MAP/World Cultures – V55.0511
Middle Eastern Societies

Spring 2008
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00-9:15
14 West 4th St., Rm. 101

Instructor:
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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 are also other readings which you can find on Blackboard.
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 February 19th, and the other on March 25th (40%)
- a final exam given during exam week (30%).

Weekly Topics:

Week 1 (January 22nd and 24th): 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 (January 29th and 31st): Representing, picturing and imagining the Middle East

- Richard Critchfield, Shahhat, an Egyptian, pp. 3-24.

Week 3 (February 5th and 7th): Islam: dogma, faith and practice

- Anne Betteridge, “Muslim Women and shrines in Shiraz,” in Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn Early, eds., Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East, 276-89.

Week 4 (February 12th and 14th): 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”.

!!! February 19th: First Midterm Exam !!!

Week 5 (February 21st): European Colonialism and its impact I

- William Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, pp. 103-117.

Week 6 (February 26th and 28th): 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.
Week 7 (March 4th and 6th): WWI and redrawing the map of the Middle East
  • William Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, pp. 149-170.
  • Charles Smith, Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict, pp. 55-104

Week 8 (March 11th and 13th): The Middle East in the Interwar period
  • William Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, pp. 172-232.
  • Charles Smith, Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict, pp. 105-162.

Week 9 (March 18th and 20th): Spring Break

  !!! March 25th : Second Midterm exam !!!

Week 10 (March 27th): Palestine, Zionism and Israel I
  • Charles Smith, Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict, pp. 162-216.

Week 11 (April 1st and 3rd): Palestine, Zionism and Israel II
  • Charles Smith, Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict, pp. 253-340.
  • Ghassan Kanafani, “Men in the Sun”.

Week 12 (April 8th and 11th): Women and gender
  • John Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path, pp. 93-100.
  • Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam, pp. 144-168.
  • Arlene E. Macleod, Accommodating Protest, pp. 97-141.
  • Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, eds., Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing, selections.
  • Elizabeth Fernea, Women and the Family in the Middle East, Selections.
  • Julie Peteet’s article in Judith Tucker, ed., Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers.

Week 13 (April 15th and 17th): Problems of democracy and human rights

Week 14 (April 22nd and 24th): Islam and Politics
  • John Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path, pp. 115-252.
  • Gudrun Krämer, “Islamist notions of democracy,” in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, Political Islam, pp. 71-82.

Week 15 (April 29th and May 1st): Iraq, The US and the Middle East
  • William Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, pp. 473-497, 541-548.

**Week 16 (May 5th): Challenges to the future**
• Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict*, pp. 437-525.