

Gender, Women, and Politics in South-West Asia & North Africa

Instructor: Amir Aziz

Level: Introductory or Intermediate undergraduate-level course

Enrollment size: 20-25 students, meets twice a week

Keywords: Middle Eastern studies; Women's studies; Gender studies; Politics

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course introduces students to contemporary themes and issues pertaining to the study of gender, women, and politics in the transcontinental region broadly called South-West Asia and North Africa (SWANA). We will read and discuss theoretical and empirical research by gender, critical race/ethnicity, and political science scholars who focus on the SWANA region.

We will examine, in particular, the relationship between women and the state, women's movements and activism, and gender in domestic, national, and transnational contexts in the SWANA region, especially the opportunities and constraints that women and gender/sexual minorities face following the Arab Spring. We will also focus on emergent areas of research, such as women's and queer representation, the construction of femininities and masculinities, and state and local responses to emergent feminist and queer movements in the region.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Students are assessed based on class presentations, quizzes, a midterm exam, and a research paper.

Class Presentations (20%): Twice during the semester, students are expected to bring in an additional reading and present it to their peers. Each student shall present a summary of the reading, including main arguments, methodology, and conclusions/findings. Email the professor a copy of the article or book chapter 24 hours before the presentation.

Weekly Quizzes (20% points): Students will complete a short, timed multiple-choice quiz once a week, which will cover material from that week's reading material.

Midterm Exam (25% points): Halfway through the semester, students will take a timed midterm exam, where they will identify and define 10 key concepts learned so far, as well as explaining their significance to the study of gender, sexuality, women, and politics in the SWANA region.

Research paper (35% points): Due in the final week of class, students are expected to write a 6-8 page-long research paper. In it, they will choose a particular SWANA state and present detailed research on its political history, its development of women's status and the emergence of women's activism and movements, the relationship between women's movements and the state, and issues facing women and queer individuals. The research paper should be 6-8 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman Font, 1-inch margins, with a bibliography at the end.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Feminist Theory and Methodology

Session 1: Introductions

- Introductions; expectations, questions; no reading.

Session 2: Introductions

- Lecture and discussion introducing the Middle East and North Africa; no reading.

Session 3: Feminist Theory and Women's Mobilizations

- Scott, Joan. 1986. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91(5): 1053-1075.
- Edward, Said. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, pp. 1-28.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1991. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, pp. 51-80.

Session 4: Gender Studies and SWANA

- Charrad, Mounira M. 2011. "Gender in the Middle East: Islam, State, Agency." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 417-437.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104 (3): 783-790.

Session 5: Feminist Methodology

- Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14 (3): 227-249.
- DeVault, Marjorie L. 1996. "Talking Back to Sociology: Distinctive Contributions of Feminist Methodology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 29-50.

2. The State

Session 6: Gender, sexuality, and feminist theories of the state

- Charrad, Mounira. 2001. *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-13, pp. 147-168.
- Mikdashi, Maya.. 2014. "Sex and Sectarianism: The Legal Architecture of Lebanese Citizenship." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34(2): 279-293.

Session 7: Politics of women's rights and mobilizations

- Tripp, Aili Mari. 2019. *Seeking Legitimacy: Why Arab Autocracies Adopt Women's Rights*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-28.

3. Women's Social Movements

Session 8: Revolutionary women

- Amrane-Minne, Danièle Djamila, and Farida Abu-Haidar. 1999. "Women and Politics in Algeria from the War of Independence to Our Day." *Research in African Literatures* 30(3): 62-77.
- Cheref, Abdelkader. 2006. "Engendering or Endangering Politics in Algeria? Salima Ghezali, Louisa Hanoune and Khalida Messaoudi." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2 (2): 60-85.

Session 9: Women's movements

- Al-Ali, Nadje. 2012. "Gendering the Arab Spring." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5(1): 26-31.
- Salime, Zakia. 2016. "Embedded Counterpublics: Women and Islamic Revival in Morocco." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 37(3): 47-73.

Session 10: Women and the Arab Spring

- Al-Ali, Nadje. 2012. "Gendering the Arab Spring." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5(1): 26-31.
- Johansson-Nogués, Elisabeth. 2013. "Gendering the Arab Spring? Rights and (in)security of Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan women." *Security Dialogue* 44(5-6): 393-409.

