Contentious Politics: Turkey’s Religious/Secular Balance

COURSE DESIGNATOR ISTN 3001
Language of Instruction English
NUMBER OF CREDITS 3 credits
Contact Hours 45 hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How Islam should relate to the governance of Turkey has been a driving question throughout the nearly 90 year history of the Republic of Turkey. Indeed, this question central to the thinking of the founders of the Republic of Turkey, who proceeded to establish the most secular (i.e. not religious) political regime in the Middle East. Decades later the Republic of Turkey stands as the only country of the Middle East that has no religiously-based law. Decades later this system has evolved from a one party form of governance into a multiparty system that makes Turkey the only Muslim country of the region with a long history of routine, competitive national elections. And, perhaps ironically, decades later this system has spawned Islamist voters who supported a political direction that fuels much of the 21st century political debate in Turkey.

This course’s two basic parts. Students will discover that aspects of both parts resonate with some aspects of what they see on the streets and what they can find in the two English language newspapers, Zaman and Hurriyet Daily News. They will also discover that the topic of the course is of larger relevance to the Middle East, provoking questions about what is distinctive about Turkey compared to other Muslim countries of the region and whether Turkey is some kind of model for a more democratic Middle East.

First part. This part of the course considers how the original design of the Republic of Turkey sought to hold religious authority and institutions at bay. It also looks at (a) how the original design evolves into the only competitive, representative form of government in the Muslim Middle East and (b) what emerges over the years as answers to the problems that surface along the way, including questions of representation, stability, and economic growth.

Part of the drama of this change is the rise in the last 1/3 of the 20th century of electoral support for Islamically sensitive political parties that challenge the founding intent of the Turkish Republic. Students will discover that part 1 resonates with some of what they are seeing on the streets, with the large Mid East debate about the relevance of the Turkish model to governance elsewhere in the Middle East, and with some of what shows up in the daily English language press of Turkey during early fall 2013. Students will discover that part 2 is an opportunity to explore these matters in greater depth.

Second part. This section of the course draws on this base to concentrate on contemporary issues of Turkey. Examples include the rise and nature of the AKP (Justice and Development Party in English); politics and women; the status of Kurdish and Alevi minorities; whether Turkey is a model for its Muslim Middle Eastern region; the autumn 2013 debate about freedoms and a new constitution for Turkey; and the like.

Interim week. Between parts one and two is an interim in Rome. Here the course will look at secular/religious divisions in the context of Christianity, a secular Italian state and a separate, sovereign, and religious Vatican state with its own territory in part of Rome.

INSTRUCTOR
TBD
COURSE GOALS

1. Students will develop an understanding of the contours of religious/secular tensions in an Islamic context. “Religious” here refers to authority based on divine revelation. “Secular” refers to authority based on actions, ideas, and institutions that humans create. Students will develop a corresponding understanding of how the original design of the Republic of Turkey related to that tension, how the design of the state evolved through time, and what kinds of major challenges surfaced along the way.

2. Students will develop competence in regard three kinds of comparisons between Turkey and the outside world: (1) how religious secular/tensions differ in an Islamic context compared to the contexts of the US and Western Europe; (2) pros and cons of why Turkey is a model for representative governance in other Middle Eastern Muslim countries; (3) Turkey compared to the specific case of Italy and the Vatican State.

3. Within the context of Turkey students will be able to relate aspects of the course readings/discussion (a) to items surfacing in Zaman and/or in Hurriyet Daily News (the two prominent Turkish English language daily papers), (b) to motifs of routine public life that have political content for Turks, and (c) to presentations by visitors to the class who speak on behalf of various aspects of Turkish politics.

4. Through reading the course assignments students will become familiar with views of prominent Turkish academic voices about Turkey’s national governance system and the values it should or should not embrace.

5. Students will develop awareness of contemporary political issues of Turkey, including the question of whether there should be a new constitution and what that constitution should protect.

WRITING REQUIREMENTS & TESTS

The course requires a 10-15 page paper that draws on the readings of the course and other relevant sources. Occasional one page summaries of reading assignments will also be required.

There will be a mid-semester test just before the Rome study tour, and there will be a final exam. The final exam will be cumulative.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION

Routine attendance is expected. Multi-tasking in the form of keeping up with the online world while you also attend the class is not part of this course. The class meeting’s need everyone’s full attention.
## GRADING

### CRITERIA FOR GRADING AND GRADING STANDARDS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95+</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-75</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-65</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;59</td>
<td>Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.</td>
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Summary of how grades are weighted:

<table>
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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Overall Grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
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### CLASS SCHEDULE

#### WEEK 1

**Intro:** Islamic religious/secular contexts; where and why Ataturk’s Turkish Republic drew lines between the two


(something short that is a basic intro to Islam as a system whose ideal form meshes church and state)


#### WEEKS 2-3

**1940s-50s Evolution of the Ataturk design into the 1970s**


Pamuk, Orhan. Snow. Pp 1-75

### WEEKS 4-6

**Advent of a “third republic”**

Reading: Orhan Pamuk, Snow, Pp 76-450


### WEEKS 7

**Study Tour to Rome** (Readings TBD)

### WEEK 8

**Whence and whither the AKP?**


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**WEEK 9**

**Women and politics**


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**WEEK 10**

**Secularism and Alevis**


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**WEEK 11**

**Kurdish Question**


Yavuz M. Hakan and Nihat Ali Ozcan, The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Question and Turkey's Justice and
Development Party, Middle East Policy, 13/1 (2006)

WEEK 12

Is Turkey a model for a Mid East region searching for more representative governance of Muslim societies?

Kuru, Ahmet. Muslim Politics without an Islamic State: Can Turkey’s Justice and Development Party be a Model for Arab Islamists? Brookings Doha Center Policy Briefing February 2013


WEEK 13

What the new constitution should protect? (What the religious/secular dichotomy woefully oversimplifies…)


Gardner, David and Dombey, Daniel. Erdogan’s Turkey: A rule more ruthless http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/387d2f6c-77f9-11e1-b437-00144feab49a.html#axzz2QRhWKq9X

Human Rights Watch, Country Summary: Turkey, (2012)


ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the on-site director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student’s responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.
Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

**SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:**

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

**STUDENT CONDUCT**

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct and student needs. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.