

فَجَاءَتْ الْإِخْوَانُ الْمَسْلُومِينَ

Course Writing Guide:

SW 54: Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East



مجلس شورى الاخوان المسلمين بفرع بور فؤاد يتوسطهم فضيلة المرشد

Harvard College
Committee on the Study of Religion/Department
of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Harvard University



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Course Writing Guide:

SW 54: Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East

Prof. Malika Zeghal

Mary Elston, TF

Cover photo: The Consultation Committee of the Society of the Muslim Brothers at the Mansura Branch. Hassan al-Banna is sitting in the center of the first row. Photograph published in *The Muslim Brothers' Journal* (*Jaridat al-ikhwan al-muslimin*, September 24, 1935, no 24).

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Table of Contents

Section One:

Course Description.....	1
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Section Two:

Overview of Assignments and Deadlines.....	2
A Primary Source Analysis: Aims of the Project.....	2
The Steps to Achieving These Aims.....	3
Finding a Topic: Timelines, Maps, and Overviews with Tertiary Sources	
Engaging with Primary Sources	
Historicizing and Contextualizing with Secondary Sources	

Section Three:

Project Proposal.....	6
First Submission.....	6
Final Submission.....	8
Grading Criteria.....	8

Course Description



Al-Azhar mosque, Cairo, Egypt

The course critically examines the ideologies and political strategies of twentieth century Islamist movements, as well as their origins and evolution. It relates the emergence of organized Islamist movements in the first part of the twentieth century to earlier Islamic reformist narratives and explores the political and social contexts in which these movements emerged and evolved. Particular attention will be given to the ideas these movements developed and to the texts they published and disseminated.

One component of the course is historical and seeks to cover the evolution of Islamist movements over the course of the twentieth century, from the Muslim Brothers' emergence, to the development of radical Islam, and the "mainstreaming" of Islamist movements searching for avenues of legal participation.

Another component will be issue-based and will examine questions such as:

Why did political movements based in Islam become so important in the twentieth century?

How can we account for their polarization into what are usually described as "moderate" and "radical" trends?

How is their existence and history related to the formation of modern states in the Middle East and to their authoritarianism?

What are the reasons behind and the consequences of some of these movements' electoral successes, after the Arab Spring in particular?

Egypt will be the central focus due to its crucial role in the genealogy of Islamism as a political movement. Although examples from North Africa, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other countries of the Middle East will also be covered, the course is not a survey of the history of Islamist movements throughout the entire region.

Section One

Overview of Assignments and Deadlines

- Project Proposal
11:59 p.m. on Wednesday September 21, 2015
- First Submission
11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, October 28, 2015
- Final Submission
11:59 p.m. on Thursday, December 3, 2015



Muslim Brotherhood Emblem

A Primary Source Analysis: Aims of the Project

The writing assignment for this course is a semester-long research project in the form of a primary source analysis. The project begins with your choice of one to two primary sources related to either an Islamist movement, an Islamist leader or intellectual, or a significant political event (e.g. an election, an attack, a trial etc.) related to Islamism or an Islamist movement anywhere in the Middle East. This choice is an important one and should be done thoughtfully and carefully with the help of the teaching staff. Throughout the course of the semester the teaching staff will be available to provide you with consistent feedback on your project.

Recommended Reading on the Research Guide for SW54
How to Use the Research Guide
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/home

Your aims with this project are:

1. To deeply engage with primary sources as a tool to investigate and analyze an Islamist movement/leader/political event.
2. To bring together primary, secondary and tertiary sources to raise and attempt to answer a question in an original and creative way.
3. To go beyond the syllabus and tackle a question that is of particular interest to you.
4. To organize and cite sources responsibly, using either MLA or Chicago.
5. To structure an essay around a question rather than a traditional thesis.

Recommended Resources on Organizing and Citing Sources
Harvard Guide to Using Sources
usingsources.fas.harvard.edu

Zotero: Citation Management
www.zotero.org

Course Collaboration Policy
canvas.harvard.edu/courses/2443/external_tools/1509

Responsible Source Use
isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup106849



Hassan al-Banna holding a speech, undated photograph

The Steps to Achieving These Aims:

Finding a Topic: Timelines, Maps, and Overviews with Tertiary Sources

As you consider your selection of a movement/leader/political event, you may want to consult a variety of sources to provide a wider context for your search. If you think best in numbers or data visualizations, you might begin with the Timelines of Islamic Events or among the 40+ themed maps included in the Oxford Islamic Studies Online.

Tools Available for Exploring Topics on the *Research Guide for SW54*

Identifying a Research Interest
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/identifying

Tertiary Sources
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/tertiary

You may also want to begin with a tertiary source. A tertiary source consists of information that is a distillation and collection of primary and secondary sources. For example: almanacs; bibliographies (also considered secondary); chronologies; dictionaries and encyclopedias (also considered secondary); directories; fact books; guidebooks; indexes, abstracts, bibliographies used to locate primary and secondary sources; manuals; textbooks (also can be considered secondary).

