

Anth 3707
Anthropology of the Middle East

Fall 2013
Tu/Th 11:10-12:25

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Course Description: This course will explore the anthropology of Middle Eastern societies. We will consider a variety of cultural forms and life experiences in the Middle East and examine debates and challenges that anthropologists face when they study this region. The course is not meant as a survey and will not address every aspect of Middle Eastern culture. It will cover a number of important themes in the anthropology of the Middle East and will provide students with the critical tools to investigate other aspects of Middle Eastern life.

Course Prerequisite: This is an upper-level course and requires a familiarity with anthropology. Students should have already taken Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology (Anth 2) or an equivalent course. Students should also be prepared to keep up with the substantial reading load.

Course Expectations: The success of the course – and your individual success in the class – requires regular attendance, participation, and preparation. Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned readings for the day and to be prepared to actively engage in discussion about those readings and their connection to broader themes in the class. You should bring your copy of the day's reading to each class.

Course policy on electronics: Your active presence and participation in all aspects of the course is important. For that reason no laptops, cellphones, or other electronic or communication devices are permitted.

Required Texts:

The following texts are available for purchase at the GWU bookstore and are on reserve at Gelman library:

Sherine Hamdy, *Our Bodies Belong to God: Organ Transplants, Islam, and the Struggle for Human Dignity in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)

Fida Adely, *Gendered Paradoxes: Educating Jordanian Women in Nation, Faith, and Progress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

Additional required readings are available through electronic reserves on blackboard. You should print these readings out and bring copies to class.

The novels you will be using for your presentations (see below) are also available at the GWU bookstore. All books are also available on online book-sellers, where you may get a better price.

Learning Goals:

- To recognize and analyze the richness and complexity of Middle Eastern societies.
- To recognize and identify key topics and questions in the anthropology of the Middle East
- To analyze and evaluate anthropological scholarship on the Middle East
- To apply skills in anthropological thinking in discussion, presentations, exams and essays

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation

My expectation is that you will attend every class and will come prepared by having done the assigned readings for the day. You are responsible for the information presented in class, whether through lecture, discussion, presentation, or film. There will sometimes be in-class work and possibly occasional quizzes. Missing classes will therefore have an adverse impact on your grade. The class will include both lecture and discussion; participating in discussion will help both your learning and your grade.

In-class work and attendance: As part of our conversation, we will regularly have small group discussions. Each group will write brief notes on their conversation and each member of the group will write their name on the paper. This will provide a record of your attendance in class that day, and the notes will give me a sense of what your group discussed. Each person must write their own name on the paper. Writing the name of an absent friend will earn the entire group a zero; any repeat will be treated as a violation of academic integrity. We will do this 10 times over the course of the semester, and I will count 9 of them. Because an opportunity to miss classes in case of illness or other problem is built into the system I do not excuse absences.

Postings: Over the course of the semester, everyone is required to post – through Blackboard – **8** 200-word reflections on the readings. The first posting is due (for everybody) on August 29 (more details will follow). For the remaining 7 postings you have choices about when to post. Each week I will provide a reading guide for the upcoming texts which will include questions to think about as you read. Your postings should respond to one or more questions. These reflections should be posted by 11:00pm on the night before class. I will print out the postings then and anything submitted after this time will not count toward your total. Everyone should read through the postings before coming to class. You can choose which days to submit the response, but 4 must be completed before the midterm, and 4 after. Postings cannot be submitted after the fact. These are not formal papers, but rather are an opportunity for you to react to and reflect on the readings for the week. Raise questions the readings posed for you, think about how they relate to other things we have read, consider how they fit into the course as a whole. These postings will help jumpstart our discussions of the readings, so you should be prepared to talk about your posting in class.

Participating in class discussion: I will allocate a small number of points in your overall participation grade for regularly joining in our shared discussions. I am aware that not everyone is comfortable speaking in a large group, so this portion of the participation grade is deliberately small, but a small number of points can make a difference in borderline cases – so I recommend that everyone try to join in.

Ethnographic readings of novels: presentation and paper

Group presentation: 10 times over the course of the semester there will be group presentations on novels from and about the Middle East. The purpose of the presentation is to reflect on both the ethnographic and the analytic aspects of the novel. You will provide background information about the novel, describe its ethnographic qualities, link it to the topic of the day, to the assigned readings, and to broader themes we are exploring in the course. Each group must prepare a handout for the class to accompany the presentations.

