Fall 2018
Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East
New College of Florida

Professor Uzi Baram
Class meets: Monday and Thursday 2:00-3:20 pm
Classroom: College Hall 214
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:15-2:15 & drop-in
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Syllabus available at http://sites.ncf.edu/baram/courses
Canvas course

Catalogue Description
This course offers a cultural anthropological perspective on the region stretching from the North African shores of the Atlantic to the Anatolian shores of the Black Sea, from the Red Sea to Central Asia. Key issues for the peoples and cultures of the Middle East will include gender, kinship, ethnic identities and conflicts, and the social construction of history. As an anthropology course, there will be a focus on comparisons among groups and societies, issues of social power and social change, and cultural diversity. Ethnographies will focus discussions. Throughout the term, the Middle East will be explored both as a locality and as a discourse. Prerequisite: previous course work in anthropology, or permission of the instructor.

Prospectus
The Middle East is a discourse and a location, a place of history and pressing contemporary concerns. The course offers a view on the region, its peoples and cultures, through ethnographies and complementary materials. A key concern for this semester is representations of and in the region, with consideration of approaches used in published ethnographies and online.

Course Objectives
1. To present an anthropological perspective on the Middle East and its diversity toward a deeper understanding of social life and social relationship. This course provides the opportunity to explore some of the anthropological insights into the Middle East and to consider some of the organizing principles used by social theorists for the region
2. To use ethnographies as an entry point to studying the peoples and social dynamics in the Middle East. The course provides exploration of ethnographies as a writing genre and analytical method
3. To examine representations of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East through such topics as cultural geography, gender and kinship, ethnicity and ethnic interactions, cultural practices and traditions, religions and ideologies, history and heritage. Since the Middle East is marked by ethnic primordialist conceptualizations of identity, we will open up the issues for social identity in the lives of Middle Eastern peoples with special attention will be given to anthropological concerns with heritage
4. To discuss the various influences producing unifying and stabilizing effects on the area, its peoples, and cultures and those factors causing dislocation, discords, and internal tensions. As an anthropology course, we will focus on comparisons among and between cultures and societies, issues of social power, social change, and cultural diversity
5. To expand analytical, interpretive, research and presentation skills focused on a major geographic region
Format for Class Meetings
The course will consist of lectures, readings, and discussion. The full participation of all students is encouraged and expected. The course runs best as a seminar: a seminar requires the active support of each and every student in the class. The discussions will revolve around the course topics and readings.

Required Readings
- L.L. Wynn 2007 *Pyramids and Nightclubs: A Travel Ethnography of Arab and Western Imaginations of Egypt, from King Tut and a Colony of Atlantis to Rumors of Sex Orgies, Urban Legends about a Marauding Prince, and Blonde Belly Dancers*. University of Texas Press.
- Rachel Newcomb 2017 *Everyday Life in Global Morocco*
- Journal articles and book chapters listed on the schedule of readings are available on Canvas in a file labeled articles and book chapters as PDFs

Course Requirements
1. Attendance: You are required to attend each and every class attendance (with the usual allowances for college-approved absences), complete readings prior to the class for which it is assigned, be ready to discuss those readings, participate in discussions, present on specific topics as requested by the professor, be attentive to current events regarding the region, and complete the written work on deadline. Unexcused absences are a basis for an unsatisfactory evaluation for the course.

2. Discussion: Quality not quantity is the requirement for discussion. I expect you to use your background in anthropology to situate the relationships between ethnographer and subject, explore the process of ethnography as well as the product of that research, measure each volume against your other anthropological readings (and ultimately among the course materials themselves), and raise critical questions about the anthropological perspective on the Middle East.

3. Presentation on Religions or Cities
   Early in the semester, the class will be divided into two halves; one group will focus on specific religions and the other on a few of the cities and present, respectfully, on October 4th and November 1st. The selection of faiths and urban areas for the presentations will be provided in a timely manner. For the short presentation, please use an innovative virtual presentation that is insightful and significant for understanding the peoples and cultures of the Middle East. The assigned readings for those class sessions are meant to illuminate anthropological concerns and can be analytically useful for the presentations.

4. Written Work – all papers/projects will be uploaded to Canvas
   a. Where is the Middle East? A Short Exercise in Representations: Please upload to Canvas a short description (three to four paragraphs) describing the term “Middle East” and locating an example of the representation of that Middle East in Florida. The representation (in the form of a description or an image) can be a restaurant (like the Jordan Market in Lakewood Ranch), place names (Mecca Street, just south of campus), or architecture (the University of Tampa’s main building); the assignment only asks for a description of the term ‘Middle East’ and a local example. The assignment will receive a complete/incomplete designation – due by September 10th at 3 pm
   b. Ethnographies from the Printed Page to Social Media: In previous semesters, the course requested response papers to the ethnographies as a means to reflect on the style of the writing, the meaning of the anthropological insights, and relevance of the scholar’s analysis. But in the social media age, this semester the concern moves to the digital translation of ethnographic research and findings and we will try something new. Please represent the major ethnographic insight from each volume on the factors that are stabilizing and destabilizing the case study and how that insight points to larger factors enveloping the
peoples of the region. You can complete the assignment, one for each of the first three ethnographies, through
a. a short (1-3 minute) video
b. a single power point slide (with 3 images and 3 text boxes), or
c. blog posting (of 5-8 paragraphs).
This creative assignment asks you to locate what significant insights from the ethnographies (by, respectfully, Abu-Lughod, Bryant, and Newcomb) can address an audience that assumes the peoples of the Middle East are the Other, different from themselves in stereotypical ways. Please upload your digital representation, along with a paragraph explaining your choice to Canvas by the deadline below. You can use one media for all three ethnographies or use the options in any combination.

