

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.

The Middle East Close-Up: People, Cultures, Societies
Anthropology 2241 / Near Eastern Languages & Cultures (NELC) 2241
Course Mechanics (Syllabus)
The Ohio State University, Autumn 2017
fulfills GE Cultures & Ideas, and GE Diversity: Global Studies

Meeting Time:
Meeting Location:

Instructor:
Email:
Phone:
Office Hours:
Office Location:
Mailbox:
Personal Website:
Teaching Assistant:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What is life in the Middle East today like? How are deep traditions and religious faith lived out in places like Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey? How can Westerners understand Middle Eastern assumptions about family, individuality, marriage, gender roles, morality, and authority? Can Middle Eastern values co-exist with Western ideals of human rights, freedoms, and democracy? Can *culture* give insight to terrorism, or corruption, to the recent popular revolts known as the Arab Spring? How do we make sense of cultural differences, including your own assumptions about the world?

This is an introduction to **the Muslims of Middle East and North Africa from the ground level**. It's about **how ordinary people live, think, and act**. The course will bring in relevant historical, political, economic, and religious contexts to help us understand the lived experience of the people we encounter. We'll also consider **how to think about cultural differences in general** and what it means to be human in the globally connected world today.

We will see that understanding the region's cultures gives us insight into big questions of politics, societal problems, global trends, and terrorism. We'll think through such issues through ethnographic (cultural anthropology) articles, books, newspaper articles, websites, and films that provide fascinating windows on different life worlds. Students of all majors are welcome. Knowledge of foreign languages is **not** needed.

GE Goals & Expected Learning Outcomes: If you do the work, by the end of the term you should:

- Grasp *what societies in the Middle East are like*, how the people think, what they do, how daily life operates, what the governments are like to live under, etc.
- Learn *how to think analytically about culture*, both Middle Eastern culture and your own in comparison.
- Understand *how the Middle East fits into the world today* and how global issues (like conflict, oil, immigration, democratization, rights, Islamic revival, and terrorism) connect the Middle East with the U.S. in our world today.
- *Think critically* about global issues and be able to express methodical arguments in writing and speech. *Learn how to grasp an issue's big picture and recurrent themes*, and how specific facts connect to them.
- This course fulfills requirements for both the GE Cultures & Ideas, and the GE Diversity: Global Studies.

Prerequisites & Audience:

- No prerequisites, only college-level ability to read critically and express yourself in speech and writing.
- This class is for anyone interested in **getting behind news headlines**, and taking a ground-level view of the cultures, histories, politics, and religions of this part of the globe. Great for students studying social sciences or humanities, but designed for students of all majors. All readings are in English

- No background is presumed in the history or languages of the Middle East, or about Islam. However, those who do have prior knowledge would benefit from the comparative perspective and analytic approach to culture.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

