Grading Guidelines
MES4520 – Spring 2025.

General information

In Spring 2025, the topic for "MES4520 Topics in Middle East Politics and Society II" was

"Jihadi and Non-Jihadi insurgencies in the MENA region."

There were nine participants for this course. Teaching was organized in 10 seminars between late January and April. All students did their mandatory class presentations. Course instructor was prof. Brynjar Lia. No guest lecturers participated in the course.

Submission

The portfolio submission consists of two term papers and a presentation (power point slides and lecture notes).

The first paper is a long paper and shall consist of **10 pages of main text**, each page comprising approximately 2,300 characters without spaces, including references. (The front page and bibliography are not included in the page count)

The second paper is a short discussion paper and shall consist of **3-4 pages of main text**.

The presentation consists of the slides and lecture notes, used by the students during her/his mandatory class presentation for this course.

The grading of these three components should be done as follows:

- the long paper 70%
- the short paper 30%.
- the class presentation slides/notes 0% but will be considered in cases when the examiners are unsure about the grade.

The portfolio submission (two term papers and the presentations) is to be uploaded in Inspera within the given deadline.

The subject of the long paper, the short discussion paper and the mandatory class presentation shall not overlap significantly. If the themes strongly overlap, this might negatively affect the grade.

The subject of the long paper shall be related to the course and approved by the instructor.

The subject of the short term paper is as follows:

> "Discuss to how rebel groups commonly: a) recruit fighters locally and/or from abroad, b) raise funds and mobilize resources, and c) govern territories and control civilian

populations. The discussion should draw upon a comparison between both jihadi and non-jihadi insurgencies in the MENA region."

The students are free to draw upon literature not included in the syllabus, but this is optional, not a requirement. I have provided feedback and comments to students who asked for feedback on their papers, but most students have worked independently with their papers.

Grading of papers

The term papers should be based primarily on the extensive course syllabus (which includes several hundred articles and book chapters), but students are also encouraged to search for relevant literature outside the syllabus.

The use of primary sources, including primary source material in a language from the region is also encouraged, but since this course is also open to non-MES program students, this is not a requirement.

The student shall demonstrate his/her ability to work from and with the syllabus literature and other relevant literature and primary sources.

The successful student will critically engage with the reading literature, offering discussions, analysis, reflections, interesting observations, etc, not merely summarizing the main points from relevant research articles.

The research question must be formulated clearly and explicitly, preferably on the first page. It should be a "why" or "how"-questions, i.e. a question which invites further analysis and critical reflection.

The chosen empirical case(s) should be relevant to the research question.

The research question shall not go beyond what one can expect to find in the research literature. The limitations of the academic literature should be acknowledged.

The term papers shall demonstrate the student's ability to describe, summarize and analyze relevant research literature, informed by a theoretical approach (theoretical perspective, framework, concepts, a set of definitions, etc.)

The analysis should include reflections on the adequacy/appropriateness of the chosen theoretical approach with regard to the research question (why does it make sense to use this approach, not another).

The short paper should be very concise and focused. Given the tight space limitation, the students should only discuss the most relevant and strongest arguments when comparing the three selected cases.

Formal aspects

The paper should be written in a concise academic style. The papers should preferably be copy-edited (incl. language check).

Language errors may negatively affect the grade.

Students are strongly advised to use Chicago citation style (either author year in the text or author title in the footnotes).

Inaccurate and sloppy referencing and inconsistent citation style may negatively affect the grade.

UiO's general grade descriptions

The portfolio submission will be graded on the basis of UiO's general grade descriptions (as of May 2025):

A – Excellent

An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.

B – Very good

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking.

C – Good

A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.

D – Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.

E – Sufficient

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.

F – Fail

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking.