

MES 1: Introduction to Middle Eastern Studies
Dartmouth College, Spring 2024
Time Slot: 12-Hour (12:50-1:55pm)
Location: Moore B03

Professor Jonathan Smolin

Associate Professor of Middle Eastern Studies

Jonathan.Smolin@Dartmouth.EDU

Office Location: Reed Hall 320

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:15-4:15pm



Course Description

This interdisciplinary course offers a broad introduction to the modern Middle East as a field of study, an interconnected region, and a site of cultural, political, and economic production. We begin in Pre-Islamic Arabia and explore the rise of Islam and the development of Islamic civilization through the medieval period. We then shift our attention to the spread of reform and emergence of local modernities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the impact of European colonialism in the region, and the rise of nationalism and independence movements. We will explore a variety of political and historical developments, including the contours of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the birth of Arab dictatorships, the rupture of the Iranian Revolution, and the seemingly

sudden Arab Spring, before concluding with the current war in Gaza. We will trace the evolution of religious movements, conceptions of gender and sexuality, and cults of personality, among other topics. Mixing historical, political, and cultural approaches to religion, gender, and society, we will study a wide array of texts, from the Quran to examples of popular culture, social media, and advertising. Students will finish this class with a strong grasp of modern Middle Eastern society, politics, history, and culture. *No prior knowledge of the Middle East or its languages is required.*

Grading

Quick Quizzes (10%)

I will periodically give simple quick quizzes through Canvas before class to confirm that you are keeping up with our assignments. These will consist of multiple choice or true/false questions. If you complete the assignments, these will not be challenging. You will receive an email notifying you to take the quiz at least twelve hours before it is due. *There are no makeups for missed quizzes.*

Canvas Responses (20%)

Students will post ten responses to our assignments on the Discussions section of our Canvas site. Responses should be one full paragraph in length and consist of comments on our texts, ideas for debate, points for clarification, or links between issues. Please do not simply summarize the assignment. I will randomly place students in Canvas Groups for these responses during the second week of classes. Be sure to read the responses of everyone in your group before class. Please note that we will encounter a wide spectrum of perspectives this term. Thoughtful engagement and respect for difference are essential.

Responses are due the night before class by 11:59pm. The discussion board will close automatically at midnight. Students are responsible to ensure that their response is uploaded and posted to the discussion board by the deadline.

Midterm Exam (30%)

We will have a timed, closed-book midterm administered through Canvas. It will consist of multiple-choice questions and short identifications. You will be able to take it anytime between 4pm on April 26 and 11pm on April 28. I will provide a study guide for the midterm by Monday, April 22.

Final Exam (40%)

We will have a timed, closed-book final exam administered through Canvas, taken anytime between 12am on May 31 and 11pm on June 2. I will provide a study guide and details on format in the week before the exam.

Grade Breakdowns

Your final exam will be calculated on a total percentage of your work as follows:

A = 95-100

B = 83-86

C = 73-76

A- = 90-94
B+ = 87-89

B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79

C- = 70-72
D = 63-69

For more on grading at Dartmouth, see:

https://www.dartmouth.edu/reg/transcript/grade_descriptions.html

Attendance

I will assume that you have completed the assignments before class, and I will not be reviewing them in detail. Instead, I will use class to build on our assignments, complicate them, or offer new perspectives. I will also be presenting a wide variety of new material during class, including video clips, posters, banknotes, advertising, music, and political speeches.

Attendance and participation are not graded or required, but I urge you to attend every class, unless you are sick. *If you miss class, you are missing a vital part of the course. There is a direct correlation between attendance and success in this course.*

X-Hours

Except for May 21, when we will host Paul Edwards '74 for a discussion about banking in the Middle East, I will only hold X-Hours if we significantly behind schedule or to make up a class cancelled because of unforeseen circumstances.

Email

I check email early in the morning and again late in the afternoon, Monday through Friday. *You should not expect to hear from me outside of normal working hours.*

Office Hours

Please come to my office hours at least once this term! I want to get to know all my students. Office hours are a great time not only to talk about the class, but also your interests and future plans. You do not need to make an appointment to come to office hours. Please just come when you have time!

Academic Honor Principle

The Academic Honor Principle applies to all aspects of this class. For more, see: <https://policies.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle-1>

Potentially Offensive Material

Students may find aspects of our material controversial or even offensive. Many of our texts present and argue for perspectives with which you might strongly disagree. I urge all students to bring an open mind to our class and material. Learning how to

engage with, take seriously, and understand—not necessarily agree with—a wide array of perspectives is a crucial component of learning and education.