- ❖ **Participation:** 10%
- ❖ **Student Responses:** 25%
- ❖ **First Exam:** 25%
- ❖ **Second Exam:** 30%
- ❖ **Working Group Presentation:** 10%
- ❖ **Participation** is the key to doing well in the course. It means:
 - *Do the assigned readings* and think about them. I cannot overstate the importance of this.
 - Pace yourself between our class meetings. Don't do last minute reading.
 - Refer to PDF "[How to Read an Academic Book or Article](#)", on Canvas, "Modules"→"Essential Files"
 - Use the **Reading Questions (RQ)** to help guide you what to read for and how to think about it. RQs are posted for each reading assignment on Canvas→Assignments.
 - Use the Class Schedule to know what the reading is each class. See Canvas→Assignments for PDFs & links
 - *Actively participate in class discussion.*
 - Be **prepared to talk about the Reading Questions in class**. Jot down notes as you read, and bring them to class. Those will be the basis of class discussion.
 - Our goal is to interpret the material critically together and respond to others' arguments. Much of our learning in this course will come from class interactions. **You'll be graded for your conscientious engagement with the material and other students**, not how much you already know, or how smart you appear in discussion.
 - I realize some students naturally don't talk much in class. But try to speak up a few times during the semester, ask questions, or talk to me or the GA outside of class – show me you are engaged with the material and with other students on the issues: that's participation.
 - *Films shown in class are required* content, and will appear in SRs and exams. You must view missed films on your own, preferably ahead of time of an anticipated missed class. In-class films are either on reserve at the Thompson Library (view them there with library's equipment), or can be streamed (link on Class Schedule or Canvas). Some of our films are also online on YouTube, and as DVDs in the Columbus Public Library system.
- ❖ **Student Responses (SR):**
 - SRs are written responses to the readings and other course materials like films that you turn in about once a week.
 - The questions to respond to will be posted on our website after a class, and you will post your SR on our Canvas website (under "Assignments") by noon two days later. So a Thursday SR questions posting is due Saturday by noon; and a Tuesday posting is due Thursday by start of class. See Class Schedule for when they will be due.
 - The questions cover the course materials since the last SR up until the class that just finished, so typically the work in the past week.
 - *Your SRs should not just summarize the material but provide a thoughtful evaluation and discussion* about it. The SRs check *if you've grasped the key points or ideas* of readings or films. They may ask you to give a specific example or two. It will NOT ask for nitpicking detail, trivial facts, nor figures.
 - We want *concise, accurate answers written in organized, formal English*. Irrelevant filler text will be crossed out.
 - You write 300-500 words total for each SR.
 - I'll drop the lowest SR grade when I compute your SR average.
 - I expect you to do the readings for each class on time according to the Class Schedule, and NOT wait until the SR questions are posted to start the readings. You should be ready to begin answering when the questions come.
- ❖ **First & Second Exams**
 - **First Exam** will be in class (see Class Schedule). **Second Exam** is on our last day of regular class, same time, same place as usual class. *If you have a conflict with either of these, let me know now.*
 - Format for both will be *short essays* (several paragraphs per question), and will ask you to reflect on the course material and discuss it, take a stance on an issue, and/or provide examples.
 - If you *keep up with readings, do the Reading Questions, and participate in class*, you'll do fine.

❖ **Working Group (WG) Presentation**

- You'll be assigned partners in your WG, and will have about 2 weeks to get together outside of class to plan, discuss, and prepare your presentations to the entire class.
- Your first task as a WG is to look at a set of resources I will provide (links to websites) and come up with a theme to investigate, that:
 - is related to the Middle East/North Africa or global trends among Muslims
 - engages with the themes of our course
 - and can be answered with the provided resources.
 - You can bring in other sources, but don't spend too much time looking for those, because this is NOT meant to be an extensive research project. Rather, *it's an exercise for you to explore and think about course themes using the provided materials.*
- Read the resources with an eye to investigate your question/theme. Discuss in your WG how you will present it.
- Presentations will happen near the end of the semester (see Class Schedule), and each group will have 10 minutes to present their findings and discuss how it connects to our course materials (readings, films, lectures, previous discussions). *Critical evaluations, comparisons, and reflections on the course materials through your investigations will be rewarded especially in the grading.*
- Each WG will receive a single grade, which will be applied to each of its members.

❖ **Grading Scale for Student Responses, Exams, & Presentation:**

- If this scale looks different from what you are used to, don't worry. All our grading will be on this scale, and your final grades will also be computed on this scale. So if you do "A" work on an Exam, you'll get a 95-100 on it. That'll put you on the road to an "A" for the course if you also do the same level of work on the other parts of the course. And so forth.

A = 95 – 100%	C+ = 78 – below 81%
A- = 91 – below 95%	C = 75 – below 78%
B+ = 88 – below 91%	C - = 71 – below 75%
B = 85 – below 88%	D+ = 68 – below 71%
B- = 81 – below 85%	D = 65 – below 68%
	E = below 65% (fail)

❖ **Canvas website & Grades:**

- Your attendance and grades will be posted onto Canvas → Grades. **But I will not be computing your grades with Carmen/Canvas. So ignore what Canvas may be saying about your overall grade** (it does that automatically). *I am using Canvas only to let you know your attendance and grades, not to determine your course grade.* Check attendance regularly and let me know if you see errors in my postings of your attendance.

