, students will learn about major actors in the Middle East as well as key events that impact geopolitics in the region.

Required Readings

- Aras, B., Yorlmaztav, E. (2017). *The Struggle for New Order*. Middle East Policy, Vol 24, Issue 2.
- Sedghi, H. (2017). "Trumpism: The Geopolitics of the United States, the Middle East and Iran." *Socialism and Democracy* 31, no. 3, 82-93.
- Henderson, J. and Mehdi, A. (2017). Russia's Middle East Energy Diplomacy. Retrieved from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-06-20/russias-middle-east-energy-diplomacy>

- Cagaptay, S. (2013). Testing Tukey: Why War in Syria Could Bring Ankara and Washington Closer Together. Retrieved from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2013-05-28/testing-turkey>
- Byman, D. and Bjerg-Moller, S. (2016). The United States and the Middle East: Interests, Risks, and Costs. *Sustainable Security: Rethinking American National Security Strategy*, edited by Suri, J. and Valentino, B.
- Kausch, K. (2015). Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia in *Emboldened Yet Vulnerable* by Echagüe, A. FRIDE. Chapters 6 & 11.
- Sharp, Je. M. (2018). Jordan: Background and U. S. Relations. *Congressional Research Service*.

Module 3: Regional Conflicts in the Middle East

This module addresses the main regional conflicts which shape geopolitics in the Middle East. The focus is on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the upheavals of the Arab Spring, and the role of political Islam. The module will also discuss the impact of the Sunni/Shia'a conflict and Daesh on international geopolitics and the future of the region.

Session 1: Jerusalem: Past, Present and Future in the Context of Shifting American Foreign Policy

In this session, students will learn about and analyze the history, dynamics, and present contributors to the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict. This session is positioned in the context of recent US Administration decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem.

Required Readings:

- Beinin, J., & Hajar, L. (2014). Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. *Middle East: The Middle East Research and Information Project*. Retrieved from: http://web.stanford.edu/group/sper/images/Palestine-Israel_Primer_MERIP.pdf
- UNICEF. (2012). Gaza in 2020: UN Report.
- Zanotti, J. (2018). Israel: Background and U.S. Relations in Brief. Congressional Service.
- Elgindy, K. (2018). After Oslo: Rethinking the Two State Solution. Foreign policy at Brookings.

Session 2: Political Islam and Geopolitics: Sunni, Shiaa, and Daesh (ISIS/ISL) Conflicts

This session focuses the role of political Islam in the Middle East. Students will learn about the history, the buildup, and the current reflections of the conflicts between Sunnis and Shia'as, Sunni/Shia'a and sectarian and terrorist acts in the Middle East, and the impact of Daesh (ISIS/ISL) in the Middle East.

Required Readings:

- Cleary, S. (2016). Identity Politics, Sectarian Conflict, and Regional Political Rivalry in the Middle East. Trilogue Salzburg.
- Mabon, S., & Ardovini, L. (2015). FPC briefing: Daesh, geopolitics and the resurgence of pan Arabism. *The Foreign Policy Center*. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/189521/1691.pdf>
- Holtmann, P. (2014). A Primer to the Sunni-Shia Conflict. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 8(1).
- Wkruglunski, A. and Kruglanski, S. (2007). The Psychology of Terrorism: Terrorism and Political Violence.

Hadad, F. (2013). *Sunni-Shia Relations After the Iraqi War*. United States Institute peace.
Shields, N. E. (2012). *Unrest in the Middle East: Potential Implications for International Terrorism and Counterterrorism Policy*. *Global Security Studies*, 3(2).

Module 4: Refugee Crisis in Jordan

This module is focused on the impact of the refugee crisis on Jordan and on the geopolitical configuration in the Middle East. Students learn about the roots and causes of the successive refugee crises in the region and analyze their impact on Jordan and the future of the Middle East.