The PDF available on the course Canvas site includes links for each of the above listed tertiary sources.

Engaging with Primary Sources

A primary source is a document written during the time under study. For your project, primary sources include texts written by political activists, political leaders, and intellectuals who thought that Islam had to be at the foundation of social and political life and discussed what it meant both in theory and practice.

N.B: these sources could also include non-Islamist responses to Islamist leaders, movements and events, as long as they are associated with an Islamist source.

Tools Available on the *Research Guide for SW54*

Primary Sources: English
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/english

Primary Sources: Arabic
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/arabic

Primary Sources: French
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/french

Types of primary sources may include, but are not limited to, different genres such as: manuscripts, pedagogical treatises, pamphlets, books, articles in journals, the

daily press (articles and interviews), speeches, letters, diaries, autobiographies, fiction set in the era or about a historical person, films produced at the time, art – e.g. street graffiti, posters, etc....

The PDF available on the course Canvas site includes links for each of the above listed primary sources.

Get creative with your primary sources and the way in which you read and use them. Approach your sources with empathy rather than sympathy. This means that you will read these primary sources by making the effort to understand their subjective nature and purpose:

- What is the author saying?
- Why and how is he/she saying it?
- What are the issues addressed?

Pay attention to the genres and styles used by the author as well as to repetitions, the use of quotes and citations.

- For example:
- What type of text is quoted?
 - Who is the intended readership?
 - Is the readership supposed to react to this text?
 - Is there an intended impact?



Drawing by Ardeshir Mohassess in
Occidentosis: A Plague from the West,
by Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, Berkeley, California,
Mizan Press, 1984

Bear in mind that these sources may be ambiguous, contradictory and obscure. Rather than ignore these contradictions and ambiguities try to identify them and work with them to shape your own analysis. Here are some examples of questions you could ask:

Does the text surprise you? Why?

For instance, if you have studied Western democratic political thought, how do these texts differ?

How does the particular movement you are studying resemble others you may know?

Where does the difference lie?

When researching and writing your paper, the primary sources are essential. It is crucial to engage with the text so make sure to quote your primary sources in your paper. A good way to start is to read your primary sources without the aid of contextual explanations. Take note of what you understand, what you do not understand, and ask questions about the text. Your original notes on the primary sources will help you read the secondary sources with a set of questions in mind and with a critical eye, and will help you form your own opinion. This means that although secondary sources often help historicize and contextualize your topic, it is always productive to confront your own original interpretation with the interpretations given in the secondary sources.

Empirical data can also assist you in your interpretative work. For instance, if you are dealing with the puzzle of: “why women choose to belong to movements that argue in favor of unequal gender rights?”, then polls asking men and women their views on sharia law and gender equality could be an important element to bring into your research.

Try to understand your source from within by historicizing and contextualizing.

Contextualizing is essential since Islamist movements were trying to respond to a specific set of issues at the time in which they were established and through which they developed. These issues might either be implicit or clearly expressed in the primary sources. Secondary and tertiary sources will help you understand further these issues and explain them in your paper in order to illuminate your analysis of the primary source.

A secondary source often interprets and analyzes a given phenomenon based on primary sources, quantitative data, or any other type of empirical data. In your particular case, along with tertiary sources, secondary sources can help you analyze a primary source because they generally retrace the history and/or analyze the sociology of the movement you want to study. You should not directly rely on and replicate the secondary sources you have selected to shape your analysis but rather, you should use your primary source(s) to produce your own interpretation.

Examples of secondary sources include, but are not limited to: encyclopedias, commentaries, academic journal articles, academic books that use primary sources to analyze an event or situation. Journalistic sources can also be used but be sure to choose them discerningly – (a good start might be to access them through databases such as LexisNexis or MidEastwire – links to these can be found in Course Research Guide.

The PDF available on the course Canvas site includes links for each of the above listed secondary sources.

Tools Available on the
Research Guide for SW54
*Quantitative/
Empirical Information*
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/data

Tools Available on the *Research
Guide for SW54*
*Finding Published Research
and Scholarship*
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/scholarship
*Suggested Secondary Sources,
by Region*
guides.library.harvard.edu/zeghal/suggestions

Project Proposal

The proposal is the crucial first step to your project. In no more than 500 words you should provide the reader with an explanation of your project choice and the reason for its relevance. The most important part of your proposal is the formulation of the question you will seek to answer. This must be highlighted in your proposal paragraph and should reflect a cohesive and focused line of inquiry that will drive your entire research project.

