The Islamist Trend in Middle East Politics

Draft, subject to change

Several decades ago, scholars predicted that secularization would advance around the world and religion would become less meaningful in people's everyday lives. Yet here and abroad, religion is on the rebound, not only in terms of personal piety but also as a mobilizing force in the political arena. This is especially true in the Middle East, where social and political movements with a religious inflection have eclipsed secular modes of activism. The sweeping victories of Islamist parties in the “Arab Spring” underline the popularity of these movements and raise a number of questions: What are the political and social origins of these movements? Why has this trend eclipsed secular modes of political activism? Are Islamist parties compatible with democratic governance and equal rights for women? The course will explore these and other questions by examining a broad range of movements, from liberal to militant trends, drawing on experiences of countries throughout the region.

Texts:
I switch up the texts each time I teach this course. They are currently under revision, but you can expect approximately 90 pages of assigned reading each week from texts such as the following:

Edward Said, Covering Islam
Carrie Rosefsky-Wickham, Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt
Khaled Abou El Fadl, Speaking in God’s Name
Arzoo Osanloo, The Politics of Women’s Rights in Iran
Zainah Anwar (ed.), Wanted: Justice and Equality in the Muslim Family
Asef Bayat, Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn

This list is just to give a sense of the types of readings assigned. The full syllabus will be available the week before the semester begins.

Course Requirements:
Participation (25%): Since this is a discussion seminar, it is essential that you complete the required readings in advance of each session and come ready to engage with others.

Short Analysis Papers (45%): Students will submit 6 short papers over the course of the semester (about 800 words each). These papers should provide summary/analysis of the weekly readings.

Term Paper or Take-Home Final Exam (30%): A 10-page term paper will be due at the end of the semester.

Course Prerequisites: 45 units. Recommended: History 151 or IS 315.
PLEASE NOTE:
Written work for this course will be submitted via Turnitin, a third-party service licensed for use by SFU. Turnitin is used for originality checking to help detect plagiarism. Students will be required to create an account with Turnitin, and to submit their work via that account, on the terms stipulated in the agreement between the student and Turnitin. This agreement includes the retention of your submitted work as part of the Turnitin database. Any student with a concern about using the Turnitin service may opt to use an anonymous identity in their interactions with Turnitin. Students who do not intend to use Turnitin in the standard manner must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance of any submission deadline. In particular, it is the responsibility of any student using the anonymous option (i.e. false name and temporary e-mail address created for the purpose) to inform the instructor such that the instructor can match up the anonymous identity with the student.