



EAST TEXAS A&M

UNIVERSITY

MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS PSCI 497-01E Fall 2026

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Office Hours: T-Th 11.00 am-12.30 pm
2.00 pm-3.00 pm
and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an interdisciplinary course that explores the structural dynamics, diplomatic history, and strategic resolution pathways of war and conflict in the Middle East. Students begin by analyzing the broader Middle Eastern security architecture, examining how state formation, regional rivalries, and identity politics fuel local warfare. Transitioning to a deep-dive case study of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the course material pairs chronological diplomatic history directly with behavioral negotiation theory. Rather than merely diagnosing historical failures, students use problem-solving frameworks to critically evaluate United States mediation efforts. Ultimately, students actively apply principled negotiation tools to deconstruct deadlocks and engineer their own strategic solutions in a final peace proposal.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will become familiar with theories and concepts of conflict and conflict resolution in the context of Middle East politics.
- **Social Responsibility:** Students will demonstrate an awareness of societal and/or civic issues in the international arena.
- **Personal Responsibility:** Students will form their own research agendas in conflict resolution and management and will practice academic honesty in their writing assignments.
- **Communication:** Students will enhance their oral skills and communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with evident message and organizational structure.
- **Empathy skills:** Students will develop empathy skills and be encouraged to see the world from multiple perspectives.

Unit Name

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REQUIRED TEXTS

- Ariel I. Ahram. 2020. *War and Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa*. Polity. ISBN: 978-1509532827.
- Laura Zittrain Eisenberg, Nail Caplan. 2025. *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace Process: Patterns, Problems, Possibilities*, 3rd Edition. Indiana University Press. ISBN: 978-0253072559.
- Roger Fisher, William L. Fry, Bruce Patton. 2011. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*, 3rd Revised Edition. Penguin Books. ISBN: 978-0143118756.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

The class will be a mix of lectures, seminar discussions and simulation exercises. An outline of the reading schedule is provided in the syllabus. Students are required to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance & Participation: Attendance is vital to your success in class. More than 3 unexcused absences will automatically drop your final grade by one letter grade (e.g. if the student earned a “B” in the course, the final grade would be a “C”). Acceptable excuses include health and family emergencies. Participation points are earned through your contribution to class discussions.

Midterm Exams: Midterm exams will be administered in class on September 17 and October 27. Midterms will be essay exams based on the course material.

Weekly Analysis Sheets: Once we move to the Arab-Israeli conflict module of the course (Week 5), every Tuesday, we will explore an empirical case study of an Arab-Israeli diplomatic encounter from Eisenberg & Caplan book. Every Thursday, we will introduce a core negotiation strategy or problem-solving framework from *Getting to Yes*.

To bridge the gap between historical fact and resolution theory, students must submit a **1-page Weekly Analysis Sheet** at the beginning of each Thursday session. Word count is limited to 500-750. These sheets are not summaries. Please do not waste your limited word count describing “what happened”. Instead, you are required to act as a diplomatic analyst. Your task is to use Thursday’s specific theoretical tool (such as interest-mapping, BATNA auditing, or negotiation ju-jitsu) to dissect Tuesday’s historical case study, pinpointing exactly why the diplomatic effort succeeded or failed, and explaining how a United States mediator could have engineered a superior solution.

Discussion Leaders: Starting Week 6, each student will be responsible for running one discussion session. The responsibility of the discussion leader is to run a dynamic seminar discussion regarding the chapter covered by the session. The purpose of these sessions is not to summarize the readings but to run the seminar by sparking new insights into the subject at hand, bringing in thoughtful remarks, highlighting the critical aspects of the readings and raising informed questions to set the stage for productive discussion throughout the session.

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Strategic Policy Pitch Lab: Strategic Policy Pitch Lab is a 3-Session In-Class Performative Group Project (Weeks 14–15). The course concludes with a professional, high-stakes diplomatic task force. Students will work in small teams acting as **U.S. National Security Council (NSC) Mediation Strategy Cells**. The mission of each team will be to engineer a realistic, interest-based diplomatic intervention to break a contemporary deadlock in the Arab-Israeli conflict. A detailed guidelines and grading rubric and the tasks that each team is required to complete in each session for this assignment can be found on D2L.