Session 1: Palestine and Jordan: Jordan's Refugee Experience

This session will analyze the roots of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Students will discuss the Palestinian refugees' current status in Jordan and analyze their future.

Required Readings:

- Francis, A. (2015). *Jordan's refugee crisis* (Vol. 21). Washington, DC: Carnegie endowment for international peace.
- Al Hussein, J. and Bacco, R. (2010). *The Status of the Palestinian Refugees in the Near East: The Right of Return*. UNHCR Publication.
- UNICEF. (2016). *Palestinian Children and Women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the State of Palestine*.
- UNRWA. (2007). *The United nations and Palestinian Refugees*. UN Publication

Session 2: Syrian, Iraqi, and Other Refugees in Jordan

This session will analyze the causes of the Syrian, Iraqi and other refugees in Jordan. Students examine the refugees' current status and analyze their future in Jordan.

Required Readings:

- Jordan Response Plan for The Syrian Crisis. (2015). Ministry of planning & UN.
- Charlotte Guard, Bridget Chan. and Amy Lutterloh. (2015). *Understanding the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. World Affairs Council. <https://www.scoilnet.ie/uploads/resources/16188/15864.pdf>
- Al-Qdah, T., & Lacroix, M. (2011). *Iraqi refugees in Jordan: Lessons for practice with refugees globally*. *International Social Work*, 54(4), 521-534.
- Stevens, D. (2013). *Legal status, labelling, and protection: the case of Iraqi 'Refugees' in Jordan*. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 25(1), 1-38.

Module 5: Turkey and Geopolitics in the Middle East:

This module takes place in Istanbul, Turkey, a city that offers a unique blend of East and West and complex geopolitical history. In the past 20 years, Turkey has emerged as a leading political, economic, and cultural power in the region and as a main regional geopolitically influential player. In Istanbul, students have a rich context to learn about a different perspective on international relations and the Turkish influence in shaping the future of the Middle East. Students also learn about sociopolitical minorities such as the Kurds, the Syrians, and international investors. Students also meet with peers from Istanbul University and visit Old Istanbul to discuss the role of Turkey in Syria and Turkey's relations with Iran, Israel, and world powers such as Russia, the US, and the EU.

Sessions may include:

- International relations and the Turkish influence in shaping the future of the Middle East
- Sociopolitical minorities such as the Kurds, Syrians, and the Armenians.
- Political structure and governing system of Turkey
- Syrian refugees and comparative case study to Jordan
- Turkey's political intake on Middle Eastern conflicts such as the Israeli-Arab Conflict and the Syrian conflict
- Turkey's political role in the Middle East as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member, along with the Russian, Iranian, Egyptian, Saudi, and Israeli roles.
- Turkey's perspective on the future of the Middle East.

Required Readings:

Hatay, M. Zenonas, T. (2019). Kinship and Diasporas in Turkish Foreign Policy: Examples from Europe, the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. *Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)*, ISBN: 978-82-343-0023-3 (online).

Zenonas, T. (2018). Erdoganist authoritarianism and the 'new' Turkey. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 18:4, 593-598, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2018.1540408

Gokarıksel, B. and Secor, A. (2018). Affective geopolitics: Anxiety, pain, and ethics in the encounter with Syrian refugees in Turkey. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, SAGE.

Recommended Readings:

Duzgun, E. (2017). Property, Geopolitics, and Eurocentrism: The "Great Divergence" and the Ottoman Empire. *Review of Radical Political Economics*.

Aras, B., Yorlmaztav, E. (2017). The Struggle for New Order. *Middle East Policy*, 24:2.

Sedghi, H. (2017). Trumpism: The Geopolitics of the United States, the Middle East and Iran. *Socialism and Democracy*, 31:3, 82-93.

Kausch, K. (2015). Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia in *Emboldened Yet Vulnerable* by Echagüe, A. FRIDE. Chapters 6 & 11.

