Course Title: Authoritarianism and Protest Politics in the Middle East
Paul Kingston, kingston@chass.utoronto.ca
Professor, Political Science and Global Development Studies (UTSC),
Office: SS 3036, 416-978-5499
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-4 pm.

Street scene in the old city of Damascus, Winter 1992 (photo by prof!).
**Course Description:** This course sets out to understand the political challenges facing protest politics in the unsettled but still resiliently authoritarian Middle East region by focusing on the dynamics of authoritarian emergence, reproduction, and resilience.

The course is divided into four parts. The first section acts as a quick introduction to some of the theoretical building blocks needed in this course: from a review of the problematic impact of ‘essentialist’ forms of analysis – cultural (orientalism) and/or theoretical; to a review of approaches to the study of the state and state formation; to an introduction to various approaches to the study of contentious politics in the MENA region.

The second section dives into three sets of case studies of the history of ‘state formation’ in the MENA region – the first week focusing on the impact of the colonial period of state formation in both emerging republics as well as monarchies, the second week focusing on the seminal case of ‘Nasserist’ regime formation in the post-colonial period in Egypt, with the third week broadening our examination of post-colonial regime formation through a comparative analysis of other republics and monarchies (Syria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia).

The third section of the course examines the transformations of authoritarian rule in the MENA region in the post-populist, neoliberal era. The focus here is on the changing strategies of authoritarian rule – sometimes referred to as ‘authoritarian upgrading’ – designed to promote authoritarian adaptability and resilience. Two general themes will be visited. The first theme revolves around *intra-regime power-sharing* – with one week being focused on approaches to regime-elite power sharing, and the other week focusing on civil-military relations. The second theme will revolve around attempts by *regimes to buttress their social/societal control* – with one week focusing on their post-populist approaches to state-society relations, and the other week examining their promotion of new forms of political identity designed to buttress ‘hegemonic’ rule.

The final week of the course will focus on the post-Arab Uprising period – characterized by the counter-revolutionary return of intensified authoritarianism across much of the MENA region. We will examine several cases of counter-revolution – in Egypt, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia and debate the question of the durability of the political economy of repression that (so sadly) characterizes the current politics of the MENA region.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **10% for general participation in class discussions and evidence that students are doing their readings!** Undergraduate students are required in most weeks of the course to read at least three readings per week; graduate students are required to read at least four!

   Note 1: This is constant but not an excessive amount of reading per week. As a result, I am expecting to hear in class discussions of (i) evidence of thoughtful
questions about aspects of the arguments in these articles that are not clear; and/or (ii) evidence of a detailed and nuanced understanding of these articles.

Note 2: For those students who do not always feel comfortable speaking up in class, you are welcome to compensate for this by coming to office hours and talking about the readings with the professor.

2. **10% for at least two in-class oral presentations of articles** on the reading list (the number will depend upon the size of the class). The presentation must be *no longer than 10 minutes* in length and follow the following format *rigorously*: (i) present the analytical *question* that the article is asking and the context that helps to explain why that question is being asked; (ii) present the *thesis* that the article proposes – *work on this to make sure you have it right!*; and (iii) provide a well-organized, schematic, but brief summary of the argumentation used to support the thesis (the bulk of the presentation).

3. **20% for the pre-class posting of your substantive reflections and questions on each week’s readings on the Quercus Discussion Board.** These should generally be posted before the beginning of each class in which the readings are assigned. 10% of this mark will be for the regularity of each student’s participation in this exercise, and 10% will be for the degree to which each student has given thought to their reflections and questions. *In short, this is another way in which your commitment to the consistent reading of the course material can be determined.*

4. **15% for three thematic analytical article summaries (5% each):**

   a. Undergraduate Students are required to write three thematic analytical summaries of NO LONGER than 3 pages double spaced (12 pt font). Each summary – to be based upon *TWO* articles in any given week in the syllabus (except for the week on contentious politics that will have its own assignment) - must focus on common analytical themes and/or questions that cross-cut these articles. Each analytical summary assignment is due *one week after* the readings have been discussed in class.

   b. Graduate Students are also required write three analytical summaries of NO LONGER than 4 pages double spaced (12 pt font). Each summary – to be based upon *THREE* articles in any given week in the syllabus - must focus on the common analytical themes that cross-cut these articles. Each analytical summary assignment is due *one week after* the readings have been discussed in class.

