Preliminary Syllabus

Catalogue Description

The course examines the interaction and developments of culture, politics and media in the contemporary Middle East (otherwise called Western Asia) through a historical and cultural lens. The course addresses culture, identity, and the media as sites of conflict; tradition, modernity, civil society and democracy; conflict resolution and conflict transformation; globalized and 'glocalized' contexts and media. The course should be of interest to graduate students interested in the modern Arab and non-Arab (Israel, Iran, Turkey), in Middle Eastern and other cultural and social perspectives.

Objectives

• To expose students to current research and theory drawn from inter-disciplinary sources in Middle Eastern and cultural studies.
• To provide students with an understanding of contemporary media products and trends in the Middle East.
• To provide students with theoretical tools to assess the role of media and culture in Middle Eastern politics and societies.
• To engage students to connect between intellectual developments and social, political and religious issues in the region.
• To encourage students to undertake cultural, economic, historical and/or comparative research in this field of study.

Method and Grading

The course is a joint intellectual effort, as follows:

• **Presentations and screenings of visual materials by the instructor** combined with class discussions, and based on readings and on written critical papers;
• **Presentations** by students and discussions of readings, following a preplanned schedule (20% of final grade);
• **Submission of written critical summaries** (15% of final grade);
• **Independent background work** whereby the instructor and the students will share basic information on names and events used in the course. This information will be posted in the course website or distributed via email (10% of final grade).
• **Final Essay** – Critical essay on a topic selected by each student and approved by the instructor, according to course materials. Significant independent research will be rewarded in final grades (40% of final grade).
• **Overall performance** (Attendance, Preparation, and Participation (15% of final grade):
Tentative Schedule

**Classes 1-2 – Intro and Creating a “Common Culture”**

**Class 1 – Introduction and Presentation**
A. Course Presentation and General Introduction (Instructor)
B. Students’ expectations and previous experience with the topic (Class discussion)

**Class 2 Middle East or Western Asia?**
Historical, Colonial, Cultural and Political Background; (Instructor)

**Classes 3-4 Theoretical Cultural and Historical Dimensions (Instructor, Class)**

**Class 3 Basic Concepts**
Tradition and Modernization; Religion and Secularism; Colonialism and Independence, Theocracy and Democracy; Identity and Nation.

**Class 4 Basic Processes**
Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations? Barber’s McWorld vs. Jihad? Geertz’s Essentialism vs. Epochalism?

**Classes 5-7 Cultural Conflict and the Media in the Middle East**

**Class 5 – Conflict and Media**
A. Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation in the Middle East: Theory and Case-Studies (instructor, class discussion).
B. Older and Newer Media Roles (instructor, class discussion).

**Classes 6-7 Media coverage in the Middle East**
Weapons of Mass Deception? (film screening, student reports and discussion).

**Classes 8-10 – Local, Global, and ‘Glocal’ Dimensions of Culture, Politics and Media**

**Class 8 – Organizational Contradictions and Professional Dilemmas in Media Coverage of Cultural Orientations (Instructor).**

**Class 9 – Media Implications of Cultural Orientations (TED lecture screening).**

**Class 10 – From CNN to Al-Jazeera and Beyond; cyber-coverage (student reports).**

**Classes 11-13 Culture, Media, and Politics in the Middle East**

**Class 11 – National and Ideological Media Systems (instructor, student reports).**

**Class 12 – Cybermedia (instructor, student reports).**

**Class 13 – Foreign and Local Interests in Media Coverage of the Middle East**
‘Arab Spring’, Iran, Turkey and Israel; Hizballah, Hamas and other movements (possible guest lecture, instructor, student reports).

**Class 14 – Discussion of final essay; Wrap Up**