

ANTH 353 | Contemporary Turkish Society

(1.0 Unit*)

Time: TBD

Location: Ankara University TÖMER, Emniyet Mah. No:8, 06560 Yenimahalle/Ankara, Türkiye

Number of hours: 42 (6 academic hours per week, over the course of 7 weeks)

Instructor: Associate Professor Mahmut Mazlum, Ph.D.

**One Bryn Mawr unit is equivalent to four undergraduate semester hours or five graduate semester hours.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This comprehensive course focuses on the intricate dynamics of contemporary Türkiye, scrutinizing the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped the nation and its contemporary societal fabric. Students will engage with pivotal subjects such as religion, economy, democratization, and gender roles, while contemplating the enduring results of regional migration and historical transformations. Employing guiding inquiries and a historical narrative, the course encourages an analytical examination of the challenges and opportunities facing Türkiye in the present.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will achieve three objectives: identifying and explaining the historical and institutional factors that shaped Türkiye's transition from the Ottoman Empire to the modern Republic, including state-society dynamics, civil-military relations, and debates on secularism and nationalism; evaluating Türkiye's contemporary socio-economic and demographic transformations, including democratization struggles, gender and minority rights, and migration impacts; and interpreting Türkiye's evolving geopolitical role as a middle power in a multipolar world, while developing skills to critically analyze academic research and political data to formulate arguments about modern Turkish society.

MAIN COURSE MATERIALS

- Ahmad, F. (1993). *The making of modern Turkey*. Routledge.
- Hale, W. (2012). *Turkish foreign policy since 1774* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Jongerden, J. (Ed.). (2022). *The Routledge handbook on contemporary Turkey*. Routledge.
- Özerdem, A., & Whiting, M. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge handbook of Turkish politics*. Routledge.
- Uyar, M., & Erickson, E. J. (Eds.). (2026). *The Routledge handbook of modern Turkish history*. Routledge.
- Zürcher, E. J. (2004). *Turkey: A modern history* (3rd ed.). I.B.Tauris.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Grading will consist of:

Category	% Points
In-class quizzes	30%; (3 quizzes x 10% each)
In-class participation and group work	10%
Final presentation	20%
Final in-class exam	40%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale

Ankara University's letter grading rules will be applied. For more information, please refer to the university's official guidelines: <https://bbs.ankara.edu.tr/bolognabilgi.aspx?menuuno=18>

ATTENDANCE POLICY & PARTICIPATION

Class attendance is required by American Councils for International Education. Excused absences include those due to observance of religious holidays and illness. In these cases, students must notify their American Councils contact person on each day they will be absent, and to be prepared upon the request of American Councils staff, to be examined by a physician.

American Councils may dismiss from the program any student who demonstrates poor attendance, inability to focus on academic studies due to ongoing physical or emotional problems, or behavior that interferes with the ability of other students to participate fully in the program. Missing classes may result in the lowering of a student's grade or loss of academic credit. Cases of habitual tardiness may also result in grade reductions or other disciplinary actions.

If a student misses one class, but then attends all other classes on that day, it is her/his responsibility to contact local American Councils staff and inform her/him of this fact within 24 hours. If a student does not contact American Councils within this period, the student will be considered absent for the entire day. (Individual course instructors may have additional participation requirements).

ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact American Councils in accordance with its Accommodations Policy, which was distributed to all participants upon admission to the program. Students seeking accommodations who have not yet informed American Councils of this request should speak to the Resident Director immediately about their needs. Students are also welcome to contact me regarding accommodations but should be aware that all accommodations are provided in accordance with the American Councils Accommodations Policy.

COURSE CONTENT

Week 1

Foundations of a Modern Nation-State: The Ottoman Legacy and the Birth of the Republic.

Analyzing the continuity and change between Late Ottoman institutions and the Early Republican era in terms of culture, society, and political identity.

Required Reading:

- Feroz Ahmad: Chapter 3: From empire to nation 1908–1923
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 2: The Foundation of the Turkish Republic under Atatürk 1923–38
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 1: Turkish politics: structures and dynamics

Further Reading (3):

- Zürcher (2004): Chapter 9: The Struggle for Independence
- William Hale: Chapter 2: Resistance, reconstruction and diplomacy, 1918–39
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 2: Politics and ideology: party and opposition in the late Ottoman and early republican period

Week 2

An "Army-Nation"? The Military's Role in Turkish Politics and Civil-Military Relations. Evaluating the historical dominance of the armed forces, the impact of coups d'état on democratic consolidation, and the shifting dynamics of military-state interaction.

