

## **GEOG 059: SPACE, IDENTITY, AND POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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**MWF 1:00-1:50**

**SAUNDERS 204**



TAHRIR SQUARE, EGYPT. Source: BBC, 11 February 2011  
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12434787>)

**BANU GÖKARIKSEL**

**OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 2-3:15 and Fridays 2-3:15**

**OFFICE: Saunders 307**

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### **OVERVIEW**

Recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) drew worldwide attention to certain spaces such as Tahrir Square in Cairo where people from various backgrounds came together to challenge the existing political order. The case of Tahrir Square as a crucial space for the Egyptian revolution is not the only one. There are many similarly politically significant spaces in MENA that have shaped the region and its people's histories. There are also many other not so obviously political spaces that are nevertheless essential for the making of identities, for reproducing or overturning established power relations, and for exploring new possibilities. The study of such spaces can reveal a lot about MENA societies, politics, and cultures.

This seminar aims to examine a series of spaces that are essential to politics, identity, and culture in MENA today. Through our examination of these spaces, we will develop an understanding of MENA's complex and changing political and cultural geography. We will enrich our discussions with films, graphic novels, and literature and visit an Ackland Art Museum exhibit and participate in a conference called "Re-orienting the veil" on campus.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The goals of this course include:

- (a) Developing a spatial approach to studying MENA,
- (b) Providing a basic historical and geographical knowledge of the Middle East through an examination of different spaces,
- (c) Developing critical analysis skills for understanding current social and political debates, changes and challenges across the Middle East,
- (d) Developing reading and analysis skills,
- (e) Developing research and writing skills by choosing and studying a research topic and writing a paper based on this research.

## **READINGS**

Our readings will include the following works that will provide us with a basic understanding of the history and geography of the Middle East:

James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*.

James L. Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know*.

Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza*.

Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis*. (Volumes I and II)

In addition, we will read short articles, book chapters, excerpts from novels, and news stories to delve deeper into the topic at hand.

Students are responsible for completing all the required readings before class and to actively listen and regularly participate in class discussions. Please talk to me if you have any problems understanding class materials, difficulties with discussion, or confusion about content. My office hours are on this syllabus and I will be happy to meet with you at other times by appointment.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**I. PARTICIPATION (25%):** Regular attendance and effective participation are very important for this seminar.

*In-class participation (20%):* All students are expected and encouraged to contribute to class discussions with thoughtful and engaging questions and comments based on readings and previous discussions. Personal experiences can also form the basis of comments but should be directly related to the topic at hand and complement other

comments that are based on class work. Being present in class is a prerequisite for participation but does not guarantee active participation. Regular attendance (not missing more than 3 classes) and regular contribution to class discussion (speaking in every class and making comments or asking questions that demonstrate direct engagement with readings) are required for achieving a high participation grade.

*1-minute paper (5%):* Students will write a very short reflection at the end of selected classes (up to 10). In this reflection, students will respond to the following questions: What was the main point of today's discussion? What is the main unanswered question with which you are leaving today? What do you wish you had said during the discussion?

**II. RESEARCH PROJECT (35%):** In this project, each student will choose a political topic/issue and a space and conduct independent research on this space and political issue. The project may focus on a specific country. For example, one could collect more news stories about Tahrir square and the role it played in the uprising in Egypt, or the border between Syria and Turkey and how it has been transformed and regulated with the ongoing uprising in Syria, or the Israel/Palestine conflict and the barrier/wall and checkpoints, or the question of how to include ethnic minorities in a nation-state and the space of city streets, or globalization, increasing consumerism, and the spaces of the shopping malls. The goal of the research is for students to examine the links between space, identity, and power struggles, be it over national borders, a particular heritage site, or a public square. Students can pursue various strategies for conducting their research. For example, they can analyze how a particular issue or space in MENA is represented by internal vs. external actors or multiple internal actors (e.g. the state vs. an interest); how representation changes from one outlet to another (e.g. comparing newspaper articles, photos, films, scholarly work, and maps); and to what end.

There will be various steps to help the students formulate the research question and design the research, collect the data, analyze it, present the findings, and finalize the paper. I will post detailed guidelines on Sakai by the 4<sup>th</sup> week. The end product of this project will be a 10-minute presentation for your classmates, an electronic archive of the images, clips, and other kinds of data you have collected, and a 10-page paper. In addition to giving students the opportunity to produce their own, original work through independent research, this project will enable students develop their knowledge and research, analysis, written and oral communication skills.

**III. EXAMS (35%):** There will be one midterm and one final exam. Both exams will consist of short answer questions.

**IV. WORKSHOP/CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AND REPORT (5%):** There are two events that the students are required to attend and report on: "Re-mapping the Middle East: Digital Narratives" Workshop at NC State (Feb 8, 3-5pm) and "ReOrienting the Veil" Conference at UNC (Feb 22-23, attendance is required for at least one panel session). The report on each of these events should be 1-page long and provide an analysis of the main points of the talk as they relate to course materials. If there is a scheduling conflict and you cannot attend one or both of these events, then we can discuss an alternative event (a lecture or film screening).

#### **GRADING**

Participation:	25%
Research project:	35%
Exams:	35%
Conference reports:	5%

#### **IMPORTANT DATES**

Proposal due	February 18
Midterm exam	February 27
Annotated bibliography	March 8
Research paper	April 30 at 1pm
Final exam	May 3 at 12pm

#### **SCHEDULE**

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##### **WEEK 1**

**January 9: Introduction**

**January 11: A Spatial Approach to MENA**

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##### **WEEK 2: IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES AND GEOPOLITICS OF MENA**

**January 14: MENA--A Geographical Region? The Drawing of Boundaries and the Creation of a Region**

Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, 1997, "The Spatial Constructs of Orient and Occident, East and West," *The Myth of Continents*

**January 16: The "New" Middle East?**

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/plans-for-redrawing-the-middle-east-the-project-for-a-new-middle-east/3882>

**January 18: Davis Library Scavenger Hunt**

Meet at the library entrance at 1pm for a Scavenger Hunt in the library with Jacqueline Solis.

