

Fall 2025
HIST 246
Modern Middle East and North Africa

Place: BRNG 1268
Day and Time: M-W-F, 3:30-4:20 am

Instructor: Professor Holden
Student Hours: W, 1-3 pm and by appt. (BRNG 6166)
Email: sholden@purdue.edu

This class focuses on the multiple meanings of "modern" as we study the history of the Middle East. We focus on the arrival of "modern" technologies to this region as well as modern institutions and identities. A semester does not provide sufficient time for a comprehensive review of the many histories of this region, but we can focus on themes and topics—geographical imaginings, political belonging (or lack thereof), economic opportunities, legal rights, centralized institutions—that facilitate your understanding of a dynamic and sometimes unexpected history of a modern Middle East.

Class Requirements

All **materials** for this course can be accessed via Brightspace.

Evaluation & Due Dates

- 40%, Attendance and Class Engagement
- 10%, Take-Home Evaluation #1 [9/26/2025]
- 10%, Take-Home Evaluation #2 [10/15/2025]
- 10%, Take-Home Evaluation #3 [10/31/2025]
- 15%, Take-Home Evaluation #4 [11/24/2025]
- 15%, Take-Home Evaluation #5 [12/15/2025]

Attendance and Class Engagement: I will count attendance and engagement with class materials toward your grade. Those who are in every class get an automatic 90 for that component. If you will be absent, you should contact me via email so we can communicate about what you missed. If you participate (in class or via email, for those reluctant for any reason to speak in class), you will earn more points toward participation. In class, as in other aspects of your professional life, you want to respectfully engage the ideas expressed by your peers.

Assigned materials are listed below the date of the class. I often provide reflection questions that allow you to anchor your

thoughts and get a preview of what we will discuss in class. These questions are not assignments, but a form of guidance.

Students will have **five take-home evaluations**. I will provide a review sheet with questions the week before the due date. I will email the exam and post it on Brightspace the night before it is due. Your responses—as will be described on the review sheet—should evaluate material from lectures, class discussions, and assigned materials. You must upload your exam to Brightspace by 4:30 pm. I deduct 5 points for each hour the exam is late, and I do not accept exams after 9:30 pm unless arranged in advance.

My **AI Statement** has been adapted—nearly word for word—from an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (see [here](#)):
 “Cheating isn’t new, and neither is ‘contract cheating’ (paper mills, etc.). Cheaters are only cheating themselves. **A track coach who would tell runners they could or should ride an electric scooter around a track wouldn’t make athletes faster or stronger. Think about yourself as a world class athlete. There is value in doing the work of learning instead of outsourcing it to a machine.** In an era of remote & hybrid jobs, working in ways that establish trust...is more important than ever.”

Grading:

A	= 94-100
A-	= 90-93
B+	= 87-89
B	= 84-86
B-	= 80-83
C+	= 77-79
C	= 74-76
C-	= 70-73

Learning Outcomes: I have designed a class intended to sharpen your critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. We do so by addressing a semester-long question: “what does it mean to be modern?” You are encouraged to discuss your ideas about class materials on the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of “being modern” in class. Regular unit evaluations will replace a cumulative mid-term and final, allowing for lower stakes (lower stress) chances to examine myriad questions raised in class.

Foundational Ideas

August 25 (M)

Class Introductions

Class Preparations

icebreaker: where would you go if you could travel anywhere in the Middle East, and why?

AND: upload a photo (of yourself!) to Brightspace under the Profile link in Settings

August 27 (W)

What do we know, or think we know?



Class Preparations

James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 5-8 & 67-69.

look at this map, and draw the boundaries of “the Middle East” (N, S, E, W)—email to me...

...with an explanation of why you chose to put your boundaries where they are

August 29 (F) Scene Setting, Early Ottoman History, 1400-1800

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 7th ed., 29-39 & 49-53.

Reflections: What are the key events in early Ottoman history described by Gelvin? How did the Ottomans organize and legitimize a system of rule with territories on 3 continents? Be prepared to list their mechanisms of governance and explain which one you believe the most important.

