Islamists, Elections, and Politics in the Middle East

INAF 520
School of Foreign Service
Georgetown University
Spring 2011

Instructor: Samer Shehata
Class Meetings: 2:15-4:05
Location: Reynolds 133
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This course is about Islamists, elections, and politics in the contemporary Middle East. It will address at least three, sometimes related, topics: 1) Islamist politics and movements; 2) Islamist electoral participation; 3) and elections in the Middle East. Although these topics sometimes overlap, this course will take a broader approach to these subjects and will not be limited to only those instances in which Islamists participate in elections. We will also be concerned with elections in the Middle East, which appear to be an increasingly important phenomenon. And when examining elections in the region, the course will attempt to integrate some of the emerging theoretical literature on “authoritarian elections,” or elections in non-democratic contexts.

From Morocco to Iraq and beyond, Islamist political parties, groups and movements are -- without doubt -- the most popular political forces in the region. And contrary to the focus in the United States and Europe, mainstream, non-violent and/or “moderate” Islamist groups (groups that participate in the political process) are much more popular and influential than the extremist, radical and violent groups that often receive a disproportionate share of media attention. Islamist groups have increasingly participated in electoral politics in the Middle East over the last several decades, from Morocco’s Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, HAMAS, Hizballah, Jordan’s Islamic Action Front, Turkey’s AK Party, to the Kuwaiti Islamic Constitutional Movement (in addition to Kuwaiti Salafis), and beyond.

Elections also appear to be taking place with greater frequency and increasing significance in the region. In recent years legislative and municipal elections have taken place (with Islamist participation) in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Iran (in addition to presidential elections in some of these countries). In many cases, Islamists performed exceptionally well. Increasingly, Islamists have chosen to participate in formal politics, including legislative elections and parliamentary politics. Elections have also become more meaningful and competitive in the Middle East as a result of both domestic pressures for reform and international attention to democratization. And there is reason to expect continued Islamist success at the ballot box. This course, therefore, seeks to
focus our attention on the intersection of these two interesting and increasingly important political phenomenon: Islamists and elections in the Middle East.

Questions: We will attempt to explore a number of questions surrounding Islamists, elections and politics in the Middle East including: what explains the success (electoral and otherwise) of these movements? To what extent does ideology, organization, or social service provision explain Islamist popularity? How important is service provision (e.g., the provision of social welfare services to citizens and constituents, such as schooling, healthcare, pensions, orphanages, recreational activities, etc.) in the success and popularity of these groups? Why do Islamists participate in elections that are likely to be neither free nor fair (i.e., “authoritarian elections”)? What electoral strategies do Islamists employ? When do Islamist (and other) groups decide to boycott elections? How do regimes manage or manipulate electoral systems for their benefit and preservation (the arts of “electoral engineering”)? In what ways are these movements “Islamic” (in fact, what is “Islamist” politics)? Are these movements on the ascendency or on the decline? To what extent have Islamist movements accepted the fundamental principles and practices of competitive pluralistic politics and democracy? How have different regimes (at different times) dealt with these movements? How have regime-Islamist dynamics affected the development and trajectory of Islamist movements in different parts of the Middle East? What is the extent of variation in ideology, organization, strategy, etc. of these groups? Does inclusion in the political process lead to “moderation”? These are only some of the many questions we hope to explore during the course of this seminar.

HOW? The course will be conducted as a seminar that also aspires to be a “research workshop.” The seminar will be based on the intense examination and discussion of selected readings which all participants will complete before class meetings. Moreover, all seminar participants will be engaged in their own research projects throughout the course of the semester. Beginning in February, seminar participants will present their ongoing research, in addition to being responsible for leading class discussion at least once during the term. Your ongoing research projects, which will form the basis of your final paper, need not be limited to the countries covered in the seminar. You are encouraged to conduct primary research (in addition, of course, to the use of secondary sources), including analyzing the documents, web sites, electoral platforms, newspapers and other materials produced by Islamist political movements and parties. In addition to briefing all of us on your ongoing research, each of us will present our research projects to the entire class toward the end of the semester in the form of a semi-formal presentation.

Course Goals: The course is intended to provide students with an advanced introduction to some of the most important issues surrounding Islamist politics. At the end of the course students should have a familiarity with a number of the leading, mass-based Islamist movements in Egypt, Turkey, Morocco and Jordan. Class discussion and presentations will provide students with a chance to hone their public speaking and presentation skills. This course will also provide significant opportunities for students to engage in independent research and analysis using a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, in English, Arabic and other languages if possible. Throughout the semester, students will be encouraged to formulate their own critical opinions of the material covered.
**Readings:** Four books will be available for purchase at the Georgetown University bookstore or through Amazon. These books will also be placed on reserve in Lauinger Library if possible (one of the books might not be in the library at this time). Readings that are not in these books will be available through Blackboard. There are also a number of readings that are available on the internet. These readings include their web (www) locations beside them. **Please also note that additional web resources and supplementary readings will be posted on Blackboard.**

**Requirements:** This is a seminar based primarily on the close reading and focused discussion of set texts. It is also a “research workshop” (as described above). The success of such an enterprise depends on the active participation of everyone. Therefore, you are required to:

1) Come to class prepared -- having read the assignments carefully and ready to discuss them. Everyone will lead class discussion at least once during the semester.

