INTR 290-900
The Arab Spring and American Foreign Policy
Summer 2012
12-week Session May 21-August 10, 2012
Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays-6:00pm-7:40pm
Instructor: Dr. Anna Viden
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Course Description

Taking an International Relations perspective this course aims to provide the analytical tools, and the historical background necessary to help you understand the current U.S. policy with regards to the Arab Spring. More specifically we will try to make sense of the initial reluctance of the Obama administration to embrace the demands for regime change in the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East. We will also try to understand why the Middle East, and especially the Persian Gulf, has been of central importance to the U.S. since the late 1940s. This knowledge will provide some clues to the initial approach of the Obama administration to the Arab Spring.

The United States’ position on the Arab Spring may be perceived as an illustration of the inherent tensions between values and interests which historically have characterized U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. Why has the U.S. which represents itself as a beacon of liberty and democracy supported autocratic regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran before 1979? Why has the U.S. supported the maintaining of the status quo in these regimes despite apparent human rights abuses, and the lack of political and religious freedoms? How has the U.S. justified the support of these regimes to American public opinion? Why does the U.S. seem to fear the current transition to democracy in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria? What are the perceptions of Islam, and its compatibility with democracy among U.S. decision makers, and other influential actors? Will the Arab Spring force the U.S. to finally address the tension between values and interests manifest in its policies? These questions and other related issues will be addressed in this course which will be given in seminar form.

Required Literature

You are not required to buy any specific literature for this course. The course literature (scholarly articles, newspaper and magazine articles, book extracts, and copies of primary documents) will be posted on black-board prior to our class meetings. News reals and films (both documentary and cinematographic) will also be used as course material.
Recommended Literature


Course Assessment:

Weekly news quiz 10%
Press review 10%
Participation 20%
Exam 40%
Essay 20%

Weekly news quiz:

Your knowledge of current events related to the Arab Spring will be tested in a weekly news quiz.

Press review:

You are responsible for presenting one article of your choice (news-paper article, scholarly article or magazine article) related to the Arab Spring to the class as a whole. The presentation which should last 5-8 minutes should analyze the perspective and the discourse of the author as well as the key content.
Participation:

You will be graded on your active participation in class activities and discussions. Absence will only be accepted if deemed justified (illness, family issues etc.) It’s your responsibility to duly inform me in advance.

Exam:

Your theoretical and factual knowledge will be tested in an exam consisting of 25 multiply choice questions and one essay question.

Essay:

You will write a 10-page essay on a topic related to the course content. You will select from a list of topics presented to you by the instructor at the beginning of the seminar.

How to make the most of the seminar

I expect you to be punctual and to come prepared to class meetings! That means obviously to do the required readings, and assignments. However, you are also expected to follow the current events in the Middle East, and the concurrent debate taking place in the U.S. in relation to these events. You are expected to read newspapers (online and in paper form), watch TV, and listen to the radio. Your knowledge of these events will be tested in weekly news quizzes. I also expect you to actively participate in class activities and class discussions.

I also expect you to take full responsibility for the research, planning, and the submission of your essay on time. I will be available for guidance, instructions and eventual questions concerning this assignment but it is your responsibility to carry it out properly.

Course Outline

Week 1: Tuesday May 22: Introduction to the Seminar:

1\textsuperscript{st} half: Presentation of syllabus: Outline of the course, goals, expectations, and assignments.
2\textsuperscript{nd} half: How to approach the study of U.S. policies toward the Arab Spring from a historical perspective.

Readings: Read the syllabus!

Thursday: May 24: The U.S. Expansion in the Middle East after 1945:

The discourse of benevolent hegemony, and the transaction of oil for security: the expansion of ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia.
Readings:

Week 2: Tuesday May 29: The U.S. Expansion in the Middle East after 1945:

*Early opposition by the American public opinion to the U.S.-Saudi relationship: The visit by King Sa’ud to Washington D.C. and New York in 1957*

Readings:

Thursday May 31: Early Threats to the U.S Expansion in the Middle East:

*American reactions to the protests by Saudi oil workers against ARAMCO in the 1953 and 1956*

Readings:

Week 3: Tuesday June 5: Early Threats to the U.S Expansion in the Middle East:

*American reactions to the questioning of the status quo in Saudi Arabia during the 1960s*

Readings:

Thursday June 7: Threats to U.S Hegemony in the Middle East:

*The expansion of Saudi, oil power at the end of the 1960s, and the beginning of the 1970s seen by American experts and intellectuals*

Readings:

Week 4: Tuesday June 12: Threats to U.S Hegemony in the Middle East:

*The 1973 Oil embargo: the first “Nine Eleven” of the U.S.-Saudi relations?*

Readings:

Thursday June 14: U.S. Threats to U.S Hegemony in the Middle East:

*The “Invasion of the Sheikhs”: the American media coverage of the post oil-embargo period.*

Readings:
Week 5: Tuesday June 19: Conflicts between Tradition and Modernity in the Middle East seen from a U.S. perspective:

“Rivers of oil”: The difficulty for Saudi-Arabia to absorb the “petro-dollars” after the 1974 oil embargo seen from a U.S. perspective

Thursday June 21: U.S. Conflicts between Tradition and Modernity in the Middle East seen from a U.S. perspective:

“Modernization without Westernization”: the development strategy of King Faisal seen from a U.S. perspective

News Quiz

Week 6: Tuesday June 26: U.S. Containment Strategies, and the Maintaining of Stability in the Persian Gulf:

From the Eisenhower Doctrine to the Reagan Doctrine: containment of Arab nationalism, communism and Shiite radicalism

Thursday June 28: U.S. Containment Strategies, and the Maintaining of Stability in the Persian Gulf:

The arming of “freedom fighters” during the War in Afghanistan: a Pursuit of realism or a misperception?

News Quiz

Week 7: Tuesday July 3: U.S. Perceptions of Women in the Middle East:

Death of a Princess: a drama documentary of the true story related to the capital punishment of a Saudi princess and her lover for adultery

Readings:

Thursday July 5 U.S. Perceptions of Women in the Middle East:

Death of a Princess: The Debate

Readings:

News Quiz

Week 8: Tuesday July 10: Domestic Opposition to the U.S.-Saudi “special relationship”:
The AWACS-Debate

Thursday July 12: Close Encounters:

The First Gulf War: “Yankees in the Kingdom”

Readings:

News Quiz

Week 9: Tuesday July 17: The “New” Enemy:

Al Qaida enters center stage

Thursday July 19: Written Exam in class!!!

Week 10: Tuesday July 24: The “New” Enemy:

September 11, 2001 and the paradigm of the War on Terror

Readings:

Thursday July 26: Islam and democracy seen from a U.S. perspective:

The Debate on Islam and Democracy

Readings:

News Quiz

Week 11: Tuesday July 31: Islam and democracy seen from a U.S. perspective:

The Debate on Islam and Democracy

Readings:

Thursday August 2: Analysis of Current Events:

Readings:

News Quiz

Submission of 10 page essay!!!
Week 12: Tuesday August 7: Analysis of Current Events:

Readings:

Thursday August 9: Analysis of Current Events:

Final day of course