Youth and Youth Movements in the Modern Middle East
First-Year Seminar
Fall 2020
Tues/Thurs 3:30-4:45

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DESCRIPTION

During the past year (2019-2020), young people have led major and continuous uprisings in Iraq and Lebanon, demanding an end to sectarianism, corruption, and economic inequality. These events are reminiscent of the 2011 “Arab spring” uprisings that overthrew dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, and that many referred to as a “youth revolution.” Meanwhile, in between the 2011 and 2019 events, the Islamic State became famous for recruiting young people across the Arab world and beyond for its campaign to restore a so-called Islamic caliphate. Does it make sense to associate these revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements with young people? Does the focus on youth distract from other issues, such as those of class or gender? What is the relationship between political mobilization and other expressions of youth counter-culture, such as drag racing or hip hop? In what ways are the current uprisings similar to or different from earlier upheavals in the region, such as the student uprisings that challenged European colonialism from the 1920s to the 1940s, the widespread youth rebellions of the 1950s and 1960s, or the disproportionate participation of young people in the Palestinian Intifadas since the 1980s? Are there “political generations” in the Middle East, and if so what have been the characteristics of different political generations across the past 100 years? Using “youth” and “generation” as lenses onto the history of the modern Middle East, this course will explore these and other questions related to political mobilization and revolution; religion and secularism; gender and sexuality; colonialism and nationalism; sectarianism and democracy; and experiences of war, dislocation, and migration.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

• Discuss the use of “youth” and “generation” as categories of sociopolitical and historical analysis;
• Identify and utilize primary and secondary sources for purposes of historical research and interpretation;
• Analyze scholarly arguments in secondary sources, including identifying the claims or assumptions the author is arguing against and evaluating the strength of the argument based on the author’s use of sources and mode of analysis;
• Analyze and historicize primary source documents;
• Produce a historical research paper based on analysis of primary sources and engagement with relevant secondary sources;
• Summarize and discuss major events and processes in modern Middle East history, including colonialism; nationalism; the rise of the modern nation-state; the Islamic revival; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the rise of the oil monarchies; the Lebanese Civil War; the Gulf Wars; and the Arab spring.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation and attendance (15%)
   Since this is a seminar, all students are expected to participate in classroom discussions. Your participation should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the assigned readings, which is the focus of discussions. (If you have not done the readings, please do not participate in the discussion.) Absences will have a direct effect on your grade unless you submit a 5-page analysis of the readings for the day you missed by the start of the next class. I will not accept more than two commentaries over the course of the semester. Absences are also likely to have an indirect effect on your grade, since expectations for the take-home mid-term and the final paper include engagement with questions and debates that have arisen both in the readings and in the classroom discussions.

2. Reading responses (20%)
   All students should write a brief reading response (3-400 words) for one of the readings assigned each week. These should be posted on Classes (Forums section) by 10am the day of class for which the reading was assigned. It is strongly recommended that you read the other students’ responses before coming to class.
   Responses should include the following three paragraphs:
   a. Identify a passage (which could be a sentence or a paragraph) from the reading that you think conveys one of the author’s main arguments. Then explain in your own words what the argument is and/or why it matters.
   b. Identify a passage that changed the way you think about a particular issue/event/theme and explain why.
   c. Identify a passage that you either did not understand or disagreed with and explain why.

   Important note on response papers: Demonstrating that you have read the material carefully, thoroughly, and thoughtfully is the main point of the assignment. There may not be a single right way to interpret an author’s argument, but there are wrong ways. If you misrepresent an author’s argument, your response paper grade will be negatively affected.

3. In-class presentation (5%)
   You will give one presentation to the class on a scholarly work not assigned as required reading on the syllabus. Presentations should summarize the content and what you see as the main argument of the reading, and should not exceed 10 minutes. There will then be a Q&A and discussion.

4. Primary source analysis paper (15%)
   [Details to come]

5. Take-home mid-term essay exam (20%)
   The mid-term will be a set of short essay questions in a take-home and open-book format. The questions will be distributed on Oct. 15 in class and the essays are due at 5pm by email on Oct. 23. Your answers should demonstrate an understanding of the main arguments of the assigned
readings and lectures as well as of issues that have arisen during class discussions. The questions will be drawn from the “Reading/discussion questions” listed at the top of each week of the course schedule below.

