Islamists, Elections, and Politics in the Middle East

INAF 520  
School of Foreign Service  
Georgetown University  
Spring 2013

Instructor: Samer Shehata  
Class Meetings: 12:30-3:00  
Location: Reynolds 131  
Office: ICC 251 (Center for Contemporary Arab Studies)  
Office Hours: TBD  
Tel: 202-687-0350  
Email: sss32@georgetown.edu  
https://digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/blogs/samershehata/

This is a research workshop about Islamist groups and elections. This is not a traditional seminar. The course is intended to provide advanced graduate students who already have a substantial background in Middle East and Islamist politics with an opportunity to pursue supervised, in-depth research throughout the entirety of the semester, culminating in a research presentation and a final research paper. This course is not intended for those who do not already have a significant background in Middle East and Islamist politics. Nor is it intended for those looking for a traditional seminar or lecture course about Islamist politics (If you are looking for a graduate course on Middle East politics, I suggest you consider the other course I am teaching this semester, INAF 725 -- “Comparative Politics of the Middle East.” Some spaces are still available).

Both terms used to describe this course – “research” and “workshop” are important. Students will be expected to choose a specific research project by the beginning of February and commence research on the project from that time onward. They will also be expected to engage in independent study and research. They will periodically update other workshop participants on the status of their research through in-class presentations during the semester. At the end of the term they will present a formal presentation based on their research.

Many of the sessions will be conducted like an advanced reading group and will be highly dependent on all of the participants. Students will be required to come to class thoroughly prepared to participate and lead class discussions.

Two years after the beginning of the Arab uprisings, there can be no doubt about the importance of Islamist politics in the region. Across the Middle East and North Africa, Islamists are on the ascendency. In October 2011 the Islamist Annahda party won nearly forty percent of the vote in elections for Tunisia’s constituent assembly, the first elections since Ben Ali’s departure. One month later, Morocco’s Islamist Justice and Development Party secured a plurality of the vote in the country’s first elections after the Moroccan king instituted constitutional reforms. And in Egypt’s first legislative elections in the post-Mubarak era, Islamist parties -- the Muslim Brotherhood’s newly formed Freedom
and Justice Party and the Salafi Nour Party -- won over sixty percent of parliamentary seats. In summer 2012, a Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohamed Morsy, was elected as Egypt’s president.

This research workshop is about Islamists, elections, and politics in the contemporary Middle East. It will address 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, the workshop 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 are an increasingly important phenomenon in their own right. And when examining elections in the region, the course will attempt to integrate some of the theoretical literature on “authoritarian elections,” or elections in non-democratic contexts into our analysis.

From Morocco to Iraq and beyond, Islamist political parties, groups and movements are -- without doubt -- the most popular political forces in the region. And 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 frequently 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 have Islamists participated in elections that were 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 ascendancy 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 “research workshop.” The workshop will be based on the intensive 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 early February, workshop 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 opportunity to pursue advanced research on 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 Palestine. 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:** Three books will be available for purchase at the Georgetown University bookstore or through Amazon. Readings that are not in these books will be available through Blackboard or on the internet. **Please also note that additional web resources and supplementary readings will be posted on Blackboard.**

**Requirements:** This is a research workshop based primarily on supervised independent research and the close reading and focused discussion of set texts. The success of such an enterprise depends on the active participation of everyone. Therefore, you are required to:

1) Come to meetings thoroughly 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 Monday 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:**
- 20% Attendance & Response Papers
- 15% Participation, Leading Class Discussion
- 15% Research Presentation & Regular Updates
- 50% Final Research Paper

**Books to Purchase (Available in GU Bookstore):**

**Secondary Texts of Interest:**

**Tuesday, January 15, 2013**

**Introductory Meeting:**

**Syllabus** (Begin Reading for next week. Come to class on 1/22/11 prepared to discuss the readings)
Tuesday, January 22
Islamists & Elections

*Choose 4 of the following readings*


**Supplementary:**


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


Tuesday, January 29
The Development of the Muslim Brotherhood (I)

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

Supplementary:

Tuesday, February 5
The Development of the Muslim Brotherhood (II)


• Explore:
  {Official web site of the Muslim Brotherhood} http://www.ikhwanonline.com/
• Explore: Office websites of the Freedom and Justice Party (Arabic) http://www.hurryh.com/

Supplementary:
Tuesday February 12: Determine Your Research Topics – Begin Independent Reading

Tuesday, February 19
Palestine (Nazir)


Tuesday, February 26 – Guest: Professor Nathan Brown
Muslim Brotherhood-Type Organizations


*March 5 – Spring Break*

*March 12 – Independent Work on Research Projects*
(Send me an outline of your current research and an annotated bibliography by March 15)

Tuesday, March 19
Turkey (Benan)


Supplementary:
• Jenny White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey* (Univ. of Washington Press), 2002. (Selections)
• Gunes Murat Tezcur, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 2010. (Selections)

**Turkey’s 2011 Elections:**

• 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

Tuesday, March 26
Tunisia (Guest: Professor Noureddine Jebnoun)

• TBD

Supplementary:
• Azzam S. Tamimi, Rachid Ghannouchi: A Democrat within Islamism (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). (Selections)
• Francois Burgat, The Islamic movement in North Africa (Austin: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1997).

Choose 3 of the following readings

• Michael J. Willis, “Morocco’s Islamists and the Legislative Elections of 2002: the strange case of the party that did not want to win,” Mediterranean Politics, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring, 2004.
  http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/l2t6drhrl4rwjm7na9g/contributions/y1/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

April 2 – Independent Research and Preparation for Presentations

Tuesday, April 9
Morocco (Nathan)
• Malika Zeghal, Islamism in Morocco: Religion, Authoritarianism, and Politics (translated by George Holoch), Markus Weiner Publishers) 2009 (Selections).
• Adria Lawrence, Election Dilemmas for Morocco’s Protest Movement, Middle East Channel, Foreign Policy, November 16, 2011. Available at: http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/16/elections_dilemmas_for_moroccos_protest_movement
• TBD – 2011 Elections

Supplementary:
• Asmae Otmani, “The Elections are Over: Let Voter Education Begin,” Arab Reform Bulletin, September 17, Volume 5, Issue 7
• Party of Justice and Development Electoral Program, 2007 Legislative Elections (available in Arabic).

Tuesday, April 16 – Student Presentations (and discussion of current issues in Islamist politics in Palestine, Morocco and Turkey)

Chose From:
*TBD

Tuesday, April 23 – Student Presentations (and discussion of current Islamist politics in Egypt and Tunisia)

Chose From:


*Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood and Democratic Transition in Egypt,” Middle East Law and Governance, 3, 2011, pp. 204-223.


*Nader Habibi, The Economic Agendas and Expected Economic Policies of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia, Crown Center Middle East Brief, No. 67, October 2012 (available online)

*Muhammad Faour, *Religious Education and Pluralism in Egypt and Tunisia*, Carnegie Papers, August 2012 (available online)


*Aria Nakissa, “Islamist Understandings of Sharia and their Implications for the Post-Revolutionary Egyptian Constitution,” Crown Center Middle East Brief, No. 68, November 2012 (available online)