5. **20% for a 5-7 page/12 pt font short essay comparing theories of contentious politics:**
a. All students are asked to answer the following question:

“Please outline the distinct ways in which the following scholars have understood the political context within which contentious politics/social movements have arisen - comparing the ‘political opportunity structure’ approach of classical social movement theory as presented by Wictorowicz (2004), to the revised understanding of that concept in the ‘dynamics of contention’ approach of Beinin and Vairel (2013), as well as the notion of ‘hegemonic contraction’ that is offered by Chalcraft (2016). What has been gained and/or lost in the study of contentious politics in the MENA region by the use of each of these approaches in your opinion?”

b. This short essay focuses on all three readings in Week 4 of the course – “Approaches to the Study of Contentious Politics in the MENA Region” All students are also welcome to do further reading in these texts for this short essay – but this is not required.

c. The short essay must be submitted on Wednesday, February 15th by 11:59 pm via Quercus.

d. Note for undergraduate students - more marking weight will be place on your ability to accurately articulate the three distinct approaches, than on the final question asking for your comparative analysis, though I am also interested and require this too!

e. Note for graduate students - I will be placing equal marking weight on both aspects of this short essay - the accurate articulation of the three distinct approaches, and of your tripartite comparative analysis of them.

6. 25% for a ‘Final Reflection Paper’ on the course. The paper will be between 7-10 page and be written doubled spaced in a 12 pt font. The task will be as follows:

Using - ONLY! - material from the course, each student will be asked to write a short paper reflecting on two things:

First, what, for you, has been the most important conceptual insight from this course that has helped you understand the dynamics of authoritarian politics and development in the MENA region over the course of the 20th and early 21st centuries? Second, what are the various components and aspects of the course – conceptual and empirical – that have helped you reach this conclusion? Please write an integrated, scholarly answer to these questions.

Note – while this paper asks for individual student reflections, it is still an academic paper and must be written – with referencing – in an academic style with an
introduction and plan for the paper, followed by an organized, systematic, and integrated set of arguments, and a conclusion.

Other requirements for this assignment:

1. Undergraduate papers are to be between 7-10 pages/double spaced/12 pt font;
2. Graduate papers are to be between 10-12 pages/double-spaced/12 pt font.
3. All papers must be submitted by Monday evening at 11:59 pm, April 8th.
4. Late Penalties: 3% of the final mark in the course per day of the assignment that is late. Extensions will only be granted in extenuating circumstances that could not be anticipated ahead of time.

Illness and Absence Declarations

For Winter 2024: The Verification of Illness (also known as a “doctor’s note”) is not required. Students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work should report their absence through the online absence declaration. The declaration is available to students through ACORN under the Profile and Settings menu. For updates, please reference the University policy for absence declaration.

Students should also advise their instructor of their absence. Instructors will not be automatically alerted when a student declares an absence. It is a student’s responsibility to let instructors know that they have used the Absence Declaration so that you can discuss any needed consideration, where appropriate. Some instructors may ask their department to confirm absences reported by students to ensure that they have been entered into the system on the dates indicated by a student.

Effective in January 2024: The number of consecutive days in the future that students can declare using the tool in ACORN will change from 14 to 7 calendar days. This means students will be able to declare their absence up to seven days from the current day, plus two days retroactive. No additional information or documentation is required. The ACORN guide for students has also been updated (scroll down FAQs to Profile & Settings subsection).

