

Middle East Studies: Approaches, Themes and Controversies
NES 595D
Department of Near Eastern Studies | Fall 2008

Tuesday, Thursday 9:30 – 10:45
Marshall 479

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Description

Why does Middle East Studies exist as a field of academic study? Are there methods or objects of research that are peculiar to Middle East Studies? These are the primary questions that the course investigates, in addition to introducing some of the central issues and approaches current in the field. Middle East Studies presents a set of methodological issues that complicate standard approaches in the social sciences and humanities. The Middle East is not a clearly delineated object of study that defines a discipline, but a region loosely defined on the basis of perceived geographical, historical and cultural common elements. The study of this region is divided among a number of academic disciplines. In most cases, these disciplines are defined by universal objects of study, like “culture”, “society”, “politics” or “religion” that are thought to require the same questions and methods wherever they are studied. The present-day existence of Middle East Studies as an academic field is largely explained by its academic lineage in Oriental studies, which focused on the “glory and decline” of Islamic civilization, and in post-war geopolitics, for which oil-producing regions and the conflicts surrounding the state of Israel have had overriding importance. The course will provide an introduction to this lineage and its effects on the academic study of the Middle East, as well as considering how contemporary scholars attempt to free their research from this lineage. We will also focus on what sort of problems are set up in Middle East Studies, how these problems are framed, and what methods are used to investigate them. The course begins with an introductory segment conducted by the course instructor. For much of the course, professors in various academic disciplines who conduct research in Middle East Studies and related areas assign readings and lead discussions.

Readings

These are posted as pdf files on the course website at <http://d2l.arizona.edu/>. The readings for the introductory segment will be immediately available and the readings assigned by guest instructors will be posted as available.

Requirements and Grading

1. Class presentation (15%) – Students will choose topics from the syllabus and present all or part of the assigned readings for that topic in small groups. The presentation should center on critical analysis of the readings.
2. Reading questions/Outlines (35%) – A reading question should be prepared for each meeting unless (Outline) is specified. The reading question is a critical question, set out coherently in a short paragraph, addressed to the reading material. An outline briefly sets forth the argument of the reading material and the main points supporting the argument.
3. Final paper (50%) – A final paper of not more than 5000 words (16-17 pages) is due 12/15. This paper should set out a research question or problem in an area of Middle East

Studies and critically evaluate three important articles or books that take up this question or problem, laying out and comparing their approaches, methods and arguments.

Plagiarism

Any instance of significant plagiarism on any paper will result in WITHDRAWAL FROM THE COURSE WITH A FAILING GRADE. For more information, see <http://dos.web.arizona.edu/uapolicies/index.html>.

Schedule

(Subject to change. Consult the course website for updated schedules and readings.)

	INTRODUCTION: ORIENTALISM AND CIVILIZATION
8/26	<i>Orientalism</i> , Introduction
8/28	<i>Orientalism</i> , Chap. 1 (pp.31-73)
9/2	<i>Orientalism</i> , Chap. 1 (pp. 73-110); Lockman, <i>Contending Visions</i> , pp.205-233
9/4	Lockman, <i>Contending Visions</i> , pp.233-267
9/9	“Orientalism and Its Critics”, Halliday; “Orientalism Now”, Prakash (Outline one of the two)
9/11	<i>Medieval Islam</i> , Von Gruenebaum
9/16	<i>Classical Civilization of Islam</i> , Gibb
9/18	Hodgson “The Role of Islam in World History” (Outline)
9/23	Hodgson, “The Great Western Transmutation” (Outline)
9/25	Modernity/Premodernity
	UNIT 1: CLASSICAL HUMANITIES
9/30	Pre-Islamic Poetry – Adil Gamal
10/2	Islamic Art and Architecture – Amy Newhall
10/7	Islamic Studies – Scott Lucas
10/9	Presentations (Outline)
	UNIT 2: MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY
10/14	Indian Muslims – Richard Eaton
10/16	Early Ottoman History – Linda Darling
10/21	Presentations
	UNIT 3: SOCIAL AND URBAN STUDIES
10/23	Minority Studies – Aomar Boum
10/28	Middle Eastern Urbanization – Michael Bonine
10/30	Presentations
	UNIT 4: LANGUAGE, POLITICS AND IDENTITIES
11/4	Arabic Linguistics – Samira Farwaneh
11/6	Palestinians in Israel – Maha Nassar
11/11	Veteran’s Day No classes
11/13	Presentations
11/18	Islam, Turkey, Modernity – Brian Silverstein
11/20	Middle East Politics – Faten Ghusn
11/25	Presentations
11/27	Thanksgiving Holiday
	UNIT 5: IRAN: CULTURAL STUDIES
12/2	Persian Literature – Kamran Talattof
12/4	Religion & Ritual in Iran – Anne Betteridge
12/9	Presentations

12/15 Final Paper due