



American Society, Culture & Politics in the Trump Era
AMST 265E (undergrad) & AMST 375M (grad)
T-Th 3:30-4:45

Professor Kouross Esmaeli

This course will introduce students to a range of disciplinary and intellectual tools for understanding the culture, society, and politics of the contemporary United States. The class seeks to understand and frame the Trump presidency as both symptom and agent of political and cultural shifts that are happening in the United States in the context of larger global shifts. We will look at the Trump period as emblematic of post-cold-war structural changes in the American political system, and we will also look at the specific rhetorical and ideological values expounded by Donald Trump and the effects that he has on America's domestic as well as international politics — particularly in relation to the Middle East. Specialists in the fields of rhetorical analysis, textual analysis, cultural studies, anthropology, critical media studies, political science, and political economy will expose students to a diverse body of theoretical and disciplinary tools. In order to do this effectively, the class will host a significant number of guest-lecturers from across departments at AUB and beyond. Confirmed lecturers include: Josh Carney (SOAM), Rayan El-Amine (Issam Fares Institute), Jessica Feldman (American U. in Paris), Rami Khouri (SOAM), David Landes (English), Karim Makdisi (PSPA), Pascal Menoret (Brandeis U.), Zeina Tarraf (SOAM), Adam Waterman (English). Topics include a review of the history of electoralism and populism in the United States; the development of America's dominant political values in the

post-cold war era; the political economy of what is understood as “neoliberalism;” the politics of globalization and anti-globalization; theories of media and the new media ecology; and the cultural formations that lie at the core of these converging factors.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to

Course Materials Required Text:

All course material will be posted on Moodle, emailed or handed out in class

Course Work and Evaluation (undergraduate):

Attendance/Presentation – 20%

Midterm Exam - 25%

Final Exam – 25%

Final Project Proposal – 5%

Final Project Completed – 20%

In-Class Quiz – 5%

Course Work and Evaluation (graduate):

Attendance – 20%

Midterm Paper – 30%

Final Paper – 50%

Attendance & Participation:

Late arrivals are discouraged. Three (3) late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence.

Three unexcused absences will lower your overall course grade by 5%

Five unexcused absences will lower your overall course grade by 10%

Missing more than five classes will result in an F and I will ask you to withdraw from the class

If you have a legitimate excuse to miss class or be late, you need to share that with me BEFORE class. The only reason for you to miss class without telling me is in the case of an emergency for which you need a note from doctor, dean or advisor.

Your participation in class is voluntary and will not be counted as part of your grade. This class will be structured primarily through lectures. However, all lectures will be followed by class discussion and I will call on students to speak and answer questions. The quality of the discussion rests squarely on your preparation. The readings are relatively short because I want you to read them and have an understanding of them before class. Because your active participation in discussion is the cornerstone of the class discussion, you should come prepared to ask questions and to air your thoughts. Being prepared for class includes how carefully you have read and thought about the readings, and how often you ask and answer questions and make relevant comments.

Since class discussion and activities will call for reference to reading material, you are required to bring printouts or digital copies of all assigned readings to class. Do not read the texts on your mobile device as they are not allowed in class.

Midterm and Final Exams

The midterm exam will be administered in class and will be a combination of short and long response questions.

The final exam will be held on the final day of class and will consist of a number of essay questions of which you will choose a few to complete.

Please be advised that no late work will be accepted, and no exam will be rescheduled without a preceding agreement with me. Delayed due dates will be rare, authorized only under truly justified circumstances (which will be defined as such only by me).

Grade Appeals

Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

Special Circumstances, Considerations, Needs:

If you have any special circumstances, consideration or needs that you feel will either affect your ability to complete assignments or participate in recitation discussions, please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Providing documentation is critical to processing special requests. I will help facilitate your requests to the best of my abilities. In most cases, special circumstances, considerations and needs should be facilitated through the Accessible Education Office <https://www.aub.edu.lb/SAO/Pages/Accessible-Education.aspx>.

Student Resources:

Students with physical or learning disabilities are encouraged to register with the Accessible Education Office (<https://www.aub.edu.lb/SAO/Pages/Accessible-Education.aspx>). You are under no requirement to share your disability with me but I encourage you to do so after you register the AEO office, especially if you need extra time for assignments and exams.

