

# Attention!

This is a representative syllabus. The syllabus for the course you are enrolled in will likely be different.

Please refer to your instructor's syllabus for more information on specific requirements for a given semester.

## Course Syllabus

**Cultures of the Contemporary Arab World:  
*Imagining Pasts and Futures*  
Arabic 2241  
Meeting Time/Location**

**Professor:**

**Email:**

**Office:**

**Office Hours:**

### **Course Description:**

This course explores the intersecting political, intellectual, and artistic currents that have shaped modern and contemporary Arab cultures. We will critically examine various meanings of the term “culture,” taken to mean societal norms, ways of relating to others, popular culture, and the arts, asking: what is “Arab culture” and what does it mean to study it? To deepen our discussions, we will engage in self-reflective practices that examine our own and our peers’ experiences and shifting understandings of culture and question how different scholars have approached the study of Arab culture. We will study topics such as the Arab Renaissance (or *nahda*), the impact of European colonialism, Arab nationalism, Islamic revivalism, gender, Arabic language and literature, music, and progressive youth movements through sources such as histories, documentary film, political tracts, novels, news reporting, and more. A recurring question in this course is how people in the modern and contemporary Arab world have theorized the idea of culture through the ways that they imagine their pasts and possible futures. To this end, we will consider utopian and dystopian visions of the past and future and the extent to which ideas of “Arab culture” are projected onto or undermined by representations of pasts and futures. These questions and our study of contemporary Arab cultures will help us build a deeper understanding of the complex shifts taking place in the region as well as the diversity of voices reflecting on them.

*This course fulfills the General Education (GE) requirement for non-western / global studies and cultures and ideas, which will help students become educated, productive, and principled citizens of their nation in an increasingly globalized world.*

### **Global Studies:**

Students understand the systematic study of human behavior and cognition; the structure of human societies, cultures, and institutions; and the processes by which individuals, groups, and societies interact, communicate, and use human, natural, and economic resources.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S. 2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

### **Cultures and Ideas:**

Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.  
2. Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

### **READINGS:**

Please purchase the following three novels (available at the campus bookstore, online, and elsewhere. Please use ISBN to make sure you are purchasing the correct edition):

- 1) *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih (ISBN: 978-1590173022)
- 2) *Limbo Beirut* by Hilal Chouman (ISBN: 9781477310052)
- 3) *The Queue* by Asma Abdel Aziz (ISBN: 978-1612195162)

All other readings and films will be made available on Carmen.

### **COURSE GRADING:**

Preparation (reading quizzes, writing questions) 20 %  
Participation (thoughtful reflection and listening in class) 20%  
Country report: 15 %  
Presentation on aspect of Arab culture 15%  
Term paper: 30%

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

**Preparation:** Please come to class as well prepared as possible. This includes doing the assigned readings or viewings, reflecting on them, and preparing questions. Please do not hesitate to bring up any uncertainties or questions that you have. Many of the topics that we are broaching are challenging and finding a level of comfort in not knowing all of the answers is a great starting point!

You will periodically be given reading quizzes. Since we do not have exams in this class, reading quizzes may be cumulative and may ask you to make connections with earlier readings and class discussions.

In this class, you will receive training on how to formulate and revise “wicked” questions. We will think about ways to probe underlying assumptions within questions and how to revise questions in order to catalyze new insights or ways of looking at an issue. Our questions will help guide class discussions and will be used as preparatory materials for Socratic Seminars.

**Participation:** Your thoughtful participation in this class is essential! Participation includes contributing to group and class discussion and listening to and responding to your peers. During Socratic Seminars and other discussion formats, you will take greater responsibility for guiding the learning process in the class. You will be assessed on your participation in a variety of discussion formats.

\*Please bring a notebook or other paper for taking notes and for journaling in class.

**Attendance:** Regular attendance is essential for success in this course. **You will be allowed three unexcused absences. After that your final grade will be lowered by 3% for every unexcused absence.**

However, if you are sick, please stay home and rest! If you are missing class due to illness or other reasons, please contact me to let me know. Other excused absences include religious holidays, OSU competitions, deaths in the family, etc.

**Country Report:** You will be asked to choose a country or national diaspora and prepare a short presentation for the class. See rubric on Carmen for description of assignment and rubric.

**Presentation on aspect of Arab Culture:** You will also be asked to prepare a concise presentation on an aspect of Arab culture. See rubric on Carmen for more details on assignment and rubric.

**Term paper:** For your term paper, you will select an aspect of contemporary modern Arab culture and discuss its historical development and significance in Arab contexts. You could select a type of social or political movement (for example, Islamic feminism, Arab nationalism) or literary genre or artistic medium (for example, the short story, modernist poetry, dystopian literature). In addition to your analysis and discussion of the movement or medium, include your own reflections on pertinent examples. We will workshop drafts of your term paper in class and you will have a chance to briefly present your topics on the last day of class. **Papers are due on Tuesday, December 13 at noon.**

**Class format:** This class is largely a discussion class. We will engage in several discussion formats, including Socratic Seminars, Jigsaw Classroom (<https://www.jigsaw.org>), and whole class conversations. We will also make room for

individual reflection (such as in class journaling) as a prelude to discussions to begin a process of critical reflection on a topic.

Although my main role as an instructor is to facilitate learning in the classroom by asking questions and helping to shape discussions, I will periodically give short lectures that help contextualize particular issues and historical contexts that relate to our readings. I will also bring in extra material (music, short readings, images) for us to explore together in class to enhance our discussions.

**Policy on phones and computers:** Research shows that not using laptops or electronic media in course settings improves learning outcomes. Please silence your phones in class and use laptops and other electronic devices only if absolutely necessary.

