Arabic 111 – Culture and Civilization of the Arab Middle East (21544)

M &W: 2:00 – 3:15
Room: Bolton Hall B83
Instructor: Juman Al Bukhari

Office: 878 Curtin Hall
Office Hours: Tues 3:30 – 4:30
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Course Description and Goal:

Arabic111 is an elementary course designed to introduce students to the culture of the Middle East and the Arab World from everyday situation to a more complicated issues, such as politics. The beginning of this course will consist of a clear discussion of basic terms. This means that no assumptions are made about prior knowledge of the subject matter. Also, the student will be introduced to a wide range of new ideas, concepts, languages, and cultures. This will quickly add up to a vast sum of information. Part of the goal of this course is to make such information ready to hand. However, the ultimate aim is not to burden your minds with more material, rather, what we will aim to do is attempt to make sense of this information and try to synthesize it in ways that will help us understand the people, the past and the present of the Middle East.

Requirements

The requirements of this course mainly involve mind-set. Due to the prominence of Arabs, Islam and Muslims in contemporary discourse in both film and print; you will enter this class with some perceptions already formed. It is arguable that much of the prevailing discourse reaffirms and recycles stereotypical representations that are largely problematic, and that have obscured understanding of all things Middle Eastern. I thus encourage you to come to class motivated and ready to listen and learn.

Information about different cultures in the Middle East will be drawn from readings, discussions, movies, music and more.

Textbook

Dona J. Stewart The Middle East Today 2nd ed.
There will also be a number of selected readings provided by the instructor.

Important Dates

2/6 First movie review due
2/27 Second movie review due
3/6 Midterm
3/27 Third movie review due
4/3 Final paper proposal due
5/8 Final Paper Due
Course Structure and grading

Attendance and Participation 25%
Being prepared for and participating in class activities is one of the most important means of attaining the goals of the course. The quality of your participation in class activity will be assessed every other week according to the attached criteria. Since it is important to participate if you are not in a class, absences will be reflected in a lowering of your participating grade, the average of which comprises 20% of your final grade. Absence will defeat the process of learning. Attendance will be taken each time. More than three unjustified absences might result in a deduction in grade by one point (e.g. from B to B-). Full class participation is imperative. You will be required to sign up for a presentation the second time the class meets. Any late assignment will drop by 10% for each day it is late.

Film Reviews 15%
You will write three critically analytic reviews of three of the movies shown in class. In two double space pages you will draw on the readings and the material presented in class to analyze the featured films.

Midterm Exam on March 6 20%
It will include all materials covered in readings and in class lectures up to that point.

Final Project 40%
This project can be done individually or in pairs. The project will be in two parts; a 5-6 page paper and a class presentation of the paper. Project ideas must be approved by the instructor. Your task in the project will be to discover some basic facts about your issue of choice and explore how it relates to the life of Arabs past, present and/or future.

The range of topics for the project is completely open. You can for example choose to write about the Prophetic Traditions known as Hadeeth; how and when were they developed to become part of the Islamic sources? What are the major texts? Who compiled them? What role do they play today? Or you can trace the journeys of the Moroccan Ibn Battuta, one of the greatest travelers of all times, whose journey covered three times the distance traveled by Marco Polo. Explore parts of the world he described, how different or similar it was to our world. Or you can explore how the Arabic satellite channel Al-Jazeera changed the region, and gave voice to the Arabs and Muslims and bonded them in new ways,…etc.

In putting your project together be mindful of the following:
- Any written piece worth reading is usually trying to answer a question. What question is your paper trying to answer?
- Do you keep your question in sight, or do you part company after the first page?
- Is your argument clear? Is it well organized?
- Do you present specific examples to support your argument?
- Are you able to effectively deliver the above in your presentation?
Tentative Schedule
1/23  Introduction
     Why Study the Middle East?
     What should one Know about the Middle East?
     Short Movie: Planet of the Arabs

INTRODUCTION TO THE REGION

1/28  Stewart: Chapter 1: The Middle East and North Africa: Between Image And Reality
     pg 3-19

1/30  Stewart: Chapter 2: The Geography of the Middle East and North Africa
     pg 23-47

EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF THE REGION

2/4   Stewart: Chapter 2: The Geography of the Middle East and North Africa–Cont’d
     pg 23-47

2/6   Stewart: Chapter 3: Culture and Society in the Middle East and North Africa
     pg 49-64
     First Film Review Due

2/11  Stewart: Chapter 3: Culture and Society in the Middle East and North Africa–Cont’d
     pg 49-64
     Movie: Mohammad: Legacy of the Prophet

2/13  Stewart: Chapter 4: Historical Foundations: The Islamic and Arab Legacies
     pg 70-97

2/18  Stewart: Chapter 4: Historical Foundation: The Islamic and Arab Legacies –Cont’d
     pg 70-97

2/20  Stewart: Chapter 5: The Making of the Modern Middle East: The Ottoman Legacy
     pg 99-118

2/25  Stewart: Chapter 5: The Making of the Modern Middle East–Cont’d
     pg 99-118
2/27  Stewart: Chapter 6: Independent States and Geopolitics: The Legacy of Western Imperialism pg 121-145
Second Movie Review Due

3/4  Mid-term review
         Movie: My Home Your War

3/6  Mid-term

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

3/11 Stewart: Chapter 6: Independent States and Geopolitics: The Legacy of Western Imperialism pg 121-145

3/13 Stewart: Chapter 7: Contemporary State System: A System in Influx pg. 150-170

3/18 Spring Break

3/20 Spring Break

3/25 Stewart: Chapter 8: Contemporary Islamist Thought: The Power of Ideology 172-185

3/27 Stewart: Chapter 8: Contemporary Islamist Thought: The Power of Ideology–Cont’d 172-185
         Third Movie Review Due

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

4/1  Stewart: Chapter 9: Economic Challenges: A Region of Disparities pg 191-209

4/3  Stewart: Chapter 9: Economic Challenges: A Region of Disparities pg 191-209
         Final paper proposal due
THE FUTURE OF THE REGION

4/8  Stewart: Chapter 10: The Middle East Conflicts
     pg. 213-235

4/10 Stewart: Chapter 10: The Middle East Conflicts
       pg. 213-235

4/15 Stewart: Chapter 11: Civil Society, Media, And Democratic Reform
       pg.239-255

4/17 Stewart: Chapter 12: The 2011 Revolutions And The Future Of The Region
       pg.259-268

4/22 Student Presentations

4/24 Student presentations

4/29 Student presentation

5/1 Student presentations

5/6 Student presentations

5/8 Student Presentation

Final paper due