

ANTH 301: Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East

Syllabus

Credit Hours: 3 credit hours

Program Location: Amman, Jordan

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course presents a general introduction to the contemporary Middle East, a region that has come to carry diverse meanings to Westerners. It will highlight the multiple and the complex cultural and socio-political life in the Contemporary Middle East, challenging some of the assumptions and stereotypes about the history, cultures, religions and politics associated with this particular region. It will introduce the various Middle Eastern groups as they vary in language, religion, subsistence economy and other cultural variables. The genealogical relationships between dialects, sects, and modes of subsistence will be outlined and framed within a historical context in order to highlight the dynamic nature of Middle Eastern diversity and how impressions of "stagnant East" are often misleading. Furthermore, the biological diversity of the Middle Easterners will be examined in relation to the legacy of "scientific racism," nationalist claims and the findings of modern population genetics.

Aims and Objectives of the Course:

- Before the completion of the course, each student should be able to:
- Understand the variety and complexity of life in the contemporary Arab world, and the Middle East from a cultural, ethnic, historical and socio-political perspective.
- Describe the physical and environmental features of the Arab world and the Middle East and the distribution of its population across history until the present.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the various traditions within Islam and the socio-political roots of movements
- Requires each student to prepare and present work as portfolio and for discussion during project reviews.

Learning outcomes for the course

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the physical and environmental features of the Arab World and the Middle East.
- Understand the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Arab World and the Middle East within a socio-historical framework.
- Explain the socio-cultural context of traditional modes of subsistence and their nature.
- Discuss the historicity of various popular traditions within Jordan and how they relate to formal Islam.
- Outline the major arguments with regard to gender inequalities.
- Analyze the social hierarchy with reference to kinship ties.
- Evaluate the traditions and culture of the Jordanian society.

Knowledge

This course is designed to assist students to acquire and demonstrate knowledge about:

- The main geographic and environmental features of the Middle East and the distribution of human populations.
- Ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of Middle Eastern peoples.
- The various traditions within Islam and their manifestations within the context of various socio-cultural milieus.
- Various interpretations of gender inequality and the changing role of women in the Middle East.
- Various social groups and the role of kinship ideology in social organization.
- Jordanian culture and traditions.

Skills

This course is designed to assist students in acquiring or enhancing the following skills:

- Unveil and critique cultural stereotypes of the Middle East
- Research aspects of socio-cultural life in Jordan

Attitudes

This course is designed to encourage an appreciation of the cultural diversity in the Arab world and the Middle East, the dynamic nature of its societies, and the complex relationships between its diverse components, and consequently develop a critical view about:

- Generalizations about the Arab world and the Middle East in general and Jordan in particular
- How social phenomena develops from complex interactions of history and culture

Recommended Readings

- Antoun, Richard (1998). *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Bates, Daniel and Amal Rassam (1983). *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1983.
- Eckelman, Dale (2001). *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Goodwin, Jan (2003). *Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World*. Boston: Plume.
- Lancaster & Lancaster (1987). "The Function of Peripatetics in Rwala Bedouin Society" in Aparna Rao *Peripatetic minorities in cross-cultural perspective*. Koeln: Boehlau.
- Layne, Linda (1994). *Home and Homeland The Dialogues of Tribal and National Identities in Jordan*. New Jersey: Princeton.
- Massad, Joseph (2001). *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rose, Lesley (2005). "A Palestinian Wedding" in Footnotes 89: 3-4.
- Shunnaq, Mohammed (2009). "Cross-Cultural Cyber-Marriages: A Post-Modern Socio-Economic Strategy (the Case of Jordanian Youth)." *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture* 15,2: 169-186, Routledge.
- Spradley, James and David W. McCurdy (2000). *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- Storey, John (1998). *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press.

Assessment Overview

Description	Weight	Due Date
Engagement	10%	Continuous
Oral Presentation	20%	Will be assigned on a weekly basis (two presentations weekly 15 minutes max)
Assignment #1: Paper	20%	Week 6
Assignment #2: Paper	20%	Week 10
Assignment #3: Research Paper	30%	Week 15

Assessment Tasks

Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and come prepared to participate fully in class activities. Students are further expected to be on time for all classes. Arriving late for class is disrespectful of both the instructor and fellow students. Please refer to the official Amideast Attendance policy for more information.

Oral Presentation (20%)

Weekly basis starting week two.

Students are expected to give a presentation on one of the topics outlined in the course. Students should choose a vital issue or current topic about the Jordanian society. The presentation will be evaluated in terms of its quality, clarity, organization, content, and style.

Assignment #1 Paper (20%) On Monday of Week Six

Student is expected to write a well-developed and well-documented paper of no more than 1500 words on one of the axes of the course.

Assignment #2 Paper (20%) On Monday of Week Nine

Student is expected to write a well-developed and well-documented paper of no more than 1500 words on a vital community issue that drew the attention of the student during the course whether during attending an occasion, or observing and participating in an event within the Jordanian society and compare it with the student's own society.

Assignment #3: Research Paper (30 %) Due Monday of Week 15

At the end of the course, students will submit a research paper of no less than 2000-2,500 words on one of the following topics: women's issues in the Jordanian society, social problems facing the Jordanian society, asylum and displacement in the Jordanian society, state and tribal issues, economic situation and the operations of marriage in Jordan, or social change and development issues.

