
Contemporary Arab Thought and Culture

Dr. Rana Zaher

Course Number: 702.2137

Class Time: TBA

Class Location: TBA

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Course Description:

This course offers an interdisciplinary overview of the central aspects of contemporary Arab thought and culture. Based on academic research, textual and media resources, and literature from both the Arab world and elsewhere, we will survey several fields relevant to the understanding of the contemporary Arab world's cultural, social and political affairs. More specifically, the course will offer academic readings and discussions into the Arab world's historical backgrounds, political agendas, gender issues, identity issues, language varieties, and probable future socio-political scenarios. The course will present ample educational opportunities and experiences that promote analytic skills and insights into another culture and its complexities.

Course Content:

This course presents 6 interrelated generic topics, and 2 classes (approximate to semester's length) will be designated for each topic. The topics and their specifications are detailed below:

1. History:

The Arab world map, the Arab League, the emergence of Islam, the Arab identity before and after Islam, the rise and fall of the Islamic empire, pan Arabism and pan Islamism.

2. Gender:

The status and challenges of Arab women in the 22 Arab countries, prominent Arab women, the secular Arab feminist movement, the Islamic feminist movement, and the Tunisian experience.

3. Theory and Thought:

Orientalism as a cornerstone theory to the post-colonial studies, Edward Said's argument about the relationship between east and west, and Bernard Lewis 'critique of Orientalism.

4. Language and Identity:

Linguistic characteristics of MSA-Modern Standard Arabic (as compared to English), the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) of MSA, non-linguistic characteristics of Arabic: religious and national symbolism, and *borrowing* and *codeswitching* among speakers of Arabic.

5. Religion and Identity:

Christian Arabs in the Arab world: status, challenges and identity.

Druze in the Middle East: status, challenges and identity.

6. Patterns of Change:

Globalization processes, and The "Arab Spring" revolutions.

Course Requirements:

Since it is an introductory course, there are no specific pre-requisites, and knowledge of the Arab culture or Arabic is recommended but not necessary. Attendance is obligatory for at least 80% of the classes, and active participation in classes are expected. All relevant material and articles can be found in and downloaded from the course Moodle website. All exams are open-book ones.

The purpose of the individual meetings is to follow-up the students' progress in their paper work and to provide an open space for them to discuss different paper or course related issues.

Assessment for Regular Students:

% 50 Midterm exam:

% 50 Paper:

Assessment for Seminar Students:

% 30 Midterm exam:

% 70 Seminar paper:

Bibliography

Obligatory Reading:

Amara, M. & Schnell, I. (2004). Identity repertoires among Arabs in Israel, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30:1, 175-193

Badran, M. (2005). Between secular and Islamic feminism/s. Reflections on the Middle East and beyond, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 1:1, 6-28.

Bassiouny, R. (2009). Diglossia and dialect groups in the Arab world, *Arabic Sociolinguistics: Topics in Diglossia, Gender, Identity and Politics*, chapter 1, 9-26, Georgetown University Press.

Craig, J. (1997). What is an Arab? *Asian Affairs*, 28:1, 38-50.

Dana, N. (2010). Druze Identity, Religion – Tradition and Apostasy, *Shanaan*,. Accessable at: <http://app.shanaan.ac.il/shnaton/15/14.pdf>

Horenczyk, G., & Munayer, S., J. (2007). Acculturation Orientations Toward Two Majority Groups: The Case of Palestinian Arab Christian Adolescents in Israel, *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 38:1, 76-86.

Horenczyk, G., & Munayer, S., J. (2014) Multi-group acculturation orientations in a changing context: Palestinian Christian Arab adolescents in Israel after the lost decade, *International Journal of Psychology*, 49: 5, 364–370.

Lewis, B. (1982). *The question of Orientalism*, The New York review of books, June 24, 1982.

Mahfoudhi, A., Everatt, J., & Elbeheri, G. (2011). Introduction to the Special Issue on Literacy in Arabic. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 24, 1011-1018.

Mellon, J., G. (2002). Pan- Arabism, pan- Islamism and inter- state relations in the Arab World, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 8:4, 1-15.

Moghadam, M., V. (2002). Islamic Feminism and its discontents: towards a resolution of the debate, *Signs*, 27: 4, 1135-1171, The University of Chicago press.

Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, chapter 1, 1-27, Penguin group.

Sawani, Y., M. (2012). The 'end of pan-Arabism' revisited: reflections on the Arab Spring, *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 5:3, 382-397.

Optional Reading:

Antonius, G. (1939). *The Arab Awakening: The story of the Arab National Movement*, chapter 1, 13-34, Simon publishers

Badawi, M., M. (1992). *Modern Arabic Literature*, 1-22, Cambridge University Press

Bassiouny, R. (2009). Women in the Arab world: framing and background information, *Arabic Sociolinguistics: Topics in Diglossia, Gender, Identity and Politics*, chapter 4, 133-137, Washington DC, Georgetown University Press.

Cachia, P. (2002). *Arabic Literature; an overview*, 1-23, Routledge Curzon.

McCallum, F. (2012). Christian political participation in the Arab world, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23:1,3-18.

Waardenburg, J. (2004). Christians, Muslims, Jews, and their religions, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 15:1, 13-33.

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the lecturer.