Mental Maps and Geopolitical Perceptions

Sept. 1 (M) The Eastern Question

Class Preparations

Huseyin Yilmaz, “The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Is there a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, ed. Bonine, Amanat, and Gasper (Stanford University Press, 2012), 11-35.

Reflections: What is the so-called Eastern Question? When did it emerge, and why? What is Yilmaz’s central point? How did Yilmaz’s essay further your understanding of a “Middle East”?

Sept. 3 (W) Ottoman Empire vs. European Imperialism

Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-34.

Reflections: List criteria necessary to identify an empire using Howe’s Short Introduction to Imperialism? What criteria have you encountered in readings about the Ottoman Empire?

Sept. 5 (F) Inventing a Muslim World

Class Preparations

Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Harvard University Press, 2019), 1-13.

“al-Afghani to Abdulhamid II,” late-1870s, in M. Bunton and A. Wender, *The End of the Ottoman Empire and the Forging of the Modern Middle East* (Hackett, 2025), 143-145.

Rifa’a Rafi’ al-Tahtawi, “The Extraction of Gold or an Overview of Paris,” in James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 178-179.

Reflections: Why does Cemil Aydin describe “the illusion of Muslim unity” (1)? Why is such unity an illusion? How does such an illusion dovetail with ideas of the “racialization of Islam” (3)? How do Tahtawi and al-Afghani differ in terms of presenting idealized political identities?

Political Transformations in Ottoman Lands

Sept. 8 (M) Algeria: European Imperialism

Class Preparations

Phillip C. Naylor, *North Africa: A History from Antiquity to Present* (UT Press, 2015), 152-157.

Assia Djebar, “Women, Children, Oxen Dying in Caves,” *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade* (1993; reprint, Heinemann, 2003), 64-79.

fill out worksheet on Djebar excerpt, upload it to Assignments in Brightspace & bring it to class

Sept. 10 (W) Egypt: Centrifugal Power Building

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 61-70.

Bunton and Wender, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, 11-19.

al-Rahman Jabarti, “The Destruction Caused by the French and the Ottomans in Cairo,” in *Al-Jabarti’s History of Egypt*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Princeton University Press, 2009), 197-201.

Reflections: Who is al-Jabarti? How does his description of Cairo under French occupation help you understand an event given short shrift in the two textbook accounts provided to you?

Sept. 12 (F) Greece: Nationalist Revolutions

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 7th ed., 60-63.

*Reflections: How did the Greeks claim statehood, and why did they make this claim in 1820? Why not centuries earlier or decades later? What *this* moment, not 1720 or 1920?*

Sept. 15 (M) Modernizing Ottoman Institutions...

mental map of what will eventually—in 1905, and more particularly after WWI—be the Middle East. How does Cromer justify England’s occupation of Egypt in 1882? & how does Cromer provide a mental map of Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, the Mediterranean region, or Europe?

Sept. 24 (W) In Class Review Day

Sept. 26 (F) Unit Evaluation #1 (No Class)

Class Preparations

Unit Evaluation #1 due on Brightspace by 4:30 pm

Social, Economic and Cultural Modernization

Sept. 29 (M) Geographical Mobility

Class Preparations

Malte Fuhrmann, “The Steamship Revolution of Perception 1 & 2” in *Port Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean: Urban Culture in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 56-62.

Ilkay Yilmaz, “Passport Regulations and Practices during the Hamidian Era,” in *Ottoman Passports: Security and Geographic Mobility, 1876-1908* (Syracuse University Press, 2023), 189-235.

Reflection: What political, social, and cultural changes are highlighted in these readings?

October 1 (W) Urban Planning

Class Preparations

Malte Fuhrmann, “Dreaming of a City in Stone,” in *Port Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean: Urban Culture in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 63-69.

Reflection: What political, social, and cultural changes are highlighted in these readings?

October 3 (F) Measuring Time

Class Preparations

Avner Wishnitzer, “Ferry Tales,” in *Reading Clocks alla Turka: Time and Society in the Late-Ottoman Empire* (The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 124-150.

Reflection: What political, social, and cultural changes are highlighted in this reading?

October 6 (M) Recovering the Modern in Pre-World War I ME

Class Preparations

Brainstorming Session: Come prepared to discuss aspects of modernization as well as their impact on social or political life. What have we already discussed? What is left to discuss?

