

THE MIDDLE EAST: Anthropological Perspectives

This course discusses traditional subsistence economies (e.g., irrigation agriculture, pastoral nomadism) and tribal forms of social organization and analyzes their transformation with the emergence of independent territorial nation-states and the advent of oil wealth during the 20th century. The course considers different sects and expressions of Islam in specific countries and discusses kinship structures and family relationships, including the varying roles of women in specific societies. Contemporary political and economic issues and conflicts in Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine will be studied from an anthropologically informed perspective of cultural continuity and change and the continuous refashioning of religious, ethnic, and national identities over time.

An essay format open book take-home mid-term quiz will be handed out on March 16th (due back April 6th).

During the course of the term, each student will make a **short oral report in class (5-10 minutes)**, summarizing a specific assigned or recommended reading and, after spring break, make a **longer oral presentation (c. 15 -20minutes) on the subject of her final paper**. Students will report and prepare a **final paper (c. 15 to 20 pages)** on a topic of their own choice, chosen in consultation with Mr. Kohl. These topics can include: a) a specific ethnic group or local traditional feature (agricultural system, religious sect, etc.) in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Israel, or any Arab country; b) the status of women or practices related to women (e.g., veiling; marriage) in different Near Eastern contexts; and c) a specific contemporary political or economic issue/conflict analyzed anthropologically as done throughout the course.

There will be no final exam but a short essay quiz *may* be given in the final class meeting on Friday May 11th. **The final paper will be due at the end of exam period on May 22nd**. Grades for the course will be calculated roughly as follows: 25% for the open book take-home mid-term; 40% for the final paper; 10% for the short oral report on a reading; and 10% for class participation and 15% for the longer oral presentation. If an essay quiz is given in the last class, it will count as 15% of the final grade, and the mid-term will be 20% and final paper 30% of the final grade. Students are invited to meet with Mr. Kohl at any time in his office (Pendleton East 345), particularly during his office hours: Tuesdays and Fridays 1:15 AM to 3:00 PM (office extension: 2146).

BOOKS WITH ASSIGNED/RECOMMENDED READINGS MATERIALS

**(1) – indicates book is available for purchase in
Wellesley College Bookstore**

CS - Cities of Salt by A. Munif (1)
BK - The Bookseller of Kabul by A. Seierstad (1)
EM-An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'a Lebanon by L. Deeb (1)
WS - Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran by R. Varzi (1)
RGM - In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs by C. de Bellaigue (1)
CST -Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds by S. Kinzer (1)
ASAM - As Strong as the Mountains: a Kurdish Cultural Journey by R.L. Brenneman (1)
COS - Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel by D. Rabinowitz and Kh. Abu-Baker (1)
MECA - The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach by D.F. Eickelman, 4th edition (1)

GP – Growing Up Palestinian by L. Bucaille
LRI – Land and Revolution in Iran, 1960-1980 by E. J. Hooglund
IMM – Islam: a mosaic, not a monolith by V. Gregorian
AT - Anatolian Tales by Y. Kemal
SE – Shaykh and Effendi: Changing Patterns of Authority among the El-Shabana of Southern Iraq by R. Fernea
ASM – All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror by S. Kinzer
TNA - The Nomadic Alternative by T. Barfield
WME – Women in the Middle East: Past and Present by N. Keddie
WFME - Women and the Family in the Middle East ed. by E.N. Fernea
WMW - Women in the Muslim World ed. by L. Beck and N.R. Keddie
SR – The Shia Revival by V. Nasr
RP–Reaching for Power: Shi'a in the Modern Arab World by Y. Nakash
PSTAIP - The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, ed. by M. Weiner and A Banuazizi (2)
TSFME - Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East by P.S. Khoury and J. Kostiner
CTSIA–The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan by R. Tapper
SREP - The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, ed. by A. Banuazizi and M. Weiner
EPSME - Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East by Esman and Rabinovich
ISR – I Saw Ramallah by M. Barghouti
ILI – In the Land of Israel by A. Oz
AE – The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of Settlements, 1967-1977 by G. Gorenberg

Course Outline

1. Week 1 – Feb. 2nd

General Introduction: The Physical Area, the Ancient Near East and the Shared Legacy of Islam; the Modern Political Geography of the Middle East: Anthropological and Western perceptions of the Orient and the Making of the Modern Middle East

Required Readings:

"The Middle East - Lines in the Shifting Sand" by D. Fromkin (xerox and in

Smithsonian, May 1991) – on e-reserve

MECA – Part IV

video in class – Living Islam, vol. 1, The Foundations

2. Week 2 – February 9th

Traditional Subsistence Economies Part 1: Tribal Social Organization and Pastoral Nomadism; Tribal Influences on Contemporary Nation-States; Changing Collective Identities from tribal, to ethnic to national; and Anthropological Studies of Villages, Rural Areas and Cities; Tribal Social Organization and Its Influence on Contemporary Nation-States; Changing Collective Identities: tribal to ethnic to national; Peoples without States and the "Kurdish Question"

Required Readings:

MECA – chapter 6 "What is a Tribe?"

