

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Prague

Course Code / Title: PR/INTR 330 Crossroads of Influence: the Middle East and Europe through Time

Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: International Relations / Middle East Studies, History, Religious Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course explores the dynamic sociopolitical and religious developments in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Students will examine the legacy of colonialism, the emergence of postcolonial states, and the complex interplay between nationalism, religion, and global politics. The course also integrates a Central European perspective, analyzing how countries like the Czech Republic and its neighbors have perceived, influenced, and engaged with the MENA region historically and today. Topics include migration, security, diplomacy, and the shaping of public opinion about Islam and the Middle East in Central Europe.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Gain an overview of the historical and geopolitical links between Europe and the MENA region, the impact of European colonialism on MENA political and social structures and the rise of political ideologies including nationalism, Islamism, and secularism.
- Examine contemporary foreign policy, conflicts and their global implications.
- Evaluate migration patterns and integration challenges in Europe, with a focus on Central Europe.
- Critically assess how MENA is portrayed in Central European media, politics, and public discourse, and how these views are or are not reflected in current foreign policy.
- Explore Czech and Central European involvement in MENA diplomacy, security, arms trade, and humanitarian aid.

Requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before the relevant class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. Reading assignments are generally 10-20 pages per class session. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise noted.

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Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** “Participation” does not mean a mere passive presence in classes. Participation means active participation in the course discussions based on assigned readings and student’s own sources. Students should always be ready to answer any of the questions/tasks related to weekly assignments in the syllabus. All course components are considered, including field experiences.
- **Short response papers:** Students write five responses of about 300 words reflecting on the readings and case studies related to course topics (e.g. describing the evolution and effects of the Arab Spring in a particular country, women as a symbol of reform/repression/rebellion, non-violent conceptions of jihad, cohabitation of Sunnis and Shi’as in specific states, etc.)
- **Mid-term quiz:** The mid-term quiz covers topics and course material covered in the first 5-6 weeks of the course. Assessment is based on a combination of multiple-choice and short-answer questions, plus a brief in-class essay.
- **Presentation:** Each student will prepare and deliver an in-class presentation on a topic chosen by the student with instructor approval. The presentation should be approximately 20 minutes followed by 5-10 minutes for discussion and questions from the class.
- **Final written exam:** The final exam is comprehensive. Students write longer responses to prompts drawing from topics and material covered over the course of the semester, including readings and student presentations.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation (<i>see rubric below</i>)	10%
Short response papers (5 at 4%)	20%
Mid-term quiz	20%
Presentation	20%
Final written exam	30%

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Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	B – 80-89% Proficient	C – 70-79% Developing	D – 60-69% Unacceptable	F – 0-59% Missing
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation*	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers
Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task

Readings / Resources

Allen, C.: Islamophobia, Routledge, London 2010.

Barr, J.: A Line in the Sand: The Anglo-French Struggle for the Middle East, 1914–1948, W. W. Norton & Company, New York 2013.

Bayat, A.: Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2017.

Berkey J.: The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.

Brown, N.J.: The Making of the Modern Muslim State: Islam and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2023.

Čejka, M.: Islam in the Czech Republic: The Perception of Islam and the Muslim Minority, The Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2008, pp. 1–15.

Cesari, J.: Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2013.

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- Clancy-Smith, J.: *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia)*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1994.
- Cole, J.R.I.: *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement*, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo 1999.
- Cooper, A.S.: *The Oil Kings: How the U.S., Iran, and Saudi Arabia Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2011.
- Daniel, N.: *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford 2003.
- Faroqhi, S.: *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, I.B. Tauris, London 2005.
- Feifer, G.: *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan*, Harper Perennial, New York 2010.
- Feldman, N.: *The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008.
- Fraser, E.: *Mediterranean Encounters: Artists Between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, 1774–1839*, Penn State University Press, University Park 2017.
- Gelvin, J.L.: *The Modern Middle East: A History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020.
- Gerges, F.A.: *ISIS: A History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2016.
- Göle, N.: *The Daily Lives of Muslims: Islam and Public Confrontation in Contemporary Europe*, Zed Books, London 2015.
- Hoyland, R.G.: *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015.
- Howard, R.: *Science in Medieval Islam: An Illustrated Introduction*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1997.
- Hourani, A.: *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983.
- Hourani, A.: *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Faber & Faber, London 2013.
- Ibn Fadlan, Ahmad (tr. Montgomery James E.): *Mission to the Volga*, NYU Press / Library of Arabic Literature, 2017.
- Kamrava, M.: *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2011.
- Kapuściński, R.: *Shah of Shahs*, Penguin Classics, London 2006.
- Kennedy, H.: *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, Routledge, London 2004.
- Kepel, G.: *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2002.
- Khalidi, R.: *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance*, Metropolitan Books, New York 2020.
- Kuru, A.T.: *Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment: A Global and Historical Comparison*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2019.