October 8 (W) Library Exercise-photo project

October 10 (F) Library Exercise-photo project

October 13 (M) No Class, October Break

October 15 (W) Unit Evaluation #2 (No Class)

Class Preparations

Unit Evaluation #2 due on Brightspace by 4:30 pm

Fault Lines and Foreshocks in Lead Up to the First World War

October 17 (F) The Young Turk Revolution

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *The Modern Middle East*, 124-134.

Reflections: How did Abdulhamid II's political ideology differ from the Young Ottomans? And how did the Young Turks of 1908 differ both from the Young Ottomans and Abdulhamid II?

October 20 (M) Challenges to Ottoman Unity

Class Preparations

Bunton and Wender, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, 45-53.

Mostafa Minawi talks of his most recent book, *Losing Istanbul: Arab-Ottoman Imperialists at the End of Empire*, Ottoman History Podcast, episode 540, 28 March 2023, 31 min.

Reflections: What internal and external forces fostered change in the six years preceding the First World War in the Ottoman Empire? How does Minawi's discussion of members of an elite family from Damascus contribute to your understanding of the political fractures of this time?

October 22 (W) Zionist Immigration in Ottoman Palestine

Class Preparations

James L. Gelvin, “Cultures of Nationalism,” *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: 100 Years of War*, 4th edition (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 15-46.

Judah Leib Levin, “To America or to the Land of Israel? (1881),” in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010), 393-394.

Osip Aronowich Rabinowich, “Russian Must Be Our Mother Tongue (1861),” in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010), 378.

Eliezer ben Yehuda, “The Revival of Hebrew (1880),” in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010), 597-598.

Reflections: What is nationalism? What political futures did Jewish leaders in Europe discuss in the late-nineteenth century? Was settlement in Palestine by European Jews inevitable? What were the other paths that Jewish communities in Europe might have taken (or did in fact take)?

October 24 (F) The Seeds of Conflict

Class Preparations

Watch “1913: Seeds of Conflict,” PBS, 2015 (53 minutes)

This website reviews the historical personalities or commentators in the film:
<http://1913seedsofconflict.com/>.

Reflections: Did conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Zionist immigrants seem inevitable on the eve of World War I? What forces and conditions promoted conflict? Or engagement?

Multiple Wartime Fronts in the Middle East

October 27 (M) The Eastern Theatre in World War I

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *The Modern Middle East*, 139-152.

Reflections: Create a timeline of major events using a timeline app of your choosing. This timeline will eventually need to be submitted to me as part of your Unit Evaluation #3. You may consider timeline apps from this web page, <https://www.preceden.com/timeline-makers>. You may also generate a table with columns for dates, events in Europe, events in Ottoman lands, etc.

October 29 (W) Review Day

Class Preparations

“[The Ottomans](#),” episode 2 of “World War I through Arab Eyes,” *Al Jazeera*, 2014 (45 min.).

complete your timeline of WWI and come prepared to discuss it in class

I would like you to address the narrative strategy of the filmmaker in presenting his film on “The Ottomans.” What is the argument, and how does the director seek to convince you of it (images, music, talking heads, narrative voice over, etc.)? What works best? What works not so well?

October 31 (F) Unit Evaluation #3 (No Class)

Class Preparations

Unit Evaluation #3 due on Brightspace by 4:30 pm

Decisive Choices (or Inflection Points)

November 3 (M) The Ottoman Declaration of War



Class Preparations

Yiğit Akin, “From the Fields to the Ranks,” *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans’ Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford University Press, 2018), 52-81.

Bunton and Wender, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, 54-61.

Reflections: Why did the CUP join Central Powers? How did the CUP seek to convince Ottoman subjects to fight and die for the imperial state? What does Aydin identify as the “war narrative”?

November 5 (W) Islampolitik and Entente Anxieties

review Aydin, *The Idea of a Muslim World*, 1-13 (Intro, from Week 2).

The Political & Secret Department of the India Office, “[The War: German Attempts to Fan Islamic Feeling](#),” 26 November 1915, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/11/99.