Academic Integrity - General:

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/
Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
3. Making up sources or facts;
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

**Academic Integrity - Citations/Referencing:**

Please follow this general formatting advice for citations and references in papers:

1. Footnotes placed at the bottom of a page should appear as follows: page number, title, author name, date of publication.
2. In-text references should be placed in parentheses and include the following information: page number, author name, date of publication;
3. Quotation marks placed around words or passages taken verbatim from the source;
4. A complete entry for all sources used in the text should appear in a bibliography at the end of the document.

**Academic Integrity - ChatGBT and the Use of AI Technologies:**

The knowing use of generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of, an examination, term test, assignment, or any other form of academic assessment, may be considered an academic offense in this course.

This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to help you reach course learning outcomes.
Accessibility Needs:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility for those students that require it. If you require accommodation or have any accessibility concerns, please let me know, email disability.services@utoronto.ca or visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.
Section One –
Authoritarian Origins and Dynamics in the MENA Region: Theoretical Perspectives

1. Introduction to the Course (January 10th):

Bellin, Eva; and Lust, Ellen; and Lynch, Marc; “Responses to Howard and Walters” in Perspectives on Politics, 12, 2, June 2014, p. 409-416.

2. Avoiding ‘Essentialisms’: Debating Theoretical Frameworks Used to Analyze Politics in the MENA Region (January 17th):

What theoretical approaches to the study of politics in the Middle East does each of these authors critique? What theoretical approaches does each of these authors prioritize? Does this add up to a general set of criteria for approaching the analysis of politics in the MENA region?

Please read at least two of the four readings for this week (grad students are required to read at least three of the readings). I am only requiring two because I want you to come to class having read your two chosen readings carefully enough to allow you to answer in some detail the questions above.


Zubaida, Sami, “The Nation State in the Middle East” in Islam, the People, and the State, 1989, p. 121-145.
3. Approaches to the Study of the State: Regimes, State Formation/Building, and State-Society Relations (January 24th):

In this week, we will unpack some of the conceptual building blocks of politics in the MENA region – states, state formation, and regimes, all in the context of an internal-external nexus. These concepts will then be applied to the analysis of the four case studies for the week.

Please read Soauli and Waldner and one of the following three case studies in state formation in the MENA region (grad students, please read two of the three).


4. Approaches to the Study of Contentious Politics in the MENA Region (January 31st):

This class will compare across three distinct approaches to contentious politics as applied to the MENA region – classical social movement theory, theories associated with the ‘dynamics of contention’ approach, and theories associated with the notion of ‘hegemonic contraction’.


Section Two – Case Studies of State Formation: Colonial and Early Post-Colonial in the MENA Region:

5. Case Studies in Colonial State Formation – Emerging Republics and Monarchies (February 7th)

This week investigates the degree to which colonial contexts shaped local MENA states, societies, and political economies. Key issues include: the degree and nature of local societal incorporation into emerging state institutions, the degree to which this represented a move towards unmediated, as opposed to mediated, political order, and what legacies this left for the post-colonial era.

Please read the Owen chapter and at least two of the following four case studies (grad students are required to read at least three of the following four case studies).


6. Case Studies in Early Post-Colonial State Formation I – Egypt’s Nasserist ‘Revolution from Above’ (Feb 14th)

Contentious Politics Short Essay Due Today at 11:59pm!
This week will focus on the seminal post-colonial case study of Egypt’s Nasserist ‘Revolution from Above’ that set the pace for post-colonial state-led socio-economic and political change across the MENA region. We will examine and debate its goals, its emerging challenges, and its political legacies. A key issue in this time period is the degree and nature of societal incorporation into these new and expanding Egyptian state.

Please read the Owen and Hinnebusch chapters and at least one of the following three case studies (grad students are required to read at least two case studies).


Kandil, Hazem, Two States Within a State: The Road to June 1967” in Soldiers, Spies and Statesmen: Egypt’s Road to Revolt, 2012, p. 43-98.


