

POS 4931 (24681)

***The Rule of Law in the Middle East and
North Africa (MENA)***

Spring 2025

Dr. Patricia Sohn, Ph.D.

Associate Professor



Welcome to POS 4931 The Rule of Law in the Middle East and North Africa! All written assignments for this course, and some verbal presentation assignments, will be submitted on Canvas.

The course is an undergraduate seminar with a good deal of discussion. It provides opportunities to work on your (analytical) public speaking skills on academic topics in the classroom, analytical reading, and analytical writing. Your assignments are designed to prepare you for the final assessment, which is a 6-page written essay (see Assignments tab in Canvas and/or Syllabus for details). Readings are usually two chapters per week; when more, discussion responsibilities are distributed across the class.

See Assignments on the next page.

The course centers upon several themes in the study of the rule of law in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) from the late Ottoman Empire through the 20th century and to recent decades. Course themes include the rule of law; religion and law; judicial independence; democratization and participatory politics; religious minorities; women's rights and freedoms; conservative religious feminism; "banditry"; and MENA courts and administrative authorities.

Required Texts (we will read selections from these):

1. Nathan Brown. *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf*. New York: Cambridge University Press 1997.
2. Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdisi. *Democratic Transitions in the Arab World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. ****A UF libraries e-book.**
3. Paula Newberg. *Judging the State: Courts and Constitutional Politics in Pakistan*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. ****A UF libraries e-book.**
4. Kent F. Schull, M. Safa Saracoglu, and Robert Zens, editors. *Law and Legality in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016. ****A UF libraries e-book.**
5. A small selection of articles and chapters available free on e-reserves (on campus or with UF-VPN).

Assignments:

- **10% – Attendance** – Daily Class Roll
- **10% – Ad Hoc Participation** is graded at set intervals, roughly quarterly throughout the semester, including daily discussion of assigned readings, ad hoc group activities, and formulating questions based upon class readings for Q&A sessions after individual presentations and Round Tables.
- **15% – Presentations**
 - **(7.5%) The Individual Presentation** is a 5–7-minute presentation on an assigned chapter (students send preferences and schedule by end of Week III); may be presented live or pre-recorded on ufl.voicethread.com (both in person). Includes a class-wide Q&A after the presentation. No outside sources.
 - **(7.5%) The Round Table** involves a 2-minute timed presentation per student participant. The presentation is on one of our main required texts (students send preferences and schedule by end of Week III). May be presented live or pre-recorded on ufl.voicethread.com (both in person). Includes a Q&A session after the presentations. Each student participates in one Round Table per semester; Round Tables are on one of the main assigned books. No outside sources.
- **10% – The Journal** is a 2-page essay including analytical distance and personal engagement using citations with page numbers; Chicago Manual of Style format; and Reference page (the Reference page is not included in page limit). No outside sources except personal engagement section (then one, no encyclopedias).
- **20% – The Abstract** is a 1.25-page essay using analytical distance; citations with page numbers; Chicago Manual of Style format; and Reference page (the Reference page is not included in page limit). No outside sources.
- **35% – The Final Essay** is a 6-page essay using analytical distance and a short personal engagement section; citations with page numbers; Chicago Manual of Style format; and a Reference page (the Reference page is not included in page limit). The Final Essay prompt choices are posted six weeks prior to the due date. No outside sources except personal engagement section (then two, no encyclopedias).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete the work for this course will:

1. **Identify** key themes in the study of the rule of law in general, and in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
2. **Identify** key points in which law, state, and society interact, cooperate, or conflict in important ways.
3. **Identify and explain** the basic institutional design questions related to the study of the rule of law in MENA.
4. **Identify and explain** important social or cultural conflicts related to the rule of law in MENA, including those related to primary themes of the course (see description on page 3). Students will specialize in one or two of the themes through their presentations and written assignments.
5. **Identify and explain** several key theories relating to the rule of law in MENA; link them with the relevant scholar; and **compare and contrast** among scholar theories on their basic contentions, and on their own terms.
6. **Synthesize** material or historical conditions with theories of our assigned scholars into the student's own assessment, using analytical distance, of what is important on a theme in the rule of law in MENA.
7. **Consider** material and historical conditions, and the theories of our assigned scholars – with reference to the texts – using both analytical distance and personal engagement.
8. Students will **practice** and develop their skills in analytical distance, personal engagement, and being cognizant of when they are using each. They will also **practice** and develop their skills in analytical reading, writing, and (public) speaking in the classroom on academic themes in a grounded way (e.g., with grounded reference to our assigned readings).

READING SCHEDULE

The reading schedule will be posted before the beginning of the semester, Spring 2025.

