

The Historian's Craft: The Rise and Fall of the Arab Spring

History 201-044

Aaron Rock-Singer, Ph.D.
4118 Mosse Humanities Building
rocksinger@wisc.edu

Class: Tuesday 8:50-10:45 AM
Location: Grainger 1070
University of Wisconsin Madison, Fall 2021
Office Hours: Monday 1:15-2:15 PM or Zoom (by appointment)

The Arab Spring is a period of political change and contestation that we're still trying to make sense of and this course will not provide "answers" to explain this period. Rather, it will explore the historical continuities and ruptures between the political conflicts of the Arab Spring and what came before. Based on this historical contextualization, it will examine the emergence of protests, revolutions and counter-revolutions across the Arab world. Why did some revolutions succeed, why did others fail, and what do we mean by "success" and "failure"? What are the continuities between the prominent demands of the Arab Spring –political, economic and socioeconomic justice, democracy and constitutionalism, religious freedom, sectarian and tribal belonging, and gender –and previous movements in Middle Eastern history? What role did social media play in the Arab Spring? How can we explain the uneven success of this historical moment?

The course is divided into two main components. The first examines central sites of contestation since January 2011. It focuses on three powerful states that have experienced regime change or civil war (Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria). The second half of the course focuses on the ideological issues of the Arab Spring and will examine the longer history of key debates over gender, Islamism, allegiances to tribe and sect, democratic reform, and socioeconomic justice.

OVERVIEW

Learning Objectives

This course has two related goals: one is to learn about the Arab Spring, and the other is to develop the skills of historical inquiry and writing. Students who take this course will learn to analyze and compare the varied popular uprisings that coursed through the Middle East post-2011 and to analyze the relationship among political, economic, intellectual and religious factors in driving these uprisings. Just as importantly, though, you will build skills of historical analysis and writing, including the ability to ask historical questions, to critically analyze secondary and primary sources, to develop a persuasive argument, to plan and carry out a research project, and to present your findings orally. As you progress through the course, you will find that these skills have relevance beyond the classroom, overlapping with methods of communicating with your peers here at UW-Madison, your communities back home, and your digital communities (where you may find these skills most necessary!).

Class Rhythm

Each week, you are expected to come to class having carefully read and reflected on the assigned secondary and primary sources. We will begin each class by reviewing any questions that you had regarding the assigned material and will then move onto discussing the main themes and arguments of the assigned secondary material. During the second half of class, we will turn towards analysis of primary sources. Prior to class, I expect you to have viewed (and taken notes) on the lecture and made a good faith-effort to complete the reading questions based on the assignment secondary and primary sources.

Over the course of the semester, you will develop your skills as historians, working up to writing a final paper that historically traces one or more key drivers of an uprising in a particular Arab country. This process will begin with a critical analysis of a primary source (2.8) and then a review essay on a secondary source (2.22). We will then put these two skills to use in crafting a research proposal (3.22), and compiling an annotated bibliography (4.12). The final month of the course will revolve around converting this training to a research project, first with an in-class presentation (4.26) and then with a final draft (5.10). If you wish to submit a draft of your final paper for comments, you must do so by the last day of class (5.3)

All assignments must be submitted by email to rocksinger@wisc.edu by 8:50 AM the day that they are due.

Explanation of credit hours

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled in-person meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus. The core of our course is our weekly meeting so please make every effort to be present and engaged.

Course Materials

You will need to purchase the following text for this course:

- Haas, Mark and David W. Lesch. *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprisings* (New York: Routledge, 2017). ISBN 978-0813349749 (~\$34.71). You can find it: <https://www.amazon.com/Arab-Spring-Hope-Reality-Uprisings/dp/0813349745>
- Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide for Students*: 5th ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN 978-0190238940 (~\$22.36). You can find it here: https://www.amazon.com/Writing-History-William-Kelleher-Storey/dp/0190238941/ref=sr_1_4?dchild=1&keywords=Writing+History%3A+A+Guide+for+Students&qid=1628538376&s=books&sr=1-4

It is crucially important that you purchase the **second** edition of *The Arab Spring* (2017), as the first edition (2012) is woefully out of date. You can make sure to purchase the

correct editions of both of these works by checking the included ISBN numbers. Other than this book, all materials, *including regular short lectures*, will be available on Canvas for you to download.

Digital Devices

You are permitted to use a computer or tablet to take notes on my lectures or to record key points of class discussions. That said, much of this course depends on your active participation, whether listening to your classmates' ideas or offering your own. Given this, I will frequently request that all digital devices be put away. To reduce our dependence on computers in class, I expect you to arrive having printed out and marked up the text and any notes on which you wish to draw.

