

America and the Middle East: the Politics of Expertise

POLS 393
Time: Wednesdays 1-3:40pm
Location: Des Peres 213
Spring 2015

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Course Description and Objectives:

Even a brief perusal of network news stations, online news outlets and newspapers will reveal the large number of people who are considered experts on the Middle East. When crisis hits, they are interviewed on talk shows and radio stations. They are expected to interpret crises, predict future outcomes, and identify policy recommendations. They may even provide expert testimony in front of the US Congress or advise President Obama. Who are these people? What qualifies them as “experts” on the Middle East? Have experts always played this role in American politics? This class will address these questions, while providing a historical overview of the role of experts in the making of American foreign policy in the Middle East in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

We will address four learning objectives. First, we will examine expertise as a concept. What is expertise? What are markers of expertise? How do people perform expertise? Students will learn to identify their own assumptions about expertise and evaluate others according to consistent criteria. Second, the course will provide empirical content about the role of experts in American foreign policy. Through required readings, students will be exposed to the major experts who informed US foreign policy from 1918-1967. As a class, we will complete this timeline, identifying the major players from 1967 to the present.

Then, building on the first two objectives, we will learn to perform expertise. Working in groups, students will develop an area of expertise and use the skills of the group to deploy it in the form of knowledge products. These products may include blogs, podcasts, video, tweets, articles or art projects. Students are encouraged to be creative in the production of content. Beyond the creation of knowledge products, students will recruit an audience and strategically deploy content to build interest in their knowledge products and in an ATLAS Week event, which the class will plan together. The resources of the Learning Studio, in which this course is hosted, will be useful in this regard [For more on the Learning Studio see: <http://www.slu.edu/ctl/teaching-innovations/learning-studio>]. Fourth, at the abstract level, this course will challenge students to reflect on how cultural biases shape policy.

Required Books:

Available at SLU Bookstore, on Print Reserve at Pius Library and online through SLU Library Catalog

Jacobs, Matthew F. 2011. *Imagining the Middle East: The Building of an American Foreign Policy, 1918-1967*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Little, Douglas. 2004. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Stampnitzky, Lisa. *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented “Terrorism.”* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Course Requirements/Expectations:

Successful completion of this course (read: a good grade) requires attendance at *all* class sessions, regular, consistent, meaningful participation in class discussions, and completion of all reading and creative assignments. In this class, you will both consume and produce content. You will evaluate other Middle East experts, and you will develop your own niche expertise in the region. There will be very little lecturing. Students must complete reading assignments in order to have a solid foundation from which to

claim and perform expertise. Students interested in a more traditional overview style course of politics in the Middle East may prefer a different course.

This class relies on the appropriate use of technology in the classroom. Inappropriate use of technology, including but not limited to, texting during class, visiting social media sites for purposes unrelated to class or attempting to distract other students will not be tolerated. If you need to send a text or make a phone call, please excuse yourself from class quietly and quickly and return as soon as possible.

A typical day in this class will include a discussion of current events and reading assignments, an activity to process readings and time for group work. The professor's role in this course is to monitor the flow of class, facilitate activities and discussions and problem-solve with groups.

Current Events:

Meaningful participation requires a concern for current events and particularly America's contemporary involvement in the Middle East. In addition to monitoring the news, students are expected to read stories posted by the professor and their colleagues through the course's Twitter hashtag #EXPERTSMENA. Each week students should read these stories by Wednesday's class. To facilitate reading these articles, I suggest that students use Flipboard, a service that allows you to customize your own magazine. By connecting Flipboard to your Twitter account, the stories posted by your colleagues will be available in the magazine, which you can then read on your computer or your mobile device rather than having to look up each story individually.

Grade Policy:

I do not negotiate grades. Students are graded based on the criteria contained in this document and subsequent rubrics. There will be no extra credit. I will notify the advisors and academic mentors of students who are performing poorly through SLU's Early Warning System. Students will receive a midterm and a final grade. Grades are available on the course Blackboard site.