Session 11: Women, democracy and political liberalization

- Shalaby, Marwa. 2016. "Challenges Facing Women's Political Participation Post Arab Spring: The Cases of Egypt and Tunisia." In *Empowering Women after the Arab Spring*, Shalaby, Marwa, and Valentine Moghadam, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Welborne, Bozena. 2016. "No Agency Without Grassroots Autonomy: A Framework for Evaluating Women's Political Inclusion in Jordan, Bahrain, and Morocco." In *Empowering Women after the Arab Spring*, Shalaby, Marwa, and Valentine Moghadam, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

4. Midterm

5. Women's Political Participation

Session 12: Women's mobilizations in voting and elections

- Aissa, Meriem. 2018. "Kuwait: Why Did Women's Suffrage Take So Long?" In *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights*, ed. Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Netina Tan. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blaydes, Lisa, and Safinaz El Tarouty. 2009. "Women's Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization." *Middle East Journal* 63 (3): 364-380.

Session 13: Feminist intersectionality

- Benstead, Lindsay J., and Kristen Kao. 2020. "Female Electability in the Arab World: The Advantages of Intersectionality." *Comparative Politics*

Session 14: Women's rights and Islam: A divide/reconciliation?

- Clark, Janine Astrid, and Jillian Schwedler. 2003. "Who Opened the Window? Women's Activism in Islamist Parties." *Comparative Politics* 35 (3): 293-312.
- Arat, Zehra F Kabasakal. 2017. "Political Parties and Women's Rights in Turkey." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44 (2): 240-254.

6. Women's Representation

Session 15: Women's representation in politics and democratic interventions

- Shalaby, Marwa. 2016. "Women's Political Representation and Authoritarianism in the Arab World." Policy brief, POMEPS: Project on the Middle East in Political Science, George Washington University.
- Nanes, Stefanie. 2015. "The Quota Encouraged Me to Run: Evaluating Jordan's Municipal Quota for Women." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11 (3): 261-282.

Session 16: Mid-semester break; no class.

7. Feminist Theories of Violence against Women

Session 17: Addressing state and public violence against women

- Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2010. "When Do Governments Promotes Women's Rights? A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Sex Equality Policy." *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (1): 207-216.
- Forester, Summer. 2019. "Protecting women, protecting the state: Militarism, security threats, and government action on violence against women in Jordan." *Security Dialogue* 50 (6): 475-492.

Session 18: Islamic and secular law

- Frank, Ana, and Ayşe Betül Çelik. 2017. "Beyond Islamic versus Secular Framing: A Critical Analysis of Reproductive Rights Debates in Turkey." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13 (2): 195-218.
- Agrama, Hussein Ali. 2010. "Secularism, Sovereignty, Indeterminacy: Is Egypt a Secular or Religious State?" *Contemporary Studies in Society and History* 52(3): 495-523.

8. Queer Politics

Session 19: Queer/LGBTQ+ politics in the SWANA region

- Ghassan, Moussawi. 2015. "(Un)critically queer organizing: Towards a more complex analysis of LGBTQ organizing in Lebanon." *Sexualities* 18 (5-6): 593- 617.

- Zengin, Asli. 2016. "Violent Intimacies: Tactile State Power, Sex/Gender Transgression, and the Politics of Touch in Contemporary Turkey." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12(2): 225-245.

Session 20: Queer gender politics

- Ghannam, Farha. 2013. *Live and Die like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bacchetta, Paola. and Jin Haritaworn. 2011. "There are Many Transatlantics: Homonationalism, Homotransnationalism and Feminist-Queer-Trans of Color Theories and Practices." In *Transatlantic Conversations: Feminism as Traveling Theory*. Edited by Kathy Davis and Mary Evans. London: Routledge, 127-144.

Session 21: Sexual violence and anti-feminist backlash

- Chouakri, Yasmina. 2019. "Violence Against Women in Political Parties: Analysis of the Situation in Tunisia." National Democratic Institute.
- El-Ashmawy, Nadeen. 2017. "Sexual Harassment in Egypt: Class Struggle, State Oppression, and Women's Empowerment." *Hawwa* 15 (3): 225-256.

- 9. Research Paper Week:** Sessions 21-22 for students to brainstorm research paper ideas; no readings.