This is a draft version of the final syllabus, which will be available the first day of class or shortly before.

JOUR-UA 505.002
Issues and Ideas in Covering the Middle East

Prof. Mohamad Bazzi
mohamad.bazzi@nyu.edu
Office Phone: 212-998-3613
Office: 20 Cooper Square, Room 644

Office Hours:
-- Monday 6 pm to 7:30 pm
-- Tuesday 6 pm to 7 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES

The Middle East is in the headlines every day. But the coverage is often bewildering, focusing on the latest death toll in Iraq, a terrorist bombing, or an ongoing political crisis. There is little historical or political context in most of this coverage.

This course will provide students with an understanding of contemporary issues in the Middle East (such as the rise of militant Islam; the roots of Sunni-Shia tension; the failure of Arab nationalism; terrorism versus national resistance; the problem of the nation-state) by reading works that combine history, political analysis, and narrative journalism. This historical and political background will help students to eventually write about the region with depth and nuance, and to evaluate the coverage that they read. In addition, we will analyze the evolution and implications of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Today, the Arab world is poised for an era of political and cultural renewal. For the first time in decades, popular uprisings have toppled the region’s longest-reigning dictators, while others cling desperately to power. Amid these momentous events, scholars, journalists, and politicians are scrambling to explain how and why these revolutions ignited the region after years of political stagnation and dashed attempts at reform.

We will also discuss the challenges of reporting from a region with competing narratives, authoritarian regimes that have little respect for a free press, and places where journalists must work under constant danger. We will have occasional guest speakers who have worked as foreign correspondents or editors managing coverage of the region, as well as diplomats who have served in Middle East postings. By the end of this course, you will hopefully be a more informed reader and analyst of events in the region.
REQUIRED TEXTS

-- *A Portrait of Egypt: A Journey Through the World of Militant Islam* by Mary Anne Weaver

-- *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein* by Andrew and Patrick Cockburn

-- *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* by Roy Mottahedeh

-- *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih (novel)

-- *Being Arab* by Samir Kassir [available on NYU Classes]

The required texts are available at the NYU Bookstore. I have also placed them on reserve at Bobst Library. Here is a link to the course reserve listing in Bobcat: [http://bit.ly/1yZxxvw](http://bit.ly/1yZxxvw)

We will also read and analyze contemporary magazine and newspaper reporting from the region. **During this course, you are expected to keep up with major news developments related to the Middle East.**

ASSIGNMENTS & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Since this is a seminar course, attendance and class participation are essential. Two or more unexcused absences will result in an automatic lowering of a student’s grade. (The only acceptable excuse for missing a class is a severe illness, which you can document with a doctor’s note, or a death in the family.) To do well in this course, you must keep up with the readings and participate regularly in the class discussions. **Note: No student will obtain a grade of “A” or “A-” without active class participation.**

Every week, each student will be required to submit a brief written response (about 3 paragraphs) to the readings. I will also sometimes go around the room and ask you to read out the highlights of your response, which will help direct our discussion. Your responses must not simply be a summary of the readings; you must offer an evaluation of the author’s main arguments and/or an analysis of the author’s reporting techniques.

There will be a midterm paper and a final paper that will involve analyzing themes that emerge from the class readings; a critique of media coverage of an important political or historical development in the region (such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq or its aftermath); or a critique of a significant piece of journalism about the region. **Papers should be up to 2000 words.** The paper must use a variety of sources: if you are focusing on one major article or piece of reporting from the region, you must include other sources. You may do
original reporting for these papers, but that is not required. Even if you plan to do a
reported paper, you must supplement your original reporting with other sources. All
papers must include a bibliography and proper footnotes.

For your final paper, you can do a media analysis/critique focusing an issue or country in
the Middle East (as long as you focus on a different issue or country than you did for
your midterm paper). You can also choose to write a “policy brief,” where you analyze a
current problem in the Middle East and build an argument that explains how U.S. foreign
policy should address this problem or issue. We will discuss both the midterm and final
papers in class, and I will provide you with guidelines.

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on your written assignments and your participation in class
discussions. If you show progress and strong effort during the course of the semester, I
will consider that in your final grade.

Your final grade will be based on the following:

• Class Participation (including reading responses): 30 percent
• Midterm Paper: 35 percent
• Final Paper: 35 percent

ATTENDANCE

This class meets only once a week. It’s essential to attend every class. Students who miss
two or more classes without a valid excuse will face a reduction in their final grade. (The
only acceptable excuse for missing a class is severe illness or a death in the family or a
religious observance.) Please note: Since this is a seminar course that is heavily based on
our discussion and analysis of the readings, please refrain from using your laptops and
other devices during our discussions.

DEADLINES

In journalism, you must meet your deadline. All assignments for this class must be turned
in on time. Late assignments will be subject to grade reductions, for each day that they
are late. I reserve the right not to accept late assignments. Any missed assignment will
receive an F.