Electronic Devices

*In order to avoid distractions to others, electronic devices are permitted only for class-specific purposes. **Be sure to turn off any cell phones before class starts.***

Accessibility

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Apply for Services webpage](#); student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential. ***I will only grant extra time on examinations after receiving formal notice from SAS at least three days before the start of an examination.***

Socioeconomic Difference and Financial Difficulty

If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, including purchasing textbooks, please let me know.

Religious Observances and Travel

Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students' religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

If you are part of a College team or organization that requires you to travel and miss class during the term, let me know before the end of the second week of class.

Sports, Theater, and Other Events

If you are participating in a game, competition, performance, or similar event on campus, let me know! Whenever possible, my family and I love going to events in which my students are participating.

Mental Health and Wellness

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your undergraduate dean (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/undergraduate-deans/>), Counseling and Human Development (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/health-service/counseling/about>), and the Student Wellness Center (<https://students.dartmouth.edu/wellness-center/>). I encourage you to use these resources to take care of yourself throughout the term, and to come speak to me if you experience any difficulties.

If you have any concerns at any point about your ability to learn and participate in our class to your fullest potential, please get in touch. I will ensure that everyone has equal opportunity to thrive in this class.

Consent to Record

I do not plan on recording any aspect of this class. Nonetheless, it is possible that we will need to conduct class by Zoom this term. By enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Title IX

At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all have equal access to the educational and employment opportunities Dartmouth offers. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. In its policies and standards, Dartmouth demonstrates unequivocally that sexual assault, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are not tolerated in our community.

The Sexual Respect Website (<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>) at Dartmouth provides a wealth of information on your rights with regard to sexual respect and resources that are available to all in our community.

Please note that, as a faculty member, I am obligated to share disclosures regarding conduct under Title IX with Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator. Confidential resources are also available, and include licensed medical or counseling professionals (e.g., a licensed psychologist), staff members of organizations recognized as rape crisis centers under state law (such as WISE), and ordained clergy (see https://dartgo.org/titleix_resources).

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the Guarini School. Their contact information can be found on the sexual respect website at: <https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>.

COURSE MATERIAL

Books, All on Reserve

- William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 6th ed (2016)
- Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (NYRB Classics Edition)
- Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*
- Amir and Khalil, *Zahra's Paradise*

All other material for our class is available on Canvas, marked with (C) below

SCHEDULE

Please Note That Our Schedule Is Open to Change

******** = Readings That Require a Canvas Response***

Week One

March 25

Introductions

- What is the Middle East? What is Middle Eastern Studies? How is this class organized? What material are we using and why?

March 27

Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Birth of Islam

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Intro to Part One + Chapter 1)
- Robert Irwin, from *Night and Horses and the Desert* (C)

March 29

The Quran and Hadith

- Quran, Surah 29, *Spider* (C)
- Listen to “Surat al-Fatiha” (C)
- Al-Bukhari, from *The Early Years of Islam* (C)

Week Two

April 1

Islamic Empire and the Abbasid Golden Era

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapter 2)
- Abū Nuwās, *On a Boy Called ‘Alī* and Two Wine Poems (C)

April 2

Public Talk: “How American Choices in the Middle East Affect Its Global Leadership”

Representative Jason Crow
Filene Auditorium, 5pm

April 3 **The Arabian Nights and Medieval Popular Culture *******

- “Prologue,” “The Tale of the Ox and the Donkey,” and “The Tale of the Merchant and His Wife,” pp. 3-18 (C)
- “The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies,” pp. 66-149 (C)

April 5 **Napoleon Invades Egypt**

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Intro to Part Two + Chapters 4 and 5)
- Al-Jabarti, from *History of the Period of the French Occupation* (C)

Week Three

April 8 **19th-Century Colonialism and Reform in the Middle East**

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapters 6-9)
- Butrus al-Bustani, from *The Arab Renaissance* (C)

April 10 **The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of the Nation State *******

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Intro to Part Three + Chapters 11-12)
- T.E. Lawrence, from *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (C)

April 12: **Visions of Modernity: Feminism**

- Qasim Amin, from *The Liberation of Women* (C)
- Esther Moyal, from *The Arab Renaissance* (C)
- Mayy Ziyadah, from *The Arab Renaissance* (C)

Week Four

April 15 **Visions of Modernity: Islam *******

- Hassan al-Banna, “Toward the Light” (C)
- Sayyid Qutb, “Signposts along the Road” (C)
- Sayyid Qutb, “The America I Have Seen” (C)

