

Cornell University
The United States and the Middle East
NES 3687 (AmSt 3687/Gov 3687/Hist 3687/PubPol 3687/JwSt 3687)
4 credits
Spring 2024
Professor Ross Brann

Course Syllabus

This class examines the history of the United States' involvement with Middle East beginning with evangelical efforts in the 19th century and President Wilson's engagement with the colonial powers in the early 20th century during and after WWI. The discovery of vast Middle Eastern oil reserves and the retreat of the colonial powers from the region following WWII drew successive US administrations ever deeper into Middle Eastern politics. In due course the US became entrenched in the post-colonial political imagination as heir to the British and the French especially as it challenged the Soviet Union for influence in the region during the Cold War. And that only takes the story to the mid-1950s and the Eisenhower administration. Our discussions will be based on secondary readings and primary sources as we interrogate the tension between realist and idealist policies toward the Middle East and trace how these tensions play out in subsequent developments including the origins and trajectory of the US strategic alliances with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey and conflict with Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the two Gulf Wars. The course also engages the pressing contemporary issues of racism and climate change as they pertain to the Middle East and the US.

Week

- 1** **T 1/23** Introduction: Course & Syllabus review
- Reading:** Lesch & Hass, *Middle East & United States*, 15-29
<https://www.npr.org/2013/10/12/230503444/the-surprising-story-of-thomas-jeffersons-quran>
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/why-thomas-jefferson-owned-qur-1-180967997/>
- 2** **T 1/30** The US, President Wilson, WWI, & European Imperial-Colonial Designs on the Middle East
- David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
- Reading:** Lesch & Hass, *Middle East & United States*, 30-46
Cohen, *Beyond America's Grasp*, 3-32
- Documents posted on CANVAS**
- Mini-Assignment 1**
- Finish watching David Lean's epic *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRRufXPVVCg>)

America plays a secondary role in this film and is embodied entirely in the character of an American journalist (“Bentley”) representing certain “interests” as he puts it. What does the film argue about America and the US interest in the Middle East? (2 pages)

Due on February 6

- 3 T 2/6 The Allure of Oil: Roosevelt positions the US for the postwar Middle East

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 289-295
Beyond America’s Grasp, 75-105; 151-160; 190-200

The Problem of Palestine & Truman’s Dilemma
Truman, the CIA, and Iran

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 47-54
Beyond America’s Grasp, 174-200

<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/museum/ordinary-man/recognition-of-israel>

“Was Harry Truman a Zionist?”* [CANVAS]

- 4 T 2/13 The Eisenhower-Dulles years: Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria & Iraq through the prism of anti-Communism
how the Cold War impacted US policy toward the Middle East

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 54-74; 77-127
A World of Trouble, 19-63
Beyond America’s Grasp, 33-69; 106-124

Mini-Response Essay #2 Due

- 5 T 2/20 “Support any Friend”---the Kennedy balance

Reading: *Beyond America’s Grasp*, 124-129

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennedy-dimona-and-the-nuclear-proliferation-problem-1961-1962>

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2019-05-02/battle-letters-1963-john-f-kennedy-david-ben-gurion-levi-eshkol-us-inspections-dimona>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/26/how-the-israelis-hoodwinked-jfk-on-going-nuclear-dimona-atoms-for-peace/>

Johnson and 1967: The Cold War intensifies over the Middle East

changes in US Middle Eastern policy from Eisenhower to Johnson

Reading: *A World of Trouble*, 64-106; 129-130
Beyond America's Grasp, 203-207
Middle East & United States, 139-157

**Term Essay Topic due (title and basic biblio)
(please consult with rb in advance for topic and biblio)**

6 T 2/27 FEBRUARY BREAK-NO CLASS

7 T 3/5 Realpolitik with Nixon, Kissinger & Ford
The Oil Crisis of 1973

Reading: *A World of Trouble*, 130-141
Middle East & United States, 158-184
Beyond America's Grasp, 129-141; 207-216

The Iranian Revolution and the Hostage Crisis

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 237-241
A World of Trouble, 210-248

Mini-Response Essay #3 Due

8 T 3/12 Reagan: the US & the Iran-Iraq War
The Iran-Contra Affair

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 237-242
Beyond America's Grasp, 69-76
A World of Trouble, 308-351

Another Crisis in Lebanon

Reading: *A World of Trouble*, 249-307

9 T 3/19 George H.W. Bush, Secretary Baker & the 1st Gulf War
Pax Americana?

reading: *A World of Trouble*, 352-401

Mini-Response Essay #4 Due

10 T 3/26 Clinton, Oslo, & Camp David

Reading: *A World of Trouble*, 402-524

“The Clinton Administration in the Middle East”* [CANVAS]

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/clinton-administrations-approach-middle-east>

“Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors”

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2001/08/09/camp-david-the-tragedy-of-errors/>

11 T 4/2 NO CLASS---SPRING BREAK

12 T 4/9 George W. Bush & the response to 9/11
American and Islamist movements

Reading: *Beyond America’s Grasp*, 234-256

A World of Trouble, 525-554

Reign of Terror, 13-85

Middle East & United States, 313-335

“Al-Qaeda’s Inner Circle”

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2006/10/19/al-qaedas-inner-circle/>

Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1993-06-01/clash-civilizations>

the US, the 2nd Gulf War and its aftermath

The importance of Turkey in US policy

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 253-288; 385-404

“Why did We Invade Iraq?”