PLAGIARISM
Plagiarism, fabricating quotes, or inventing sources will not be tolerated. Anyone caught doing so will fail the course and the department chair will be notified. For more information, see the NYU Journalism Handbook for Students: 
http://journalism.nyu.edu/ethics/handbook/

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

A NOTE ABOUT THE SCHEDULE: There might be a few changes to this schedule (some additional, short readings) as we attempt to keep up with developments in the Middle East. We will also occasionally have to work around the availability of guest speakers, and I might assign additional readings tied to a particular guest.

WEEK 1:

Topics: Introduction to major issues in the Middle East today. How do we cover foreign news?

In-Class Assignment: Write a 500 to 600-word autobiographical essay explaining why you are interested in foreign reporting and, specifically, the Middle East? Have you had any previous experience traveling or living in the Middle East? How has that experience affected your outlook on the region? Do you pay attention to media coverage of the Middle East, and what do you think of this coverage? (This assignment will not be graded.)

WEEK 2:

Topics: Egypt and the emergence of militant Islam.

Readings: Weaver, p. 1 to 122 [CHAPT 1 to 4]

WEEK 3:

Topics: The Afghan jihad and the birth of a new movement.

Readings: 
-- Weaver, p. 123-228 [CHAPT 5 + 6]
[NYU CLASSES]
-- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice speech in Cairo (June 2005)
-- President Barack Obama speech in Cairo (June 2009)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09/
-- President Barack Obama speech on the “Arab Spring” (May 2011)
NO CLASS on FEB. 15 (Presidents’ Day)

READINGS [NYU CLASSES]:
http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html?page_wanted=print
-- “The Times and Iraq: A Sample of the Coverage” [for reference only; no need to read the links]
http://www.nytimes.com/ref/international/middleeast/20040526CRITIQUE.html

WEEK 4:

Topics: The Arab states fight back. The making of a jihadist: Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri

READINGS:
-- Weaver, p. 229-293 [CHAPT 7 + 8]
[NYU CLASSES]
-- “The Man Behind Bin Laden” by Lawrence Wright.
The New Yorker. Sept. 16, 2002
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/09/16/020916fa_fact2

Movie: “Destiny” (in-class)

WEEK 5:
Topics: Iraq—The rise of Saddam Hussein and pan-Arab nationalism.

READINGS: Cockburn, p. 1-163 [CHAPT 1 to 6]

WEEK 6:

***MIDTERM PAPER DUE***

Topics: Iraq—what next? The failure of Arab nationalism.

READINGS: Cockburn, p. 164-294 [CHAPT 7 to 12]

WEEK 7: NO CLASS on MARCH 14 (NYU Spring Break)

READINGS: [NYU CLASSES]

http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20020301faessay7970/kenneth-m-pollack/next-stop-baghdad.html

http://nationalinterest.org/article/the-arab-wave-5169

-- “Beyond Fallujah: A year with the Iraqi resistance” by Patrick Graham.
Harper’s Magazine, June 2004
http://harpers.org/archive/2004/06/0080071

-- “When Fighting is Glimpsed From a Different Perspective” by Patrick Graham
Nieman Reports, Fall 2004
http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100783/When-Fighting-is-Glimpsed-From-a-Different-Perspective.aspx

WEEK 8:

Topics: War and propaganda.

READINGS:
[NYU CLASSES]
The Atlantic, March 2005
-- “Letter from Baghdad” by William Langewiesche. 
_The Atlantic_, Jan./Feb. 2005


**Movie:** “War Made Easy” (in-class)

**WEEK 9:**

Topics: The roots of the Sunni-Shia conflict.
**READINGS:** Mottahedeh, p. 1-185 [CHAPT 1 to 5]

**WEEK 10:**

Topics: Iran—between revolution and reform.
**READINGS:** Mottahedeh, p. 186-336 [CHAPT 6 to 8]
-- Short articles [NYU CLASSES]

**WEEK 11:**

Topics: Iran—what next? The new power dynamics in the Persian Gulf.
**READINGS:** Mottahedeh, p. 337-390 [CHAPT 9 to end]

**WEEK 12:**

Topics: The colonial legacy in the Middle East.
**READINGS:** “Season of Migration to the North” [entire novel]
**Discuss topics for final paper**

**WEEK 13:**

Topics: The “Arab malaise” and the “Arab spring”
**READINGS:** “Being Arab” by Samir Kassir [NYU CLASSES]
-- Articles on Arab revolutions

**WEEK 14:**
Topics: The politics of terrorism and the rise of Osama bin Laden.

**READINGS: [NYU CLASSES]: “Osama: The Making of a Terrorist,” by Jonathan Randal, p. 1-98 [CHAPT 1 to 4]**

**WEEK 15:**
Topics: Review of semester.

***FINAL PAPER DUE***