Syria: History, Politics and Society

Dr. Yakub Halabi

Course Number: 702.2042  
Office Hours: by appointment

Class Time: TBA 
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Class Location: TBA

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 Syrian 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:**

II. **Syria under the French Mandate:**

III. **The formation of the modern Syria:**

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

V. **The Rise of the Ba’ath Party:**
VI. The Functioning of the Authoritarian Regime:

VII. The political economy of Syria I:

VIII. The political economy of Syria II:

IX. Opposition Groups and Regime Stability:

X. Foreign Policy of Syria

XI. Sectarianism and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Syria
XII. The Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War:  