Final Peace Proposal: Acting as an independent, solution-oriented advisory panel to the United States government, students are required to write a comprehensive final peace proposal. They must take the real-world deadlocks of the contemporary Arab-Israeli conflict and engineer a phased, step-by-step resolution roadmap. The proposal must justify “why” their solutions are viable based on both the regional rules (Ahram) and interest-based bargaining logic (Fisher, Ury, & Patton).

Final research papers are expected to be 7-10 pages in length. A detailed guidelines and grading rubric for this assignment can be found on D2L. Final papers are due **December 10, 11.59 pm**.

Format Requirements: All assignments must be double-spaced, typed and written with Times New Roman, 12-point font. Sources for each assignment must include books, academic articles and news pieces. All sources must be cited properly and listed in a bibliography or in footnotes/endnotes format. Regarding citations, you may use any academically accepted format.

GRADING

Course Requirements	Weight
Attendance & Participation	20%
Discussion Leaders	10%
Midterms	30% (15% each)
Weekly Analysis Sheets	10% (2% each)
Strategic Policy Pitch Lab	10 %
Final Peace Proposal	20%
Total	100%

GRADE SCALE

90-100 = A
80-89 = B
70-79 = C
60-69 = D
Below 60 =F

MAKE-UP POLICY

Make-ups are allowed under special circumstances such as medical or family emergencies. You are required to request your make-up prior to the deadline. Documentary proof for your request might be required based on the circumstances. Post-deadline late extension requests will not be granted. Post-deadline submission of assignments without an excuse will lead to loss of points.

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CIVILITY AND RESPECT

All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. I expect everyone to be respectful of each other's perspectives and opinions during class discussions. Any behavior that disrupts the class or impedes other students' ability to fully engage with the course will not be tolerated.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student is required to be responsible for purposefully pursuing and honestly submitting research and work that is original and is the sole work of the individual. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. If you are unclear about the ethics of an academic action, please consult with me during my office hours.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services Texas A&M University-Commerce Gee Library Room 132 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148 StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Texas Senate Bill-11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- 8/20** Introduction to the course/Overview of the syllabus
- 8/25** Accounting for War in the Middle East & North Africa Ahram Intro & Ch 1
- 8/27** The MENA Security Predicament Ahram Ch 2

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Week 2

- 9/1 Oil as Conflict Trap Ahram Ch 3
9/3 Identity as Conflict Trap Ahram Ch 4

Week 3

- 9/8 Geopolitics as Conflict Trap Ahram Ch 5
9/10 Fragmentation, Integration, and War in the 2010s Ahram Ch 6

Week 4

- 9/15 Peace and Peacemaking Ahram Ch 7 & Conclusion
9/17 **Midterm 1**

Week 5

- 9/22 Understanding Arab-Israeli Conflict: Historical Patterns Eisenberg & Caplan Intro
9/24 Understanding Arab-Israeli Conflict: Analytical Variables Eisenberg & Caplan Intro

Week 6

- 9/29 The Camp David Peace Process, 1977-1979 Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 1
10/1 Don't Bargain over Positions Fisher, Fry & Patton Intro & Ch 1

Week 7

- 10/6 Mission Impossible & Premature Peacemaking Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 2 & 3
10/8 Separate the People from the Problem Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 2
Focus on Interests not Positions Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 3

Week 8

- 10/13 The Madrid Conference, 1991 Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 4
10/15 Invent Options for Mutual Gain Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 4
Insist on Using Objective Criteria Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 5

Week 9

- 10/20 Israeli-Jordanian Peace Process Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 5
10/22 Israeli-Syrian Peace Process Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 6

Week 10

- 10/27 **Midterm 2**
10/29 The Breakthrough, 1993-1996 Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 7

Week 11

- 11/3 The Breakdown, 1995-2000 Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 8
11/5 Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 6

Week 12

11/10 Camp David II Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 9

11/12 Negotiation Jujitsu Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 7

Taming the Hard Bargainer Fisher, Fry & Patton Ch 8

Week 13

11/17 Attempts to Salvage the Two-State Solution Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 10

11/19 The Abraham Accords Eisenberg & Caplan Ch 11 & Conclusion

Week 14

11/24 Strategic Policy Pitch Lab

11/26 Thanksgiving No Class

Week 15

12/1 Strategic Policy Pitch Lab

12/3 Strategic Policy Pitch Lab

Week 16

Finals Week

Final Research Papers due December 10, 11.59 pm.

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