

Modern Language Center (MLC)

(AM/INTR 375) The United States in the Arab World

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: International Relations / Middle East Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites: None

Course Description

This course offers an extensive and academically rigorous examination of the historical, political, cultural, and strategic dimensions of US engagement in the Arab world. Beginning with the post–World War II order, students trace the evolution of American foreign policy, from Cold War alliances and containment strategies to modern counterterrorism, democratization initiatives, military interventions, and global security doctrines.

Through case studies, primary-source analysis, and multi-perspective discussions, learners explore major turning points such as the Arab Nationalist movement, the June 1967 War, the oil crises of the 1970s, the Gulf War, the 9/11 attacks, the US-led invasion of Iraq, and the Arab Spring.

Students analyze how US involvement has influenced regional governance, economic development, public opinion, security structures, cultural perceptions, and diplomatic relations. The course additionally assesses how Arab societies interpret American power—examining narratives of interventionism, democratization, Orientalism, and national sovereignty.

Using Jordan as a living case study, students gain firsthand exposure to the local perspectives shaping Arab interpretations of US foreign policy.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Interpret the historical roots of US–Arab relations and their evolution since 1945.
- Assess how political, cultural, and economic factors shape American policy in the Middle East.
- Analyze successes and failures of various US administrations in addressing regional crises.
- Evaluate the impact of US foreign policy on Arab governance, security, and public opinion.
- Identify key moments where US actions reshaped regional alliances and global geopolitics.
- Build competence in analyzing political discourse, diplomatic documents, and international relations scholarship.
- Conduct independent research using academic, field, and community-based sources..

Course Requirements

Students must complete all assigned readings before class and be prepared to contribute meaningfully to discussions, debates, and field excursions.

Assignments include:

- **Three Research Projects:** Each a five-page analytical paper linked to course themes, including presentation.
- **Homework:** Short analytical responses, reading reflections, and vocabulary tasks.
- **Field-Based Reports:** Students analyze perspectives gathered during excursions or interviews with locals.
- **Mid-term Exam:** Covers early historical developments, Cold War politics, and foundational theories.
- **Final Paper & Presentation:** A 10–12 page analysis with oral defense.

Attendance at field visits and guest lectures is mandatory as these experiences form a core component of the course

Grading

Preparation & Participation: 20%

Homework: 10%

Presentations: 20%

Mid-term Exam: 10%

Research Projects: 15%

Final Paper & Presentation: 15%

Final Exam: 10%

Readings

Assigned readings consist of curated academic excerpts, policy analyses, historical accounts, and political commentary. External URLs are not included.

Representative authors include:

- Fawaz Gerges
- Rashid Khalidi
- Peter Hahn
- Donna Marsh
- Melani McAlister
- Richard Parker
- Shibley Telhami
- Jean-Loup Samaan

- David Lesch
- William Quandt

- These readings support historical understanding, strategic analysis, and interpretation of US–Arab relations

Additional Resources

Supplementary materials may include:

- Policy reports on US aid, diplomacy, and regional strategy
- Analyses of anti-Americanism and public opinion trends
- Academic works on US interventionism, ideology, and political identity.
- Film excerpts, media reports, and interviews relevant to US–Arab dynamics

These resources reinforce students' contextual and analytical understanding

Outline of Course Content

Topic 1: Understanding the Arab World

- Peoples, cultures, modern history

Topic 2: The US & the Middle East After WWII

- Cold War alignment
- US–Iran relations in the 20th century

Topic 3: US–Arab Relations During the Cold War

- US and political Islam
- The June 1967 War

Topic 4: Arab Nationalism & US Policy (1958–1967)

- Shifts in US policy in response to Arab Nationalism

Topic 5: The US & the Arab–Israeli Conflict

- US presidency, UN Resolution 242, PLO, Arab League

Topic 6: Impact of the Conflict on US–Arab Relations

- Anti-Americanism
- US–Palestine relations

Topic 7: The Egyptian–Israeli Peace Process

- Camp David Accords

Topic 8: The Gulf War & the 1990s

- US strategy
- “New World Order”

Topic 9: The US & the Peace Process

- Oslo Accords
- Clinton Administration
- Iran’s role

Topic 10: 9/11 & the Iraq War

- US–Saudi relations
- Oil and geostrategy

Topic 11: The US in American Imagination

- Cultural conflicts vs. political interests
- Orientalism
- The Amman Message

Topic 12: The Arab Spring

- Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain

Topic 13: Post–Arab Spring

- Syria, Yemen, rise of ISIS

Topic 14: The US & Jordan

USAID, economy, education, trade

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