Course Overview
Since its founding in 1923 in the wake of Ottoman imperial collapse, Turkey has emerged as a pivotal actor in its many varied neighborhoods. Bordering countries that include Greece, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, Turkey’s geopolitical role now more than ever is becoming a prime focus of interest for scholars and policy makers alike. As the only Muslim-majority member of NATO, and home to the organization’s second-largest armed forces, Turkey is a key ally – but not always willing partner – in securing US interests in the Middle East. As well as being a former head of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Turkey is also a long-time candidate for membership in the European Union, an overlap of domestic and foreign political preferences that has caused serious tensions for Turkey’s ambitions at home and abroad. Indeed, the intertwining of the domestic and the international in Turkey and the Middle East is playing out daily in the headlines: the Turkish government’s dramatic shifts in its approaches to the Syrian regime, Israel, and Kurds inside and outside its borders profoundly shape, and are shaped by, Turkey’s internal political workings. From students of political Islam to the growing refugee crisis to intra- and inter-state conflict, Turkey provides an excellent empirical window onto developments in its region.

This course therefore delves deep into the fascinating and ever-shifting dynamics of Turkey’s politics and society, examining how they are intricately connected to Turkey’s location at the crossroads of East and West. The course is designed to give students a thematic and chronological understanding of Turkey’s struggles in areas such as democratization, economic development, and identity debates (ethnic, religious/sectarian, gender), as well as securing its borders in a volatile region and later asserting its role as a formidable regional power. Throughout the course, the inside-outside dynamic suggested above will be invoked as an analytical lens through which we interpret the outcomes we observe, both to expand empirical insight and encourage students to think critically about the nature of state borders in theory and in practice. In doing so, the first half of the course will focus on the development of Turkey’s domestic political system, tying in how external shocks such as the two world wars, the Cold War, and the collapse of the USSR fundamentally shaped its form and content. The second half of the course then turns the focus to Turkish foreign policy, similarly keeping in mind the domestic-international nexus by investigating how internal developments such as the rise of political Islam, increase in per capita income, and outbreak of war with the Kurdish PKK influenced Turkey’s foreign relations, especially in the Middle East. From the Arab Spring to ISIS, from Gezi to Gaza, students will gain important empirical knowledge and critical thinking tools crucial for understanding this complex country and its equally complex neighborhood.

Methods of Assessment
1. Map Quiz (pass/fail)
   In order to establish a solid foundation for our study of the Middle East and the borders that have played such a prominent role in debates within the region, students will be required to pass a map quiz. Students are required to place the country names and capitals of Middle East and North African states, plus Turkey’s other border states, onto a blank map with no more than two errors. Students may take this quiz as many times as they need, but cannot pass the class until they pass the quiz.

2. Attendance and Participation (10%):
To facilitate productive discussion and active learning, students are expected to attend all classes unless excused in advance by the instructor. Students are expected to have completed all assigned readings and come prepared with questions, critiques, and topics for discussion and debate. To make the most of this course, students are also expected to familiarize themselves with topical events involving Turkey and the Middle East, and to be able to raise and critically address these issues as engaged participants. Students will be assessed based on the level and quality of their participation; students with more than two unexcused absences will receive an automatic deduction in their participation grade.

3. 2,000-word Short Essay (20%): Due Monday, March 14 by noon
Students will select one of three suggested topics drawn from material covered in the first six weeks of the term. Students will explore their selected topics in a short essay to be handed in via email to the instructor and in hard copy to her office mailbox (Uris Hall 154) at the beginning of the eighth week. Structure of argument and quality of writing will both factor highly into the grade awarded. Written feedback will be provided for these short essays to assist students in preparing for the longer essay.

4. 4,000-word Analytical Essay (40%): Due Friday, May 20 by noon
The analytical essay will consist of an extended examination of one of the topics covered in the course. This paper will provide students with the opportunity to explore in depth an area that is of particular interest to them, develop an argument, and present research in support of that argument. The paper should demonstrate the student’s ability to engage at least one of the themes presented during the course (e.g., political Islam, domestic and/or regional sectarianism, democratization, foreign policy strategies, the Arab Spring). The paper must feature Turkey as the primary country of focus, but could include a comparative component that considers one or several other countries in its analysis. Whatever the topic, the paper must be analytical, in that it presents a well-reasoned argument and includes appropriate supporting evidence that is correctly cited; an essay that only contains description will not receive a top grade. The paper should show strong research and critical thinking skills, be well written in terms of grammar and structure, and include a full bibliography. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss their intended topics. The essay must be submitted via email to the instructor and in hard copy (Uris Hall 154) by the deadline.

5. Final Exam (30%): May 16 Time and Location TBA
The final exam will be a cumulative assessment of the material covered throughout the term. Questions will be pulled from readings, lectures, and discussions. The exam is intended to ensure that students absorb the material presented in the course, and will consist of short-answer IDs and several short (1-2 paragraph) essays.

6. Extra Credit Opportunity (1/3 Grade Raise): Response Paper to Pop Culture Work
Throughout the term, we will use forms of Turkish pop culture including novels, films, and political cartoons to gain insight into vernacular understandings of Turkish politics, society, and daily life. Students may pick ONE of these pop culture works, or another chosen in consultation with the instructor, on which to write a 1000 – 1500 word response paper. The paper should highlight key themes/debates/dilemmas the work engages, and how these themes are represented in the work’s pop culture medium (e.g. literature, film, music). Depending on the medium, the paper should contain quotes used in the work, descriptions of visual detail, etc. to support their response. Response papers will be graded pass/fail; students earning a pass will receive a 1/3 grade raise on their lowest method of assessment.
**Technology in the Classroom**
To reduce distractions for all students and provide the most productive learning environment possible, the use of laptops or tablets will not be permitted during class without permission from the instructor. Cell phones must be switched off for the duration of class and kept out of reach.