If this digital device policy will pose an unnecessary hardship for you, let me know. We will find a solution that meets your needs and my pedagogical goals.

Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for History 201 are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Accommodations

I welcome open communication regarding your learning needs. If you intend to request accommodations in this course, please contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center as soon as possible in order to register. I work according to the University's policy, as articulated by the Committee on Access and Accommodation in Instruction:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability

information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Quarantine or Isolation Due to COVID-19

Students should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and get tested for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Students should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

Writing Resources

The *History Lab* is a resource center specific to the History Department in which experts (current Ph.D. students) will assist you with your research papers. Regardless of your stage –whether deciding on a topic, formulating a thesis, outlining or sharpening your argument, or revising a draft –the staff at the History Lab can help you improve as a writer. Schedule an individual consultation by going to <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>.

Academic Integrity

My expectation is that you will adhere to the university's policies on academic integrity, available at <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>. While we will discuss particular questions that pertain to academic integrity in class –such as correct citation, how to paraphrase an argument –you are responsible prior to addressing these particular questions. Broadly speaking, the guidelines are simple A) when in doubt, cite B) cite not only language, but also ideas and c) when paraphrasing, change the language.

Assignment Submission

Please submit all assignments to me digitally at my university email address. An assignment due in class must be sent to me *by the beginning of class*, i.e. 8:50 AM.

Late Policy

If an assignment for this course coincides with assignments in other courses, students may request an extension *no less than one week in advance*. Extensions will not be granted beyond this point, and late assignments lose one letter grade/day. In other words,

the onus is on you to structure your time so that you can successfully complete the assignments by the due date.

ASSESSMENT

Components of the Course Grade:

Critical analysis of a primary source (2 pages), due 9.23: 9%
Review essay on a secondary source (2 pages), due 10.7 10%
Research proposal (2 pages), due 10.21: 10%
Annotated bibliography (2-3 pages), due 11.11: 6%
In-class presentation (5 minutes), 12.2 5%
Final draft of your research paper, due 12.17: 30%
Your class participation: 30%

Canvas

On Canvas, you will find the readings organized by week, as well as assignments, course documents (which includes weekly reading questions and the syllabus), and weekly recorded lectures.

Standards

You will receive detailed directions for each assignment in this course. Your class participation grade will reflect a combination of the following skills: regular attendance; class preparation (including notes on assigned readings); listening and engagement with the ideas of other students in the class; and asking questions and offering comments that advance our class discussion and show growth in your skills as a historian. While it is not an official component of the grade for this course, I also hope that you will schedule virtual “office hours” meetings so that we can discuss both the course material and your academic interests more broadly.

Email and Titles

I will do my best to respond to your questions as quickly as I can during business hours (8:00 AM-4:00 PM). I may also be able to respond outside of those hours, but I will generally respond the next morning. It is your responsibility to think ahead on this front!

When you email, please also be mindful of the difference between texting and emailing; the following guide may be of help:

<http://udel.edu/~jsoares/How%20to%20Use%20Proper%20Email%20Etiquette%20When%20Writing%20to%20a%20Professor.pdf>. In short, more punctuation, fewer emojis.

Finally, universities are strange places with sometimes odd-seeming titles. Here’s a quick overview: If somehow has a Ph.D. (also known as a Doctorate), they are addressed as “Dr.” If they have a Ph.D. *and* are employed as a Professor, then “Professor” takes precedence. Accordingly, appropriate ways to address me (whether in person or by email) include Professor Rock-Singer, though Dr. Rock-Singer is fine, too. Inappropriate forms (these are all real examples!) include “Hi Aaron,” “Mr. Aaron” and “Professor Aaron.”

Part I: Understanding the Rise and Fall of the Arab Spring

1.25 First day of class: Syllabus review

2.1 The Arabs: An Introduction

- Lecture: The Arabs in World History (Canvas)
- S: Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 14-48.
- *Assignment*: Please complete reading questions on the Dawisha reading.
- Storey, *Writing History*, 9-26 (1C-1M, on choosing an appropriate topic of study)

2.8 Egypt

- Lecture: 20th Century Egyptian History (Canvas)
- S: Jeanine L. Sowers and Bruce K. Rutherford, "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Egypt," in *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprising* (Chap. 2, 40-71)
- Storey, *Writing History*, 33-6 (2B-C, on reading primary and secondary sources)
- P: Ramy Essam, "Bread, Freedom" (*2-page critical analysis comparing these two sources due)
 - o From Tahrir Square: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oS7I_1IABZY
 - o Music Video (with subtitles):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9Re4zJkoQM>

