

Geopolitics & Culture from Bosnia to Afghanistan (Fall 2012)

The Middle East in Global Contexts

Focus (SES 209/Turkish 209 FS)

Tues./Thurs. 1:25 - 2:40 PM, 208 Languages

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Office Hours: Fridays 12:50-2:50, confirm by appt.

The concerns of geopolitics often take precedence over an understanding of local cultures at a great cost in human life and material resources. In a globalizing world, how might the “otherness” of individuals, communities, and nations be acknowledged without condoning exile, war, and ethnic cleansing? This seminar examines the geopolitics of conflicts from Bosnia to Afghanistan from a cultural perspective. Through current events, policy papers, historic documents, documentaries, and literature we will survey the changing geopolitical context of nations and states that have recently made headlines. The greater Middle Eastern regions under consideration include areas from the Balkans through Central Asia. Some of the specific contexts we will examine and compare are Bosnia, Turkey, Chechnya, Iran, and Afghanistan. We will be analyzing the ways in which global “outsiders” like the United States, the EU, and Russia, and local “insiders” understand ongoing military, diplomatic, and cultural conflicts. In this interdisciplinary framework, discussion will focus on representations of nationalism, identity, ethnicity, religion and gender. Secondary discussions will examine issues of secular modernity, cultural revolution, Islam, and the ways in which political ideologies create, question, and distort national identities.

One of our overarching goals will be to understand how historical and literary texts function to create lasting cultural representations (and misrepresentations) that carry political force. We will compare political and cultural accounts that present contrasting views of nations, states, and their minorities. Other questions at issue will include: What is the relationship between representation and ideology? And how does policy, history, or fiction work to establish and reinforce, or conversely, subvert identity?

Secondary readings will have a theoretical focus, including work by political scientists, cultural critics, historians, and literary scholars. These readings will address issues of gender, political Islam, ethno-religious nationalism, colonialism, and Orientalism. By combining a set of varied texts and issues, we aim to develop a more complex understanding of geopolitics and culture in Middle Eastern communities.

Last but not least, this course is an introduction to the structure of a university seminar. Class time will be spent in a combination of discussion and short lecture. By the end of the semester, you will be familiar with important debates concerning geopolitics that continue to inform globalizing cultures today.

This course qualifies for the Turkish minor, the DISC certificate, and minors and majors in SES, AMES, and ICS.

Course Requirements:

- 1) *Attendance and Participation.* Students are expected to attend class meetings, to read all assigned materials, and to come prepared to participate in discussion. All readings should be brought to class, as we will work closely with them. Two unexcused absences will reduce your overall grade. 10% of your grade.
- 2) *Quizzes.* Occasional five-point quizzes on the readings. 5% of your grade.
- 3) *Reading Responses.* Concise 1-2 page responses to prompts based on the readings. The aim will be to hone your academic writing by interpreting and analyzing aspects of readings. 10% of your grade.
- 4) *Discussion Facilitating (in pairs).* Prepare a brief 1-2 page outline of a reading that 1) defines the main term(s) and 2) identifies the main points. Send a draft of the outline to me at 9 PM the evening before the assigned reading. 5% of your grade.
- 5) *Two Exams.* Tests your knowledge of material covered in the first and second parts of the course in short answers. 30% of your grade (together). **In-Class, Thurs., Oct. 4 and Thurs., Nov. 29.**
- 6) *Middle East Film Scenes.* You will present and analyze an important scene from a film or documentary of your choice that you have watched this semester. 5% of grade.
- 7) *Précis & Report.* You will make a report based on your summary (*précis*) of a policy paper by abstracting the central argument. The summary must be about a quarter of the length of the original. The reports will be about 8 minutes. Submit with policy paper of at least 15 pages. 5% of your grade.
- 8) *Annotated Final Paper.* This 10-12 page paper asks you to think comparatively about two regions or two historical periods in the same region. Questions will be distributed two weeks before they are due. Requires five course sources and five outside sources. 25% of your grade. **Due Mon., Dec. 10 by 5 PM.**
- 9) *PowerPoint Presentation.* Together with a classmate, you will give a 10-minute presentation at the end of the semester that relates to your final papers. The presentation is a short lecture that demonstrates your mastery of course concepts. A separate handout will describe this assignment in more detail. 5% of your grade.

Class Policies:

- 1) *Paper Policy:* Late papers will be penalized. All papers should be titled, but without title page. They must be doubled-spaced with one-inch margins, and twelve-point font (approx. 250 words per page).

