I. Description

Ethnic and religious diversity has been integral to Middle Eastern societies. This 3-credit course offers an introduction to the minority-majority relations in the region with a focus on four countries in contemporary times: Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Iran has a sizeable Sunni minority (mainly ethnic Kurds and Baluchis) and small Christian and Jewish minorities with a Shiite majority; Iraq has a Shiite Arab majority with Sunni (both Arab and Kurdish) as well as Christian and Yazidi minorities; Syria has a Sunni Arab majority with a diversity of religious minorities such as Alawites, Druzes, and different denominations of Christianity; Turkey is a Sunni majority country with large Alevi and Kurdish minorities. Minority-majority relations in these four countries exhibit interesting variations in terms of peaceful co-existence, state repression, and inter-communal violence since the formation of the modern state system in the Middle East almost a century ago. While a simplistic perspective would suggest that Sunni-Shiite/Alevi relations have been characterized by persistent sectarian conflict since ancient times, a social scientific approach adopted in the course will specify the circumstances under which such relations take a more harmonious or conflictual turn. The course cover both the substance (basic history and beliefs) of minority groups and their interactions at societal (e.g., gender relations) and political (e.g., access to power) levels. It adopts an inter-disciplinary approach and utilize insights from anthropology, psychology, political science, and sociology to explain this variation. No previous academic knowledge of the Middle East is required for the course. The main objectives of the course are to

- Guide students interpret interreligious and interethnic relations in the Middle East from the lenses of social sciences rather than as reflections of unchanging cultural essences.
- Introduce students to diversity both among and within religious groups in the region.
- Help students understand the circumstances under which religious faith and ethnic identity provide basis for conflict and cooperation, and
- Provide students with necessary tools to make sense of current news on religion and politics in nuanced ways.
A Note about Dr. T: Güneş Murat Tezcür (PhD, University of Michigan, 2005) has joined UCF in 2015. He is a Professor at the Department of Political Science and the inaugural holder of the Jalal Talabani Kurdish Political Studies, the first and only such academic position dedicated to the study of Kurdish issues in the United States. He also directs the Kurdish Political Studies Program at UCF, the first and only academic unit dedicated to the study of Kurdish issues in the United States. His scholarship exploring political violence, democratization, and identity politics have appeared in many leading scholarly outlets. He has also traveled widely for research purposes in the Middle East, conducted extensive fieldwork in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, and given talks about political topics in many different avenues across the globe.

II. Requirements & Assignments

Mandatory First Week Academic Activity

All UCF faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. For this purpose, I have added an ungraded question to Assignments titled “Required Academic Engagement.” Please answer this question by 2 pm on Friday, January 9. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

The requirements for this course are:

1) 10%: Map Exercise
2) 40%: Four scheduled short exams (10 % each)
3) 20%: Debate paper
4) 20 % Final Exam
5) 10%: Class participation

1) Map Exercise: Maps showing the borders of sovereign states do not typically reveal religious and ethnic diversity within these borders. Choose a minority in the Middle East and find two maps showing the existence of this group from online or printed sources. Write a short paper (500-750 words) comparing these maps and discussing their credibility. The map and discussion will be electronically submitted in WORD format via webcourses@UCF by 4:30 pm on January 22. Each student will then present her/his maps in class on the same day.

2) Short Exams: There are four of these exams that are composed of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and short answer questions. They are not cumulative. Questions come from both the lectures and required readings. See the table below for the exam dates.

3) Research Paper: Each student will also write a research paper on one of the topics listed at the end of this syllabus. Detailed information about the papers is provided in Section VII (p. 9).

4) Final Exam: The final exam will cover all the assigned material in this course. It will take place at class during the UCF assigned time and date.

5) Participation: Class participation grade will reflect physical attendance as well as contribution to class discussions. In-class and extracurricular bonus point opportunities will be offered throughout the semester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight (in %)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map Exercise</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jan 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Exam I</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jan 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Exam II</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feb 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Exam III</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>March 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate paper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>April 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Exam IV</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Entire semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grade and Make-Up Policy**

Due dates are absolutely non-negotiable. Students who fail to complete Tableau and paper assignments receive 0 point for the assignment. Students have to present proper documentation for any make-ups. The following grade scale is applicable in this class: A: 100-94, A-: 93-90, B+: 89-87, B: 86-84, B-: 83-80, C+: 79-77, C: 76-74, C-: 73-70, D+: 69-67, D: 66-60, F: 59-0. Grades are rounded to the nearest integer (e.g., 79.4=79, 79.6=80).