TNA – chapters 3 and 4 on e-reserve

TSFME - articles by Khoury and Kostiner and by Beck on e-reserve

video in class – Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life

Recommended Readings:

MECA – Part I (short oral report)

"From Objects to Agents: The Ababda Nomads and the Interpretation of the Past" on e-reserve (short oral report)

SREP - articles by Keddie and Higgins

February 16th – Presidents' Day – No Class

3. Week 3 – February 23rd

Traditional Subsistence Economies Part 2: Irrigation Agriculture and Anthropological Studies of Villages, Rural Areas and Land Reform Programs; Urbanization in the Middle East from the 2nd half of the 20th century on

Required Readings:

MECA – chapters 3 and 5
AT – “The Drumming Out” and “The Shopkeeper” on e-reserve
LRI – chapters 1, 2 and 8 – also on e-reserve
video in class – An Afghan Village
Recommended Readings:
CTSIA – introduction by R. Tapper (short oral report)
SE – entire (short oral report)

4. Week 4 – March 2nd

The Advent of Oil and Its Transformative Effects: Western Involvements and Local Responses

Required Readings:

CS – entire

ASM – chapters 4 and 5 (short oral report)

video in class: ARAMCO Turns 50

videos on reserve to be shown individually and discussed in class: Death of a Princess Syriana

5. Week 5 – March 9th

Diverse Expressions of Islam: a survey and a quest for understanding; gender and public piety in Shi’i Lebanon

Required Readings:

IMM – chapters 1 and 6 on e-reserve

EM – entire

video in class: Living Islam

Recommended Readings:

MECA – part IV (short oral report)

6. Week 6 – March 16th

Family, Kinship, Structures, and Gender Roles with a focus on Afghanistan

Required Readings:

WME – “Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender” pp. 203-223 on e-reserve

BK – entire

video in class: Some Women of Marrakesh

video on reserve to be shown individually and discussed in class Crimes of Honour

Recommended Readings:

WMW - "Introduction" by L. Beck and N.R. Keddie (short oral report)

WFME – article by N. Al-Sa'dawi (short oral report)

**TAKE-HOME OPEN BOOK ESSAY QUIZ DISTRIBUTED ON
MARCH 16TH – RETURNED ON April 6th**

7. Week 7 – March 30th

Iran: the Emergent Regional Power? part 1 – History, Diversity, Revolution, and Relations with Arabs and the War with Iraq

Required Readings:

RGM – entire

video on reserve to be shown individually and discussed in class - Leila

8. Week 8 – April 6th

Iran: the Emergent Regional Power? part 2 – The Cult of Martyrdom, Youth, and Media in Today's Islamic Republic; the Rise of Iran

Required Reading:

WS – entire

Recommended Reading:

SR – chapter 9 “The Rise of Iran” (short oral report)

9. Week 9 – April 13th

Turkey: From Imperial Power to Secular (European?) State: the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Republic of Turkey; Kemalism and Islamic Revivalism; the Kurdish problem; Who are the Turks? the Turkish Historical Thesis

Required reading:

CST – entire

video on reserve to be shown individually and discussed in class – Yol and Time for Drunken Horses

Recommending readings:

“The Hittite Sun: a deconstruction of western civilization from the margin” by W. Shaw - e-reserve copy (short oral report)

Snow by O. Pamuk (short oral report?)

1st student oral presentations

10. Week 10 – April 21st (Monday Schedule on Tuesday)

The Kurds – a stateless people; Iraqi Kurdistan – an independent state?

Required Reading:

ASAM – entire

Recommended Reading:

“Kurdistan”, chapter 8 in The End of Iraq: how American incompetence created a war without end by P. Galbraith – e-reserve (short oral report)

2nd student oral presentations

11. Week 11 – April 27th

Israel/Palestine– The Central, Long-Lived and Seemingly Intractable Middle East Conflict: historical and anthropological perspectives; Co-Existence within Israel; Who are the Israelis? Who are the Palestinians? Who are the “Israeli Arabs”?

Required Reading:

COS – entire

videos on reserve to be shown individually and discussed in class –

Paradise Now and Walk on Water

Recommended readings:

AE – entire

ILI – entire (short oral report)

GP – entire (short oral report)

ISR – entire (short oral report)

3rd student oral presentations

12. Week 12 – May 4th

Transformations in the Contemporary Middle East: the Middle East reconfigured (?) after the current Iraq and Afghan wars: the rise of Shi'a Islam; and prospects for the future

Required readings:

SR – chapter 7: “Iraq: the first Arab Shi'a state” and chapter 9 “The Battle for the Middle East”

Recommended reading:

RP – chapter 3 “The Struggle for Power in Iraq” and chapter 5 “Between Aspirations and Reality”

4th student oral presentations

13. Week 13 – May 11th – possible in-class essay quiz

Required Reading:

MECA – part V

5th student oral presentations