What accounts for the increasing salience of Islam in the politics, culture, and social relations of the Middle East? This seminar is intended to introduce you to – and to get you participating in - several recent scholarly debates on the question of Islam and politics in the modern era. Rather than focus in depth on specific cases – though you will learn more about some than about others - we will discuss the most influential recent scholarship on major problems in the field. We will begin with a critique of attempts to explain Islamist politics in a global context. We will move on to discuss the historical development of Islamist reform movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the relationship of Islamist political movements to nationalism, and recent attempts to understand the resurgence of Islamist politics and identities. The final part of the course will be devoted to a discussion of debates on the relationship of Islamist politics to gender, and on how Islamist politics can play out in small communities. The course will also consider two influential critiques of Islamist politics.

Requirements:

1: A high level of weekly participation. Each week you are responsible for all readings. The week before each session I will hand out or send you by email a list of questions for discussion. Several people will then volunteer to open the discussion of each question with a short presentation. The point is to ferret out the underlying argument in the book or argument and to put it into the larger context of the seminar. That a book is on the reading list does not imply that I approve of it! Also, successful participation will depend on your willingness to chase down reviews, articles, and books that are not in the syllabus. Some of you may find that you learn more by trying to study something than by actually studying it.

2: A 5000-7000 word paper. In all cases I expect you to try out your paper topics on me before you put weeks of effort into them. This is in order to save you time and intellectual investment if the topic is unworkable, and to get me involved in your projects at their conception. Also, I might be able to make a useful suggestion or two. Your
discussions with me should be collaborative ventures, and I hope only to make myself useful to you and your work.

Note on the weekly reading: In this seminar, if you try to read every word and memorize every fact you will run out of time. You will also miss the point of the argument. You will need to hone your reading skills to fillet the central argument out of the body of the book. Skillful reading requires paying careful attention to the structure and argumentation of a book, the nature of the supporting evidence, and the meanings of key terms and phrases.

Those with little or no background in pre-modern Middle Eastern history should read, as soon as possible, Ira Lapidus’ *A history of Islamic societies*, or Albert Hourani’s *A history of the Arab peoples* (in spite of the title, and a somewhat anachronistic construal of ethnicity in the pre-modern period, much more than Arab history is covered). R. Stephen Humphreys’ *Islamic history: a framework for inquiry* (Princeton, 1988) is a very useful guide to both the major reference works and the basic historiographical problems for the period. The essential research tool is the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd. Ed.

As you go through these readings ask yourselves, and be prepared to discuss, the following questions:

- Why did this author write this book?
- Into what larger argument is the author trying to insert himself/herself?
- What kinds of evidence does the author examine?
- What are the key concepts the author brings to his/her approach?
  - Are concepts enlisted to try to make sense of the evidence?
  - Are concepts intended to help the author ask a question or frame a research problem?
- How was the argument received?

Books, required (other readings will be available on learn@uw)


Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Islamist politics in comparative perspective

Reading:

Eickelman, Dale F, and James Piscatori, Muslim Politics (Princeton, 1996).

Week 3: The "Clash of Civilizations" debate

Huntington, Samuel P., “The Clash of Civilizations,” Foreign Affairs (Summer, 1993). (learn@uw)

Huntington, interview, "Clash of Civilizations Revisited” (learn@uw)

Given that these readings this week are short, you should use your library skills and mastery of JSTOR to read some of the immense body of literature that the Huntington argument has inspired. I will add some of the more influential critiques to learn@uw; in the meantime you might want to take a look at these:

Miller, Judith, “Is Islam a Threat?” Foreign Affairs (Spring, 1993).

Week 4: Islamic reformism

Reading: Voll, John, Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, 1994), pp. 3-151
Week 5: The Islamic revolution in Iran and the establishment of an Islamic republic:

Readings:

Recommended:

Week 6: Local impacts and social aspects of Islamist movements:

Readings:
Required:

Recommended:

Week 7: Islam and Civil Society:

Readings: (learn@uw)

Week 8: Are Islamist politics inherently authoritarian?

Reading:

Week 9: Critique of the intellectual underpinnings of Islamist politics

Week 10: Islamist Politics and Gender. I will change the readings for the week but if you are interested in the question you might start here.

Haddad, Yvonne, *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*

Fernea, Elizabeth, *In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman’s Global Journey* (New York, 1997).


Final two weeks: Discussion of papers and research

Additional Readings, partial list

Abu Amr, Ziad, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Ghaza* (Bloomington, 1994)

Afkhami, Mahnaz and Erika Friedl eds, *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-Revolutionary Islam* (Syracuse, 1994)

Ahmad, Leila, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, 1992)


Ajami, Fouad, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi`a of Lebanon* (Ithaca, 1986)


Brand, Laurie, “‘In the Beginning was the State’…The Quest for Civil Society in Jordan,” in A.R. Norton ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East* (Leiden, 1995)


Norton, Richard Augustus, Amal and the Shi’a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon (Austin, 1987)


Piscatori, James, ed., Islam in a World of Nation States (Cambridge, 1986).


Roy, Olivier, The Failure of Political Islam, Carol Volk, trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1994).