**Course Schedule (subject to change):**  
**Assigned readings and viewings are for the class date listed**

**Week 1: The Arab World and the Study of Culture**

**8/23** Introductions and course overview

**8/25** Read: Raymond Williams “Keywords: culture,” Suleiman M.H. Boayo “Idea of *thaqafah* and culture in the Western and Muslim conception”

**Week 2: Orientalism and the Study of Arab Culture**

**8/30** Read: Steve Tamari “Who Are the Arabs?” and Edward Said, *Orientalism*, “Knowing the Oriental,” pp. 31-49

**9/1** Read Halim Barakat, “Arab Identity: E pluribus unum,” *The Arab World: Society, Culture, State* pp. 32-47

**Week 3: Looking back: The Arabic Language and the Idea of Golden Age and Decline**

**9/6** Read Christopher Horn “Diglossia in the Arab World: Educational Implications and Future Perspectives”

In class: Asking “wicked” questions, preparation for Socratic Seminar

**9/8** Read Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam, Vol. 1*, “General Prologue,” 71-100, and “Prologue to Book Two,” 233-240 (electronic book accessible through OSU library catalog)

In class: Socratic Seminar

**Week 4: Colonialism and the Nahda**

9/13 Choose one reading: Mohamed Abduh, Jamal al-Din al-‘Afghani, Taha Hussein, Qasim Amine

In class: Jigsaw classroom

9/15

Listen to “The Middle East and the West” NPR (8:55)

Read Albert Hourani “The End of Empires (1939-1962), *A History of the Arab Peoples* pp. 353-372

**Week 5: Independence and Voices of Arab Nationalism**

9/20 Read Excerpt from Franz Fanon *Wretched of the Earth*, Albert Memmi *The Colonizer and the Colonized*

In class: Excerpt from *The Battle of Algiers* and discussion

9/22 Read “Tarab” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Watch *Umm Kulthum: A Voice Like Egypt*

In class: Viewing and discussion of Jamal Abd al-Nasser and Umm Kulthum as different kinds of voices of Arab nationalism

**Week 6: 1967 and The Crisis of Postcolonial Nationalism**

9/27 Read *Season of Migration to the North* by al-Tayeb Salih

9/29 Read *Season of Migration to the North* by al-Tayeb Salih

**Week 7: Season of Migration / Poetry**

10/4 Read *Season of Migration to the North* by al-Tayeb Salih

10/6 Read Adonis “Poetics and Modernity,” *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, Adonis  
Browse Princeton website and listen to poems

**Week 8:**

10/11 Poems by Mahmoud Darwish, Adonis, Nazik al-Malaika, Naomi Shihab Nye

10/13 Autumn Break – no class

**Week 9: Questions of Gender, Agency, and Sexuality**

10/18 Watch *Feminism Inshallah*, Read Fernea “The Idea of the family in the Arab World” *The Arab World: Forty Years of Change*, pp. 207-210

10/2 Read Norma Claire Moruzzi, “Gender and the Revolutions: Critique Interrupted,” *Middle East Report*, Mervat Hatem, “Gender and the Counterrevolution in Egypt,”

*Middle East Report*

Browse the English-Arabic gender dictionary: <http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/sites/default/files/resources/lebanonsupport-genderdictionary-en-ar.pdf>

**Week 10: Memory and Conflict**

10/25 Read: “Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990” in *The Encyclopedia of War*  
Read Hilal Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, sections 1-3,

10/27 Read Hilal Chouman, *Limbo Beirut*, sections 4-5,

In class: Socratic Seminar

**Week 11: Islamic Revivalism**

11/1 Read Lapidus, Ira, “Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Reading, pp. 444-460

11/3 Read Saba Mahmood “Topography of the piety movement,” *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, pp. 40-78

**Week 12: Remembering Resistance and New Media**

11/8 Watch *The Wanted 18*

In class: discussion of Palestinian visual culture of resistance

11/10 Read Loubna Hanna Skalli “Youth, Media, and the Art of Protest in North Africa”  
<http://www.photography.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1976/youth-media-and-the-art-of-protest-in-north-africa>

Explore Mideast Tunes <https://mideastunes.com>,

In class: Socratic Seminar

**Week 13: Arab Spring / Winter**

11/15 In class screening of *The Square* (2013) by Jehane Noujaim

11/17 Read: “Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart,” *New York Times*  
[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/11/magazine/isis-middle-east-arab-spring-fractured-lands.html?emc=edit\\_ta\\_20160811&nid=60133169&ref=cta&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/11/magazine/isis-middle-east-arab-spring-fractured-lands.html?emc=edit_ta_20160811&nid=60133169&ref=cta&r=0)

**Week 14:**

11/22 – Writing workshop: Bring drafts of term papers to class!

11/24 – Thanksgiving –no class (begin reading *The Queue* over the break!)

**Week 15: Utopian / Dystopian Futures**

**11/29** Read [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/books/middle-eastern-writers-find-refuge-in-the-dystopian-novel.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/books/middle-eastern-writers-find-refuge-in-the-dystopian-novel.html?_r=0)

Read *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz, pp. 1-119

**12/1** Read *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz, pp. 120-217

## **Week 16**

**12/6** Final reflections class and term papers

## **STUDENT RESOURCES:**

### **Mental and Emotional Health:**

If you are experiencing a personal crisis or problems that are difficult for you to manage please contact the OSU Counseling and Consultation Services (614-292-5766; <http://www.ccs.ohio-state.edu>). This service is free and confidential to students. Staff is there to provide support and guidance.

### **Disability Services:**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

## **ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).