

## **HIS 181 -- A HISTORY OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST**

### **(Thinking Globally GE)** **Writing & Speech Intensive GE**

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Fall 2019 -- MWF 11:30-12:35 – Adams 217  
Office Hours: Mon & Wed 2-3:30  
Thurs 3:30-5:30  
or by appointment

### **BIG PICTURE**

This course covers many countries and several thorny conflicts and topics. There is inevitably an element of selectivity in what we can cover and in how much depth. The chosen texts provide a good guide to the priorities of this course.

- Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)
- Dwight F. Reynolds, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arab Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- Boaz Yakin and Nick Bertozzi, *Jerusalem: A Family Portrait* (New York: First Second, 2013)
- Marjane Satrapi, (The Complete) *Persepolis* (Pantheon, 2007)
- James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (recommended)

We will not be using a traditional textbook. Instead *Justice Interrupted* by Elizabeth Thompson will be our guide. As the title suggests, the Thompson traces the history of efforts and movements organized by the people of the Middle East to create just and accountable governments. In almost all cases these efforts and movements have been thwarted, occasionally by the failings of local leaders, but far more often by the (unwanted and unhelpful) intervention of outside powers. This is the author's contention and we certainly can and will take issue with it. But, I suggest we withhold final judgment until the end of the course. While this focus means there is a great deal we will not 'cover' in this course I have chosen this approach for four main reasons.

1. What you lack in breadth I believe will be more than made up for in terms of a clear and comprehensible narrative of the modern Middle East.
2. That narrative resembles how people in the Middle East perceive their own history.
3. It pushes back against the unacknowledged but pervasive view that Arabs and/or Muslims live in a parallel (medieval) universe out of synch with and in opposition to the modern world and its values.

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4. A textbook that focuses on political events rather than political actors can easily lead one to feel sorry for the people of the Middle East. If you went to the Middle East or had the opportunity to meet people from there I am confident that pity would not be your dominant response (the current crisis in Syria not included). Instead I believe you would be impressed by the resilience, resolve, creativity, and good humor of those you met (including today's Syrians). I hope that at the end of this course you have greater empathy and respect, not pity, for the people of the Middle East.

These goals have also guided my selection of the other main texts.

Each chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arab Culture*, edited by Dwight Reynolds, addresses a different aspect of modern Arab culture. The aim is to move away from the typical focus on politics and closer to the rich tapestry that makes up people's lives. The hope is that we will continually bob back and forth between the particularities of "Arab" and the generalities of "modern" in the different cultural components covered.

The two graphic novels, *Jerusalem: A Family Portrait* and *Persepolis*, were chosen because they portray momentous events in the Middle East, in both cases involving war and conflict, through the eyes of children. A main goal of the course is to maintain the tension between the types of historical events that make it into textbooks and the lived experience of ordinary people. These novels also represent an Israeli and an Iranian point of view, two countries that are not covered in *The Companion to Arab Culture* and only peripherally in *Justice Interrupted*.

In addition to these readings the other major component of the course is a **Role Play** that will unfold over several weeks. I will provide a **reading packet**. This roleplay is set during Egypt's first experiment with parliamentary democracy in the 1920s. At the time Egypt was also a British 'protectorate.' This will enable us to look more closely at how different political forces and actors, inside and outside Egypt, helped and hindered its transition to constitutional democracy. Each student will play a real historical actor seeking particular objectives that reflect your personal ambitions as well as your national or social aspirations.

#### More Generally... "modern" and "Middle East"

In order to understand the history of the modern Middle East we first have to consider what do we mean by 'modern.' Modernization is frequently treated as synonymous with westernization. Is this accurate? How might this be problematic? Are there aspects of modernity that are universal and others that are culturally and regionally specific? In other words, can modernity look different in

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different places? If so, how different before it is no longer modern in any meaningful way? How have the peoples of the Middle East contributed to and contested modernity? Thompson is clearly presenting constitutional government as both modern and universal, but do you agree?

