

## OISSLX01 - Lebanon: Consociational Politics, Civil War, and Resistance

---

**Professor:** Aurélie DAHER

**Contact information:**

[aurelie.daher@dauphine.psl.eu](mailto:aurelie.daher@dauphine.psl.eu)

**Department:** International affairs

**Semester:** 1

**Course level:** L3 Undergraduate, graduate

**Domain:** Social Sciences and Law

**Teaching language:** English

**Number of in-class hours:** 33

**Number of course sessions:** 10 + Exam

**ECTS:** 6

---

### Course description and objectives

In the study of state and politics in the Middle East, Lebanon is a puzzling case. The consociational distribution of power between no less than eighteen official religious sects has turned Lebanon's politics into a zero-sum-game. As a consequence, it has prevented the emergence of a supra-sectarian authority that could be called a "state" in the Western sense of the concept.

This institutional weakness generates a paradox. It threatens the country's sovereignty by making it more vulnerable to regional and global powers. From a civil war (1975-1990) and the Israeli occupation of its south (1978-2000), to the relative calm of Syrian tutelage (1990-2005), regular turbulence periods since and another war with Israel (2006), the war in neighboring Syria, Lebanon gives the impression of great instability and unpredictability. The positions of its main actors often seem to answer to different, contradictory rationalities.

But despite appearances, Lebanon remains a real subject of its own history. Its "lack of State" gives it a flexibility that can sometimes turn out to be useful to overcome political blockages. In other words, the political game in Lebanon is the product of calibrated doses of local, national, regional and international imperatives addressed through more or less rigid frames of meaning-making.

This course aims to shed light on the submerged part of the iceberg of Lebanese politics, and to assess its significance for the country's social and political future. As such, our aim here is to build Lebanese politics as a model and determine what it can teach us for other countries of the region (Iraq, Syria), which already present – or will soon present – some of the same social and political features as Lebanon.

This course has three main objectives.

(1) At an empirical level, it aims at giving students a solid knowledge in Lebanese history, mainly in the major violent episodes of its trajectory: the civil war (1975-1990), Israeli occupation (1982-2000), and Hezbollah's intervention in Syria (since 2013).

(2) The point is also to present a specific understanding of a practice of power far removed from what can be observed in Western democracies. Without being an authoritarian regime, the Lebanese political staff has always had a particular definition of ruling, a special understanding of democracy, that go beyond the usual features shared by consociational systems everywhere else in the world. This course will hence illustrate through thorough examples what the Lebanese mean by a "*démocratie à la libanaise*".

(3) By doing so, this course will also aim at triggering a shared reflection on theoretical concepts of political science, and a questioning of the universality of some of what western political science sees as basic elementary truths and laws in politics-in-practice.

### Prerequisites

No prerequisite required.

## Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, the students enrolled will have an advanced understanding of

- (1) Lebanese history,
- (2) the notion of militancy in contexts of violence,
- (3) the main differences between major Islamic and jihadist movements,
- (4) a critical notion of foreign intervention, peacemaking, peacebuilding, state building, reconciliation, and transitional justice,
- (5) a good command of a particular case of consociational politics.

## Assignments and grading

The teacher will check the presence of the students enrolled in the course at every session. Grading is as follows: participation (10%) – book report (40%) – final exam (50%).

**Participation** covers the students’ performance in discussion during the meetings. They are expected to participate effectively.

Each student is expected to submit a **book report** (book to be presented by instructor on first session). The paper, of 2 000 words, should not only summarize the content of the assigned text, but also—and more importantly—assess the author’s arguments critically, draw out the reading’s relevance to the themes of the course.

The **final exam** – a series of questions based on what will be presented during the class sessions (3hrs exam) will take place at the end of the semester. The grading will be based on the quality of the analysis, and the relevance of the examples used to illustrate the argument.

The numerical grade distribution will dictate the final grade. The passing grade for a course is 10/20.

**Class participation:** Active class participation – this is what makes classes lively and instructive. Come on time and prepared. Class participation is based on quality of comments, not quantity.

**Exam policy:** In the exam, students will not be allowed to bring any document (except if allowed by the lecturer). Unexcused absences from exams or failure to submit cases will result in zero grades in the calculation of numerical averages. Exams are collected at the end of examination periods.

## Course structure

Session	Topic
1	Introduction: Chronological Overview/What is a Consociational Democracy?
2	The Competition between Different Understandings of the “Lebanon” Concept – Groups and Actors
3	The Civil War (1975-1990)
4	The Israeli Occupation (1978-2000)
5	The Pax Syriana Years (1990-2005)
6	9/11 and “New Middle East” Effects
7	Rafic Hariri’s Assassination and the End of Syrian Tutelage (2005 onwards)
8	The Rise of Sunni Jihadism
9	The Lebanese ‘Great Depression’ (2019-present): What Hope for Lebanon?
10	<b>Final Exam</b>
11	<b>Final Exam</b>

## Bibliography

For an introduction to the Lebanese historical and political universe, see:

- SALIBI, Kamal, *A House of Many Mansions*, University of California Press, 1990, 247 p.;
- TRABOULSI, Fawwaz, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, Pluto Press, 2012.  
They should be complemented with:
  - HANF, Theodor, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, London, Tauris, 2013, 712 p.
  - FISK, Robert, *Pity the Nation*, New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002, 752 p.
  - HAUGBOLLE, Sune, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 280 p.
  - SCHIFF, Ze'ev, YA'ARI, Ehoud, *Israel's Lebanon War*, Simon and Schuster, 1985, 320 p.For the events of 2005 and onwards:
  - YOUNG, Michael, *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square*, Simon & Schuster, 2010, 336 p.
  - BLANDFORD, Nicholas, *Killing Mr. Lebanon*, IB Tauris, 2006, 544 p.On Hezbollah:
  - DAHER Aurélie, *Hezbollah. Mobilization and Power*, Hurst/Oxford University Press, 2019
  - HAMZEH, Nizar, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, Syracuse University Press, 2004, 242 p.
  - NORTON, Augustus Richard, *Hezbollah. A Short Story*, Princeton University Press, 2007, 216 p.
  - PALMER HARIK, Judith, *Hezbollah. The Changing Face of Terrorism*, I.B. Tauris, 2004, 256 p.And for an internal presentation by the party's vice-secretary general:
  - QASSEM, Naim, *Hizbullah. The Story from Within*, Saqi Books, 2010, 464 p.

Lebanese news can be followed by reading the dailies (English versions):

- *Al-Nahar* (naharnet): pro-March 14
- *The Daily Star*: pro-March 14 (archives)
- *al-Akhbar*: pro-March 8
- *as-Safir*: Leftist (archives).

## MyCourse

This course is on MyCourse: **No**

## Lecturer's biography

Aurélie Daher is an assistant professor in political science and co-head of the Master's Programme in Peace Studies at Université Paris-Dauphine/PSL Research University, Paris, as well as being a lecturer at Sciences Po, Paris.

She was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Oxford, UK, St Antony's College (from 2010-2011, and from 2016-2017). In the US, she also held a postdoctoral research associate position at Princeton University, NJ (from 2012-2013).

Her work focuses on Hezbollah, Middle Eastern Shiism, Lebanese and Middle Eastern politics. She also works on the new aspects of Middle Eastern jihadism and its repercussions on European societies.

## Academic integrity

Be aware of the rules in Université Paris Dauphine about plagiarism and cheating during exams. All work turned in for this course must be your own work, or that of your own group. Working as part of a group implies that you are an active participant and fully contributed to the output produced by that group.