Books for presentations:

- * Amitav Ghosh, *In an antique land* (New York, A.A. Knopf, 1993).
- * Sunnallah Ibrahim. *The Committee* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).
- * Abdel Rahman Munif, *Variations on Night and Day* (New York, Vintage Books, 1994).
- * Sayed Kashua, *Dancing Arabs* (New York: Grove Press, 2004).
- * Ali Aswani *The Yacoubian building* (New York, Harper Perennial, 2006).
- * Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestine's children : Returning to Haifa and other stories* (Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).
— focus on Returning to Haifa
- * Nagib Mahfuz, *Miramar* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992)
- * Sonallah Ibrahim, *That Smell and Notes from Prison* (New Directions, 2013).
- * Fadia Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (Interlink, 1998)
- * Tayeb Salih, *Season of migration to the north* (New York: Penguin, 2003).

Presentation paper: While the presentations will be done in groups, each member of the group is required to submit an individual paper of 2-3 pages at the next class meeting after the presentation. This paper should reflect critically on fiction as a source of ethnographic insight and should use the material in the novel to analyze one of the issues that we are exploring through other genres of writing. In your paper you should make direct reference to texts we are reading in class. You will certainly have discussed your thoughts about the novel with the other members of your presentation group, but the paper should be your own work and reflect your own conclusions. You will receive an assignment sheet with further details and instructions.

Key themes in Middle East Anthropology

Throughout the semester we will consider key themes within the anthropology of the Middle East. You will have several opportunities to reflect on and explore these themes.

Posting #1: Your first posting – due **August 29** – is a 200-word reflection on one of the themes identified in the article, “Anthropologies of Arab-Majority Societies.”

Critical essay: Each student will write a critical essay (1700-2000 words) analyzing one of the ethnographies we are reading in relation to a key theme in the anthropological literature on the Middle East. This paper will also require you to engage with other readings, either from the syllabus or outside the class. You will receive an assignment sheet with further details and instructions. This paper is due on **November 26**.

Exams

There will be two exams in this class, an in-class mid-term on **October 17** and an in-class final on **December 12**. Tests must be taken at their scheduled times. In the case of a documented emergency that makes it impossible to sit for the exam as scheduled, students will take a make-up exam in an alternative format (take home, essay exam). The tests will require you to write reflectively and analytically about the concepts, populations, and experiences we are studying in class.

Assignments should be turned in at the beginning of class the day they are due. Electronic papers will not be accepted. Late papers will be docked one-third of a grade for each day they are late and will not be accepted after one week.

All work must be completed in accordance with The George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. For writing assignments this means, among other things that: 1) quotes be clearly identified with quotation marks and fully cited, 2) the source of ideas not your own be properly cited, and 3) the paper represents your own work and writing. For exams this means, among other things, 1) no use of materials not explicitly permitted to take the test and 2) no looking at your classmates' work. For further details about the university's academic integrity policy, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately at the beginning of the semester to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>.

You are responsible for the assignments and deadlines that are detailed in this syllabus as well as for any changes that may be announced in class or via blackboard.

Grading:

Participation and attendance: 20%

Your participation grade will be calculated as follows:

Postings: 8 points

Attendance/in-class work: 9 points

Participating in class discussion: 3 points

* Neither postings nor in-class work can be made up after the fact*

Group presentation: 10%

Presentation paper: 10%

Mid-term: 20%

Critical Essay: 20%

Final: 20%

Class Schedule

Part One: Orientations

Introduction to the Anthropology Middle East

August 27: Introduction - no reading

August 29: No-class meeting

Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, "Anthropologies of Arab-Majority Societies" *Annual Review of Anthropology*

Posting #1 Due

Challenges of studying the Middle East: Stereotypes and other interference

September 3: Popular culture

In-class film: *Reel bad Arabs: how Hollywood vilifies a people*

email me your top 5 choices for presentation groups (in order of preference) by today

September 5: Media coverage

Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, Chapter 1 and 2

September 10: Gender and intervention

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104, 3 (2002): 783-790

Practice and Ethics of Fieldwork

September 12: Challenges of fieldwork in the Middle East

Anita Fabos "Ethical Dilemmas of Research Among Sudanese in Egypt: Producing Knowledge About the Public and Private" in *Between Field and Text: Emerging Voices in Egyptian Social Science*, ed. Seteney Shami and Linda Herrera, 98-118 (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1999).

Ted Swedenburg, "Occupational Hazards: Palestine Ethnography" *Cultural Anthropology* 1989: 265 - 272.