READING WEEK

7. Case Studies in Early Post-Colonial State Formation II - Emerging Populist Authoritarian Republics and Monarchies and the Challenges of State/Regime Formation (February 28th)

This week compares distinct post-colonial paths towards regime and state formation – contrasting the emergence of the populist authoritarian states such as Syria and Tunisia with the MENA region’s monarchical regimes. Basic questions include: how did processes of regime consolidation differ, how did processes of societal incorporation differ, and what consequences did this have state formation, state capacity, and economic development in each?
Please read Hertog and at least two of the following four case studies (grad students are required to read three of the four case studies).


**Republican Regimes:**

Waldner, David, “Constructing Coalitions and Building States: Turkey” in *State Building and Late Development*, 1999, p. 53-76.


**Monarchical Regimes:**


Monaldo, Victor, “Oil Curse or Monarchical Exception?” in *The Institutions Curse: Natural Resources, Politics, and Development*, 2016, p. 295-348 (Note: Unless you are interested in quantitative methodologies, there is much methodological analysis in this chapter that you can skip over).

Section Three –

The Transformation of Authoritarianisms in the Neoliberal Era

8. The Problem of Authoritarian Power-Sharing I: Regime Management of the Politics of Elite Incorporation in the Neoliberal Era (March 6th)

Authoritarian regimes face an acute dilemma in managing their relationships with powerful elite networks. On the one hand, their power is directly linked to the degree to which these elite networks are incorporated into their regime networks; on the other hand, regime power can also be directly threatened by these processes of elite political incorporation. How have authoritarian regimes in the Middle East managed these dilemmas?

*Undergraduate students, please read Hertog, Svolik and at least one of the following four case studies; grads, please read Hertog, Svolik and at least two of the case studies.*

Authoritarian regimes face difficult dilemmas when managing politics ‘inside the black-box of the state’, especially with respect to the management of the state’s coercive apparatus. When regimes have faltered, for example, many have done so as a result of ‘revolts from within the state’. How have Middle Eastern states tried to solve these dilemmas and what have been the consequences for state and regime formation?

Undergrads, please read Owen and at least two of the following four case studies; grad students, please read Owen and three of the four case studies.


10. A Third Problem of Authoritarian Control - Post-Populist Regimes and the Challenge of Managing State-Society Relations (March 20th)

After having initially benefitted from popular mobilization in the era of populist authoritarian and nationalist politics, republican regimes in the MENA region have moved away from their populist roots and ‘national social pacts’ in the neoliberal era. What affect has this retreat from alliances with and ‘commitments to’ popular forces had on state-society relations?

Undergraduates, please read at least two of the following four readings; grad students, please read at least three.


Harris, Kevan, “A Martyr’s Welfare State and its Contradictions: Regime Resilience and Limits through the Lens of Social Policy in Iran” in (eds.) Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Lenders, Middle East Authoritarianisms: Governance, Contestation, and Regime Resilience in Syria and Iran, 2013, p. 61-82.

11. An Additional Approach to Authoritarian Control – Debating the Utility of Deploying Political Ideologies and Identities (March 27th)

This week, we investigate the question of why regimes send so much time and money on such things as the promotion of ‘cults of personality’ and/or of certain kinds of political
identities and ideologies? Where do these strategies fit into the ‘authoritarian toolkit’ in terms of their importance and effectiveness?

Undergraduates, please read at least two of the following four readings; grad students, please read at least three.


12. The Dynamics (and Future?) of Counter-Revolution in the Post-Arab Spring MENA Region (April 3rd)

What explains the prevalence of the counter-revolutionary intensification of authoritarian rule in the MENA region in the wake of the Arab Uprisings, and do you think this trend is sustainable?

Please read Heydemann and Allinson’s “Introduction” and at least one of the following two case study readings.


Allinson, J., “Political Revolutions and Counter-Revolution: Tunisia and Egypt” in The Age of Counter-Revolution: States and Revolutions in the Middle East, 2022, p. 103-142.