Every student should be using the resources at the Writing Center (https://website.aub.edu.lb/units/writing_center/Pages/index.aspx) and to drop by their offices at Ada Dodge Hall, Room 214 and West Hall, Room 336 to use their help and resources in improving your writing habits and writing skills.

Miscellaneous:

As in all of your courses, good faith, respect and trust are crucial to enabling class discussion. The ideas and concepts we'll be discussing may challenge or conflict with our commonly held beliefs and perspectives. Such challenges should not be construed as value judgments nor should anything discussed in class be construed as a personal offense. Our goal (and that of the university more generally) is to get us thinking critically about the things we often take

for granted and to enable us to support our beliefs intelligently and thoughtfully. If you experience any discomfort with material discussed in class, please talk with me directly, and we'll work together to resolve the situation effectively.

Week	Topic	Day	Readings	Notes
1	Introductions: Who is Trump and what is meant by "Trumpism"?	1/22		
	Populism	1/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moffitt, "Understanding Contemporary Populism: Populism as Political Style" Ch. 3 in <i>The Global Rise of Populism</i> - Moffitt, "Populism and Democracy" Ch. 8 in <i>The Global Rise of Populism</i> - Trump Inauguration Speech, 2017 *Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRBsJNdK1t0&t=447s *Text : https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/donald-trump-inauguration-speech-full-transcript-35386639.html - Obama Inauguration Speech, 2009 *Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1ljmtaibC4 *Text: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/01/21/president-barack-obamas-inaugural-address 	
2	<i>Context 1:</i> US in the World	1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wallerstein, "Introduction" in <i>World System Analysis: An Introduction</i> - Wallerstein, "Structural Crisis in the World System" - Wendy Brown, "Waning Sovereignty, Walled Democracy" Ch. 1 in <i>Walled States, Waning Sovereignty</i> 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young, "How Trump Took Middle America" https://www.theguardian.com/membership/2016/nov/16/how-trump-took-middletown-muncie-election 	
	<p><i>Context 2:</i> The Politics of American Capitalism in the 21st Century</p>	1/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Piketty, "Introduction" in <i>Capitalism in the 21st Century</i> - Perelman, "The Great Capitalist Restoration" Ch. 1 in <i>The Confiscation of American Prosperity</i> - <i>watch</i>: "Park Avenue: Money, Power, and the American Dream" from PBS's <i>Independent Lens</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6niWzomA_So - Jeff Hauser, "Prosecute the elite when they do crime" www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-trump-crimes-accountability_us_5c38ca9ee4b0c469d76db38c 	
3	<p>Technology 1: Crisis of Representative Democracy</p>	2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anderson, "A History of Disenfranchisement" Ch. 1 in <i>One Person, No Vote</i> - Amar, "Some Thoughts on the Electoral College" - Robin, "The Scandal of Democracy" in <i>Jacobin Magazine</i> - Levitz, "Democrats Can Abandon the Political Center, Cause it Doesn't Exist" http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/dems-can-abandon-the-center-because-the-center-doesnt-exist.html 	
		2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persily, "Can Democracy Survive the Internet?" 	Guest: Jessica Feldman

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Castells, “Communication, Power & Counter-Power in the Network Society” - Feldman, “Strange Speech: Structures of Listening” - Jenkins & Thorburn, “The Digital Revolution, the Informed Citizen, and the Culture of Democracy” 	<i>American U. in Paris</i>
4	Who is the Trump Voter? 1	2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mike Davis, “Trump’s America” interview with <i>Haymarket Books</i> - Hartman, “Taking God’s Country Back” Ch. 3 in <i>A War for the Soul of America: A history of the Culture Wars</i> - Saunders, “Who Are All these Trump Supporters?” in <i>The New Yorker</i> - Hochschild, “Strangers in their own Land” <i>Ch. 8</i> - Bessire & Bond, “The Rise of Trumpism” in <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> - <i>Watch</i>: “The Trump Prophecy” [the narrative, 0:00-1:20:00] https://123movies.la/search/the+trump+prophecy 	
		2/14	<i>Unofficial Official National Holiday</i>	
5	American style of populism	2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hofstadter, “Paranoid Style in American Politics” - Ribuffo, “Donald Trump and the Paranoid Style” - Stanley, “Propaganda” Ch. 2 in <i>How Fascism Works</i> - Butler, Janssen & Prins in Bessire & Bonds “The Rise of Trumpism” in <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1032-reflections-on-trump https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1037-making-rural-america-great-again 	