2) Seminar participants are required to write short weekly responses (one or two paragraphs) that should be posted on Blackboard by Wednesday at 6:00 pm. These are not intended to be highly polished pieces of writing. Nor are they meant to summarize the week’s readings. Rather, they are your short, critical reactions and engagement to the readings and are intended to promote discussion, generate debate and raise critical questions about the topics to be discussed in class.

3) You are required to conduct research on your topic throughout the course of the semester and occasionally present your ongoing research (e.g., research conducted, sources gathered, articles read, etc.) to the class. You will also be required to present your research in the form of a semi-formal presentation at some point in the semester.

4) You are required to write a final research paper on a topic of your choice. This is intended to be a substantive research exercise and should include the use of a wide range of sources. Please consult the instructor as you think about different topics.

**Grading:**

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Attendance &amp; Weekly Response Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Participation, Leading Class Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Research Updates and Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
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**Books to Purchase (Available in GU Bookstore):**


**Secondary Texts of Interest:**

• Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* (I. B. Tauris; New Ed edition (August 20, 2006).


**Thursday, January 13, 2011**
**Introductory Meeting:**

**Syllabus** (Begin Reading for next week. Come to class on 1/20/11 Prepared to discuss the readings)

**Thursday, January 20**
**Topic 1: Islamists & Elections**

*Choose 5 of the following readings*


• Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi, ”Do Muslims Vote Islamic?” *Journal of Democracy*, April 2010, Volume 21, No. 2.


**Supplementary:**

- Martin Kramer, “Coming to Terms: Fundamentalists or Islamists?,” *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2003. (available online)

**Thursday, January 27**

**Topic 2: The Development of the Muslim Brotherhood (I)**


- Two State Department documents about Hassan Al Banna and another MB member.

Supplementary:


Thursday, February 3

Topic 3: The Development of the Muslim Brotherhood (II)


• Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones (March 2006)

• Explore:
  {Official English language web site of the Muslim Brotherhood} Ikhwanweb.com
  http://www.ikhwanweb.com/
  {Official web site of the Muslim Brotherhood} Ikhwanonline.com

Supplementary:


Thursday, February 10

Topic 4: Turkey (I)

• Jenny White, Islamist Mobilization in Turkey (entire text)

****BEGIN YOUR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH IN EARNEST****
**Topic 5: Turkey (II)**

  http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/ctwq/2004/00000025/00000002/art00004


**Supplementary: Turkey’s 2007 Elections:**


  http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/78u409hr14qww1jxdf1/contributions/p/p/e/b/pp ebllvqwpdykn.pdf

  http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v014/14.2ozel.pdf


Also see the “filmmakers notes”:
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/turkey/filmmaker.html


http://www.jstor.org/view/00104159/ap020119/02a00050/0

http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1999/issue3/jv3n3a4.html

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v014/14.2onis.pdf

Thursday, February 24
**Topic 6: Jordan**


- Explore the official website of the Islamic Action Front: http://www.jabha.net/

**Supplementary:**


   (An earlier version of this text is available at: http://hei.unige.ch/sections/sp/agenda/colloquium/Lust-Okar_Elections%20in%20Jordan.pdf


**Thursday, March 3**

**Topic 7: Morocco I**

*Choose 3 of the following readings*


http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/l2t6ddrhr14rwjm7na9g/contributions/y/1/y/u/y1yupf6b58g0aar4.pdf

http://cadmus.iue.it/dspace/bitstream/1814/2784/1/04_42.pdf


• Explore the official web site of the PJD: http://www.pjd.ma/sommaire_en.php3

*Supplementary:*

http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/(qhp04qqpr2wedr45vpuhaxud)/app/home/contribution.asp?referrer=parent&backto=issue,1,7;journal,3,11;linkingpublicationresults,1:110531,1

Thursday, March 10 -- Spring Break

Thursday, March 17
Topic 8: Morocco II

• Malika Zeghal, Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism, and Politics (translated by George Holoch), Markus Weiner Publishers) 2009 (Selections).

• National Democratic Institute’s International Observation Mission Final Report on Morocco’s 2007 Legislative Elections:

Supplementary:
• Asmae Otmani, “The Elections are Over: Let Voter Education Begin,” Arab Reform Bulletin, September 17, Volume 5, Issue 7
  http://www.carnegie-mec.org/Library/Files/Uploaded%20Files/moroccan_parliamentary_elections_final.pdf
• Democracy Reporting International, “Preliminary Statement on the 7 September Elections to the House of Representatives -- Morocco,”
• Party of Justice and Development Electoral Program, 2007 Legislative Elections (available in Arabic).
Thursday, March 24

Topic 9: Egypt I


Supplementary:


Thursday, March 31

Topic 10: Egypt II

Choose 4 of the following readings

http://www.merip.org/mer/mer238/elghobashy.html


- Dina Shehata, *Islamists and Secularists in Egypt: Opposition, Conflict and Cooperation* (Routledge) 2009. (Selections)

**Supplementary:**
- Muslim Brotherhood Electoral Program 2005.
- Muslim Brotherhood Electoral Program (Shura Council Elections, 2006).

**Thursday, April 7**

**Student Presentations**

**Thursday, April 14**

**Student Presentations**

**Easter Break -- Thursday, April 21**
Thursday April 28 – NO CLASS

**FINAL MEETING (OFF CAMPUS) at a time and location TBD (Readings TBD)**

Other Supplementary material of possible interest:

- Salwa Ismael, “The Paradox of Islamist Politics,” in *Rethinking Islamist Politics*.