

# 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.

# Introduction to the Field of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

**NELC 5101**

**1 credit hour**

Instructor:

Contact:

Office Hours:

This one-credit hour lecture/discussion course is intended primarily for first- and second-year graduate students in NELC as well as advanced undergraduates (seniors or juniors) majoring in the NELC department. Graduate students in other departments with research interests in the Near East are encouraged to take the course, too.

It offers a concise introduction to the field of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and its close cognates (Middle Eastern Studies, etc.), focusing on the history and constitution of institutional bases for the study of the Near East, the major debates about how the field is constructed, the development of the terms by which it is defined (“Near” vs “Middle” East, “civilizations,” etc.), the debate over Orientalism and its aftermath, the background to Area Studies, controversies about the study of the region, and the place of NELC knowledge in higher education and scholarship generally and in various publics, and how careers in NELC are made.

The course meets for a session of one hour and fifty minutes every other Monday, for a total of eight sessions.

## **Course Materials**

Book available online through library portal:

- Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge 2004. (Recommended for purchase.)

The other required readings may be found on *Carmen* unless otherwise indicated.

## **Attendance Policy**

Your progress in this course depends upon your active engagement in class discussions, and we have only eight sessions for this 1-credit course. You cannot afford to miss any session. Please discuss excused absences with me as early as possible. More than one absence may be grounds for reduction of your final grade by one-third of a letter (for example, B to B-). More than two absences will result in a grade of “EN” for the course.

## Grading Scale and Assignments

A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 60-66, E = 0-59

Active participation in the discussion of course materials is a basic requirement and is assumed. Non-participation will be treated as an absence (see above).

1. Write **four responses to the readings**, each of 200-300 words (40% = 10% each).
  - a. *Due weekly on the Friday before any Monday meeting (choose four different weeks).*
  - b. The purpose of these written responses is to demonstrate your analysis and critical thinking about the readings and to prepare you to participate fruitfully in discussion during the class sessions.
  - c. Write your responses to the readings in the Discussion list in the course Carmen/Canvas site. Read the responses of students who come before you and take into consideration their ideas. Feel free to disagree respectfully.
2. **Journal Summaries.** Pick two journals in the field in consultation with the instructor. Skim all of the volumes of these journals, either online or in the university library. Note the subjects covered, the locales from which the contributors come, and the changes in these two respects over time. Deliver a 6-minute presentation on the careers of these two selected journals (10%).
  - a. *Presented in Week 5.*
3. Write a 5-to-6-page **review of a book** relevant to a public debate in or about the field, chosen from the list at the end of this syllabus (40%).
  - a. *Due at meeting in Week 15.*
4. **5-minute oral presentation** of the issues dealt with in the book reviewed (10%)
  - a. *Presented at session in Week 15.*

## Learning Objectives

Students finishing this course will understand the history of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures as a field of knowledge and research, the historical processes that generated it, and what scholars do in this field and why. They will be better prepared to navigate the political pitfalls that circumstances have created for scholarship about the Near East and Middle East and will be better able to pursue a career in this area of study.

## 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://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>).

## Disability policy

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/>.

FOR YOUR SAFETY, the OSU Student Safety/Escort Service is available after 7 p.m. by dialing 292-3322.

*Readings listed below are to be read in preparation for the session in which they are listed.*

**NOTE: WE MEET IN ODD-NUMBERED WEEKS ONLY.**

### **Week 1. Aug 29. Orientation.**

- The history of NELC at OSU, what it offers, and its mission.
- Where is NELC/NES in North America? Comparing department profiles.

### **Week 3. Sept 12. Europeans and Americans Studying the East. (92 pages)**

- Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, pp. 9-11 and 38-99.
- Benjamin Foster, "On the Formal Study of Near Eastern Languages in America, 1770-1930," in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardtson (eds.), *U.S.-Middle East Historical Encounters*, University Press of Florida, 2007, pp. 11-44 (really pp. 11-37)

### **Week 5. Sept 26. The Societies and the Journals. (20 pages).**

- Lockman, pp. 99-112.
- Journal review exercise, brief presentations.

### **Week 7. Oct 10. The Rise and Fall of "Civilizations," and the "Islamicate" World: The Near East in General Education. (50 pages)**

- Silvia Federici, "The God That Never Failed: The Origins and Crises of Western Civilization," in Silvia Federici (ed.), *Enduring Western Civilization: the construction of the concept of Western civilization and its "others,"* Praeger 1995, pp. 63-89.
- Milton Singer, "Chicago's Non-Western Civilizations Program," *The Journal of General Education* 12.1 (1959): 22-23. FIND ON JSTOR.

- Marshall Hodgson, "A Non-Western Civilization Course in a Liberal Education with Special Attention to Islâm," *The Journal of General Education* 12.1 (1959): 39-49. FIND ON JSTOR.
- Marhsall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1, pp. 30-45 from his "Introduction to the Study of Islamic Civilization."

**Week 9. Oct 24. "Near East" vs "Middle East": Political Contexts (56 pages.)**

- Roger Adelson, "British and U.S. Use and Misuse of the Term 'Middle East,'" in Michael Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Gasper (eds.), *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 36-55. Available freely through OSU's library online, via the "ProQuest ebrary." Link [here](#).
- Lockman, pp. 112-147.

**Week 11. Nov 7. Orientalism. (66 pages pages)**

- Lockman, pp. 148-214.

**Week 13. Nov 21. Scholars contributing to Public Debates. (53 pages)**

- Lockman, pp. 215-267.

**Week 15. Dec 5. Careers in NELC. Careers *with* NELC.**

- Deliver your oral presentation on the book you read to review.
- Discussion of the "job market" for NELC degree-holders.

**Suggestions for book reviews.** Remember, these book reviews are supposed to represent popular scholarship about the Near East, the sort of thing that non-specialists might read. The book you choose should address some controversy (or have caused some controversy) or public debate pertinent to the present. You are welcome to propose a book that you find on your own. This is just a sample of what's out there.

Jim Al-Khalili, *The House of Wisdom: How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave Us the Renaissance* (2012)

Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (3 vols.: 1987, 1991, 2006)

Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (2006)

Richard L. Cravatts, *Genocidal Liberalism: The University's Jihad against Israel and Jews* (2012)

Reese Erlich, *Inside Syria: The Backstory of Their Civil War and What the World Can Expect* (2014)

Anand Gopal, *No Good Men among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War through Afghan Eyes* (2015)

Karen Elliott House, *On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault-Lines—and Future* (2013)

Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents* (2008)

Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (2008)

Martin S. Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle East Studies in America* (2001)

Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (2010)

Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (2003)

Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* (2010)

Rajiv Malhotra, *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* (2011)

Mahmoud Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (2005)

William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (2015)

John McHugo, *Syria: A Recent History* (2015)

Michael Morell, *The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight against Terrorism from al Qa'ida to ISIS* (2015)

William R. Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, from Persia to the Islamic Republic, from Cyrus to Ahmedinejad* (2011)

Robert Wright, *Vanished Khans and Empty Steps: A History of Kazakhstan from Pre-History to Post-Independence* (2015)