POLICIES:

- **Absences:** *you are allowed 2 absences to class without penalty.* This is meant to cover illness, family situations, job interviews, etc.
 - **Beyond that, absences will negatively affect your overall grade, up to 5% per unexcused. This is a lot! Just one absence beyond the 2 allowed can make an A- into a B+, for example. You can fail just by missing a few classes!**
 - For absences after the 2nd one, email me (ahead of time if possible) with your reasons. Email me even if you tell me verbally in class, because I need a record. I will use my discretion to decide how much grade penalty (up to the 5% per incident) applies, **but some penalty will apply.**
 - If an unusual, lasting situation arises, you are responsible to let me know as soon as possible (or have someone else contact me). Disappearing (even with good reason) without telling me does not look good for you in terms of getting a reduced penalty. Don't just disappear!
 - Also, let me know now about expected absences from *religious holidays ahead of time.* These are excused without counting to the no-penalty limit of 2.
 - The GA and I will take attendance with a sign-in sheet. Make sure I know you're here if you're late. Perfect attendance may get a grade boost!

- **Missed Exams:** please do not miss the Exams, because it would mean failing the course. If an emergency arises, contact me ASAP. If there is an adequate reason for missing an Exam, I may allow a makeup at my discretion, but *there will be some grade deduction*, no matter what the reason.
- **Lateness:** repeated lateness (every 3 or 4 instances) will be counted as absence. *Leaving class early* (without telling me ahead verbally) is treated as lateness. *Doing inappropriate activities during class* is treated the same (see below on class conduct).
- **Incompletes:** I don't like to give incompletes. But if feel you need one, you must request this *before* the Second Exam, and give good reasons. I have discretion about whether to grant this. If granted, it would come with a late penalty on any missed Exams or other work that is lacking at the end of the term.
- **Class Cancellation:** In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note be placed on the classroom door. Afterwards, I'll email you about what I expect you to do for the following class. It is a good idea always to check your email the morning before each class.
- **Cheating & Plagiarism:** I take *very* seriously plagiarism and cheating on any coursework
 - **Academic Misconduct Policy:** All suspected cases will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct, in accordance with university rules. The Committee on Academic Misconduct investigates or establishes 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).
 - *Substantiated cases would mean a failing grade in this course*, and possibly expulsion, according to university rules.
 - I may use new anti-plagiarism software to check for undocumented source material.
 - Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas.
 - **Collaboration and sharing ideas** from others, however, is a **good thing**. We learn by building on each other's ideas. Just make sure you **acknowledge** your sources with footnotes in your writings, or orally in class. (Also *do something* with the ideas of others: evaluate them, relate them to other ideas, argue for or against them, give your own examples illustrating them, etc. Don't just cite them.)
- **In-class conduct:** I expect your full, thoughtful attention. We will all treat each other with respect.

- **NO DIGITAL DEVICES permitted in class**, not even for note taking. *No texting during class*. If it's a true emergency, step outside, just like at the movies.
 - The GA and I may check what you are doing and confiscate devices that violate this for the remainder of the class. WE CAN TELL IF YOU ARE LOOKING AT YOUR PHONES, whether or not we tell you to stop, and are keeping track throughout the semester. If you persist, YOU WILL SUFFER A GRADE DEDUCTION FOR BOTH PARTICIPATION AND PENALTY FOR ABSENCE for that class.
 - No newspapers, non-course books, email, websites, etc. during class.
 - I reserve the right to ask students whom I judge is disrupting the classroom environment (or repeatedly texting) to leave, resulting in an instant absence deduction of 5% of total grade.
 - *Why so strict? I need your full engagement during the class time. That goes toward your Participation grade, and you'll get more out of the class.* I realize some take notes on their computers, but I'll have to ask you to go with paper for this course. (You can transcribe it later to computer).
- **Students with disabilities**, please make your needs known to me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W12th Ave; 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

SUGGESTIONS:

