The Middle East and North Africa Through Film and Literature

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An/Re S40
Short Term 2013
Bates College

Monday 1:00-2:30pm RW G18
Wednesday, Thursday 1:00-4:00pm Hedge 106
Dr. Rania Kassab Sweis
rsweis@bates.edu
Office: Pettengill Hall 163
Office hours: by appointment
COURSE DESCRIPTION

This anthropology course examines the contemporary Middle East and North Africa through film, novels and scholarly texts. With an emphasis on the aesthetics of filmmaking and writing, students will have a better understanding of the history, culture and politics of the Middle East/North Africa region and its relationship to the ‘West.’ As an anthropology course, we will take a critical approach to the material. We will read films and novels ethnographically; that is, we will subject them to the kind of rigorous social analysis anthropologists engage in when analyzing large-scale political processes and everyday relations of power.

The goals of the course are two-fold: first, to introduce the Middle East and North Africa as a broad and diverse region to students with little or no academic training on the subject; and second, to interrogate the politics and ethics of film and literature production about the region. What issues are addressed in the works of Middle Eastern and North African filmmakers and novelists? Why?

Topics covered in class include colonialism and post-coloniality; Islam in everyday life; gender, kinship and sexuality; war and structural violence; art and music; globalization and unemployment; the state, social movements and revolution.

Students are responsible for all assigned readings and screenings, for participating in classroom discussions, for completing homework assignments on time, for keeping up to date on events in the region and presenting on a topic of choice at the end of the course. Opportunities for extended participant observation during this short term may include trips to film screenings, restaurants and museums in the Portland or Boston areas.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Attendance and Class Participation = 50%
2 Written Thematic Précis (4 pages double spaced) = 25%
Final Film Project Presentation and Portfolio = 25%

CLASSROOM RULES AND ETIQUETTE

An overall goal of this anthropology course is to provide you with the space and time necessary to cultivate better discussion and analytic skills. You will be discussing texts and films with your classmates each time we meet. You must engage all members of the class in a respectful and socially responsible manner. The classroom is a safe space, not an unregulated space. Disrespectful behavior, ethnocentrism or hurtful comments are not allowed and may result in your dismissal from the course.
You may email me at rsweis@bates.edu. Emails should contain a proper greeting and closing. Avoid using overly informal language in your emails. The language you use in an academic message should be different from what you would use in a text message or IM chat.

Enjoy your coffee, water or other (non-alcoholic) beverage in class. Feel free to eat in class if you need to. But if you do, please be discrete about it and try not to disrupt class or draw attention to yourself. If you’d like, you may bring enough for the entire class to enjoy.

Sleeping during a film viewing is not allowed. Please ensure you are awake, rested and ready to work when you arrive to class.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

Each time we meet you should bring your course syllabus, all your notes and be ready to participate actively in class.

If you cannot attend class you must contact me directly.

One absence without a Dean or doctor's note is excused for emergencies or other unforeseen situations. Your second absence without a note will lower your participation grade. A third will result in an office meeting where we will discuss your place in the course.

Late assignments are graded down (half a grade per day) unless an extension has been granted.

Assignments are accepted in class only and as a hard copy – no emailed papers please.

Arriving late to class is disruptive and disrespectful to those who work hard to be on time. Consistent lateness will lower your participation.

MOBILE PHONES MUST BE TURNED COMPLETELY OFF IN CLASS

THANK YOU FOR LEAVING COMPUTERS, TABLETS AND ALL OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

IMPORTANT

The syllabus is a fluid document, subject to change based on your collective needs/interests. You will be notified in advance if this happens.
All students are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College Statement on Academic Honesty.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please also request the Dean of Students to send a statement verifying your disability and specifying the accommodations you will need.

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

*The Modern Middle East*, James Gelvin  
*Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Haram Girlhood*, Fatima Mernissi  
*I'Jaam*, Sinan Antoon  
*The Yacoubian Building*, Alaa Al’Aswany

*All books are available on library reserves*

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

*Ladd Library Middle East Studies Guide:*  
[http://libguides.bates.edu/content.php?pid=63770&sid=470613](http://libguides.bates.edu/content.php?pid=63770&sid=470613)

*Ladd Library Film Studies Guide:*  
[http://libguides.bates.edu/content.php?pid=64227&sid=474323](http://libguides.bates.edu/content.php?pid=64227&sid=474323)

*Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP):*  
[http://www.merip.org/?ip_login_no_cache=4552eeaf0bc42423d8715439886f7fa6](http://www.merip.org/?ip_login_no_cache=4552eeaf0bc42423d8715439886f7fa6)

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: April 22-26  Colonialism and Postcoloniality**

Reading: “Algeria: a world constructed out of ruins,” Matthew Evangelista in *Gender, Nationalism, and War*, available on Lyceum

Reading: *The Modern Middle East*, James Gelvin, Chapter 14 “The Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Dispute” and Chapter 18 “Israel, the Arab States, and the Palestinians”
Further Suggested Reading: “Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer,” Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, *MERIP*, available on Lyceum

Viewing: *The Battle of Algiers*
Viewing: *The Time That Remains*

Week 2: April 29-May 3  Religion, Gender, Sexuality

Reading: Dreams of Tresspass: Tales of a Haram Girlhood, Fatima Mernissi

Reading: “How Not to Study Gender in the Middle East,” Maya Mikdashi, *Jadaliyya* (3/21/2012), available on Lyceum


Viewing: *Caramel*
Viewing: *A Separation*

*Précis #1 Due Thursday in class*

Week 3: May 6-10  War

Reading: *IJaam*, Sinan Antoon

Further Suggested Reading: The Story of Zahra: A Novel, Hanan al-Shaykh

Viewing: *Where Do We Go Now?*
Viewing: *House of Saddam, Part 1 & 2*
Viewing: *House of Saddam, Part 3 & 4*
Viewing: About Baghdad

Week 4: May 13-17  Globalization, Cities, Revolution

Reading: *The Yacoubian Building*, Alaa Al-Aswany


Further Suggested Reading: *The Modern Middle East*, James Gelvin, Chapter 19 “The Iranian Revolution”

Viewing: *The Yacoubian Building*
Viewing: *Captain Abu Raed*
Viewing: *Dubai: City of Life*
Viewing: *In Tahrir Square: 18 Days of Egypt’s Unfinished Revolution*

Further Suggested Viewing: *Persepolis*

*Précis #2 Due Thursday in class*

**Week 5: May 20-24  The Social Life of Music**

Reading: “You Will (Not) Be Able to Take Your Eyes Off It!: Mass Mediated Images and Politico-Ethical Reform in the Egyptian Islamic Revival,” Patricia Kubala in *Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East*, (forthcoming), available on Lyceum

Viewing: *Um Kalthoum: A Voice Like Egypt*
Viewing: *We Loved Each Other So Much*
Viewing: ‘*Video Clips*’ or Music Videos from the Middle East/North Africa

*Final Project Presentations*

*Final Project Portfolios Due last day of class*