
Contemporary Arab Thought and Culture

Dr. Rana Zaher

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Course Number: 702.2956

Class Time: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 10-13

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 several fields relevant to the understanding of the contemporary Arab world's cultural, social and political affairs. More specifically, the course will offer academic readings and discussions into the Arab world's historical backgrounds, political agendas, gender issues, identity issues, language varieties, and probable future socio-political scenarios. 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 4 generic topics .The topics and their specifications are detailed below:

- 1. Historical vs. Contemporary Arab affairs:** This topic includes a brief historical survey of Arab social and political status before and after the emergence of Islam. A special emphasis will be put on Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism as two leading and competing ideologies.
- 2. Conservatism vs. Progressivism:** This topic contrasts the conservative social forces with those of a progressive nature in the Arab world. A special emphasis will be put on gender issues.
- 3. Orientalism and its critique:** This topic will focus on the east-west relationships from a post-colonial perspective: Orientalism. Critique of this theory will be introduced as well.

4. Identity Conflicts: This topic will focus on the identity conflicts experienced by certain communities: Christian Arabs and Druze. Also, the relationship between Arabic language and national identity will be discussed.

Course Requirements:

Since this is an introductory course, there are no specific pre-requisites, and knowledge of the Arab culture or Arabic is recommended but not necessary. Attendance is obligatory for at least 80% of the classes, and active participation in classes is expected. All relevant material and articles can be found in and downloaded from the course Moodle website. All exams are open-book.

Assessment:

Midterm exam: 50 %
Paper: 50%

Bibliography

Obligatory Reading:

Amara, M. & Schnell, I. (2004). Identity repertoires among Arabs in Israel, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30:1, 175-193

Badran, M. (2005). Between secular and Islamic feminism/s. Reflections on the Middle East and beyond, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 1:1, 6-28.

Bassiouny, R. (2009). Diglossia and dialect groups in the Arab world, *Arabic Sociolinguistics: Topics in Diglossia, Gender, Identity and Politics*, chapter 1,9-26, Georgetown University Press.

Craig, J. (1997). What is an Arab? *Asian Affairs*, 28:1, 38-50.

Dana, N. (2010). Druze Identity, Religion – Tradition and Apostasy, *Shanaan*,. Accessable at: <http://app.shaanan.ac.il/shnaton/15/14.pdf>

Horenczyk, G., & Munayer, S., J. (2007). Acculturation Orientations Toward Two Majority Groups: The Case of Palestinian Arab Christian Adolescents in Israel, *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 38:1, 76-86.

Horenczyk, G., & Munayer, S., J. (2014) Multi-group acculturation orientations in a changing context: Palestinian Christian Arab adolescents in Israel after the lost decade, *International Journal of Psychology*, 49: 5, 364–370.

Lewis, B. (1982). *The question of Orientalism*, The New York review of books, June 24, 1982.

Mahfoudhi, A., Everatt, J., & Elbeheri, G. (2011). Introduction to the Special Issue on Literacy in Arabic. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 24, 1011-1018.

Mellon, J., G. (2002). Pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism and inter-state relations in the Arab World, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 8:4, 1-15.

Moghadam, M., V. (2002). Islamic Feminism and its discontents: towards a resolution of the debate, *Signs*, 27: 4, 1135-1171, The University of Chicago press.

Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, chapter 1, 1-27, Penguin group.

Sawani, Y., M. (2012). The 'end of pan-Arabism' revisited: reflections on the Arab Spring, *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 5:3, 382-397.

Optional Reading:

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

Badawi, M., M. (1992). *Modern Arabic Literature*, 1-22, Cambridge 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, 133-137, Washington DC, Georgetown University Press.

Cachia, P. (2002). *Arabic Literature; an overview*, 1-23, Routledge Curzon.

McCallum, F. (2012). Christian political participation in the Arab world, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23:1, 3-18.

Waardenburg, J. (2004). Christians, Muslims, Jews, and their religions, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 15:1, 13-33.

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