

**The University of Western Ontario
Department of History
Winter 2018**

HIST 9601B

**THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE GREAT DIVERGENCE: HISTORICAL ROOTS
OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT**

**Tuesday
2:30-4:30 PM
Lawson Hall 2270C**

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Office hours upon request**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The 'Great Divergence' is a phrase applied to the gap that opened between the West and the rest of the world, in terms of economic development and standards of living. Where is the place of the Middle East in it and how does it affect the destiny of its people? It is the role of the social, political and economic history to explain it.

A recent panel taking place in the World Economic History Congress in Boston defines the current debate and identifies the pertinent questions which will be dealt with in the course.

The abstract sums it this way:

“The Middle East was a cradle of civilisation, and, during the Golden Age of Islam, it was arguably one of the world’s most dynamic centres of learning and civilization. In recent centuries, the West has surged ahead in income, technology, science, and governance. The Middle East is not alone in ‘falling behind,’ but it has not played a leading role in discussions of the Great Divergence. This session will explore that topic. The early dynamism of the region poses questions: Why did the political evolution of the Middle East differ from Europe’s and did those differences affect economic performance? Was Islam ‘growth promoting’ during the eighth and ninth centuries but became ‘grow retarding’ later, and, if so, why? What was the impact of the region’s location and its arid geography on economic development? How did changes in transportation, trade routes, and imperialism affect the region? Could different state

policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have closed the gap with the West, and, if so, why were they not pursued? “

The course is methodologically divided into three sections in reverse chronological order. In the first section, we read and discuss literature defining economic, social, political deficiencies in the contemporary Middle East. In the second we read and discuss the writings suggesting and analyzing various factors for the historical decline of the Middle East. In the third section, we read on and discuss the economic performance of the early Islamic Middle East and the economic development of the region in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Our goal is to develop new original thinking on the issue of the historical roots of the current conditions of the Middle East. We select, understand and pass judgement on the criteria used in measuring the social, political and economic development and whether we should look as to how could history explain them.

TEXTBOOKS

Roger Owen and Sevket Pamuk, *A History of the Middle East economies in the Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, 1999. For purchase at the bookstore

Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914*, (I. B, Tauris, 1981) reprinted 2009. On the reserve shelf.

Issawi, Charles, Ph. *An economic history of the Middle East and North Africa*, Columbia University Press, 1982. Available **on line** and for purchase at the books store

Articles required will be available on OWL and on the library course reading website.

COURSE WORK

Students are required to read the material assigned and to present reports on selected topics assigned to the class.

Students will be asked to write a research paper on subject of their choice and present to the class their work in progress.

GRADING

Attendance and participation in class discussions	20%
Presentation of reading material and research paper	30%
Research paper of 20 pages double spaced	50%

DISCUSSIONS AND READINGS

1. JANUARY 9

INTRODUCTION, COURSE STRUCTURE, ASSIGNMENTS, GENERAL HISTORICAL SURVEY, POLITICAL CONDITIONS, DEBATE TRENDS.

2. JANUARY 16

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE 'GREAT DIVERGENCE'. THE ELEMENTS OF THE DEBATE

1. What is economic growth?

Elhanan Helpman, *The Mystery of Economic Growth*. (2004), pp. 1-33 and 111-142

2. What is the 'Great Divergence'?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Divergence

3. Why did growth occur in the West and not in the rest?

Allen, Robert (2001), "*The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War*" (PDF), *Explorations in Economic History*, **38**: 411–447, doi:10.1006/exeh.2001.077

3. JANUARY 23 (AND JANUARY 30)

WHERE IS THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY? UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE EAST 'DEFICITS': EVIDENCE FROM THE ARAB HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

The **AHDR 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009** on constitutional, legal, political, and social flaws and constraints on freedom that impede good governance in the Arab region,

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rbas_ahdr2002_en.pdf

Creating opportunities

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rbas_ahdr2003_en.pdf

Governance

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rbas_ahdr2005_en.pdf

Women

http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/arab_human_developmentreport2009.html

Human security

<http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/cbbdc892-a0bc-4846-b780-69fdb635b555/ArabHDR2016-Executive-Summary->

[UNDP.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=cbbdc892-a0bc-4846-b780-69fdb635b555](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/cbbdc892-a0bc-4846-b780-69fdb635b555/UNDP.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=cbbdc892-a0bc-4846-b780-69fdb635b555)

Youth

4. JANUARY 30

Reports:

Political participation, Gender inequality, Economic vulnerability, healthcare and illiteracy

5. FEBRUARY 6 AND FEBRUARY 13

THE BLAME GAME

Timur Kuran, (2011), *The Long Divergence. How Islamic Law held back the Middle East* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp. 4-41

Jared Rubin, (2017), *Rulers, Religion, & Riches. Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.1-24

Eric Chaney, “Religion and the rise and fall of Islamic Science”. (On Chaney’s site)

Eric Chaney, “Revolt on the Nile: Economic shocks, religion, and political power” *Econometrica* 2013. 81(5) 2033-2053 (and On Chaney’s site)

Timur Kuran, “Islam and economic performance: Historical and Contemporary links” *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 56(2018): (On OWL)

Owen, Introduction, pp. 1-10

6. FEBRUARY 13

Discussion and Reports: Islam. Islamic law. Religious elites.

7. FEBRUARY 27

BACK TO EVIDENCE: THE MIDDLE EAST ECONOMY IN THE 19TH CENTURY. EVALUATING THE ECONOMIC CHANGE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Sevket Pamuk, “Estimating economic growth in the Middle East since 1820.” in *The journal of Economic History*, vol. 66, 2006 pp. 809-28.

Owen, Ch. 1, pp. 24-56

Owen, Ch. 2, ‘The economic consequences of the age of reforms, 1800-1850’ pp. 57-82
The effect of the reforms

8. MARCH 6

THE EXPANSION OF TRADE WITH EUROPE AND CONSEQUENCES. EUROPEAN PENETRATION AND FINANCIAL CONTROL

Owen, Ch. 3, pp. 83-19

Owen, Ch. 4, pp. 100-116

Owen, Ch. 5, pp.122-148
Issawi, Ch. 2
Issawi, Ch. 4

9. MARCH 13

CHANGING PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

Issawi, Ch. 3
Issawi, Ch. 7
Issawi, Ch. 8
Owen and Pamuk, 91-149.
Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, Ch. 4: The Impact of Rapid Population Growth.

10. March 20

INVESTMENT AND MIGRATION, POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Issawi, Ch. 5
Issawi, Ch. 6
Issawi, Ch. 9
S. Pamuk, "Institutional change and economic development in the Middle East," *Cambridge History of Capitalism* vol. 1
Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, Ch. 11: Political Regimes.

11. March 27

OIL EXPORTING ECONOMIES

Issawi, Ch. 10
Owen and Pamuk, pp. 202-228.
Richards and Waterbury, Ch. 15: Regionalism, Labor migration and the future of the oil economies.

12. April 3

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT

Robert C. Allen, *Global Economic History: A very short introduction*, pp. 1-39.
S. Pamuk and J. G. Williamson, "Ottoman de-industrialization, 1800-1913: Assessing the magnitude, impact and response, *Economic History Review* 64(2011), pp. 159-84.