- 2) *Exam Policy:* Exams must be taken at the scheduled date and time. Exceptions will be made only in cases of emergency.
- 3) *Final Grades:* Students are required to complete all assigned course work in order to receive a passing grade. No incompletes will be given except in cases of genuine emergency.
- 4) *Plagiarism:* All work submitted must be written by you and for this course. You are expected to abide by the Duke Honor Code. Unacknowledged borrowing constitutes plagiarism, the most serious academic offense, and results in automatic failure for the entire course and possible suspension by the university.

Required Books (available at textbook store):

-  Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia*
-  Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*
-  Leo Tolstoy, *Hadjji Murat*
-  Orhan Pamuk, *Snow*
-  Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*
-  Atiq Rahimi, *Earth and Ashes*

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Seminar Readings & Assignments Schedule

Week 1: **Introduction**

T **8/28** *Seminar Format*

TH **8/30** *Nation and State*

- Smith, “The Nation: Real or Imagined?”
- “Ethnic Nationalism & the Plight of Minorities”

Optional: Smith, “Nation & Ethnoscape”

Reading Response 1: Current Events

Week 2: **Nationalism, the Ottoman Empire, & the Modern Middle East**

T **9/4** *Late Ottoman Empire*

- Roberts, “Beyond the Flawed Principle of National Self-Determination”
- McCarthy, “Reform, 1789-1912” from *The Ottoman Turks*

TH **9/6** *Ottoman Legacies*

- Aksan, “Ottoman to Turk”
- Film clips: Archival images of early Middle East

Week 3: **Orientalism**

T **9/11** *The Politics of Representation*

- Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, “Orientalism,” *Edward Said*
- Said, Edward, “Introduction”

TH **9/13** *Tropes of Orientalism*

- Vambery, “My Tatar” from *Sketches of Central Asia*

Optional: Said, Edward, “Knowing the Oriental” from *Orientalism*

Reading Response 2: Orientalism

Week 4: **Bosnia**

T **9/18** *Ethnic Cleansing*

- Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde*

[Week 4]

TH 9/20 Religion-as-Ethnicity

- Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Gorazde*
- Michael Sells, "The Construction of Islam in Serbian Religious Mythology and Its Consequences" from *Islam and Bosnia*
- Documentary Film: *Return to Srebrenica & Kosovo*

Optional: Szewczyk, "The EU in Bosnia"

Week 5:

Iran

T 9/25 Gender and Veiling

- Satrapi, *Persepolis I*
- Zahedi, "Concealing and Revealing Female Hair: Veiling Dynamics in Contemporary Iran"

TH 9/27 Islamic Revolution

- Satrapi, *Persepolis I*
- Film: *Persepolis*

Optional: Kandiyoti, "Women and Nation"

- Micklewright – "Photo Essay," *Gender, Modernity & Liberty*

Reading Response 3

Week 6:

Exam

T 10/2 Guest talk by M.E. librarian Christof Galli
Review

TH 10/4 EXAM 1 (bring bluebooks)

Week 7:

Middle East Film Scenes

T 10/9

- Scene presentation

TH 10/11

- Scene presentation

Week 8:

Secularism and Islam

T 10/16 FALL BREAK NO CLASS

- Begin reading *Snow*

[Week 8]

TH 10/18 *Political Islam*

- Baran, "Rise of the AKP"
- Documentary film scenes: *Coup/Darbe: February 28, 1997*

Reading Response 4

Optional: Taşpınar, "Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism"

Week 9: Turkey

T 10/23 *Veils of Snow*

- Pamuk, from *Snow* (Ch. 1-8)
- Pamuk, from *Snow* (Ch. 15-20)

TH 10/25 *Turkey/Europe*

- Pamuk, from *Snow* (Ch. 36-7 & 43-4)
- Hitchens, "Mind the Gap" (review)

Week 10: Chechnya

T 10/30 *Civilizing Missions*

- Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat*

TH 11/1 *Landscapes of War*

- Politskovskaya, "Chechnya, a Small Corner of Hell"
- Film scenes: *Greetings from Grozny*

Reading Response 5

Week 11: Afghanistan

T 11/6 *American Orientalism*

- Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*
- Dorronosoro, "Afghanistan: The Impossible Transition"

TH 11/8 *American Orientalism*

- Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*

Week 12: Afghanistan

- T 11/13
- Atiq Rahimi, *Earth and Ashes*
 - Film scenes: *Taxi to the Dark Side*

[Week 12]

- TH 11/15
- Article *Précis* Reports

Reading Response 6

Week 13: Article *Précis* Reports

- T 11/20
- Article *Précis* Reports

- TH 11/22 THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS
- Begin writing final papers

Week 14: Exam

T 11/27 Review

TH 11/29 EXAM 2

Reading Response 7: Geopolitics and Culture

Week 15: Final Presentations

T 12/4 Presentations

TH 12/6 Presentations – LAST DAY OF CLASS

Week 16: Final Paper Due Mon. Dec. 10 by 5 PM