September 17: Fieldwork in revolutionary and conflict times

Samuli Schielke, "You'll be late for the Revolution!" *An Anthropologist's Diary of the Egyptian Revolution and What Followed*: <http://samuliegypt.blogspot.com/>

At a minimum read the following dates: 2011: January 30 and 31; February 11; March 7 and 19. 2012: January 30. 2013: June 3. I recommend reading more as well.

Ghassan Hage, "Hating Israel in the Field: on Ethnography and Political Emotions," *Anthropological Theory* 9, 1 (2009): 59-79

Group Presentation 1: *In An Antique Land*

Part Two: Political, Social, and Spatial Forms

Nation and State

September 19

Esra Ozuryek, "Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of state imagery and ideology in Turkey" *American Ethnologist* 31, 3 (2004): 374-391.

September 24

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Ethnography of a Nation," and "The Ambivalence of Authenticity: National Cultures in a Global World," in *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Group Presentation 2: *The Committee*

Bedouin, Minorities, and "Marginal" people

September 26

Donald Cole "Where Have the Bedouin Gone?" *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, 2 (2003):235-67.

Nathalie Peutz, "Bedouin "abjection"" "World Heritage, Worldliness, and Worthiness at the Margins of Arabia" *American Ethnologist* 38, 2 (2011): 338-60.

Group Presentation 3: *Variations on Night and Day*

October 1

Elizabeth Smith, "Place, Class, and Race in the Barabra Café: Nubians in Egyptian Media," in *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, ed. Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, 399-413 (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006).

Saba Mahmood, "Sectarian conflict and family law in contemporary Egypt," *American Ethnologist*, 39, 1 (2012):54-62.

Group Presentation 4: *Dancing Arabs*

Urban Life

October 3: The form of the city

Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19, 2, (1987): 155-176.

October 8: The camp as the city

Michel Agier, "Between War and City: Toward an Urban Anthropology of Refugee Camps," *Ethnography* 3, 3 (2002): 317-341.

Diana Allan, "Stealing Power," in *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013)

Group Presentation 5: *The Yacoubian Building*

Conflict and Displacement

October 10: Palestine

Ilana Feldman, "Home as a Refrain: Remembering and Living Displacement in Gaza" *History and Memory* 18, 2 (2006): 10-47.

Lori Allen, "The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada," *History and Memory* 18, 2 (2006): 107-38.

Group Presentation 6: *Returning to Haifa and other stories*

October 15: Iraq

Haydar Al-Mohammad, "Order and Disorder: the case of Basra and the anthropology of excrement" *Anthropology of the Middle East* 2, 2 (2007): 1-23.

October 17: **Midterm exam**

Part Three: Religion, Ethics, and Society

October 22: On the Anthropology of Islam

Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam, or how to make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life." ZMO working papers, Vol. 2 (2010).

Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, "Choosing Faith and Fun: Youth Negotiations of Morality in South Beirut," *Ethnos*

October 24
Sherene Hamdy
Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2

October 29
Sherene Hamdy
Chapter 2 and 3 and 4

Group Presentation 7: *Miramar*

October 31
Sherene Hamdy
Chapters 4 and 5

November 5
Chapter 6-Conclusion

Group Presentation 8: *That Smell and Notes from Prison*

Part Four: Gender and development

November 7
Lila Abu-Lughod, "Seductions of the 'Honor Crime'" *differences* 22, 1 (2011): 17-6

November 12
Fida Adely
Introduction, Chapter 1 and 2

In class film: *A Veiled Revolution*

November 14
Fida Adely
Chapter 4 and 5

Group Presentation 9: *Pillars of Salt*

November 19:
Fida Adely
Chapter 6 and 7

Group Presentation 10: *Season of migration to the north*

Part Five: Migration, Consumption, Globalization

November 21: Consumption, Circulation, and Labor

Gregory Starrett, "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo," *American Anthropologist* 97, 1 (1995): 51-68.

Sharon Nagy, "'This Time I Think I'll Try a Filipina': Global and Local Influences on Relations Between Foreign Household Workers and Their Employers in Doha, Qatar," *City and Society* 10, 1 (1998): 83-103.

November 26: Popular Culture and Technology

Martin Stokes, "Abdul Halim's Microphone," in *Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East*, ed. Laudan Nooshin (London: Ashgate, 2009).

Critical Essay Due

November 28: Thanksgiving - no class

December 5 – Wrap-up and Review