

Contemporary Arab Thought and Culture

Dr. Rana Zaher

Course Number: 702.2137
Class Time: Tuesdays, 12:00-15:00
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 a number of fields relevant to an understanding of contemporary Arab civilization: historical background, political agendas, language varieties, literary traditions, and social constructs. 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 generic topics and 2 classes (approximate to semester's length) will be designated for each. The topics and their branches are detailed below:

1. History:

Introduction, history of Arab nationalism- before Islam, after Islam, Pan Arabism, Arab Christians

2. Language:

The development of Arabic: classical Arabic, colloquial Arabic, dialects, Arabic language, identity and politics

3. Literature:

Examples of literature of the 20th century and different schools of literary thought

4. Religion:

The three main religions: Islam, Christianity and Druze, religion and culture, religion and politics

5. Gender :

Arab feminist movement, Arab women in society, literature and politics

6. Patterns of change:

Globalization processes, Arab Spring

Course Requirements:

- Weekly Reading Assignments
- Class Participation
- Presentations
- Mid-Term Exam
- Final exam

Since it is an introductory course, there are no pre-requisites, and knowledge in Arab culture or language is recommended but not necessary. Attendance is obligatory for at least 80% of the classes. Students are expected to come to class with their own material and ready for discussion.

Assessment:

Midterm exam: 20 %

Final exam: 50%

Presentations: 10%

Paper: 20%

Bibliography:

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

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

Badran, M., (2005). Between secular and Islamic feminism/s. Reflections on the Middle East and beyond, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol.1. No. 1,(pp.6-28)

Bassiouny, R., (2009). Diglossia and dialect groups in the Arab world, *Arabic Sociolinguistics: Topics in Diglossia, Gender, Identity and Politics*, (chapter 1, pp.9-26), Georgetown 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, pp.133-137) Washington DC, Georgetown University Press ,
- Bernard, L., (2012). Orientalism and the cult of right thinking, *Notes on a century: reflections of a Middle East historian*, (pp. 26), Penguin Publishing
- Cachia, P.,(2002). Arabic Literature; an overview, (pp. 1-23), RoutledgeCurzon
- Mahfoudhi, A., Everatt, J. & Elbeheri, G., (2010). Introduction to the special issue on literacy in Arabic, *Read Writ* 24 (pp.1011–1018)
- McCallum,F.,(2012). Christian political participation in the Arab world, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23:1,(pp.3-18)
- Moghadam, M.,V. (2002). Islamic Feminism and its discontents: towards a resolution of the debate, *Signs*, Vol. 27, No. 4., (pp. 1135-1171), The University of Chicago press
- Said, E., 1979, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, (chapter 1, pp. 1-27), Penguin group
- Waardenburg, J.,(2004). Christians, Muslims, Jews, and their religions, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 15:1, (pp.13-33)

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