6. Final research paper (25%)
   [Details to come]

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- Turn off your cellphones. It is recommended that you print out all readings and bring them to class with your notes, but if that is not possible you may use your laptop for reading purposes only. Laptops may not be used for taking notes as this is a discussion seminar.
- Grades will be significantly lowered for work submitted after the due date, unless it is for a legitimate and well-documented reason.
- If you are having any difficulty with the readings, the assignments, or the course in general, come talk to me during my office hours right away, or make a separate appointment to meet with me.
- Plagiarism will be immediately reported to the university administration. See the university policy on Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Cheating (adapted from the website of the College of Arts & Science, [https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html](https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html)):

  “Academic integrity means that the work you submit is original. Obviously, bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious — for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea(s) without a reference to the source of the idea(s); or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects).”

**NYU Resources**

1. You are strongly encouraged to use the NYU writing center. You can make appointments for one-on-one meetings with faculty members for support on your writing. 411 Lafayette, 4th fl. / 212 998-8866 / writingcenter@nyu.edu / [https://nyu.mywconline.com/](https://nyu.mywconline.com/)

2. Students who need special accommodations due to disability should visit the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for support and documentation. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Contact the Center at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu.

**READINGS**

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore. All other readings in the syllabus will be posted on Classes, unless they are available through the NYU library site.


Pascal Menoret, *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt* (2014)
COURSE SCHEDULE

Thurs 9/3: Introductions

Week 1: Histories of Childhood and Adolescence

Reading/discussion questions: TBD

Tues 9/8 Readings:

Thurs 9/10 Readings:

Week 2: The Problem of Generations

Reading/discussion questions: What is a “generation”? Do political generations exist and, if so, how do we define them? Do young people, in the Middle East or in general, tend to be more rebellious or revolutionary than older people? How have different scholars approached the question of youth rebellion or resistance?

Tues 9/15 Readings:

Thurs 9/17 Readings:

Week 3: Education and the Rise of the Nation-State

Reading/discussion questions: What is distinctive about schooling under the modern nation-state, compared to earlier approaches to education? What motivated the expansion of state-managed (public) schools in late 19th and early 20th century Egypt? In what ways did state-managed schools diverge from and draw on earlier Islamic forms of schooling?

Tues 9/22 Readings:

**Thurs 9/24 Readings:**

**Week 4: Youth as a Colonial and Nationalist Battleground**

Reading/discussion questions: How did European colonial power and influence affect the education of youth in places that came under European rule, such as Egypt and Iraq? Why and how did young people become a battleground between colonial and nationalist forces? What was the relationship between the semi-colonial state, the elite nationalist movement, and young rebels? Did educational institutions, the state, and/or the elite nationalist movement succeed in controlling youth?

**Tues 9/29 Reading:**

**Thurs 10/1 Readings:**
TBD

**Week 5: Outside the Nation-State: Palestinian Youth**

Reading/discussion questions: If youth and the nation-state are so intertwined, what happens to young people who don’t have one? Why have images of Palestinian youth been so central to discussions around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? What are some of the ways Palestinian youth have been imagined by various parties to the conflict? How might major historical ruptures, such as the Palestinian nakba, affect relations between generations?

**Tues 10/6 Readings:**
Ghassan Kanafani, Palestine’s Children, selections.

**Thurs 10/8 Readings:**
Other primary readings TBD.

**Week 6: The Global 1960s**

**Tues 10/13 Readings:**
TBA.

**Thurs 10/15 Readings:**
Other readings TBA.

*MID-TERM ESSAY EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS 10/15*
Week 7: Young People and War

Tues 10/20 Readings:
Film: *West Beirut* (watch at home).

Thurs 10/22 Readings:
Readings/films on Iraq Wars TBD

*FRIDAY, 10/23, MID-TERM ESSAY EXAM DUE, 5PM BY EMAIL.*

Week 8: Youth and the Islamic Revival

Tues 10/27 Readings:

Thurs 10/29 Readings:

Week 9: New Youth Subcultures I

Tues 11/3 Readings:
Menoret, *Joyriding in Riyadh*, selections.

Tues 11/5 Readings:
Menoret, *Joyriding in Riyadh*, selections.

Week 10: New Youth Subcultures II

Tues 11/10 Readings:
Film: *Slingshot Hip-Hop* (watch at home)

Thurs 11/12 Readings:
TBA

Weeks 11 and 12: Youth and the 2011 Arab Spring

Tues 11/17 Readings:
Paul Amar, “The Street, the Sponge and the Ultra”? [see for more refs]

Thurs 11/19 Readings:
TBA

Tues 11/24 Readings:
TBA

NO CLASS THURSDAY 11/26: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 13: Youth, the Syrian Civil War, and the Islamic State

Readings and film clips TBA

Week 14: The 2019 Uprisings

Readings and primary sources TBA