

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 12th (due back March 26th). Students can report and prepare a final paper 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. **Students will be asked to make short (15 minute) oral presentations on their final projects in classes during the last month of the term. There will be no final exam but a short essay quiz will be given in the final class meeting on Friday May 7th. The final paper will be due at the end of exam period on May 21st.** Grades for the course will be calculated roughly as follows: 30% for open book take-home mid-term; 40% for final paper; 15% for final essay quiz on May 7th; and 15% for class participation and the oral presentation. 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 11:00AM to 12:15 PM (office extension: 2146).

BOOKS WITH ASSIGNED/RECOMMENDED READINGS MATERIALS

(1 – indicates book is available for purchase in 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)

GP - Growing Up Palestinian by L. Bucaille (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
 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 – January 29th

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

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

Recommended Readings:

MECA: Parts I, IV, and V

2. Week 2 – February 5th

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?” on e-reserve

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:

CTSIA – introduction by R. Tapper

SREP - articles by Keddie and Higgins

3. Week 3 – February 12th

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:

AT – “The Drumming Out” and “The Shopkeeper” on e-reserve

LRI – chapters 1, 2 and 8 – also on e-reserve

MECA – chapters 3 and 5 – on e-reserve

video in class – An Afghan Village

Recommended Readings:

SE – entire

4. Week 4 – February 26th

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

Required Readings:

CS – entire

ASM – chapters 4 and 5

video in class: ARAMCO Turns 50

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

5. Week 5 – March 5th

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

6. Week 6 – March 12th

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

WFME – article by N. Al-Sa'dawi

**TAKE-HOME OPEN BOOK ESSAY QUIZ DISTRIBUTED ON
MARCH 12TH – RETURNED ON MARCH 26TH**

7. Week 7 – March 26th

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 2nd

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

Required Readings”

WS – entire

SR – chapter 9 “The Rise of Iran” on e-reserve

9. Week 9 – April 9th

Turkey: From Imperial Power to Secular (European?) State: history and the creation of the Republic of Turkey; Kemalism and Islamic Revivalism; the Kurdish problem; Who are the Turks? Who are the Kurds?

Required reading:

CST – entire

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

Recommending readings:

Snow by O. Pamuk

“Diversity, Nationalism, and Rebellion: the Kurdish Question in Historical and Cultural Context” by M. Riley – on e-reserve

1st student oral presentations

10. Week 10 – April 17th

Israel/Palestine, part 1 – The Central, Long-Lived and Seemingly Intractable Middle Eastern Conflict: historical and anthropological perspectives; Co-Existence within Israel; Who are the Israelis? Who are the “Israeli Arabs”?

Required Reading:

COS – entire

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

Walk on Water

Recommended readings:

ILI – entire

AE - entire

2nd student oral presentations

11. Week 11 – April 23rd

Israel/Palestine, Part 2 – Life in the Occupied Territories. Points of Contention and Possible Solutions to the Conflict. Who are the Palestinians?

Required Reading:

GP – entire

video on reserve to be shown individually and discussed in class – Paradise Now

Recommended Reading:

ISR - entire

3rd student oral presentations

12. Week 12 – April 30th

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 7th – final in-class essay quiz