“[The Arabs](#),” episode 1 of “World War I through Arab Eyes,” Al Jazeera, 2014 (45 min.)

Reflections: How does Aydin’s “Introduction” shed light on this wartime document. Does the Aljazeera film support or undermine Aydin’s central idea? Print out the English document and make marginal notes on it (including the handwritten pages) for in-class assessment.

November 7 (F) Everyday Life in Wartime Jerusalem

Class Preparations

Ihsan Turjman, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier’s Diary and the Erasure of Palestine’s Ottoman Past*, ed. Salim Tamari (University of California Press, 2015), 91-160.

print out a single diary entry and annotate it-be prepared to discuss it and to turn in

Reflection: Ihsan Turjman was born and raised in Jerusalem, where he served during the war. What information can you glean from his diary? What do his entries tell you about political belonging in Ottoman Jerusalem? The experiences of women? The wartime economy? Intra-sectarian and/or intra-ethnic relations? Zionism? Class and status? Local response to war?

Collective Memory (Groups Remembering the Past)

November 10 (M) Gallipoli

Class Preparations

Harold Allen Skinner Jr., “Campaign and Battle of Gallipoli, International Encyclopedia of First World War, 6 March 2023, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/gallipoli-campaign-and-battle-of/>

Paul Daley, “Ataturk’s ‘Johnnies and Mehmeds’ Words about the Anzacs Are Shrouded in Doubt,” *The Guardian*, 20 April 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/apr/20/ataturks-johnnies-and-mehmeds-words-about-the-anzacs-are-shrouded-in-doubt>

“Turkish Islamist Push May Be to Blame for Removal of Atatürk Inscription at Anzac Cove,” 15 June 2017, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/16/turkish-islamist-push-may-be-to-blame-for-removal-of-ataturk-inscription-at-anzac-cove>

Reflections: As a leader in one of the Entente powers, what are the lessons of these military campaigns? What does the statement “attributed” to Ataturk suggest about post-WWI policies of Turkey and the British Empire? When and why do historical events get remembered?

November 12 (W) Armenian Genocide

Class Preparations

Ronald Grigor Suny, “Armenian Genocide,” 26 May 2015, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/armenian-genocide/>

Karnig Panian, “Childhood” and Deportation” in *Goodbye Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 1-41.

President Joe Biden, “Statement by President on Armenian Remembrance Day,” 24 April 2021.

Reflections: How does Panian’s account complement Suny’s essay on the Armenian Genocide? How does Panian’s memoir convey something about being Armenian and their WWI fate? What choices did Joe Biden’s administration make in issuing the first recognition of Armenian Genocide by the U.S. government? What choices were made? Or could have been made?

November 14 (F) The Balfour Declaration

Class Preparations

Maryanne A. Rhett, “The Balfour Declaration,” 18 July 2019, International Encyclopedia of the First World War, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/balfour-declaration/>

Arthur Balfour, “The Balfour Declaration,” 2 November 1917.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “Tragedy of Balfour Declaration is that 30 years passed before it was implemented,” 7 November 2017, Press Release, Knesset Website, https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/pr13622_pg.aspx

Marc Tracy, “Activists Deface Portrait of Balfour, Who Supported Jewish Homeland,” *The New York Times*, 8 March 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/08/arts/design/balfour-declaration-portrait-slashed.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Reflections: Print out the Balfour Declaration after reading Rhett’s entry and annotate it-what are key terms, questions raised, ideas conveyed? Who wrote it to whom? And how might that help your historical analysis? Why was this document issued in November 1917, not earlier or later? How is this historical document deployed by political actors of the twenty-first century?

Counterfactual History and Revisionism

November 17 (M) The King Crane Report

Class Preparations

Andrew Patrick, “‘These people know about us’: A Reconsideration of Greater Syrian Attitudes Towards the United States in the First World War Era, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50, no. 3, 397-411.

“The American King-Crane-Commission Report, 1919,” in Akram Fouad Khater, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 203-209.

“The Zionist Organization’s Memorandum to the Peace Conference in Versailles, February 3, 1919,” in Akram Fouad Khater, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 193-200.