The region now known in the West as 'the Middle East' was at the apogee of global cultural, political, and economic power in the medieval and early modern periods. The empires of the Middle East were some of the largest and longest lasting in history. These were multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious empires. Many of the struggles and challenges that have confronted the governments and peoples of the region are the result of a contested and bumpy transition to nation states with the concomitant emphasis on the equal rights of individual citizens and a homogenous national culture and identity. In all societies this transition disrupted traditional social and religious hierarchical structures thereby undermining valued understandings of communal and personal identity. Many of the challenges and conflicts in the Middle East are a product of battles (both physical and ideological) to determine what should be people's primary identity: religion, ethnicity, nation, tribe, region and what is the proper relationship between these competing loyalties. These are also the same areas in which the Middle East forces us to confront and perhaps question the ways in which we have arranged these loyalties in our own lives and society.

This transition to prioritizing individuals and nation states that characterizes modernity was not smooth for any region or empire. The Middle East experience was made even more difficult by European imperialism. After centuries of power and glory, the region entered the modern period on the periphery of the new global economic system that left the region's governments and militaries weak. Much of the modern period therefore is the story of succumbing to European imperial domination and the subsequent struggle for political, economic, and ultimately cultural independence. Frequently, the borders of the nations within which these struggles were carried out were not of the people's own choosing.

Why seek to understand the Middle East, especially at an American Christian liberal arts college?

- All truth is God's truth. Therefore, the more truthfully we understand the history and complexity of the world we live in the more fully we understand God and what He is doing in the world.
- All of us, whether we recognize it or not, hold *a priori* assumptions about the region, its peoples, and conflicts. You all have views on Arabs, Muslims, Israel, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each one of us is not fully aware of these and even less aware of how we came by them. Our perception of truth will likely be enhanced and enriched by encountering people who have different *a priori* assumptions.

- As with any academic discipline, the truth revealed in scripture and the truth revealed in history should compliment each other. Our commitment in this class is to do rigorous academic work that deepens our understanding of the history of this region, driven by a confidence that as we so do we are fulfilling our Christian mandate to be truth seekers.

### READING STRATEGIES

For some of you this will be your first encounter with the history and cultures of the Middle East. People, places and concepts will be new to you. Thompson is a good guide if you read her carefully. There is a lot there. You cannot breeze through it. Each chapter begins with an anecdote that illustrates the main topic of the chapter, she then backs up to provide the historical context. While the chapters are arranged chronologically, they are also thematic and so the book as a whole does not proceed as: this happened, then that happened...

If you want a more conventional approach then I recommend you pick up James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*. Gelvin covers the same material as Thompson, but Gelvin is excellent at drawing out the main points: the three causes of this, the four consequences of that. If you want more historical background Gelvin is the best there is for a sweeping overview that doesn't get bogged down in details. We will use select chapters from Gelvin to provide more of a chronological road map for the course.

DO NOT get bogged down by names and dates. If it is a name, place, event or date you should know, then it will be abundantly clear to you as it will be repeated frequently in the reading and in class. Think big picture. On the other hand, we only can see larger themes and patterns through how they manifest themselves in historical particularities. Thus "getting your facts right" is also of the utmost importance. We want to move through the course in a dialectic dance between the larger themes and the historical details.

I will provide additional primary sources throughout the semester.

### **COURSE GOALS**

- Students will have greater understanding and empathy for the people of the Middle East.
- Students will be able to articulate clearly the challenges currently facing the region, their causes, and possible outcomes.
- Students will have a greater appreciation for the relationship between "historical forces" and "personal choices" – the bread and butter of history.

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### **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Students will be able to:**

- Construct a historically contextualized argument based on primary sources
- Deliver well-constructed and supported speeches
- Identify & Explain the significance of prominent individuals, movements, ideologies and events that have shaped the modern Middle East.
- Compare democratic movements in multiple ME countries
- Contextualize and critique popular perceptions of the Middle East

