This course provides an introduction to key conceptual debates surrounding the comparative and international relations of the Middle East, including methodological issues relating to the systematic study of Middle East politics. It provides an in-depth look at theoretical and empirical literature to contemporary political, economic, and social issues and dilemmas in the region, drawing on literature in the canon of Middle East political science. Major questions include: Why has authoritarianism remained robust in the MENA region? What role do colonial legacies, Islam, natural resources, external powers, patriarchal culture, sectarianism, state coercive power, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, economic institutions, and other factors play in explaining the lack of democratization? Why did mobilization and regime change occur in some countries but not others during the Arab spring? Is the Why do women’s rights lag in the MENA region? Why do most economic and social indicators in the MENA region lag behind predictions based on GDP? How has US foreign policy affected the region? How and why do the transitional politics and prospects of Arab Spring countries vary?