Along with this paragraph you will put together a bibliography of between one and two primary sources. Remember that the sources you initially choose are not set in stone and that true research involves a certain degree of flexibility in changing sources according to the direction your project takes. Use tertiary sources to contextualize your primary sources:

Who is the author and what is the context?

Then think about the text itself:

What genre does it belong to?

What are its aims?

What questions/issues does it raise that you plan to tackle in your paper?

When you choose your project remember that choosing a prominent event in the news will not necessarily result in a productive and constructive paper. There are different reasons for this: First, if the event is too recent, it is usually difficult to acquire all the necessary elements to properly analyze it. Second, if it is not recent, but particularly prominent, a lot must have been written about it which could mean that there may be an overwhelming number of relevant secondary sources. Therefore, you are more likely to produce an original paper if you choose an event that has been less commented upon.

The teaching staff will provide feedback on your choice of movement/intellectual/leader/event, explanation for this choice and the primary sources bibliography. Following this feedback you will be ready to tackle the second part of the assignment.

First Submission

The first submission is a 2,000-word paper that should not be considered a rough draft. This is where you will incorporate two secondary sources that you will use in your paper and include in its bibliography. The first submission should be a polished paper that provides a cogent argument based on an analysis of your chosen primary sources and any other data you deem to be relevant. Depending on the issue you decide to write about, your paper should include the following elements:



Poster of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iranian Revolution- Azadi Square, Tehran

A creative and clearly formulated question that you will attempt to answer through your own interpretation of the primary sources chosen and your broader research. For example:

How can we explain the emergence of a specific movement?

What was the view of a given movement on a particular issue?

(e.g.: elections)

How has it changed?

It is usually good to try to formulate your question as a puzzle. For instance: why do women adhere to Islamist movements that restrain their freedom and do not advocate for equal rights? You could even choose to tackle relations between an Islamist movement and the government. These are only suggestions, and you are encouraged to be creative.

The secondary literature has dealt with numerous issues, which will be addressed in the lectures and in some of the readings. You are welcome to refer to them, but we expect that you formulate your own questions. This is not merely an academic exercise, but also an opportunity for you to think about the current issues and questions raised by these movements in political thought, policy-making, international relations, gender relations, protest and social movements, etc. This will give you the tools to formulate and analyze these issues, which are so often encountered in the media.

Contextualization should include: history of the movement and/or the biography of the leader. If you choose to research an event, make sure to explain situations leading to the event and the event's main protagonists.

A clear and creative use of primary, secondary and tertiary sources – to help you with this you are encouraged to consult the Course Research Guide. Remember that these sources may change as your project develops over the course of the semester.

Once you have submitted this paper you will receive feedback that you will incorporate in your final re-write.

Final Submission

The entire final submission should not exceed 3,000 words in total and is composed of:

Paper:

The final paper (max. 2,500 words) will be based on feedback received as well as any additional relevant material gathered in the interim from lectures and readings.

Reflection Paragraph:

This paragraph should be around 500 words and serves to:

i) describe the challenges you encountered when choosing and analyzing your primary sources.

ii) clearly evaluate the secondary sources you have used:

Did they help you write your paper? In what ways?

Did your own analysis of the primary sources depart from the arguments developed in some of the secondary sources?

What would you have liked to find in these secondary sources and what do you think needs to be researched to help answer your original question?

Grading Criteria

What we are looking for in your papers is:

- Achieving the Aims of the Assignment
- A clear structure: the paper should have an introduction and a brief outline, as well as a brief and clear conclusion.
- A cogent question and a clear argument
- Use of the primary source: you need to CITE AND ANALYZE, which means that when you develop your argument, you must refer to the text and cite what is relevant. (The reader must "see" the primary source in your paper and understand it through the particular issue you have raised and developed.)
- Good contextualization
- Creativity

The Goals of General Education

Harvard has long required that students take a set of courses outside of their concentration in order to ensure that their undergraduate education encompasses a broad range of topics and approaches. The Program in General Education seeks to connect in an explicit way what students learn in Harvard classrooms to life outside the ivied walls and beyond the college years. The material taught in general education courses is continuous with the material taught in the rest of the curriculum, but the approach is different. These courses aim not to draw students into a discipline, but to bring the disciplines into students' lives. The Program in General Education introduces students to subject matter and skills from across the University, and does so in ways that link the arts and sciences with the 21st century world that students will face and the lives they will lead after college.

Complementing the rest of the curriculum, this program aims to achieve four goals that link the undergraduate experience to the lives students will lead after Harvard:

- to prepare students for civic engagement;
- to teach students to understand themselves as products of, and participants in, traditions of art, ideas, and values;
- to enable students to respond critically and constructively to change;
- and to develop students' understanding of the ethical dimensions of what they say and do.

Malika Zeghal

Committee on the Study of Religion/Department
of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Barker 411

12 Quincy Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

mzeghal@fas.harvard.edu