**III. Academic Honesty**

As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and so are very serious academic offenses. UCF’s Golden Rule defines plagiarism as follows: “whereby another’s work is used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student’s own.”

All acts of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, cheating, submitting false documents, and copying another student’s work will be penalized by an F for the course without any exception and leniency. If you are not sure what constitutes as academic dishonesty while doing your research, you should consult me at once.

**IV. Title IX - No Discrimination Policy**

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the sex (gender) of employees and students of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX’s prohibition of sex discrimination includes prohibition of sexual harassment and sexual violence. UCF does not tolerate sex discrimination, sexual harassment or sexual violence of any kind. This prohibition is further explained in the University’s Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence. Any student, faculty, or staff member with questions or concerns about the applicable University policies or who believes that he or she has been the victim of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence is encouraged to contact the University’s Title IX Coordinator and visit the Let’s Be Clear website.

**V. Accessibility**

The UCF is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the
beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from me.

VI. Course Schedule & Readings

The following books are required and should be purchased:


All other required readings are available online at webcourses@UCF. Additional news reports and visuals about contemporary events will be made available during the semester.

**Week I (January 6-8):**

*An Introduction: Society and Politics in the Middle East*


**Suggested Book:**


**Week II (January 13-15):**

*The Historical Origins of Majorities and Minorities in the Middle East*


**Suggested Book:**


**Week III (January 20-22):**

*Politics of Religion*


Suggested Books:


**Week IV (January 27-29):
Politics of Ethnicity**


Suggested Books:


**Week V (February 3-5):
The Politics of Minorities in the Contemporary Middle East**


Suggested Books:

Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, eds., *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

**Week VI (February 10-12):
Political Sociology of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey**

Castellino and Cavanaugh, *Minority Rights in the Middle East*, chps. 4-5.
Gelvin, *The New Middle East*, chp. 3-4.

Suggested Books:

**Week VII (February 17-19):**
**Kurds in Turkey and Iraq**


**Suggested Books:**


**Week VIII (February 24-26):**
**Kurds in Syria and Iran**


**Suggested Books:**

Week IX (March 3-5):
Christian Minorities: Armenians and Assyrians


Suggested Books:


Week X (March 17-19):
Yazidis – A History of Successive “Firmans”


Suggested Books:


Week XI (March 24-26):
Baha’is in Iran - An Inconvenient Minority


**Suggested Books:**


**Week XII (March 31-April 2):**

Jews in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey


**Suggested Books:**


**Week XIII (April 7-9):**

Alawites in Syria & Alevis in Turkey


**Suggested Books:**

Week XIV (April 14-16):
Sunnis and Shiites


Suggested Books:


VII. Research Papers

Students are required to write a research paper by choosing one of the minorities covered in this course. The papers should have a focus on *politics* meaning that they should discuss how religious and ethnic identities become relevant in social relations and matter for access for power (i.e., being a member of a minority affecting one’s opportunities and social mobility) and the minority-majority and/or minority-majority relations. The papers could focus on a minority in a single country (e.g., Baha’is in Iran or Yazidis in Iraq), or compare a minority in multiple different countries (e.g., Jews in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey or Kurds in Iraq, and Turkey). The papers may have a short historical background, but should focus on modern period (post World War I).

The papers should be electronically submitted in WORD format via webcourses@UCF by 5 pm on April 13. Turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission, will process papers. Late submissions are not accepted under any condition.

Papers should be *conceptual* and *analytical* (rather than purely descriptive) meaning they identify competing/opposing perspectives, demonstrate familiarity with the differences and similarities between rival points of view, and offer a compelling argument. They should also discuss other plausible arguments and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in a fair manner. Papers are evaluated according to five criteria: a) the quality and scope of research, b) the quality of writing and organization, c) the accuracy of knowledge, d) the coherence and consistency of argumentation, and e) grammar, style and format. All conventional citation styles are acceptable as long as they are used properly and consistently. Students are most welcome to consult me whenever they need guidance and suggestions. UCF Library’s website provides access to numerous search engines that will enable students to locate relevant sources in a time efficient manner. Search engines such as LexisNexis, Google Scholar, JSTOR, WorldCat, and Web of Science are valuable tools for doing research. Suggested books listed below are invaluable for getting more information. Electronic sources edited by anonymous users are not accepted as reliable sources. Papers should not rely on Wikipedia entries. Debate papers should be *between 2,000 and 2,500 words* including a *separate bibliography that should include at least eight reliable sources*. 