**Academic Integrity**
Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework situations, but in all University relationships and interactions connected to the educational process, including the use of University resources. While both students and faculty of Cornell assume the responsibility of maintaining and furthering these values, this document is concerned specifically with the conduct of students. A Cornell student's submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student's own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student's academic position truthfully reported at all times. In addition, Cornell students have a right to expect academic integrity from each of their peers. For the full set of guidelines to which students are expected to adhere in this class, see: http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm.

**Students with Disabilities**
Cornell University is committed to ensuring equal access to university programs and activities for students with disabilities. Policy and procedures have been developed to provide students with as much independence as possible, to preserve confidentiality, and to offer students with disabilities the same exceptional opportunities available to all Cornell students. Student Disability Services (SDS) is the office responsible for providing services and accommodations to meet the individual needs of students with documented disabilities. For a full guide to resources, see: sds.cornell.edu/Brochures/SDS_Access_Guide.pdf.

**Useful Reference Texts**
The following books, sections of some of which are assigned as class readings below, should be very helpful for students wishing to familiarize themselves with, or gain greater background context for, the subjects we will discuss in this course. Students are not expected to have read all of the books, but can consult the list for reputable English-language sources to be used in their research in this class and elsewhere. This should also not be considered an exhaustive list; students are encouraged to draw from sources they locate themselves, and are welcome to discuss the suitability of any source for a particular topic with the instructor.


Erik Zürcher *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

**News Media and Blogs**

To keep up with current events on Turkey and the Middle East, students can read news articles and blog posts at the English-language sites listed below.

*Hürriyet Daily News* (Turkey’s largest newspaper in English):

“Turkey Pulse” section of *Al-Monitor*:

“Türkiye” section of *Jadaliyya*:

*Al Jazeera Middle East*:

*Today’s Zaman* (Owned and operated by supporters of the Gülenist Hizmet movement):

*James in Turkey* (Blog by a British journalist and Turkish election analyst):
Schedule of Classes and Assigned Course Materials
NOTE: Those readings that are preceded by a star (*) are short blog-style pieces selected to a) give students a sense of how the issues covered that week shape current social and political dynamics, and b) add a variety of perspectives on an issue not widely covered in the scholarly literature. While these pieces are intended as commentary rather than more formal academic writing, students should give the same attention and consideration to them as they do journal articles and book excerpts. Readings are subject to change with due notice.

Week 1 (Jan 27): Introduction, Course Logistics, Talking Turkey in the Classroom

PART I: Turkey’s Political Institutions and Society

Week 2 (Feb 3): Forging a Republic: Imperial Legacies and Nation-Building
First Attempt at Map Quiz; View short Incredible Turk documentary in class

Erik Zürcher. “The Ottoman Legacy of the Kemalist Republic,” in The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building (Ch. 11).

Ersin Kalaycıoğlu. “From Collapse to Liberation” and “Founding the Republic and the Cultural Revolution,” in Turkish Dynamics: Bridge Across Troubled Lands (Chs. 1 and 2).


Week 3 (Feb 10): Post-War Transition: Multi-Party Politics and the Democrat Party
Second Attempt at Map Quiz


Week 4 (Feb 17): Transition, Interrupted: Understanding Turkey’s Military Coups
NOTE: Film viewing of Babam ve Oğlum (My Father and My Son), schedule TBA


Feroz Ahmad. *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy* (London, C. Hurst, 1977), Ch. 11.


Week 5 (Feb 24): Identity Politics: Rise (and Fall?) of Political Islam in Turkey


Week 6 (Mar 2): Identity Politics Revisited: Turkey’s Kurdish and Alevi Questions


David Shankland. The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition (London: Routledge, 2003), Introduction, Ch. 1 and Ch. 7.


**Week 7 (Mar 9) From Economic Crisis to Electoral Triumph: The AKP Decade**


**Week 8 (Mar 16): No class**
Attend lecture Turkey opposition MP and human rights advocate Şafak Pavey on March 14 at 5:00pm in McGraw 165. Prepare three questions to ask her and send them to me in advance. Students unable to attend will write a blog-style piece on one of their questions.

**Week 9 (March 23): The Gezi Protests and Beyond: Challenges to the AKP**

**NOTE:** Film viewing of *Mutluluk (Happiness)* on gender rights and violence, schedule TBA


**Spring Break**

**PART II: Turkey’s Foreign Policy and the Middle East**

**Week 10 (April 6): A Western Foreign Policy Tradition? NATO ally, EU candidate**

Philip Robins. *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003). Read Ch. 1 (pp. 11-28 only), Ch. 3 (entire chapter), and Ch. 4 (pp. 136-144 only).


**Week 11 (April 13): Breaking with Tradition: The Middle Eastern Pivot**


**Week 12 (April 20): Turkey–Iran–Israel: Non-Arab Rivalries in the Middle East**


Philip Robins. *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003). Read Ch. 7, “Turkey and Israel: Embattled Allies in the ‘New Middle East.’”


**Week 13 (April 27): Sectarian and Ethnic Dynamics in the Middle East**


**Week 14 (May 4) Turkey–Syria: The Arab Spring, ISIS, and the Refugee Crisis**


**Week 15 (May 11): A Model Debate: Can/Should Turkey Be a Post-Arab Spring Model?**