			https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1041-trumpets-at-a-kansas-parade	
	Technology 2: Truth and Post- Truth	2/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Waldo Moment</i>, Season 2, Episode 3 of <i>Black Mirror</i> on Netflix - Nussbaum, “How Jokes Won the Election” in <i>The New Yorker</i> - Mendes, “Digital Demagogue” - Beran: https://medium.com/@DaleBeran/4chan-the-skeleton-key-to-the-rise-of-trump-624e7cb798cb - Grassegger & Krogerus https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/mg9vvn/how-our-likes-helped-trump-win - Albrecht, “Waldo Wins IRL” in <i>Black Mirror and Critical Media Theory</i> 	Guest: Josh Carney AUB/Media Studies
6	Trump & American Popular Culture (1)	2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Debord, <i>Society of the Spectacle</i>, pp. 6-25 & 115-119 - Debord, <i>Comments on the Society of the Spectacle</i>, pp. 3-16 (sections I-XIII) - Harvey, “Consumerism, Spectacle, and Leisure” in <i>Paris, the Capital of Modernity</i> - Watch: Zizek on “They Live” (Pervert’s Guide to Ideology) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18qD9hmU9xg - Watch: Season 1, Episode 4 of <i>Trump: An American Dream</i> on Netflix 	
	Trump & American Popular Culture (2)	2/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lynch, “President Donald Trump: A Case of Spectacular Power” - Kellner, <i>American Nightmare</i>, 1-29 - Watch: <i>The Apprentice</i>, 2nd Season Recap https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmhSnhNfskU 	Guest: Zeina Tarraf AUB/Media Studies

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Donald Trump’s Luxurious Apartment” (part of <i>Celebrity Apprentice</i>) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ns5bMU4bYKc&list=RDxQiW0zXpT6o&index=8 	
7	Culture Wars (1) Politics of Gender	3/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hartman, “The Trouble with Gender”, Ch. 5 in <i>A War for the Soul of America</i> - Stanley, “Sexual Anxiety” ch. 8 & “Sodom & Gomorrah” ch. 9 in <i>How Fascism Works</i> - Kimmel, “The Cult of Masculinity: American Social Character and the Legacy of the Cowboy” - Tumulty, “Trump’s History of Flippant Misogyny” https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-history-of-flippant-misogyny/2015/08/08/891f1bec-3de4-11e5-9c2d-ed991d848c48_story.html?utm_term=.6d2100be8c3e - Rosen, “Donald Trump and the Crisis of Masculinity” https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/26/donald-trump-and-the-crisis-of-masculinity/ 	Guest: Adam Waterman <i>AUB/English</i>
	Culture Wars (2) Politics of Race	3/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bonilla-Silva, “The Structure of Racism in Color-Blind, ‘Post-Racial’ America” - Lopez, <i>Introduction to Dog Whistle Politics</i> - Hartman, <i>A War for the Soul of America</i>, ch. 4 “The Color Line” - <i>Watch</i>, “Blackface: A Cultural History of a Racist Art Form” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqID-eZm1ck - <i>Watch</i>, Ava Duvernay’s 13th documentary on Netflix 	
8	The Production of Distraction	3/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curtis, “Century of the Self” on BBC parts I-IV, watch all four starting with part I: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVwKjGbz60k 	Guest: Prof. David Landes <i>AUB/English</i>