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## EXPECTATIONS

### PARTICIPATION -- 15%

- Participation means coming to class ON TIME having done the reading and ready to participate by contributing questions, answers or comments. Naturally you get no credit if you are not in class. Be there and be prepared!
- *To do well in this class you will need to take notes during lectures and discussions.* Notes should record the main point or theme of the lecture or discussion and the examples and arguments used to support them.
- **No cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices may be used during class.**
- Class will *summarize & analyze* rather than *repeat* the reading.
- If you do not understand reading or are feeling lost in the details *PLEASE* come talk to me – sooner rather than later!
- No underwear or sleepwear should be visible in class.
- If you miss class, you are responsible to find out what material and announcements you missed.
- You should follow (to a limited degree) current events in the region. We will discuss the news briefly at the beginning of class on Mondays. I recommend that you do not use news sources from the USA (unless you want to compare coverage). Better options are: Aljazeera.com bbc.com <http://www.jadaliyya.com> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html> <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg> <http://mondoweiss.net> <http://www.madamasr.com/> <http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/>

### READING RESPONSE PAPER/PARAGRAPH (RRP) – 10%

RRP is a 300-word (and no more) response to the reading. By my count there are 30 possible RRP's. You need to do **15** or 1-2/week throughout the semester. You need to turn this in by 9:30am the day of the reading/class topic.

For *Justice Interrupted* and selected primary sources I will provide a Reading Response Prompt (RRP) to which you will write a Reading Response Paragraph (RRP).

The RRP for the *Companion to Arab Culture* chapters, unless otherwise specified, is: How does this aspect of Arab culture compare with its counterpart in the US?

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I will not grade RRs *per se*. Everyone should assume if they do the assignment that it is a ‘base hit.’ If it is a “home run” I will tell you. Also if you “strike out” (didn’t understand it) or punt (didn’t try) I will tell you.

COMPANION LEAD DISCUSSION – 5%

For the *Companion to Arab Culture* text you will in groups of 2 lead the first part of class discussion. You should come with some audio, video, literary, or artistic illustration of the topic of the chapter. You need to meet with me beforehand to discuss where you want to take the discussion and what cultural artifact you intend to use.

PERSEPOLIS PAPER & JERUSALEM: A FAMILY PORTRAIT PAPER – 20%

For each graphic novel you will write a 1000-word (5-page) double-spaced paper. I will provide a writing prompt later in the semester. Remind me. This will be due in hardcopy and uploaded to Canvas at the beginning of class on the day scheduled to discuss it.

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ROLE PLAY ON EGYPT’S LIBERAL EXPERIMENT (see separate handout)

Presentations & Debates -- 10%  
2 Papers - 20%

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FINAL EXAM -- 20%

Two hour essay and short answer exam.

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**Side note on integrity and plagiarism... or “intellectual property”**

Plagiarism is claiming another’s work, ideas, or structure as your own. To avoid this you must cite (including page #) where you have acquired all of the above that is not genuinely your own. Putting everything in quotes is not a solution, but mere intellectual laziness. You can and should use the ideas of other people, but you need to acknowledge such usage in a footnote and ideally summarize the idea or information in your own words (rather than quote it) to indicate that you truly understand the point being made. Plagiarism is stealing intellectual property and is taken very seriously by the academy, this institution, and your professor. To avoid plagiarizing you should familiarize yourself with the Westmont policy statement:

[http://www.westmont.edu/offices/provost/plagiarism/plagiarism\\_policy.html](http://www.westmont.edu/offices/provost/plagiarism/plagiarism_policy.html).

Writers' Corner, Westmont’s writing center, is a creative space where student writers can find friendly “test readers” as they develop projects for professors, employers, and others. Tutors support peers as they mature into more skillful and confident writers. Tutorials are free of charge; come visit us in Voskuyl Library 215. Clients with appointments get first priority; drop-ins are also welcome. Make an appointment using WOnline at <https://westmont.mywconline.com/>

**STUDENT WELFARE** Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive in college. For helpful resources contact counseling center or a member of the student life team (such as your RA or RD).

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students who have been diagnosed with a disability (chronic medical, physical, learning, psychological) are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as early as possible to discuss appropriate academic accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Office of Disability Services. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your equal access to this course.

Please contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services. (310A Voskuyl Library, 805-565-6186, [snoble@westmont.edu](mailto:snoble@westmont.edu)) or visit the website for more information: <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability>

### **COMMUNICATION**

You can reach me by email or during the weekday in my office (x7148). I do not check emails on Sundays and cannot guarantee that I will read email on Saturday. I will send class emails through web advisor or post readings and notices on Canvas.

