

G53.3500
Comparative Politics Seminar: Political Economy of the Middle East

Fall 2007

Prof. Tim Mitchell
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Office Hour: Tue, 3:30-4:30
19 West 4th St, Room 208

D R A F T

Course Outline

This is an advanced graduate seminar on the political economy of the Middle East. It is open to Ph.D. students, and to MA students with a strong background in the study of the Middle East and/or in historical and critical political economy.

The goal of the course is to explore and develop a new approach to the study of political economy, drawing upon recent work in science and technology studies. The approach, which will be discussed in more detail in the first class, includes the following elements:

1. Rather than asking about the political forces that shape markets or economies, examine the twentieth-century arrangements that invented “the economy” as a new (and quite real) object of politics and made its “development” a paramount political goal.
2. Take technologies seriously and study them closely, not as parts of a singular process of technical change that drives history, but as particular arrangements of hardware, know how, energy, and agency that give rise to new forms of government and new matters of concern. Systems of oil production, irrigation schemes that transform the ecosystem of an entire country, military installations and apparatus, ways of building cities and neighborhoods, the construction of roads, separation barriers, and frontier controls, technical schemes for the creation of markets in land or jobs or commodities, and many other more local technical arrangements and transformations offer important sites for the study of political economy.
3. Do not ask about the “impact” of material resources, technologies, or forms of energy (such as oil) upon society. This assumes that the material and the social exist as separate realms. As the field of science studies has shown, the distinction between technology and society, between nature and politics, or between human and non-human is not a stable line between different objects. In the creation of new technologies, resources, infrastructures, and energy flows, these distinctions are destabilized and reconfigured.
4. Ask about agency. Most social analysis makes do with a narrow list of possible agents—individuals, business firms, social classes, or states—whose identities, interests, and powers of calculation are fairly stable. But studies that take more seriously the socio-technical complexities of contemporary life suggest that powers of action are assembled out of eclectic mixes of the human and the technical, of forces of nature and machineries of calculation. The description of these kinds of agency is an important project.
5. Avoid capitalocentrism. Social explanation typically operates by revealing particular

situations to be instances of a general process—of modernization, capitalist development, or the globalization of the market. Such explanations tend to lend capitalism, modernity, or the market a logic and coherence they do not have. A number of projects have contributed to creating the apparent coherence and uniformity of capitalist modernity, by helping to manufacture tightly controlled zones where this coherence can be experienced. Social science is often found at work maintaining the borders of these zones.

6. Recent events in the Middle East, especially since the US invasion of Iraq, have posed the question of democratization. But they have also revealed the inadequacy of prevailing understandings of democracy, whether minimalist accounts that focus on democratic procedures or macro accounts that examine the growth of particular classes, ethnic identities, and forms of associational life. The history of democratic practice and of technologies are closely related, both because democratic procedures always rest upon novel technical devices and apparatuses, and because large-scale technical systems create points of vulnerability, secrecy, and contestation that are critical to the development of more democratic futures.

The reading draw upon studies of a number of countries in the region, including Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel/Palestine, as well as material considering other parts of the world.

Course Website

Access via NYU Home (<http://home.nyu.edu>), under the "Academics" tab. I will post on the website class notices, changes to the reading assignments, and links, where available, to electronic copies of readings.

Requirements:

Participants in the seminar are asked to submit a 200-300 word reaction to the week's readings, for nine out of the eleven classes from week 2 through week 12. You may choose which two weeks not to submit. The reaction papers should be drafted as a contribution to framing each week's seminar discussion. They should draw out what you see as the most important or problematic aspects of the week's readings, relate the readings to the issues we are pursuing in the course, and pose questions we might discuss.

You will be asked to write a term paper, the topic to be agreed with me and closely related to the themes of the course. Papers should be 8,000 words (about 26 double-spaced pages), longer with prior agreement. Drafts of the papers will be circulated on Nov 30 and discussed by the class on Dec 6 and 11.

Deadlines:	Sep 24:	Email precis of paper topic, after discussion with me
	Oct 22:	Email paper outline and annotated bibliography
	Nov 30:	Email draft of paper for class discussion
	Dec 14:	Paper due; leave paper copy in my mailbox at 19 West 4 th , 2 nd floor, and also email electronic copy to me at tm5@nyu.edu .

Readings

1 September 6 Introduction New approaches to the study of political economy

2 September 13 Kapitalism, Markets, and Economic Knowledge

Andrew Barry and Don Slater, "Introduction: The Technological Economy,"
Economy and Society 31, No 2, May 2002

Michel Callon, "Why Virtualism Paves the Way to Political Impotence: A Reply to Daniel Miller's Critique of *The Laws of the Markets*," *Economic Sociology: The European Electronic Newsletter*, 6 (2), pp.3-20.

Andrew Barry, "The Anti-Political Economy," *Economy and Society* 31 No 2, May 2002: 268–284

Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, chapters 1-3 (available on reserve or at the NYU Book Center)

Additional reading:

Michel Callon, *The Laws of the Markets*.

