MAAS 419: Contemporary Arab Society
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The class will cover different aspects of contemporary Arab society through readings, films, and other media. The course will be lead as a seminar, with the majority of time devoted to discussion aimed at critical understanding of the material, connections within the different articles, books, and media, and connections to larger issues in the Arab world and outside of it.

The point of this course is to provide you with a broad understanding of different issues within Arab society. Recognizing that there are limitations to scholarship on these subjects, we will be focusing on a number of topics that repeat themselves throughout the course material in different ways: peoples’ conceptions of family and home, and how these concepts are constructed and changed through the influence of history, “tradition”, and globalization. Please note that one of the goals of this class is to get us to consider what these terms mean to different people and that there is not just one way of defining them. We will read a variety of ethnographic texts that describe and analyze contemporary Arab society and allow us to see the diversity, changes, and XXX

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) **Attendance and participation is required.** Students are expected to come to each weekly session prepared to discuss the reading. That means the students must do all of the readings, engage with them in assignments and class, and show evidence that they have thought about the readings, the larger issues addressed in the class, and the field of study.

* Any absence for any reason will result in a drop in your participation grade by one full grade, IF a make-up assignment is not turned it. You are responsible for getting the notes from the class from a classmate (not me). The make-up assignment is a 1-2 page (single spaced) response integrating the week’s readings with your own analysis of the topic/s of the week. You are responsible for doing this (I will not ask for it or remind you). I reserve the right to award a failing grade to anyone with more than 3 absences for any reason.

2) **Weekly Assignments:** Each week I will send out an assignment for class that is based on the readings. They may be written assignments or presentations. You are expected to turn the written assignments to me via email by 9am on Tuesday morning. Late responses will not be counted. The assignments will vary and may be used during class time and you may be asked to lead class or ask your discussion question, etc. These will be graded. Around mid-semester I will give you some feedback on your class participation and assignments.

Participation and Assignments: 40% of your grade.
Two book reviews: Choose two of the books we are reading for class and write a book review, which should include: 1) a summary of the major themes in the book 2) major strengths of the work including an assessment of the quality of the research and methodology; the strength of the arguments made; and, theoretical contributions 3) dimensions of the work that were in your assessment lacking. Each review should be 5-7 pages in length (double spaced & one inch margins). The book reviews are due on Oct. 14 and Nov. 24. (40% - 20 points each)

Final Paper: A written paper on a topic of your choosing related to the class. I encourage you to come discuss the paper topic with me early in the semester. Paper topics and a preliminary bibliography are due in class on Oct. 20. The description should be at least two paragraphs long and should articulate the major research question and/or topic with which you are concerned. If you prefer to elaborate that’s fine, but not more than one page single-spaced please. Although the final bibliography may differ somewhat, this initial bibliography should be indicative of the types of sources you plan to draw on for your paper and the coherence of your research topic/question. Hard copies of final papers are due on Monday Dec. 8 by 5:00 pm in my box at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. Undergrads (12-15 pages). Grad Students (20-25 pages) (40%)

Paper number 1: a written paper (8-10 pp) based on the readings up to that point. (30%)

Paper number 2: a written paper on a topic of your choosing (a topic related to the class). by 4 pm. (30%) (20-25 pages)

Paper submission instructions:
  1) Turn in a hard copy to me on the day it is due. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 grade for each day late (one day late would bring an A paper down to an A-, etc.). Late begins when class starts on the day the paper is due.
  2) Email a copy of the paper to me on the day it is due.
  3) Double-spaced, size 12 font, at least 1 inch margins, title, and appropriate quoting and citation styles.
  4) You are responsible to know what constitutes plagiarism and abide by the regulations of the university regarding academic work. If this is unclear to you, please see me.

READINGS:

Books: (Available in Bookstore)

Websites: (for class on Sept 30)
http://ein-hod.israel.net/
http://www.inisrael.com/tour/places/einhod/
http://www.samorbaum.com/places/Ein%20Hod.html
http://www.palestinerecalled.com/Haifa/Ayn-Hawd/index.html


Alaa al-Aswani. *Yacoubian Building* (any edition)


Roberto Gonzales. (2009)

**SCHEDULE**

*Part 1: RETHINKING “TRADITION”, SOCIETY, AND FAMILY – How people construct their family and communal histories and local traditions.*

**Sept 8** – First class, starring Nancy Ajram

**Sept 15** – What is Culture?


  geertz -- thick description


  said -- covering islam

  abu lughod -- do muslim women need saving?

**Sept 22** – First half of *Object of Memory*

**Sept 29** – Finish *Object of Memory*;

look at the following websites and be prepared to discuss them in class:

  - [http://ein-hod.israel.net/](http://ein-hod.israel.net/)
  - [http://www.samorbaum.com/places/Ein%20Hod.html](http://www.samorbaum.com/places/Ein%20Hod.html)
Oct 6 –

Oct 13

Part 2: REMAKING “TRADITION”, SOCIETY, AND FAMILY – How gender, labor, and globalization affect and shape ideas about “tradition” and the family.

Oct 20 –

Oct 27

Nov 3 –

Nov 10

Nov 17

Nov 24 (no class)

Dec 1 –

Dec 8 –