

International Relations of the Middle East

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Dates and schedule:

Monday	17 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 11:00 until 13:00
Tuesday	18 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 4 (BF158) from 11:00 until 13:00
Wednesday	19 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 4 (BF158) from 14:00 until 16:00
Thursday	20 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 11:00 until 13:00
Friday	21 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 11:00 until 13:00
Monday	24 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 15:00 until 17:00
Tuesday	25 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 15:00 until 17:00
Wednesday	26 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 15:00 until 17:00
Thursday	27 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 15:00 until 17:00
Friday	28 March @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156) from 11:00 until 13:00

Credits: 20

Course description

The aim of this seminar is to study the international relations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by applying concepts and theories from International Relations scholarship. While the study of the international relations of the MENA was traditionally dominated by realist and neo-realist approaches, a rather stark divide used to mark the relationship between IR and Middle East studies until recently — perhaps surprisingly so. Indeed, questions of regional security, war and peace, alliances, foreign interventions, and the role of non-state actors (to name but a few) are central issues in both IR and the study of Middle East politics. More recent scholarship has not only applied a wide range of different approaches to study specific phenomena in the Middle East. It has also highlighted the important contributions – and potential contributions – that one field of study can make to the respective other. While IR concepts and theories may thus help explain events and developments in the Middle East and North Africa, the region also provides crucial case studies for a critical engagement with, and development of, IR concepts and theories.

Starting with an exploration of the reasons why IR and Middle East studies were disconnected from each other for quite some time, the seminar will focus on the usefulness of different approaches in IR

to understand and explain political characteristics and developments in the MENA region. It will discuss questions of regional order, alliance formation, interests and identity politics, and domestic (and economic) determinants of foreign policy from different theoretical perspectives while also paying attention to region's relationship with the US, Europe, and other external actors.

Learning objectives and outcomes

Researchers who have successfully completed this seminar should be able to:

- Understand the major contributions of IR theory to the study of political developments in the Middle East and North Africa
- Analyse political developments in the MENA through different theoretical and conceptual lenses
- Identify the major empirical questions in the study of the international politics of the Middle East and North Africa
- Identify the major debates and developments in the specialized literature
- Write well-structured essays / response papers on pertinent questions in the study of MENA's international relations by employing conceptual insights from IR

Format and requirements

Researchers are expected to do the assigned reading prior to each session and come prepared to class. Active participation in class discussions is a requirement. Researchers will introduce and guide the seminar debates in sessions 3-10. In addition, researchers taking the seminar as elective for credit are required to prepare 2 response papers / analytical essays (between 600 to 1,200 words, notes and bibliography included) over the course of the seminar. To receive credit for this seminar, researchers need to pass these three requirements (active participation, introducing and guiding seminar debates, 2 response papers / analytical essays).

The seminar is open to all researchers but some familiarity with the history and politics of the Middle East is expected. (A seminar on the history and politics of the Middle East was offered in the first term).