April 17

Orientalism: Constructing the Middle East

- Edward Said, from *Orientalism* (C)
- Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (pp. 1-73)

April 18

Public Talk: “Do Israelis and Palestinians Really Want Peace? What Opinion Polls in Both Societies Teach Us about the Conflict”

Dr. Dahlia Scheindlin

Fellow at the Century International, Political Advisor, and Ha’aretz Columnist
Haldeman 041, 4:30pm

April 19:

Orientalism: East-West Encounters *****

- Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (pp. 74-139)
Week Five

April 22

Zionism and Palestine to 1948 *****

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapter 13)
- Bilu Manifesto and Theodor Herzl, from *The Jew in the Modern World* (C)
- Constantine Zurayq, from *The Meaning of the Disaster* (C)

April 24
Salvation

Gamal Abdel Nasser: From Military Coup to Messianic

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Intro to Part 4 + Chapters 15)
- Speech by President Nasser, Alexandria, July 26, 1956

April 26

Arab Nationalism

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapters 16)
- Film: *Umm Kulthum: A Voice Like Egypt* (Michael Goldman, 1994) (C)

***** Take Midterm on Canvas**
Anytime between 4pm, Friday, April 26
and 11pm, Sunday, April 28 ***

Week Six

April 29 **Revolutionary Algeria**

- Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) (C)
- Zohra Drif, from *Inside the Battle of Algiers* (C)

May 1 **Waiting for Palestine *******

- Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun* (pp. 21-74 only)
- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapter 17)

May 3 **June 1967: Shattering Loss, Euphoric Victory**

- Zvi Yehudah Kook, 15 May 1967 Speech (C)
- Naomi Shemer, “Jerusalem of Gold” (C)
 - Translation available in video description on YouTube
- Nasser’s Resignation Speech, 9 June 1967 (C)
- Fairuz, “O Flower of Cities” (C)
 - Watch with subtitles/closed captions for translation

Week Seven

May 6 **The Palestinian Guerilla Movement**

- The Palestine National Charter, July 1968 (C)
- Film: *The 50 Years War: Palestinian Exiles, 1970-1982* (WGBH, 2000) (C)
 - Recommended: Film: *The Dupes* (Tewfik Saleh, 1972) (C)

May 8 **Civil War in Lebanon *******

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapter 19)
- Film: *West Beirut* (Ziad Doueiri, 1998) (C)

May 10 **October 1973 War, the Revival of Islamic Politics, and Camp David**

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Intro to Part Five + Chapter 14 and 18)

Week Eight

May 13: **The Iranian Revolution and Its Aftermath *******

- Amir and Khalil, *Zahra's Paradise*

May 15 **From the Assassination of Anwar Sadat to the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin**

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Intro to Part Six + Chapters 22 and 23)
- Film: *The Settlers* (Shimon Dotan, 2016) (C)

May 17 **The Second Gulf War: The Invasion Will Be Televised *******

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapter 25)
- Film: *Control Room* (Jehane Noujaim, 2004) (C)

Week Nine

May 20

Coming Out

- CTDC Report: “Conceptualizing Sexualities in the MENA Region” (C)
- From *Bareed Mista3jil* (C)
- Laura Boushnak and Mona Boshnaq, “Coming Out in Lebanon” (C).
- Video: “Abdellah Taia – African, Muslim, and Gay” (C)

May 21

X-Hour (1:20-2:10pm)

Banking in the Middle East: A Discussion with Paul Edwards 74'

May 22

Tahrir Square and the Arab Spring *****

- William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Chapter 26)
- Film: *Ticking Giants* (Sara Taksler, 2016) (C)

May 24

Resurgent Authoritarianism and Cults of Personality

- Jonathan Guyer, “Inside the Strange Saga of a Cairo Novelist Imprisoned for Obscenity” (C)
- Joshua Hammer, “How Egypt’s Activists Became ‘Generation Jail’” (C)
- Video: “She Wants Independence. In Egypt, That Can Be Dangerous” (C)

Week Ten

May 27

No Class—Memorial Day

May 29

The Gaza War

- Ehud Barak, “Israel Must Decide Where It’s Going” (C)

- Solcyré Burga, “Is What’s Happening in Gaza a Genocide?” (C)
- Eva Illouz, “How the Left Became a Politics of Hatred against Jews” (C)
- Video: “Khalil Shikaki: The Rise—and Future—of Hamas” (C)

***** Take Final Examination on Canvas**
Anytime between 12am, Friday, May 31
and 11pm, Sunday, June 2 ***

Be Sure to Come to Office Hours at Least Once This Term!!!