Grade Scale:

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	80-82	F	Below 60

Grading Detail:

25%	Participation
25%	Knowledge Product
25%	Expert Timeline
25%	Twitter Portfolio

Attendance Policy/Participation Grade:

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate actively in discussions in order to gain full participation credit. Comments related to course materials and readings are acceptable and beneficial for fulfillment of the participation grade. Students who both attend and participate appropriately will receive full participation credit. Since the course meets once a week, one unexcused absence is permitted before your grade is impacted. Completion of online evaluation at the end of the course is a part of participation and is expected from all students. I take participation grades seriously, and so should you.

The participation grade is broken down as follows: 10 points for attendance, 10 points for participation in class discussions and activities, and 5 points for Twitter participation. Students who post a news stories on Twitter using the course hashtag at least ten times over the course of the semester will receive full credit for the course.

Reading Assignments:

Students are expected to complete ALL reading assignments. Each week students will expected to read two chapters of scholarly works. Please take into account that scholarly works cannot be skimmed the

way a textbook can be. It is expected that students already possess the ability to read and understand scholarly-level publications. Those who are new to reading scholarly writing should consult with the instructor for further resources during the first week of classes. I reserve the right to modify readings according to the needs of the class. Student reading of the Jacobs volume will be evaluated through the creation of a timeline of experts, see below for details on the assignment.

Knowledge Products:

Students will work in groups of four to produce knowledge products on a specific area of American foreign policy in the Middle East. The professor will not specify the content or form of these products but they may include podcasts, blogs, policy briefs, videos, interviews or other products. Early in the semester, the class will decide on the area of American foreign policy in the Middle East that will be emphasized in the course. Each small group's knowledge product will address this same foreign policy challenge from a unique angle. Students will submit a proposal by week four of class explaining what they will create, how they will create it, and how they want to be evaluated. Students are encouraged to create an actual rubric. They will receive a response from the professor by week five of class. Knowledge products are due 29 April 2015. Students will informally present their products to their classmates on this day. After completion of the knowledge projects, students will be asked to complete a self-evaluation.

In addition to the Twitter "Portfolio," described below, students will also be expected to attract followers to their accounts in order to attract an audience for their knowledge products. Students will set their own goals for number of followers in discussion with their small groups. Students will be assessed based on their creativity, cooperation, and quality of their knowledge product and the breadth of its dissemination.

Expert Timeline:

Employing the program Tiki-Toki, generously funded by the Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning here at SLU, students will produce timelines with mini-bios of fifty significant experts on American foreign policy from 1918 to the present. Place each expert on the year that they were the most prominent in American foreign policy. If multiple dates apply, place the entry on the first year in which the person could be considered an expert. Significant institutions that facilitated conversations among experts may also be included. Please attempt to space out your experts over time, with approximately five coming from the 1920s, five from the 1930s, continuing in this fashion until the present. Each entry should include a photo and a brief bio with information relevant to the class definition of expertise. Students will receive Bronze Accounts of Tiki-Toki. The first half of the project is due 25 February. Final timelines are due 22 April 2015. Students will be evaluated for the inclusion of significant experts, for the scope of their timelines in capturing experts from throughout the period of interest, and in their creativity in employing Tiki-Toki to display the information. For information on open access photos available for timelines, please refer to the following site:

<http://guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=56693&sid=1274161>

Twitter Portfolio:

All students will develop a "Twitter Portfolio" as an exercise in evaluating contemporary experts on Middle East foreign policy. It is recommended that students create new Twitter accounts to be used solely for this class. Students will create new Twitter accounts by the second week of the semester and will be expected to share their Twitter handles with their classmates and professor. During the course of the semester, students will be expected to develop feeds consisting of 500 experts on American Middle East foreign policy. Students are encouraged to relate their feeds to their knowledge products. Students will submit a list of the first 250 experts they have selected with a two sentence annotations explaining their choice by **4 March 2015**. The first sentence will make reference to the feed's biography in defending its selection as an "expert," while the second sentence must make reference to tweets themselves in defending their selection. Students will be expected to have increased their feeds to 500 experts by **8 April 2015**. You do not need to submit any documentation of your feed on this day. The professor will

look at your account and evaluate your choice of experts. Students will be evaluated on their efforts to construct a Twitter feed reflective of the top experts in their area of choice and their ability to analyze Tweets for evidence of expertise.