### **CLASS & READING SCHEDULE**

#### **Week ONE**

August 26	Introductions
August 28	Cultural, Religious & Political Foundations Gelvin, chpt 1 & "Seven Fundamental Questions"
August 30	Arab Culture & Arabic <i>Companion</i> , Intro & chpt 1

#### **Week TWO**

Sept 2	Circle of Justice JII
Sept 4	19 <sup>th</sup> Century Overview Gelvin, (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed) pgs 71-99; sharif of Gulhane
Sept 6	<i>Companion</i> : Nahda & Gelvin photo essay

#### **Week THREE**

Sept 9	Lebanon: Medieval to Modern Sectarianism JI 2
Sept 11	Constitutional Justice JI 3 TBA
Sept 13	Minorities <i>Companion I: Minorities &amp; news article</i>
<b><u>Week FOUR</u></b>	
Sept 16	Turkey's Trajectory JI 4
Sept 18	Introduction to Role Play Game: "Egypt's Liberal Experiment"
Sept 20	ELE: primary source analysis Huda Shaarawi & Qasim Amin
<b><u>Week FIVE</u></b>	
Sept 23	ELE: historical context I: Gelvin, (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed) pgs 180-195, 217-226
Sept 25	ELE: regional context JI 5
Sept 27	ELE: character intros & faction meetings
<b><u>Week SIX</u></b>	
Sept 30	ELE 1: Salon Discussion (1925)
Oct 2	ELE 2: Cabinet meeting & vote (1925)
Oct 4	ELE 3: faction meetings
<b><u>Week SEVEN</u></b>	
Oct 7	<b>FALL HOLIDAY</b>
Oct 9	ELE 4: Salon Discussion (1926)
Oct 11	ELE 5: Cabinet meeting & vote (1926)
<b><u>Week EIGHT</u></b>	
Oct 14	ELE 6: Saad Club debate (1927)
Oct 16	ELE 7: cabinet meeting & vote (1927)
Oct 18	ELE 8: debrief

**Week NINE**

- Oct 21 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Overview  
Gelvin, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) pgs 233-265
- Oct 23 Modern Jihad  
JI 6
- Oct 25 *Arab Culture* Presentation II: folklore

**Week TEN**

- Oct 28 Communists in Iraq  
JI 7
- Oct 30 Baath in Syria  
JI 8
- Nov 1 *Arab Culture* Presentation III: music

**Week ELEVEN**

- November 4 *Jerusalem: A family portrait (paper due)*
- November 6 the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict  
JI 9A, 239-260 + UN Res 242
- November 8 *Arab Culture* Presentation IV: Cinema & Television +  
*Kismet* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX8Un4nneXg>

**Week TWELVE**

- November 11 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict  
JI 9B, 261-274 + Interview w/ Khaled Meshaal
- November 13 Christian Zionism  
Reading TBA
- November 15 Hope  
*Faith in the Face of Empire*, 109-130

**Week THIRTEEN**

- Nov 18 Islamic Revolution  
JI 10A (275-298); Qutb & Shariati
- Nov 20 The Arab/Sunni Revolution  
JI 10b (298-308) & Primary Sources TBA
- Nov 22 *Arab Culture* Presentation V: Humor

**Week FOURTEEN**

Nov 25            The Iranian (Shii) Revolution  
(review JI 292-298) *Persepolis* paper due

Nov 27            THANKSGIVING

Nov 29            THANKSGIVING

**Week FIFTEEN**

Dec 2             Arab Spring  
                      JI 11

Dec 4             Arab Winter  
<https://www.facebook.com/Vox/videos/875076916013245/?v=875076916013245>  
                      TBA

Dec 6             *Arab (& Turkish & Persian) Culture VI: Food*

**FINAL EXAM**            Tuesday December 10, 12:00-2:00

*"He who controls the past controls the future.  
He who controls the present now controls the past. Now testify."  
--Rage Against the Machine.*