Daniel Miller, "Turning Callon the Right Way Up," *Economy and Society*, Volume 31 Number 2, May 2002: 218–233

Andrew Barry and Don Slater, eds, *The Technological Economy*

Donald MacKenzie, Fabian Muniesa, and Lucia Siu, eds, *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*.

3 September 20 The Work of Economics

Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, chaps 7-9

Mitchell, "The Properties of Markets," In *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*. Edited by Donald MacKenzie, Fabian Muniesa, and Lucia Siu (Princeton University Press 2007), 244-75.

Mitchell, "The Work of Economics: How a Discipline Makes its World," *European Journal of Sociology*, 2005.

Additional reading:

J.K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Two Histories of Capital," and "Reason and Historicism," in *Provincializing Europe*, 47-71 and 237-255.

Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital*.

Monday, Sep 24: Email precis of paper topic, after discussion with me

4 September 27 Reassembling the Social

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005)

Additional reading:

Other major works by Latour include *Science in Action* (1987), *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), and *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (1999).

5 October 4 Assembling Energy Systems

Bruce Podobnik, *Global Energy Shifts* (2006)

Gregory Nowell, *Mercantile States and the World Oil Cartel, 1900-1939*

Stephen Bunker and Paul Ciccantell, *Globalization and the Race for Resources*

Additional reading:

Rolf Peter Sieferle, *The Subterranean Forrest: Energy Systems and the Industrial Revolution*

Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*

J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*

Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*.

6 October 11 America's Kingdom

Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*

Nathan, J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Sa'ud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations*.

Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, "The Weapondollar-Petrodollar Coalition," in *The Global Political Economy of Israel*, chapter 5, 198-273.

Mitchell, "McJihad: Islam in the US Global Order"

Additional reading:

Reinhard Schultze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*

Alexei Vassiliev, *A History of Saudi Arabia*

Simon Bromley, *American Hegemony and World Oil* (1991)

Ervand Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," *Science and Society*, 65 no 2 (Summer 2001), 185-215

Retort (Ian Boal et al.), *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War*

Peter Nore and Terisa Turner, eds, *Oil and Class Struggle*

Michael Klare, *Resource Wars*

Michael Klare, *Blood and Oil*

7 October 18 Carbon Democracy

Mitchell, "Carbon Democracy"

Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, chapter 5

Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* (Vol. 53, No. 3, Apr., 2001).

Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens, "The Impact of Economic Development on Democracy", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7/3 (1993)

Additional Reading:

Hussein Mahdavy, "The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran," in M. A. Cook, ed., *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (1970).

Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World," in Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State* (New York: 1987).

Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework," in Beblawi and Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State*.

Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), chaps 1, 3 and 9.

Andrew Rosser, "Why Did Indonesia Overcome The Resource Curse?" [IDS Working Paper 222](#), March 2004.

Benedict Anderson, "Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (May, 1983), pp. 477-496.

Monday, Oct 22: Email paper outline and annotated bibliography

8 October 25 Metrological Zones

Barry, A. (2006) "Technological Zones." *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2): 239-253.

Gary Bowden, "The Social Construction of Validity in Estimates of US Crude Oil Reserves," *Social Studies of Science* (1985)

Larry Lohman, "Democracy or Carbocracy?" The Corner House, Briefing 24, October 2001

Larry Lohman, "Carbon Trading: A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatization, and Power," *Development Dialogue*, no.48 (Sep 2006), 1-360.

Aleklett, Kjell and Campbell, Colin J., "The Peak and Decline of World Oil and Gas Production," *Minerals and Energy*, vol. 18, no 1 (2003): 5-20

9 November 1 Political Economy of Iraq 1

Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*

Additional reading:

Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*.

Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*

Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*.

10 November 8 Political Economy of Iraq 2

Human Rights Watch, [Considerations for the Management of Oil in Iraq](#).

Anthony Cordesman, [Iraq's Evolving Insurgency](#).

Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Quarterly Reports to Congress;

Platform, [Crude Designs: The Rip-Off of Iraq's Oil Wealth](#)

[General Union of Oil Workers in Basra: Fact Sheet](#), the [Speech by Hassan Jumaa](#), and the [Iraqi Trade Union Statement on IFI Policies](#).

Glenn Zorpette, "Save Iraq One Switch at a Time"

Additional Readings TBA

11 November 15 Political Economy of Israel-Palestine 1

Bichler and Nitzan, *The Global Political Economy of Israel*.

Additional reading TBA

November 22 Thanksgiving Holiday: No class

12 November 29 Political Economy of Israel-Palestine 2

Readings TBA

Friday, Nov 30: **Email draft of paper** to me for class discussion

13 December 6 Paper Presentations 1

14 December 11 Paper Presentations 2 (Tuesday--classes follow Thursday schedule)

Friday, December 14: **Final Papers due** -- leave printed copy in my mailbox at 19 West 4th St., 2nd floor, and also email an electronic copy to me at tm5@nyu.edu.