ATLAS Event:

The class will plan an ATLAS event to share with the SLU community the information that has been learned in this class. We will set aside time during class for the planning of the event. The event will take place the week of April 15th. We will make every effort to have our event scheduled during class time. In the event that this is not possible, students are asked to arrange their schedules so that they can be in attendance. Students will receive a separate rubric for this assignment. Student participation will be reflected in the participation grade.

Response Policies

The fastest way to contact me is via email. On normal business days, I will return your emails within 24-48 hours. Plan ahead and contact me well in advance of deadlines with your questions.

Academic Honesty:

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in *an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment* and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: <http://www.slu.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences-home/undergraduate-education/academic-honesty>

Student Learning and Disability Statement:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [314-977-8885](tel:314-977-8885) or visit the Student Success Center.

Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

Weekly Schedule

Unit 1: Expertise

Week 1 (14 January 2015): Welcome

- Introduce professor, instructional designer, space, students
- Skill Inventory Bingo
- Review the syllabus
- HMWK: Read the Introduction from Edward Said's book *Orientalism* [available on print reserves] and Little Intro and Ch. 1

Week 2 (21 January 2015): Orientalism and Defining Expertise

- HMWK: Jacobs Introduction, Ch. 1
- What is Expertise?
- **Due: Twitter Account creation**

Week 3 (28 January 2015): Applying definitions of expertise

- HMWK: Jacobs Ch. 2 and Little Ch. 3
- Negotiate regional focus

Unit 2: Factors, Events and Relationships Shaping American Foreign Policy

Week 4 (4 February 2015): Religion

- HMWK: Little Ch. 2 and Ch. 4
- Stakeholder roles

Week 5 (11 February 2015): Oil

- HMWK: Jacobs Ch. 3 Little Ch. 5
- **Group Proposal for Knowledge Products due**
- Cultivating an Audience and Background

Week 6 (18 February 2015): Mid-century politics

- HMWK: Little Ch. 6 and Jacobs Ch. 4

Week 7 (25 February 2015): Modernization

- HMWK: Little Ch. 8 and Jacobs Ch. 5
- **Due: First half of Tiki-Toki Expert Timeline (~25 experts)**

Week 8 (4 March 2015): Week of midterms; America's relationship with Israel and Palestine

- In-class film: Reel Bad Arabs (50 min)
- HMWK: Little Ch. 7
- **DUE: 250 Twitter Experts and Annotations**

Week 9 (11 March 2015): Spring Break – No class

Week 10 (18 March 2015): Vietnam/Iranian Hostage Crisis

- HMWK: Little Ch. 9 and Jacobs Epilogue

Unit 3: War on Terror

Week 11 (25 March 2015):

- HMWK: Stampnitzky Intro and Ch. 1

Week 12 (1 April 2015):

- HMWK: Stampnitzky Ch. 2 and 3

Week 13 (8 April 2015):

- HMWK: Final preparations for ATLAS Week
- HMWK: Stampnitzky Ch. 4
- **DUE: 500 total experts in Twitter feed**

Week 14 (15 April 2015): ATLAS Week

- HMWK: Stampnitzky Ch. 5 and 6
- HMWK: al-Saadi, Yazan. 2013. "The Rise of the Arab 'War on Terror' Discourse." *Muftah*. <http://muftah.org/the-rise-of-the-arab-war-on-terror-discourse/> (November 23, 2014).

Week 15 (22 April 2015): War on Terror/War in Iraq

- HMWK: Stampnitzky Ch. 7, 8 and 9
- **Due: Tiki-Toki Timelines**
- Course evaluation

Unit 5: Reflection

Week 16 (29 April 2015): Presentation of knowledge products to classmates

- **Due: Knowledge Products**
- Self-evaluation of knowledge products
- Discussion: role of culture in making of foreign policy

Final Exam Period: (6 May 2015) 2:00-3:50pm "What I tried to accomplish in this class"