Additional Notes

- The class is a Comparative Politics course. In comparative politics, we analyze the domestic politics of countries, states, and nations around the world. Sometimes we study nation-states one at a time in great detail, in small groups, or by geographical region. At other times, we look at them across wide numbers of states in less detail in order to gain great comparative leverage on a specific set of questions. In this class, we are looking at the related themes of law, state, and society in the single case of Israel. On occasion, I may comment on it in comparison with some other countries or regions.
- There is no political litmus test in this course. Students are not required to believe arguments in the class readings, nor arguments made by the professor. Students will be asked to present arguments in the texts accurately and on their own terms. They may be asked to do so verbally or in writing. It is ideal not to counter a major item from lecture in a writing assignment without evidence from class readings, but a good deal of leeway is made for students to hold their own normative positions. It is assumed that ours is a diverse classroom with people of many sensibilities across the political spectrum as well as those of religion, gender, ethnicity, race, national origin, and the like.

Additional Notes, 2

- Many fact claims in the Middle East and North Africa are contested. Thus, we will focus on scholarly arguments from primary research studies. It makes the classroom a more neutral space for everyone when we are dealing in other people's arguments rather than our own. In a manner similar to a debate context, students will be asked to explain arguments not their own. Students may develop a certain expertise on specific texts or chapters through presentations and written work. It is hoped that by embracing the work of the course, centered as it is on developing the analytical reading, writing, and speaking skills, students will increase their abilities to make evaluations about "the facts" on their own. Ideally, daily practice and class assignments may also improve students' substantive confidence in their own abilities to do so.
- Generally speaking, students are encouraged not to bring their own opinions to the classroom. Later in the semester, after some disciplined work on the texts and their arguments on their own terms, we will begin to bring in student personal experience (if preferred – not required) and some opinions as they relate to analytical arguments (rather than opinion as purely normative).
- For discussion of the readings, students are allowed to read from prepared notes until they become comfortable speaking without notes. Daily practice usually makes it easier over the course of the semester.

METHODS BY WHICH STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED

AND THEIR GRADE DETERMINED

Spring 2025

GRADING RUBRICS

Link to grading rubric for [WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS](#)
(Prose – read both)

Link to grading rubric for [WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS](#)
(Graph Detail – read both)

Link to grading rubric for [PRESENTATIONS](#)

See next page for grading rubric for Daily Ad Hoc
Participation

GRADING SCALE

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	E	Below 62

Ad Hoc Participation Grading Rubric (graded at 5-point intervals):

- 100 - Perfectly stated identification of the author argument in assigned reading, and explanation of it; comment(s) are well grounded in the pages of the text.
- 95 - Very well stated identification of the author argument and explanation of it; grounded in the pages of the text.
- 90 - Strong statement identifying the author argument and explanation of it; grounded in the pages of the text.
- 85 - Very good statement of the author argument and explanation of it; grounded in fewer of the pages of the text.
- 80 - Good statement of the author argument and explanation of it; few references to the pages of the text.
- 75 - Partial, flawed, or incomplete statement of the author argument and explanation of it; less grounded in the pages of the text.
- 70 - Poor statement of the author argument and explanation of it; not grounded in the pages of the text.
- 65 - Verbal statement in class does not relate to the assigned text.
- 60 - and below - Does not speak in class.

Assessed roughly quarterly: February 7, February 28, March 28, and April 18, 2025.

Note: A student who wants to do so can upload a **one-page** set of notes in prose regarding what he or she learned on four separate class discussion days during this period. It is not required and there is no penalty in not doing so. (Some students may find it helpful in keeping up with the course materials and retaining information from [verbal] class discussions).

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Spring 2025

- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the [University Attendance Policies](#).
- Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “[Get Started With the DRC](#)” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.
- Information regarding current UF grading policies for assigning grade points. See link to the [University grades and grading policies](#).
- Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under 2 Revised: September 2024 GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.
- Materials and Supplies Fees: Required texts that are not available as free UF Libraries e-books must be purchased or rented. They are available in local bookstores, and some may be purchased or rented online. E-reserves readings should be free with your UF Gatorlink information; you may need to use the [UF-VPN](#) or be on campus for free access to e-reserves articles. Please get the [UF-VPN](#), and do not pay for e-reserves readings.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Spring 2025

- UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the [UF Conduct Code website](#) for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.
- Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.
 - A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private 3 Revised: September 2024 conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.
 - Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).
- University Police Department: Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- [Teaching Center](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- [Academic Complaints](#): Office of the Ombuds; Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.
- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): View the Student [Complaint Procedure webpage](#) for more information.



THANK YOU!

Dr. Patricia Sohn

Office Telephone: 352-273-2370

Email: pjsohn@ufl.edu