This course offers an introduction to the political history of the Middle East from the advent of Islam fourteen centuries ago to the modern era. It has four main objectives. First of all, it will familiarize students with the institutions that have determined the pace and characteristics of political development in the region. Second, it will examine certain institutional transformations and selected cases of institutional stagnation to derive lessons about the mechanisms that govern political development in general, including democratization. As such, it will provide insights applicable to other regions of the world, in both the past and present. Third, the course will investigate how religion shaped the region’s political trajectory; in particular, it will identify mechanisms through which Islam contributed to specific historical patterns. These patterns include militarily strong empires, campaigns to suppress or control religion, and, in the present, low government legitimacy, low political participation, and weak civil society. Fourth, the course will identify the social forces driving the contemporary rediscovery and reinterpretation of Islam for political ends, by both Islamists and secular political actors.

The course is organized around topics that present intellectual puzzles, including ones that have preoccupied scholars for generations. Within each topic the goal is to learn not just what happened but also, and more important, why political history unfolded as it did. In other words, the emphasis is on analysis rather than description. Our inquiries will draw comparisons with other parts of the world, especially western Europe, but also the Indian subcontinent and East Asia. They will also draw on theoretical writings in both economics and political science.
Class sessions

The class will meet once a week for two back-to-back sessions separated by a 10-minute break. Regular attendance is essential to success in the course. Because there is no main textbook, only by attending class regularly will you be able to master the topics to be discussed. In any case, class presentations will go beyond the readings, and they will contain ideas unavailable through published sources. Keeping up with the readings is essential to following discussions.

Audiotaping or videotaping of the class sessions is not allowed.

Exams, grading

Requirements include an in-class midterm exam (October 7), a final examination (Saturday December 12, 9-noon), and a paper due before reading period, on Friday, December 4, 4 PM. The course grade will be based on a weighted average of the tests, paper, and class performance: (0.20 x midterm grade) + (0.35 x final grade) + (0.35 x paper grade) + (0.10 x class performance). The paper grade is broken down as follows: 0.02 (proposal) + 0.08 (organizational draft) + 0.25 (paper) = 0.35.

Taking the exams is mandatory. The time of the tests cannot be moved for anyone, except in the event of a documented grave emergency (e.g., death in the family, hospitalization, illness requiring immediate attention of a physician, natural disaster). Unacceptable excuses for missing a test include: malfunctioning automobile, temperamental alarm clock, non-refundable airline ticket, social event, and uncooperative weather. Special arrangements may be made for disabled students working through Disabilities Services (668-1267).

Exams will be graded for analytical sophistication, originality, accuracy, coherence, clarity, and comprehensiveness. No credit will be given for repeating a question, and penalties will be imposed for invoking facts or theories irrelevant to the question at hand. Requests for regrading will be accepted only if accompanied by a clear and written justification. Regrading will not be limited to the specific question whose scoring is being challenged. The entire exam will be regraded, and the score may go up or down.

Readings

The selected readings consist of journal articles, book chapters, and books. Seven books, which we shall cover in part or in full, are available for purchase at the Textbook Store. These books are also on 2-hour or 1-day reserve at Perkins. Articles are posted on the Sakai site for the course.
Authors of the readings include not only political scientists and economists but also legal scholars, and historians. The readings have been selected partly to familiarize you with a variety of research techniques used to study the past: (1) archival data collection, (2) empirical testing, (3) textual criticism, and especially (4) institutional analysis.

Certain readings will address politically controversial and socially sensitive issues from multiple angles. Within the time constraints of the course, you will gain exposure to competing perspectives through influential writings of their leading exponents.

The required readings are starred. The rest are highly recommended. Depending on student interest, minor adjustments may be made to this reading list.

**Paper requirement**

Instructions regarding the paper will be given as the course progresses. The expected length is 4000-5000 words. The key deadlines are as follows:

- **October 14, midnight**: 2-page proposal due (place word file in Sakai dropbox)
- **November 11, midnight**: 1250-1500 word sketch draft due (place word file in Sakai dropbox)
- **December 4, 4 PM**: Paper copy of final paper due in my Econ or Poli Sci mailbox, along with a word file to Sakai dropbox.

Except in case of documented grave emergency, missing any deadline will result in a grading penalty, which will be proportionate to the length of the delay.

**Teaching Assistants**

The teaching assistants for the course are Aslı Cansunar, Noa On, and Roman Levkin, all Ph.D. students in either Political Science or Economics. They will hold weekly office hours, mainly to assist students in finding a suitable paper topic, organizing the paper, and selecting a method of analysis. Their office hours and addresses are as follows:

- **Aslı Cansunar**: Tuesday, 9-11 am, SSRI Conn. Café, Gross H 2nd floor (asli.cansunar@duke.edu)
- **Noa Cnaan-On**: Monday, 10-12, Edge at Bostock Library (on_noa@yahoo.com)
- **Roman Levkin**: Friday, 5-7 pm, Social Science Building 113 (roman.levkin@duke.edu)
Course outline

| L: On reserve at Perkins Library | ●: * Required reading | ●: T: Available at Textbook Store |

BACKGROUND on Middle East, Islam, Ottoman Empire


I. THE MIDDLE EAST’S PRE-ISLAMIC AND ISLAMIC POLITICAL HERITAGES
(2 weeks)


II. PROPERTY RIGHTS AND TAXATION (2 weeks)

* L Halil İnalcık, “State, Land and Peasant.” In *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, edited by Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert, pp. 103-54 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
L Suraiya Faroqhi, “Crisis and Change, 1590-1699: Finances.” In *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, edited by Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert, pp. 531-44 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).


III. PUBLIC GOODS AND CIVIL SOCIETY (2 weeks)


**MIDTERM: October 7, 2015 (in class at regular time)**

**IV. LEGAL SYSTEM AND THE COURTS** (2 weeks)


**V. BEGINNINGS OF POLITICAL MODERNIZATION** (1 week)


* T Vikør, *Between God and the Sultan*: chap. 12 (to p. 245).

VI. THE RISE OF MODERN ISLAMISM (1 week)


VII. ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY (1 week)

*L Browers, Democracy and Civil Society in Arab Political Thought, chaps. 4-5.


VIII. ISLAM AND SECULARISM (1 week)


**IX. POLITICAL USES AND EFFECTS OF ISLAM TODAY** (1 week)


**FINAL: Saturday, December 12, 2015 (9-noon)**