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**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**COLLEGE OF LIBERAL AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES**

**FALL 2017**

**PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS**

**HIST 232-601**

**IRAQ AND SYRIA** **FROM WORLD WAR I TO ISIS**

**Monday, 5:00-8:00 p.m.**

[**http://www.history.upenn.edu/courses/hist232-iraq-and-syria-world-war-i-isis-0**](http://www.history.upenn.edu/courses/hist232-iraq-and-syria-world-war-i-isis-0)

**COURSE SUMMARY**

A century ago the states of Iraq and Syria did not exist. Created by British and French fiat on the debris of the defeated Ottoman Empire, during the twentieth century the two were cornerstones of the postwar nation-state order in the Middle East. Despite the apparent artificiality of the post-1918 borders and the persistence of rival political identities (local, tribal, confessional), the two states appeared robust, with the regimes able to resist internal and external challenges. These certainties have come into serious question in the twenty-first century. The establishment of a de facto independent Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent Iraqi and Syrian civil wars, have all threatened the viability of the regional nation-state order. Most significant in this regard is the so-called "Islamic State" established on the territory of both states in 2014. In 2017, the future of the two states remains ambiguous. Strong pressures internally, regionally, and internationally point toward both fragmentation and regime resilience. This seminar will focus on the dominant themes in Iraqi and Syrian political and social development, focusing on those features common to both and tracing the tensions between nation-state-based identities and their rivals. Specific topics will include World War I and the creation of the states; the experience of the Mandates; Ba‘thism as an ideology, a political movement, and a ruling party; the problem of the Kurds; the role of the military; and Islamist politics. Students will read, discuss, and write upon selected texts, and pursue individual research projects culminating in a major research paper.

**Prospective major texts:** Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (Columbia, 2003); Kevin Martin, *Syria's Democratic Years: Citizens, Experts, and Media in the 1950s* (Indiana, 2015); Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Cornell, 1996); Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (Cambridge, 2012), plus articles and chapters.