Objectives and description
This course explores some key issues in Middle East politics nowadays. It deals mainly with the Machreq states including the two regional superpowers Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We will start the course with a general lecture introducing Middle Eastern politics through its key historical moments in the XXth century that brought up the modern nation-state system from the remains of the Ottoman Empire and authoritarian regimes once states became independent.

The thematic organization of the course intends to open several debates on today’s issues at stake in the Middle East region. Starting with wide-reaching issues and in order to make the link with the inaugural session, the first lecture theme proposes to deal with authoritarianism in the Middle East. Second, we will continue with the longstanding problem of the Palestinian refugees. This will bring us to the main internal divisions on the Palestinian political scene by discussing the political success of the Hamas movement since 2006 with its domination of Gaza.

Shifting to the neighbouring state, Lebanon, the two following sessions will discuss sectarianism as a mode of governance and the role of Hizbullah as a powerful political party and an armed non-state actor. The Syrian issue will be then analysed through the fate of millions of refugees living in Lebanon in Jordan, a lasting problem for the decade to come. In the Machreq, the political trajectory of Iraq raises the question of the Kurdish minority and how the political leaders have managed to mobilise around their ethnic identity to secure greater autonomy in the post-Saddam era. The final session will focus on al-Qaida, the jihadist matrix of the Islamic State, in order to shed light on the changing phenomenon of the violent movements in political Islam.

Requirements and grading
The CMINT is aimed to be a discussion class. This implies mandatory diligence, personal commitment and regular work.

Active and well-prepared participation is expected. Readings are compulsory; at every session we will discuss them together: take time at home to read and take notes. One of you, randomly selected, may be asked to present the assigned reading of the week orally.

To get ready for discussion, the following questions must be addressed to each text:
→ What is the author’s main thesis?
→ What arguments are developed to defend it?
→ What sort of empirical material is used? Does it fit with the corresponding arguments?
→ How does the text contribute to the field?
→ What is your personal opinion of the text?
10% of the overall grade reflects your participation grade in class throughout the semester.

**Oral presentation**

- Each one of you will give a 10 minute-long oral presentation on an assigned reading. You will have to hand out the outline of your presentation and your bibliography, presented according to international standards. Additionally, you can use a Powerpoint presentation.

When preparing an oral presentation, keep in mind the following methodological advice:

→ An oral presentation must be built around a thesis. You are supposed to provide a demonstration, including arguments and examples to prove your assertions.
→ You need to use academic sources for your presentation: books, articles of academic journals, newspapers or magazine articles if they are scholarly in nature. Online sources are OK, but again they need to be scholarly in nature: wikipedia.com does not count! However, you may use it, as well as movies, blogs, radio programs, in addition to academic sources.

- 40% of the overall grade: Oral presentations based on readings (see below)

**Final assessment**

- 50% of the global grade: Final written exam: this 1h30 exam will take place at the end of the semester and will consist of a set of short questions (3-4).

**Course schedule**

1. Introduction


2. Authoritarian regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral presentation 1</th>
<th>Did Tunisia succeed to get rid of the authoritarian system that prevailed under Ben Ali? (Mullin, 2015)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation 2</td>
<td>Are the Houthis in Yemen a revolutionary movement? (Brehony, 2015)</td>
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3. **Palestine and the Palestinian refugee issue**

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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation 1</td>
<td>Where lies the border between Israel and the future state of Palestine? (Khamaisi, 2008)</td>
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<td>Oral presentation 2</td>
<td>Why do Palestinian refugees are facing a legal limbo in Lebanon? (Knudsen, 2009)</td>
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4. **Gaza and the Hamas movement**

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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation 1</td>
<td>The marginalization and abandonment of Gaza: an Israeli system of control? (Peteet, 2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation 2</td>
<td>Is the discovery of Gas resources off Gaza coasts a way to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? (Antreasyan, 2013)</td>
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5. **Lebanon and the sectarianism**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation 1</td>
<td>Is sectarianism a possible mean to rebuild the Lebanese State? (Makdisi, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation 2</td>
<td>Beyond Sectarianism: Hegemony, Reproduction and Resilience in Lebanon (Di Peri, 2016)</td>
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6. **Hizbullah: an Iranian proxy?**

|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
### 7. The Syrian refugee issue

**Reading**


**Oral presentation 1**

What are the main reasons for the precarity of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon? (Janmyr, 2016)

**Oral presentation 2**

What are the main stakes for the Jordanian authorities when facing the Syrian refugee crisis? (Achilli, 2015)

### 8. The Kurdistan Regional Government and the Kurdish identity

**Reading**


**Oral presentation 1**

What are the disputed territories showing of the relationship between Erbil and Baghdad? (Bartu, 2010)

**Oral presentation 2**

What is at stake in the perspective of an independent Kurdish State in the north of Iraq? (ICG, 2015)

### 9. From al-Qaida to ISIS

**Reading**


**Oral presentation 1**

Explain the successes and setbacks faced by IS in its implantation in Syria? (Legrand 2014)

**Oral presentation 2**

Why ISIS is perceived as a major threat for the West? (Nuruzzaman, 2015)
Specific Bibliography

The following titles refer to the above mentioned references for oral discussion or presentations. Additional references will be provided upon a request.