Module 6: International Relations and the Future of the Middle East

This module maps possible geopolitical scenarios for the future of the Middle East. Students will analyze the role regional conflicts, civil wars, and the scope of the displaced populations will have mid and long-term impact on geopolitics in the Middle East and on international relations. The module will also analyze the impact of emerging future regional actors on international relations and Middle Eastern politics.

Session 1: Reformation: The Social and Political Future of Jordan and the Middle East

In this session, students will learn prospective and projected geopolitical structure of Jordan and study expected future changes in the Jordanian international relations' philosophy. Students will also analyze the expected changes in the Middle Eastern geopolitics and future changes in the Middle Eastern international relations in the context of changing social, political, and economic structures.

Required Reading:

- Burrows, M. J. (2014). Middle East 2020: Shaped by or Shaper of Global Trends. *Atlantic Council, Washington, DC*. Retrieved from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/183196/ME2020.pdf>.
- Clark, J. H. (2017). Feminist geopolitics and the Middle East: Refuge, belief, and peace. *Geography compass*, 11(2), e12304.
- Nahar, G. S., and Rima, L. (2013). The Factors Affecting the Foreign Political Behaviors in Jordan on its Strategic Position in the Middle East, and Especially its Conflict and Peace Process with Israel during the 1990s. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3:4.
- Joffe, G. (2013). The Future of the Middle east and North Africa. Report: Norwegian Peace Building Centre.

Session 2: Economics and International Relations in Jordan and the Middle East

In this session, students will examine future economic actors in the future of the Middle East and Jordan in the context of international relations.

Required Readings:

- Gaub, F. (2015). Arab futures: three scenarios for 2025. *Confluences Méditerranée*, (2), 169-180.
- Gaub, Florence and Laban, Alexandra (eds.) (2015) Arab Futures: Three Scenarios for 2025. Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved from: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/arab-futures-three-scenarios-2025>
- Kausch, K. (2015). Competitive multipolarity in the Middle East. *The International Spectator*, 50(3), 1-15. Retrieved from: <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1410.pdf>
- Snider, E. A. (2017). International political economy and the new Middle East. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 50(3), 664-667.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.

Description of Assignments:

Students are responsible for the timely reading of materials assigned for each session. In addition to readings, it is also your responsibility to keep up to date with current events. At a minimum, you are required to read the *Jordan Times* newspaper (in hardcopy form or online <http://www.jordantimes.com>). It is also recommended that you read a daily newspaper available on-line in English (for example, *Ammon News* at <http://en.ammonnews.net/>)

Students will be assessed in this course through the following dimensions:

Group Work and Discussion (30%)

Student-led discussion of a pre-assigned lecture topic including emphasis on assigned readings, preparation of discussion questions, and presentation of supplemental materials on the topic (interviews, articles, discussions with lecturers, etc.). After the lecture, students will be

divided into groups to discuss the thematic lecture and place emphasis on the readings and the main points made during the lecture for 15 minutes. Each group will choose a presenter to present the work of the group. Each presenter has 3 minutes. The students led discussion will play the role of group facilitator and coordinator to lead the group discussion.

Lecture Analysis Paper (30%)

This assignment follows the student-led discussion and should not exceed 3 pages. Students must work individually and turn this assignment individually three days after the lecture they facilitated.

Comparative Case Study (30%)

In no more than 5 pages, present a comparative analysis of the various aspects of geopolitics, international relations, and the future of the Middle East in both Jordan and Turkey following your weeklong stay in the latter. In your analysis, cover three of the following areas:

1. Geopolitics in the Middle East
2. Middle Eastern international relations
3. Regional Conflicts in the Middle East
4. Refugee Crisis in the Middle East
5. The Future of the Middle East

Participation and Attendance (10%)

Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory, and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and outside class.

Assessment:

Group Work and Discussion	30%
Lecture Analysis Paper	30%
Comparative Case Study	30%
Participation and Attendance	10%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time. Have your Reading completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits, etc.). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.