- **Check email & course website announcements** on Canvas for any updates on assignments. We are listed as ANTHROP 2241 on Canvas no matter which section of the course you registered in. I post all my emails to class on Canvas announcements.
- I suggest you **download all course handouts and readings** under the “Contents” tab soon onto your own medium, rather than wait until you need it. “I couldn’t download the readings” will not be an excuse later.
- Many readings are from the *New York Times* website, which requires students to get a *digital* subscription to them. See **Readings**, below. Once you are paid up on NYTimes.com, links to those required *NYT* articles are on the Canvas website (and on the Class Schedule).
- Contact me by email, (liu.737@osu.edu). I try to reply to email within 24 hours. You can also see me right before/after class. If you missed class, ask a friend in class, or ask me or the GA.
- Email me questions about what we did in class or read. “No question is stupid” – I mean it. I can answer them at the beginning of next class, because probably other students have the same question.
- Get the phone/email of 2 others in the class, for notes or updates in case you miss class.
- It’s great to talk about the course material outside of class and share insights. **Do your Reading Questions with someone else!**
- Make sure the GA and I know you’re in class if you come late and miss the attendance sign-in. Our record of your attendance will be posted and updated regularly on our Canvas website. **Check your attendance record regularly to see we’ve got it right.**
- I don’t give your grade “so far in the semester”, but SR and exam grades will be posted on our Canvas website. You can do the math to estimate your performance.
- Clear, concise, **effective writing** in the essays is key to doing well in this course. I highly encourage you to use the free services of the Writing Center, which works with you one-on-one, confidentially, to improve your writing. Check them out at: <http://cstw.osu.edu>, 614-688-4291.
- Please **post a picture of yourself** on Canvas, so that the GA and I can get to know your name.
- **Do come see me in my office hours** during the term. I’ll be glad to chat with you about questions, or any topics of your interest. *You don’t have to have a “problem” to see me!* But **please email me to tell me you’re coming**, so that you don’t come when other students are talking with me. Our GA is also available on the same terms.

DISCLAIMER:

I have intentionally chosen readings & films that offer a range of different interpretations and viewpoints, some of which argue against each other. *The points of view expressed in the course material do not necessarily reflect my views* or those of the University.

This course is *not* trying to advocate any particular political or religious point of view, nor to evaluate the rightness of official policy (like the recent U.S. war in Iraq and Afghanistan). Rather, we are trying to understand the Middle East and its people, whom we will listen to, but not necessarily agree with.

Our common task is to evaluate everything thoughtfully, because an opinion you disagree with is instructive to all of us. You are NOT required to agree with what you read or hear (including from me), but ARE required to give every idea careful consideration and respect for those expressing them.

You are welcome to argue for your own point of view in a constructive manner. You will be graded NOT for which side you take, but how well you argue for it (using well-documented facts, materials from our course, methodical argument, etc.). This applies for what you say in class and what you write in your exams.

READINGS:

Course readings & other materials come from three sources:

1. New York Times news online
2. Article PDFs and links through our Canvas site
3. Books for purchase (and on Library Reserve)

1. All students are required to get a *digital* subscription to The New York Times, available to you at the college rate. NYTimes.com/CollegeRate. This is obligatory, because the Class Schedule (and Canvas) has links to various NYT articles that are *required reading for the course*. You need the *subscription for the entire semester, covering 16 weeks* (our term is 15 weeks, but they sell by 4-week blocks). If you do not pay for the subscription, NYTimes.com will allow free access to only 10 articles per month, which is not adequate for this course. Subscription not expensive, about \$24 according to the current pricing (at the cheapest level that includes computer access to the NYTimes.com archive plus Smartphone apps; for tablet apps it's a bit more expensive. If you just use a computer, the cheapest subscription level is enough). Consider this as part of the cost of taking this course, about the cost of one book.

2. Article PDFs and links to readings/pictures/maps/video/audio on external websites are available on the course Canvas website, which is listed under "NELC 2241", no matter which section you're registered for. (You get the same GEC credit in either section of the course – no difference).

3. The books can be bought at SBX Bookstore, 1806 N. High Street (across from Ohio Union), phone 614-291-9528, www.sbx-osu.com. Our course is **listed under "NELC 2241 / ANTH 2241"** there.

1. *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East, 3rd edition (2014)*, edited by Donna Lee Bowen, Evelyn Early, & Becky Schulties. Make sure you get the Third Edition.
2. *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Childhood* by Fatima Mernissi
3. *The Arab uprisings : what everyone needs to know* by James Gelvin, 2nd Edition (2015). Make sure you get the Second Edition of this one.

If SBX runs out, *let me know immediately*, and search for these books at other campus bookstores, like UBX, Barnes & Noble at South Campus Gateway, online, etc. If you decide to buy the texts elsewhere, *be sure to get the 2nd edition (2002) of Bowen & Early*.

The books are also on reserve at the main **Thompson Library, Closed Reserves**. Our course is **listed under "Anthro 2241"** there. You can take out our course books for 2 hours at a time. Some of the in-class films will also be on reserve there, in case you miss that class. You can view the films with equipment at the library.

The **Class Schedule for reading assignments** is in a separate document on Canvas website (under "Modules" on the left Sidebar → "Essential Files"). It shows what you need to read for which class, and the theme of the day. Please see that now.