Students are expected to use a minimum of 5 reliable academic sources and document them properly using APA style. Students can use other sources like newspapers, multimedia, interviews, etc.; but these are in addition to the 5 mentioned academic sources. Use type font Times New Roman 12 pt. Double space your assignment.

Avoid any type of academic dishonesty. I strongly suggest that you submit your paper a couple of days early and do not leave things until the last minute.

Your paper should strictly follow APA guidelines for writing research papers. You can go to the OWL website by Purdue University to check on the guidelines if you are not yet aware of them. Visit this website <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>. Your research should NOT include a cover page with your name and title. Your name needs to appear in the upper left corner of the first page of your paper. The title should appear centered on the first page. Leave one double space between title and your introduction. No headers please. Your assignment should also be paginated. Page numbers should appear in the lower right corner of each page. You can insert them as footers. On the very last page of your paper, include your word count. The word count should NOT include your reference section. The References or Works Cited page should appear on a separate page. References must show proper indentations (see APA) and should appear in alphabetical order.

Make sure your paper has a clear thesis statement and is properly structured (Introduction with literature review, body with detailed discussion and proper support, conclusion). Make sure the paper is properly proportioned. I expect to see a thorough investigation and analysis of the topic you have chosen after consulting with me and receiving approval thereof. Your argument is clear and you provide enough support.

Failing to submit by the set deadline will result in the lowering of your grade. If you are faced with some hurdle and you cannot meet the deadline, you need to consult with me on this matter a few days before and receive permission to get an extension.

Course Schedule

Week	Classwork	Homework	Exams, Trips, and Holidays
Week	<i>Orientation Week</i>		
Week 1	Introduction to the course Geographic Setting: Middle Easterners in their Environment	Bates & Rassam: 1-29 Eickelman : 1-21	

Week 2	Cultural Variation in the Middle East: Language and Religion	Bates & Rassam: 84-127 Eickelman: 241-265, 298-311	
Week 3	Holiday - No Class		
Week 4	Concepts in Customs, Traditions and Values Individual habits Social customs Characteristics of social customs Norms, traditions, fashions The concept of values Relative values Some of the values prevailing in Jordan	John Storey (1998):1-20	Excursion
Week 5	Ethics of Greetings and its Cultural Implementation Greeting in the Jordanian society Greeting words in Jordan Ways and methods of greeting Rules of greeting Coffee & its Meanings The concept of numbers and symbols Coffee preparation Coffee Roasting, Coffee Grinding, Coffee Feeding Social manners in offering coffee Rules of conduct relating to the consumption of coffee	Sally Howell (2003): Modernizing Mansaf	Field report
Week 6	Holiday – No Class	Holiday – No Class	

Week 7	Appearance, Urbanization and City Life Housing: Old houses, stone houses, modern homes The history of dress in Bilad Al-Sham (The Levant) Jordan's outfit between tradition and modernity Clothing men: Arab cloak, headband, Aldishdash, Al-Farwa, shoes Women's clothing and adornments; cosmetics, Kohl, Henna	Bates & Rassam (1983):157-188. Spradley & McCurdy (2000):233-240.	
Week 8	Social Organization: Family, Marriage and Kinship Bedouins, peasants, the urban population Engagement among Arabs Sex segregation and gender mixing Relationships of confrontation in the countryside Al-Hijab in Jordan, Sufoor of the rural and Bedouin women Al-ta'leeleh among Bedouins Views on Bedouin religion Love relationships in the countryside Engagement: Conception and Development Stages of the engagement process Five tests for the bride Engagement ceremony Official engagement Marriage contract Engagement banquet Contemporary engagements	Bates & Rassam (1983):189-211.	

Week 9	Sociopolitical Formations: Tribes and States	Layne (1994):96-127. Rao (1987):311-321.	
Week 10	Marriage in the Jordanian society Islam's views on marriage Motives for marriage Exchange or swap marriages Bride price, dowry, divorce price Celebrations Responsibilities after marriage The bridal trousseau Songs in the "Dabke" Dancing among women Female "Dabke" and other examples "Zaghareed" and "Muhahaa" Shooting at weddings Marriage by abduction The night of the henna Wedding garment Marriage of employed women	Shunnaq (2009) 15,2: 169-186.	Excursion
Week 11	Different Models of Weddings The demands of the bride on the wedding day The bride's "Zaffeh" (party) Samples of weddings in different cities Hairstyle of the bride The groom's "Zaffeh" (party) Contemporary model of a groom's "Zaffeh" The wedding night The groom's home among Bedouins The groom's home in rural areas Contemporary Marriages	Rose (2005) Footnotes 89,3-4.	

Week 12	Women and Gender Roles	Goodwin (2003): 250-276.	Women and Gender Roles
Week 13	<i>Excursion</i>	<i>Excursion</i>	<i>Excursion</i>
Week 14	Islam and Daily Practices of Muslims The Five Pillars of Islam The Five Pillars of Faith The Social Islam	Antoun (1989):106-153.	
Week 15	Final Paper Due		
Week 16	<i>Reflection Week (TBD Reflection Day for this Class)</i>		