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- Launay, R. & Soares, B.F.: *The Formation of an 'Islamic Sphere' in French Colonial West Africa, Economy and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1999, pp. 497–519.
- Laurence, J.: *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2012.
- Levy-Rubin, M.: *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011.
- Louër, L.: *Sunnis and Shi'a: A Political History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2021.
- Lockman, Z.: *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004.
- Magaš, B.: *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-up 1980–1992*, Verso Books, London 1993.
- Malečková, J.: *“The Turk” in the Czech Imagination (1870s–1923)*, Brill, Leiden 2021.
- Mansel, P. (ed.): *Ottoman Constantinople: The City, Diplomacy, and Daily Life*, I.B. Tauris, London 2010.
- Mayall, S.: *The House of War: The Struggle between Christendom and the Caliphate*, Osprey Publishing, New York 2024.
- Mazower, M.: *The Balkans: A Short History*, Modern Library, New York 2000.
- McDowall, D.: *A Modern History of the Kurds*, I.B. Tauris, London 2004.
- Mitchell, T.: *Colonising Egypt*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1991.
- An-Na'im, A.A.: *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 2008.
- Nasr, V.: *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*, W.W. Norton, New York 2006.
- Nováková, A. & Barša, P.: *The Czech Republic: From Tolerance to Rejection, in Islamophobia in Muslim Majority and Minority Contexts*, Brill, Leiden 2019.
- Pakenham, T.: *The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1991.
- Öztürkmen, A. (ed.): *Ottoman Women and Diplomacy: From the Harem to the Embassy*, Koç University Press, Istanbul 2021.
- Qutb, S.: *Milestones*, Kazi Publications, Lahore 1964.
- Reptova Nováková, Z.: *Czech Islamophobia as an Interplay of Islamophobia, Racism and Nationalism, in Islamophobia in Muslim Majority and Minority Contexts*, Brill, Leiden 2019.
- Rogan, E.: *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East*, Allen Lane, London 2015.
- Roy, O.: *The Failure of Political Islam*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1994.
- Said, E.: *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York 1978.

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Shindler, C.: A History of Modern Israel, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013.

Smišek, M.: Czechoslovak Arms Exports to the Middle East: Israel, Jordan and Syria, 1948–1989, Helion & Company, Solihull 2021.

Soares, B.F. & Otayek, R. (eds.): Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2007.

Triandafyllidou, A. (ed.): Muslim Immigration in Europe: Religious and Cultural Challenges, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2011.

Ulrichsen, K.C.: The First World War in the Middle East, Hurst Publishers, London 2014.

Wright, Z.: Islam and Decolonization in Africa: The Political Engagement of a West African Muslim Community, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, VA 2010.

Content

Topic 1 – Europe and MENA: introduction

- What is the MENA region? Geopolitical, religious and cultural boundaries
- Shared past, present and future: empires, religion and culture, views on conflicts and solutions

Topic 2 – New Borders, New States, New Ideas: Colonial Legacies and International Politics

- Ottoman collapse and European mandates: drawing borders, creating states, and shaping modern diplomacy
- The “Scramble for Africa” and Great Power rivalry: British and French ambitions, global competition, and colonial spheres of influence
- Political Islam and the international system: reinterpreting jihad in the age of empire and anticolonial struggle
- Central Europe and the Orient: Czech and European Orientalism as part of global power relations and identity-building
- Contemporary relevance: colonial borders and legacies in today’s debates on sovereignty, intervention, and conflict (e.g. Syria, Iraq, Libya)

Topic 3 – Nationalism, State-Building, and Ideological Struggles

- Arab nationalism and competing visions of governance: secular vs. religious models
- Cold War geopolitics: U.S. and Soviet alliances shaping the region
- Czechoslovakia in MENA: engineers, arms, and ideological influence (1950s–80s)
- Czech–Israeli relations: from early recognition to today’s foreign policy debates

Topic 4 – Political Islam, Radicalization, and Reform Movements

- 1979 as a global turning point: Iranian revolution and Afghan jihad
- Rise of Islamist movements and the formation of radical ideologies
- Global jihad and international security concerns
- Central European responses: counterterrorism laws, cultural fears, and political discourse
- Islamic Revivalism through a Post-Socialist Lens: Fear of Ideology or Culture?

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Topic 5 – Arab Spring: Uprisings and Global Impact

- Causes: authoritarianism, corruption, unemployment, and social media
- Outcomes: Tunisia’s reforms, Egypt’s reversal, Libya/Syria wars
- Europe’s role: EU diplomacy, NATO in Libya, asylum policies
- Migration effects: refugee flows into Europe after 2011
- Memory: Arab Spring as “awakening” vs. “lost hope” in MENA and Europe

Topic 6 – Migration, Refugee Crisis and Europe

- Causes and trends of migration from the MENA region
- Integration, exclusion, and public policy across Europe
- Current views on migrants and refugees
- Muslim migrant between Islam and Europe: identity and security
- Muslims in Central Europe: Demographics, representation, and stereotypes
- Czech political discourse and the instrumentalization of Islam (2010s–present)
- Refugee crisis in the Visegrád region: National narratives and EU tensions

Topic 7 – Contemporary Conflicts and International Engagements

- Civil wars of MENA and world security
- Resource politics: Oil, water, and foreign influence
- Czech and Central European diplomatic and humanitarian efforts in conflict zones
- Analysis of Czech arms exports and security cooperation with Middle Eastern states

Topic 8 – European perceptions of MENA: Identity, Culture, and Modernity

- Colonial legacies and identity struggles: cultural decolonisation, border disputes
- Gender role in society: between tradition and change
- Perceptions of MENA cultures in Central European education, literature, and media
- Orientalism and its afterlife in the Czech cultural imagination

Field study and experiential learning components may include:

- Guest speakers on Czech-Israel relations, Czech media and the Muslim world, and the Iranian nuclear deal and the West
- Naprstek Museum of Asian, African, and American Cultures
- Spanish Synagogue and other examples of architecture inspired by MENA themes
- Festivals: Festival of Arab culture, Middle East Film Festival, Refufest, World Culture Festival, Festival of Iranian movies

Syllabus of Record is subject to minor changes in Term-specific Syllabus at faculty’s discretion.