**Course description:** This course examines the histories, cultures and societies of the Middle East, a loosely defined term designating a large area of North Africa and West Asia. It starts by questioning the usefulness and origins of the very term “Middle East”. It then raises questions of how historical and anthropological knowledge, western media and travel writing, and academic scholarship have traditionally defined the Middle East. The course proceeds to offer a brief historical perspective of Islam, how it rose in 7th-century Arabia, how it spread rapidly through the region, and how Islamic orthodoxy was established. It then offers a brief historical overview of the Ottoman past, i.e. the period from the sixteenth century onwards, passing through the colonial period in the nineteenth century to the present post-colonial period in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The course will then shift to discussing some important contemporary issues affecting Middle Eastern societies. These include: women and their position in Middle Eastern societies; the Arab-Israeli conflict; problems of democracy and human rights; Islam and politics; and the Gulf War and the current war in Iraq. We will use a wide range of materials including diplomatic documents, short stories, scholarly texts, and photographs and videos, to explore the many different ways people in the Middle East have come to define and shape their world and also how outsiders have attempted to control and shape this world.

**Course format:** The course consists of two lectures followed by one recitation (discussion group) per week. A list of the weekly topics is given below. The lectures are meant to introduce the weekly topics and will be related to, but not a repetition of, the assigned readings. During the recitations students will discuss with their preceptors issues covered by the lectures and/or discussed in the assigned readings in greater detail and will be encouraged to raise questions and issues for further explorations.

**Required books:** available for purchase at the NYU Book Center and also put on reserve in the Reserve Room at Bobst Library (on A Level):
- Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict.*

There is also a coursepack of required reading which is available for sale.
Course Requirements:
- regular attendance at lectures, completion of all assigned reading on time, and active participation in recitations (20%)
- a map exercise due on September 13th in addition to randomly, unannounced pop quizzes (10%)
- two midterm exams one on October 4th and the other on November 1st (40%)
- a final exam given during exam week (30%)

Weekly Topics:

N.B. Items marked with one asterisk (*) are only available by clicking on the URL link from the course’s webpage on Blackboard (i.e. they are not in the coursepack).

Week 1 (September 6th and 8th): Introduction to the course: What, When and Where is the Middle East
- Daniel Bates and Amal Rassam, Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East, pp. 10-16.

Week 2 (September 13th and 15th): Representing, picturing and imagining the Middle East
- Richard Critchfield, Shahhat, an Egyptian, pp. 3-24.

Week 3 (September 20th and 22nd): Islam: dogma, faith and practice

Week 4 (September 27th and 29th): The Ottoman Heritage:
- Donald Quataert, The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922, pp. 89-109, 140-171.
- Albert Hourani, The Ottoman Background of the Modern Middle East.

!!! October 4th: 1st Midterm Exam !!!

Week 5 (October 6th): European Colonialism and its impact I
- William Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, pp. 103-117.

Week 6 (October 11th and 13th): European Colonialism and its impact II
- Charles Smith, Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict, pp. 20-54.
- William Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, pp. 117-129.
- Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples, pp. 299-314. (cont....)

**Week 7 (October 18th and 20th): WWI and redrawing the map of the Middle East**
- Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict*, pp. 55-104

**Week 8 (October 25th and 27th): The Middle East in the Interwar period**
- Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict*, pp. 105-162.

!!! November 1st: 2nd Midterm exam !!!

**Week 9 (November 3rd): Palestine, Zionism and Israel I**

**Week 10 (November 8th and 11th): Palestine, Zionism and Israel II**
- Ghassan Kanafani, “Men in the Sun”.

**Week 11 (November 15th and 17th): Women and gender**

**Week 12 (November 22nd): Problems of democracy and human rights**

November 24th is Thanksgiving holiday

**Week 13 (November 29th and December 1st): Islam and Politics**

**Week 14 (December 6th and 8th): Iraq, The US and the Middle East**

**Week 15 (December 13th): Challenges to the future**
• Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict*, pp. 437-525.