		<p>- Transcript for the documentary on Moodle</p>	
	<p>The forces of opposition 2</p>	<p>3/14</p> <p>Everyone should read these 4 texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “What is Critical Resistance?” and “What is Abolition” and “Prison Abolition in Practice” pp. 137-145 in <i>Abolition Now!</i> also look at their website: http://criticalresistance.org/ - Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i>, ch. 3 - O’Brien, “#OCCUPYWALLST: A Possible Story” in <i>I See In the Sea Nothing Except the Sea</i>” pp. 113-130 - O’Brien, “An Artists’ Guide to Not Being Complicit with Gentrification” on <i>Hyperallergic</i> https://hyperallergic.com/385176/an-artists-guide-to-not-being-complicit-with-gentrification/ <p>And the following are for further readings, look at what interests you:</p> <p>A. Politics of criminal justice and prisons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Angela Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> <p>B. Politics of housing and gentrification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at: https://latenantsunion.org/en/ - School of Echoes, “A Structural Analysis on Gentrification”, also look at their syllabus https://www.pitzer.edu/manifesto/wp-content/uploads/sites/104/2018/02/Ultra-Red_School_of_Echoes_Broadsheet-School-of-Echoes-2017-Anti-Gentrification-Syllabus.pdf And key texts from the syllabus https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0Bw1l-3tyKZ5EOVZqbGRrSkxZaFE <p>C. Popular Education and grassroots organizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boggs, “Education, the Great Obsession” 	<p>Guest: Heather O’Brien AUB/FAAH</p>

			http://monthlyreview.org/2011/07/01/education-the-great-obsession - Freedom School Curriculum, Mississippi 1964 (look through the site to get a sense of the pedagogy of the school) http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/ - Ultra-red, “Popular Education in Organizing of Unión de Vecinos” http://joaap.org/issue8/ultrared.htm - <i>Watch</i> : “American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs” on Netflix	
9	How to understand the Democratic Party	3/19	- Minute 0-7:00 of “Fahrenheit 911” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CPEpxsZsEA - Reed, “Nothing Left” - Frank, Ch. 1 in <i>Listen, Liberal</i> - Carter & Delaney, “How the ACORN Scandal Seeded Today’s Nightmare Politics” https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/2009-acorn-scandal_us_5ae23fa6e4b02baed1b86696 Midterm Review	
	MidTerm	3/21	Midterm Exam in class	
10	US hegemony	3/26	- McCoy, <i>In the Shadows of the American Century</i> , Ch. 2 - Wallerstein, “States? Sovereignty? Dilemmas of Capitalists in an Age of Transition” Ch. 4 in <i>End of the World as We Know It</i>	
	US & the Mid East Ideological roots	3/28	- Lieven, <i>America, Right or Wrong. Intro & Ch. 6</i> American Nationalism, Israel & the Middle East”	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tump's Alliance with Evangelicals http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/10/trump-evangelical-transgender.html - Watch: <i>The Trump Prophecy</i>, after the end of the narrative from 1:20:00-end https://123movies.la/search/the+trump+prophecy 	
11	US & the Mid East Geopolitical roots	4/2	- Mitchell, Introduction and "McJihad" Ch. 8 from <i>Carbon Democracy</i>	
	The Arab Region	4/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Khouri, "Trump's Wild Middle East" in <i>Cairo Review</i> https://www.thecaireview.com/tahrir-forum/trumps-wild-middle-east/?platform=hootsuite - Khouri, "Why We should Worry About the Arab Region" - Khouri, "Fragmentation and Violence in the Arab Region" - Khouri, "Implications of the Syrian War for New Regional Orders in the MidEast" 	Guest: Rami Khouri AUB /SOAM
12	US & the Liberal International order	4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - John Ikenberry, "End of Liberal International Order" - Mazower, "Introduction" to <i>No Enchanted Palace</i> - Makdisi, "Contested Multilateralism: The UN and the Middle East" - Acharya, "After Liberal Hegemony" - Parmar, "US-led Liberal Order" - Mamdani, "The New Humanitarian Order" 	Guest: Karim Makdisi AUB/PSPA