2.15 Tunisia

- Lecture: 20th century Tunisian history (Canvas)
- S: Julia Clancy-Smith, "Lessons from a Small Place: The Dignity Revolutions in Tunisia, North Africa and the Globe," in *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprising* (Chap.1, 10-39)
- P: Intissar Kherigi, "Tunisia: 'Change will take time,'" *New African*, December 2012, 66-8. Available at <https://newafricanmagazine.com/?p=3463>
- P: Amira Yahyaoui, 'Tunisia: Our Post-Revolutionary Struggle,' *New African*, December, 2012, 70-71. Available at http://www.albawsala.com/uploads/documents/NA1212_p70_71.pdf

2.22 Libya

- S: Karim Mezran and Laurentina Cizza, "The Libyan Spring: From Dream to Disillusionment," in *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprising* (Chap. 3, 72-90)
- P: Hisham Matar, *The Return: Fathers, Sons, and the Land in Between* (New York: Random House, 2016), 28-50.
- Storey, *Writing History*, 42-51 (3C-3I, on synthesizing secondary literature, drawing on primary sources, and citing appropriately)

- Review essay on secondary source due (2 pages)

3.1 Syria

- Lecture: 20th century Syrian History (Canvas)
- S: David W. Lesch, "Anatomy of an Uprising: Bashar al-Assad's Fateful Choices that Launched a Civil War," in *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprising* (Chap. 4, 91-112)
- P: Samar Yazbek, *A Woman in Crossfire. Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*, trans. Max Weiss (London: Haus Publishers, 2012), Excerpt: 8 April 2011.
- Storey, *Writing History*, 5A-5E.

3.8 Iran:

- S: Narges Bajoghli and Arang Keshavarzian, "Iran and the Arab Uprisings," in *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprising* (Chap. 8, 174-93)
- Thomas Erdbrink, "The Iran Revolution at 40: From Theocracy to 'Normality,'" *New York Times* 10 February 2019.
- P: Fatemeh Shams and Erika Abrahamian, "Their Black Imaginings: Letters from an Exiled Wife to her Imprisoned Husband," *VQR: A National Journal of Literature and Discussion*, Summer 2010. Available at: <https://www.vqronline.org/vqr-symposium/their-black-imaginings-letters-exiled-wife-her-imprisoned-husband>

Spring Break (March 12-20)

3.22 Mass Media and the Arab Spring

- Lecture: The History of Mass Media in the Middle East (Canvas)
- S: Malcom Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted," *The New Yorker*, 4 October 2010.
- P: Wael Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater than the People in Power: A Memoir* (Chap. 4, "Online and on the Streets," 58-81)
- * Research Proposal due (2 pages)

3.29 The Battle over Constitutions, Democracy and Socioeconomic Justice

- S: Monica Marks, "Convince, Coerce, or Compromise: Ennahda's Approach to Tunisia's Constitution", *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper*, No. 10, February 2014. Available at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Ennahda-Approach-Tunisia-Constitution-English.pdf>
- P: Tunisia 2014 Constitution (Articles 1, 6, 18, 46, 75, 77, 78)
- Storey, *Writing History*, Chap. 6 (98-105)

4.5 Gender

- Lecture: Feminism in Egypt (Canvas)
- S: Laura Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 60-100.

4.12 Islam and the Arab Spring I: The Muslim Brotherhood

- Lecture: The Rise and Fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Canvas)

- S: Carrie R. Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Chapter Seven: “The Brotherhood and the Egyptian Uprising,” 154-195)
- * Annotated Bibliography due (2-3 pages)

4.19 Islam and the Arab Spring II: Salafi-Jihadism

- Lecture: The History of Jihadism (Canvas)
- S: Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Tara Vasefi, “Perceptions of the ‘Arab Spring’ within the *Salafi-Jihadi* Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35 (2012), 831-48.
- P: <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/categories/jihad/entry/200-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-appears-in-video,-delivers-sermon-in-mosul>

4.26 In Class Presentations

Each student will give a five-minute presentation on their research, to be followed by several minutes of questions from other students.

5.3 Wrap Up: How and why did the Arab Spring rise and fall?

This will be a concluding class discussion. Please come prepared having thought critically about the key factors that have shaped the different trajectories of political change since 2011 across the Middle East and North Africa. You should also have considered the methodological challenges of historical analysis of current events such as the Arab Spring.

Papers due: May 10, 2021