“The Resolution of the General Syrian Congress at Damascus, July 2, 1919,” in Akram Fouad Khater, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 200-202.

Reflections: What are the claims of the Zionist Organization and the General Syrian Congress? How did these claims affect the King-Crane Commission’s findings? How might Palestine and world history have changed if the King-Crane Report recommendations had been implemented?

November 19 (W) British Mandate of Iraq

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *The Modern Middle East*, 195-201.

Wallace Lyon on “The Kurdish ‘Election’ of King Faysal,” in Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (University Press of Florida, 2012), 74-78.

Mahdi al-Khalisi on “Shia Opposition to (Rigged) Elections,” in Stacy E. Holden, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq* (University Press of Florida, 2012), 81-86.

Reflections: What were the needs (objectives) of England after World War I? What were the policy interests of England as its leaders hammered out the peace? Was there a way to secure England’s interests without turning Iraq and other places into a Mandate? How so?

November 21 (F) Modern Turkey

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *The Modern Middle East*, 161-175.

Sarah Shields, “The Greek Turkish Population Exchange: Internationally Administered Ethnic Cleansing,” in *MERIP*, 267 (September 2013), <https://merip.org/2013/06/the-greek-turkish-population-exchange/>.

Mustafa Kemal, "His Vision of the Recent Nationalist Past of Turkey and the Future of the Country, 1927," in Akram Fouad Khater, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 145-152.

Reflections: What was the logic behind the international support for what was in fact if not intent ethnic cleansing? What does it reveal about preconceived political notions of that time? As you read Mustafa Kemal's speech, identify how he speaks of the people and state of modern Turkey.

November 24 (M) Unit Evaluation #4 (No Class)

Class Preparations

No Class, but upload Evaluation #4 by 4:30 pm.

November 26 (W) Thanksgiving Week

November 28 (F) Thanksgiving Week

Ottoman Legacies

December 1 (M) A New Class Alliance in Egypt

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 184-194 & 286-305.

December 3 (W) Sunni and Shia Fault Lines in Iraq

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 310-313.

Yara Badday, "Reframing Sunni and Shi'i Discussions," in *In We Are Iraqis: Aesthetics and Politics in a Time of War*, ed. Al-Ali, Nadjie and Deborah Al-Najjar (Syracuse University Press, 2013): 83-92.

Reflections: What do these short readings tell you about the relationship between Sunni and Shi'i in Iraq? How do they complement or contrast with what you read about Iraq in the textbook?

December 5 (F) Ottoman Revivalism in Turkey

Class Preparations

Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 263-273.

Jenny B. White, "[The Turkish Complex](#)," *The American Interest* 10, no. 4 (2 February 2015), 15-23.

Nicolas Bourcier, "Erdogan, the Enduring Reinterpreter of Turkish History," *Le Monde* (29 October 2023).

Reflections: What are the principals of the new state of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal, and how does White compare him to the present-day leader of Reycip Erdogan? How does Erdogan offer both glaring differences and similarities with Ataturk? What is Erdogan's vision of a modern state, and how does this vision engage Ottoman imperialism? And towards what end?

December 8 (M)

Rethinking "The Long Great War"

Class Preparations

"The New Middle East," episode 3 of "World War I through Arab Eyes," Al Jazeera, 2014 (45 min.)

Jonathan Wyrzten, *Worldmaking in the Long Great War: How Local and Colonial Struggles Shaped the Modern Middle East* (Columbia University Press, 2022), 1-28.

Reflections: Why does Wyrzten use the term "The Long Great War"? How does Wyrzten reconsider the start and end of World War I? How does the chronological coverage in Wyrzten's "Introduction" compare & contrast with the Aljazeera documentary? Where do Bunton and Wender land in comparison to them? How does each work periodize World War I?

December 10 (W)

No Class

December 12 (F)

No Class

Unit Evaluation #5 Due on Brightspace by 12 Noon on 15 December!!!

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cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972] <https://www.purdue.edu/odos/academic-integrity/>

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Disclaimer: *In case of a major campus emergency, the requirements on this syllabus are subject to changes required by a revised semester calendar. Any changes will be posted, once the course resumes, on the course website. It may also be obtained by contacting the instructor via email.*