	Iran	4/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kausch, “Competitive Multipolarity in the Middle East” - Geranmayeh, “Why Iran Will Divide Europe from the US” - Benin, “From Gaza, to Jerusalem, to Iran” in MERIP - Dizboni, “Hegemonic Aspirations and MidEast Discord: The Case of Iran” https://www.internationalaffairshouse.org/hegemonic-aspirations-and-middle-east-discord-the-case-of-iran/ - Tajbakhsh, “Getting Real About Iran” http://www.foreignaffairs.org/articles/iran/2019-03-19/getting-real-about-iran - Falk, “The Failure of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East” https://richardfalk.wordpress.com/2015/11/22/the-failure-of-u-s-foreign-policy-in-the-middle-east/ 	
13	Lebanon	4/16	<p>I. Lebanese Confessional Politics Background</p> <p><i>The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon (MERIP)</i> - Ussama Makdisi https://merip.org/1996/09/the-modernity-of-sectarianism-in-lebanon/</p> <p><i>Hezbollah: A Primer</i> – Lara Deeb https://merip.org/2006/07/hizballah-a-primer/</p> <p>*** Lebanese Elections (MERIP) Rayan El-Amine https://merip.org/2018/06/the-lebanese-elections-and-their-consequences/</p> <p>II. Historical Context of US policy in Lebanon</p> <p>***America and the Lebanon Issue – David Schenker https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057%2F9780230622432_13.pdf</p> <p><i>The United States and Lebanon: A Meddlesome History</i>, by Stephen Zunes. https://fpif.org/the-united-states-and-lebanon-a-meddlesome-history/</p> <p>III. Recent developments and US Legislation against Hezbollah</p>	<p>Guest: Rayan El-Amine AUB/Issam Fares Institute</p>

		<p>*** <i>'America First' is a risk to Lebanon and the Middle East</i> , by Jeremy Arbid http://www.executive-magazine.com/economics-policy/america-first-is-a-risk-to-lebanon-and-the-middle-east</p> <p><i>Pompeo Denounces Hezbollah in Lebanon, With an Israeli Audience in Mind</i> , by Hwaida Saad and Edward Wong https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/world/middleeast/mike-pompeo-lebanon-hezbollah.html</p>	
	Global Protectionism	4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erixon & Sally, “Trade, Globalisation and Emerging Protectionism Since the Crisis” - Eichengreen, “What’s the Problem with Protectionism?” https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jul/15/whats-the-problem-with-protectionism - Michael Roberts Blog “Trump’s Trade Tantrums – Free Trade or Protectionism?” https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2018/03/19/trumps-trade-tantrums-free-trade-or-protectionism/ - <i>Watch</i>: RSA Animate on David Harvey’s “Crises of Capitalism” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOP2V_np2c0
14	Global Trumpism	4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Douthat, NY Times, “The Trump Doctrine” - Swyngedouw, Erik (2004) “Globalisation or ‘glocalization’? Networks, territories and rescaling.” Cambridge Review of International Affairs 17(1): 25-48. - NACLA, “The Bolsonaro Effect” - Blyth, “Global Trumpism” Watch on Youtube: Mark Blyth, “Global Trumpism and the Revolt Against the Creditor Class” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSS4GCA_As

	Global Climate Change	4/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Klein, "This Changes Everything" <i>excerpts</i> - Perelman, "The Growing Crisis in Science" Ch. 10 in <i>Confiscation of American Prosperity</i> - <i>Watch</i>: Chomsky on Trump https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQvig0KvUaE&feature=youtu.be 	
15		4/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US Elections: Meet the Democrats https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-election/presidential-candidates-2020-democrats-running-for-president-list-a8803346.html - Eggers, "Why Donald Trump Could Win Again" https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/02/why-donald-trump-could-win-again-by-dave-eggers - Hewitt, "Why Trump Will Win in 2020" https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/trump-win-2020-election-polls-recession-bernie-sanders-a8889826.html - New York Times, "Bernie-Sanders-Style Politics are Defining 2020 Race, Unnerving the Moderates" - Sullivan, "Can Bernie Sanders really Win over Trump voters?" https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/can-bernie-sanders-really-win-over-trump-voters/2019/04/14/43744f10-5c65-11e9-9625-01d48d50ef75_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7cccd26c57c6 	
	Final Exam	5/7	Nicely 500 at 8:00 AM	