Required Reading:

- Feroz Ahmad: Chapter 3: From empire to nation 1908–1923
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 2: The Foundation of the Turkish Republic under Atatürk 1923–38
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 1: Turkish politics: structures and dynamics

Further Reading (3):

- Zürcher (2004): Chapter 14 and 15
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 11: Coups and state formation in Turkey
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 11: The Armed Forces

Week 3

Faith and the Secular State: Religion, Politics, and the "Invention" of Turkish Islam. Investigating the role of religious institutions, the status of minority groups, and how Islam shapes modern Türkiye's social and economic fabric.

Required Reading:

- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 8: Turkish secular nationalism as religion
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 4: Political Islam
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 32: Religious movements in Turkey
- Gumuscu, Sebnem. (2016). "The clash of Islamists: The crisis of the Turkish state and democracy". Contemporary Turkish Politics, 6, 6-11.

Further Reading:

- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 7: The Political Islam in Power 2002–24
- Feroz Ahmad: Chapter 10: Epilogue: Turkey today and tomorrow
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 3: Turkish secularism: looking forward and beyond the West
- Cizre-Sakallioğlu, Ümit. (1996). "Parameters and strategies of Islam-state interaction in Republican Turkey". International Journal of Middle East Studies, 28 (2): 231-251.

Week 4

A (Still) Developing Economy? Political Economy and Social Transformation in 21st Century Türkiye. Examining the drivers of Türkiye's economic policies, industrialization efforts, and the impact of higher education and demographic shifts on national development.

Required Reading:

- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 22: The political economy of Turkey in the last two centuries
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 11: Political economy
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 6: Democratisation and Economic Liberalisation 1983–2002
- Özoğlu, M., Gür, B. S., & Gümüş, S. (2016). Rapid Expansion of Higher Education in Turkey: The Challenges of Recently Established Public Universities (2006–2013). *Higher Education Policy*, 29(1), 21–39.

Further Reading:

- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 17: Youth politics
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 14: The economic role of cities
- Feroz Ahmad: Chapter 5: The new Turkey: society and economy (1923–1945)

Week 5

The Struggle for Democracy: Political Traditions, Women’s Rights, and Minority Issues. Critically analyzing Türkiye’s path toward democratic consolidation, the evolution of the women’s movement, and the historical complexities of the Kurdish question and other minority rights.

Required Reading:

- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 2: Turkey’s never-ending search for democracy
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 6: Elections, Parties, and the Party System
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 24: Gender politics and the women’s movement
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 15: Kurdish politics in Turkey

Further Reading:

- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 9: Politics and Democratisation
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 16: Turkish nationalism and patriarchy
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 17: The Kurdish question
- Tezcür, Güneş Murat and Gürses, Mehmet. (2017). “Ethnic Exclusion and Mobilization: The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey”, *Comparative Politics*, 9 (2): 213-234.

Week 6

A Land of Migration: From Nation-Building to Global Diaspora and Refugee Host. Exploring how migration has shaped Turkish identity, from early population exchanges to the modern role of Türkiye as a major refugee hub and a source of soft power through its diaspora.

Required Reading:

- İçduygu, Ahmet, and Damla B. Aksel. “Turkish Migration Policies: A Critical Historical Retrospective.” *Perceptions* 18, no. 3 (2013): 167–90.

- İçduygu, A., Toktas, Ş., & Ali Soner, B. (2008). The politics of population in a nation-building process: emigration of non-Muslims from Turkey. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(2), 358–389.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701491937>
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 28: Migration from rural Anatolia to metropolitan cities
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 14: Migration and Diaspora

Further Reading:

- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 5: Refugees of the 1923 population exchange between Turkey and Greece
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 35: Turkey's responses to refugees: past and present
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 15: Governing Turkey's diaspora(s) and the limits of diaspora diplomacy

Week 7

A Middle Power in a Multipolar World: Türkiye's Foreign Policy and Rising Global Tensions.

Discussing Türkiye's strategic transition from the Cold War era to its current role as a middle power navigating relations with the West, Russia, and China.

Required Reading:

- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 28: Foreign policy, 1923–2018
- Özerdem & Whiting (2019): Chapter 29: Resetting Turkish foreign policy in a time of global turmoil
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 10: Diplomacy
- Jongerden (2022): Chapter 37: Turkey and the West: dealignment in contemporary times

Further Reading:

- William Hale: Chapter 6: Turkish foreign policy after the Cold War: strategic options and the domestic and economic environments
- Uyar & Erickson (2026): Chapter 15: Integration with the West

Week 8

Synthesis, Wrap-up, and Final Presentations.