

# 17.405/17.406

## Seminar on Politics and Conflicts in the Middle East

### ASSIGNMENTS

Below are three short paper assignments for the course. Students have the option of writing three short review essays in place of a long research paper or taking a final exam (take home format). If the paper assignments are chosen, they are worth 60% of the final course grade, as are the other two options. Each of the paper assignments may be downloaded.

#### **Paper 1**

The purpose of the paper is for you to reflect on a topic, do the relevant readings in the syllabus (extra if you wish), identify your key points and place them in some order in your presentation. This is to encourage you to consider one topic (as broadly defined below) and draw on various sources in order to develop a perspective.

#### **Topics**

Please write an essay (7-10 pages) on one of the following topics:

- Early Days of Islamic Political Community
- The Role of the Military in Middle East Politics
- Religion and Politics – Comparison of 2 countries
- Political Institutions – Comparison of 2 countries
- Changing Boundaries in the Middle East – Why and How?
- Homogeneity vs. Diversity – Comparison of 2 countries
- Interactions Among Conflicts: Discussion of at least 2 types of conflict and their interactions

You are welcome to suggest a topic (not listed above) or to reframe a topic (of the above). Please make sure that the instructor approves any 'topic' not listed above.

#### **Paper 2**

The purpose of the paper is for you to reflect on a topic, do the relevant readings in the syllabus (extra if you wish), identify your key points and place them in some order in your presentation. This is to encourage you to consider one topic (as broadly defined below) and draw on various sources in order to develop a perspective.

## Topics

Please write an essay (7-10 pages) on one of the following topics:

- State Formation – Comparison of 2 countries during the Interwar period leading to their independence states
- Compare and contrast the Role of the Military in 2 countries
- Religion and Politics – Comparison of 2 countries
- Political Institutions – Comparison of 2 countries
- Non-State Actors in the Region – An essay on Role & Relevance
- Interactions Among Conflicts: Discussion of at least 2 types of conflict and their interactions

You are welcome to suggest a topic (not listed above) or to reframe a topic (of the above). Please be sure to follow the process below – it is important that you have a coherent structure and argument –

## Paper 3

The purpose of the paper is for you to reflect on a topic, do the relevant readings in the syllabus (extra if you wish), identify your key points and place them in some order in your presentation. This is to encourage you to consider one topic (as broadly defined below) and draw on various sources in order to develop a perspective.

## Topics

Please write an essay (no less than 10 pages) on one of the following topics:

- Continuity and Change in two North African Countries – Focus on Implications for Stability and Security
- Compare the Beliefs and Political Views of National Leaders in Two Countries (i.e. 2 leaders, one in each country)
- Discuss Matters of “Migration” (i.e. movements of populations) in the Middle East – sources & consequences
- US Policy in the Middle East since 1945 – Key Points &/or Path Dependence
- Regional Impacts of the End of the Cold War
- Compare and contrast the Suez Crisis 1956 (and war) with
- Gulf war 1991 (and crisis)
- Non-State Actors in the Region – An essay on Role & Relevance
- Interactions Among Conflicts: Discussion of at least 2 types of conflict and their interactions

You are welcome to suggest a topic (not listed above) or to reframe a topic (of the above).

## **General Instructions**

### **Format:**

1. Introduction of Topic – why is this topic relevant (or important?)
2. Background & Argument you are presenting
3. ‘Evidence’ i.e., from the assignments or other
4. Conclusion

### **References:**

Be sure to footnote your points as needed. Direct quotes require quotation marks. Please be sure not to overlook these two points. Please use side-titles for sections as needed.

### **Process**

1. Be sure to identify your views vs. those of others you are citing (i.e. other authors or other sources)
2. Do not confuse “is” with “ought” and do not use “should” without clarifying the criteria that drive this view – avoid “should” as much as possible.
3. Usually it is best think out the entire paper before starting to write. This means, do an outline- this will show you where you think you are going and help identify lack of coherence (if any)
4. Direct quotes require quotation marks.
5. Please be sure not to overlook these two points. Please use side- titles for sections as needed.

### **Citations**

Be sure to footnote your points as needed. For direct quotes please cite author’s last name, date, and page number