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**WEEK 3: THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST-PART I**

**January 21: MLK day—no class**

**January 23: The Emergence of the Modern Middle East**

Gelvin, Part I Ch 3, 4 (pp.35-59)

**January 25: Developmentalism and Imperialism**

Gelvin, Part 2, Ch 5, 6 (pp.73-99)

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**WEEK 4: COLONIALISM, DECOLONIZATION, AND SPACE**

**January 28: Colonial Space: the Casbah**

Frantz Fanon, 1963, Concerning Violence, from *The Wretched of the Earth*,  
<http://zeroanthropology.net/2009/03/12/frantz-fanon-concerning-violence/>,  
pp. 35-50.

**January 30: Surveillance and Militarization of Space**

*The Battle of Algiers.*

**February 1: Subverting the Colonial Spatial Logic: Tactics of Decolonization**

*The Battle of Algiers*

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**WEEK 5: HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT IN PALESTINE-ISRAEL**

**February 4: The Origins of the Conflict in Palestine-Israel**

Gelvin, Ch 14 (pp.206-218)

**February 6: Struggle over Territory and Livelihood**

Gelvin, Ch 18 (pp. 268-277)

**February 8: "Re-mapping the Middle East: Digital Narratives" Workshop at NC State, 3-5pm**

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**WEEK 6: MILITARIZATION OF SPACE: CHECKPOINTS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE**

**February 11: Spaces of Occupation: Checkpoints, Roadblocks, and "Security Fence"**

Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza*.

**February 13: Qalandia Checkpoint**

Helga Tawil-Souri, 2011, "Qalandia Checkpoint as Space and Nonplace",  
*Space and Culture*, 14, 1, 4-26.

**February 15: Research project work day: proposal preparation**

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**WEEK 7: CHECKPOINTS CONTINUED**

**February 18: Checkpoints in Palestinian Films**

*Divine Intervention*

Christine Leuenberger, 2011, *The West Bank Wall as Canvas: Art and Graffiti in Palestine/Israel*, *Palestine-Israel Journal*, 17, 1, 297-304.

***Submit a 1-page proposal for your research project in class.***

**February 20: Visit to the Ackland Art Museum (Exhibit on veiling)**

**February 22: Library research**

Meet at the entrance of Davis library for a hands-on research session with Amanda Henley and Mohamed Hamed. This session aims to introduce us to the resources available at the library and to show us how to use these resources in research projects. If you come with specific ideas for your research project, then you can use this opportunity to do the first stage of your research right there and then.

**“ReOrienting the Veil” Duke-UNC Workshop (at UNC FedEx Global Education Center, starts on Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5 and continues all day on Feb 23)**

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**WEEK 8: THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST- PART II**

**February 25: Midterm review**

**February 27: MIDTERM EXAM**

**March 1: Drawing Boundaries in Post-WWI MENA**

Gelvin, Ch 11, 12, 13

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**WEEK 9: POLITICS OF PRIVATE SPACE/PUBLIC SPACE IN IRAN**

**March 4: Iranian Revolution**

Gelvin, Ch 19

**March 6: Private/Public Space in Iran**

Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*

**March 8: Representing the Home in Iranian Cinema**

*A Separation*

***Submit your annotated bibliography***

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**WEEK 10: SPRING BREAK**

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**WEEK 11: SECULARISM, ISLAM, AND THE VEILED BODY**

**March 18: New Islamic Political Movements**

Gelvin, Ch 20

**March 20: Body Space/City Space**

Gokariksel, 2012, *Intimate Politics of Secularism and the Headscarf: The Mall, the Neighborhood, and the Public Square in Istanbul*

**March 22: Filming the Veiled Woman and the City**

*Büşra*

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**WEEK 12: ARAB SPRING AND TAHRIR SQUARE AS TERRITORY**

**March 25: Arab Spring: Tahrir Square, Egypt**

Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings*, Ch 1-2, pp. 1-66

**March 27: Tahrir Square, Cairo**

Nathan Swanson, forthcoming

Charles Hirschkind, 2012, “Beyond Secular and Religious: An Intellectual Genealogy of Tahrir Square.” *American Ethnologist* 39, 1, 49-53.

The Walls of Tahrir, [http://www.merip.org/walls-tahrir?utm\\_source=merolist&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=walls](http://www.merip.org/walls-tahrir?utm_source=merolist&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=walls)

**March 29: No class- Holiday**

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**WEEK 13: DIVIDED CITY BEIRUT: RECLAIMING SHARED PUBLIC SPACE**

**April 1: Beirut: Divided City**

Caroline Nagel, 2002, Re-constructing Space, Re-creating Memory: Sectarian Politics and Urban Development in Beirut, *Political Geography*, 21, 717-725.

**April 3: Remembering the Civil War: Public Art**

<http://www.whitewallbeirut.com/>

**April 5: Beirut on the Screen**

*West Beirut*

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**WEEK 14**

**Project week**

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**WEEK 15**

**April 15: Research Presentations**

**April 17: Research Presentations**

**April 19: Research Presentations**

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**WEEK 16**

**April 22: Research Presentations**

**April 24: Research Presentations**

**April 26: Research Presentations**

***RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON APRIL 30***

***FINAL EXAM MAY 3 12PM***