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2021/07/22/why-did-we-invade-iraq/>

The Iraq Study Group Report

<https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/the-iraq-study-group-report/>

Mini-Response Essay #5 Due

13 4/16 Obama goes to Cairo and the “Arab Spring”

Reading: *The Dispensable Nation*, 141-183; 185-215

<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>

Middle East & United States, 405-433

Reign of Terror, 155-256

Obama, Iran & the JCPOA

Reading: Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation*, 95-140

Middle East & United States, 336-364

14 4/23 CLASS CANCELED

15 4/30 Trump, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel

Reading: *Middle East & United States*, 434-435

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/04/22/the-trump-netanyahu-alliance>

Reign of Terror, 257-338

Mini-Response Essay #6 Due

16 5/7 **Wrap Up:** Biden and Trouble Ahead:

Beyond realist & idealist policy toward the Middle East:
radical & isolationist critiques

Reading: Fantappi and Nast, “The War that Remade the Middle East: How Washington Can Stabilize a Transformed Region”

Reading:

<https://eds-p-ebsohost>

[com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=bee1011f-9487-455e-afa6-990643b2a381%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=174258482&db=aph](https://eds-p-ebsohost.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=bee1011f-9487-455e-afa6-990643b2a381%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=174258482&db=aph)

Required Texts

David W. Lesch and Mark Haas, *The Middle East and the United States*, 6th edition (Routledge pb 2018) 978-0813350585

Patrick Tyler, *A World of Trouble* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux pb 2010) 978-0-374-53200-0

Stephen P. Cohen, *Beyond America’s Grasp* (Picador pb 2010) 978-0-312-65544-0

Spencer Ackerman *Reign of Terror* (Penguin pb) 978-1-9848-7979-0

Recommended if you want more general ME history:

Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (fifth edition 2020 Penguin pb) 978-0-14-312190-9

Selected works for further study and research:

- Elliot Abrams, *Tested By Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- Andrew Arsan, *Lebanon: A Country in Fragments* (Hurst, 2020)
- Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East* (New York: Random House, 2016)
- Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Harvard University Press, 2013)
- Martin Bunton, *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Andrew Scott Cooper, *The Oil Kings: How the U.S., Iran, and Saudi Arabia Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001)
- Robert Draper, *To Start a War: How The Bush Administration Took America into Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2020)
- Fawaz Gerges, *America and Political Islam* (Cambridge U Press, 2009)
- Suzy Hansen, *Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017)
- John B. Judis, *Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015)
- Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009)
- _____. *Brokers of Deceit: How the US has Undermined Peace in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013)
- Stephen Kinzer, *Reset: Iran, Turkey and America's Future* (New York: St. Martin's, 2010)
- Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: A House Divided* (New York: Norton, 2006)
- Alia Malek, *The Home that was Our Country: A Memoir of Syria* (Boldtype Books, 2017)

- Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 2008)
- Carla Power, *If the Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship and a Journey to the Heart of the Quran* (New York: Holt, 2015)
- William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) third edition pb
- Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh, *A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009)
- David Rhode, *Beyond War: Reimagining America's Role and Ambitions in a New Middle East* (New York: Penguin, 2013)
- Josh Ruebner, *Shattered Hopes: Obama's Failure to Broker Israeli-Palestinian Peace* (London and New York: Verso, 2014)
- Jonathan Rynhold, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- Denise A. Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an* (New York: Vintage, 2013)
- Robert F. Worth, *A Rage for Order: The Middle East in Turmoil, from Tahrir Square to Isis* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016)
- Lawrence Wright, *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David* (New York: Vintage, 2015)
- _____. *The Looming Towers. Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006)

Course Requirements

- 1) **Regular attendance, preparation of readings, class participation (20%)**

A GUIDE TO THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH YOU MAY SATISFY THIS REQUIREMENT IS POSTED ON CANVAS

- 2) **6 short mini-response essays (2 pages) due as indicated on the syllabus (60%)**
- 3) **Term research essay (12 pages) due last day of class (20%)**

**A GUIDE FOR HOW WRITTEN WORK IS EVALUATED IS POSTED ON
CANVAS**

While we will not have a final exam students needing any special arrangements to be able to do your best work should speak with me as soon as possible so I can accommodate you.

**Professor Ross Brann
rb23@cornell.edu**

office hours: Wednesday 5-6:30; Th 7:30-8:30 and other times via appointment

**ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ADHERE STRICTLY TO THE
STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC CONDUCT OUTLINED IN CORNELL'S
ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (INCLUDING
USE OF ON-LINE RESOURCES)**

<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>

ChatGpT may not be used under any circumstances.