Deadlines are
i. Veiled Sentiments – Due on October 1st, uploaded to Canvas by 1 pm
ii. The Past in Pieces – Due on October 25th, uploaded to Canvas by 1 pm
iii. Global Morocco – Due on November 12th by 1 pm
The assignments will receive a satisfactory/unsatisfactory designation

c. Final Assignment: The fourth ethnography experiments with representations by exploring multiple landscapes, transnationalism, archaeology, and tourism for the complexities of the idea of Egypt. The ethnographer does not predict the Arab Spring but does offer an analysis of social dynamics and inequalities in Egypt. After the three short projects that focus reading the ethnographies for factors that stabilize and destabilize Middle Eastern cultures, the final assignment asks you to explore the dynamics for the peoples of the contemporary Middle East, focused on the ethnographic materials in Pyramids and Nightclubs and the insights that come from your semester’s efforts on the region. In a 10-12 page essay (with references to appropriate course materials), reflect on the findings of cultural anthropology, with specifics from the Wynn ethnography, for understanding the Middle East today; the course concerns with representations and ethics will center your argument. The general question is quite simple: does anthropology matter for understanding the contemporary Middle East? The assignment is due, uploaded to Canvas on Monday December 10th at 2 pm and will receive a narrative evaluation.

Cross-listings:
Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East fulfills a Cultural Anthropology thematic elective for the Anthropology AOC and is cross-listed with International and Area Studies. The course is Gender Studies Eligible. And the class fulfills LAC for Social Sciences and Diverse Perspectives.

The Professor’s Approach to Evaluations and Deadlines
There are no grades for this course; the satisfactory/unsatisfactory designation allows a great deal of flexibility for assignments, as is evident above. Work for the course, which includes projects, presentations, and engagement with course materials, will receive comments and students can assume an assignment is satisfactory unless a revision is requested. The course is predicated on the notion that students in the class want to engage, study, and learn the course materials and meet the class goals.

The deadlines for assignments exist to ensure completion of course goals. When I receive your written work, I will strive to read and assess the work in a timely manner. The comments will point out strengths and weaknesses and your progress in the course; if I see a need for improving some aspect of your work, I will you to revise the work; if you do not revise, the assignment is unsatisfactory and the course will be as well. The goal is to meet all the course objectives toward mastery of the course materials. With the written work set up for your success, there are no extensions on deadlines – if circumstances create a situation where you are not satisfied with your work, hand in the extant draft with a note that you will revise the paper by a reasonable date (i.e., up to three days); I will evaluate the finished product. Since all the deadlines are noted on this syllabus, you will produce the assignments on the deadline.

Accessing Professor Baram
I will strive to arrive early to the classroom for each class meeting: that is a wonderful time to raise any questions about the course. My office hours are organized as open door: there is no need to sign up for a time slot, just come by my office. If there is a crowd of students, specific questions will be addressed; if you are the
only student to arrive and I am free, nearly anything related to the course, anthropology, or the Middle East can be discussed. Beyond office hours, if the door to my College Hall office is open, you can drop in and we can chat. In addition, I will reply to emails but please be polite in your requests and acknowledge my response to your questions/concerns.

**Beyond the Classroom: Films, Food, and Music**
The class meets for only a few hours a week but the issues and concerns should extend beyond the classroom walls. The professor is available for discussing issues and insights but class members are expected to explore the ideas, examples, and arguments outside of the classroom with each other. Everyone should be reading the newspapers (most major media from the region are available in English editions on-line; knowing the local languages is even better for research purposes), screening films and documentaries on the Middle East, reading novels, listening to music, engaging the large corpus of scholarship and continuing flood of commentary on the region, and eating Middle Eastern foods. You can gain insights from members of the local Middle Eastern communities, and talking to each other. The class might be confined by the time slots and the course is focused on specific anthropological goals but your efforts need not be limited to those concerns. Please discuss the Middle East a lot among yourselves. If you have any recommendations for events, food, films, or music, please share the information with the class.

**New College Policies**
- A student claiming a need for special accommodations because of a disability must work with the Counseling and Wellness Center, which will establish the need for specific accommodations and communicate them to the instructor.
- Any suspected instance of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with New College policy on academic dishonesty.
- No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time when he or she would normally be engaged in a religious observance or on a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief. Students are expected to notify their instructors if they intend to be absent for a class or announced examination, in accordance with this policy, prior to the scheduled meeting.

**Outline of Topics**

8/24 Mini-Class: The Continuing Significance of the Middle East for Anthropology, and for Us in General

8/27 Introducing the Middle East: Historical Geography
Readings:
1. I.R. Manners, B.M. Parmenter, and R. King 2013 The Middle East: A Geographic Preface Chapter from *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*
8/30 Past is Present: Middle Eastern Heritage
Readings:
1. A. Goldschmidt Jr. 2013 The Historical Context Chapter from *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*

September 3 is Labor Day – Class does not Meet

9/6 Representations: Orientalism and Its Critics
Readings:
2. James Zogby 2010 Super Myth One: They’re All the Same. *Arab Voices*, pp.59-71

September 10th – Class does not Meet
Assignment: Complete the first exercise

9/13 Contemporary Issues: Challenges and Struggles across Middle Eastern Landscapes, and the Ethnographic Opportunities
Readings:
4. Fran Markowitz 2013 Edgy Ethnography in a Little Big Place, In *Ethnographic Encounters in Israel*: Poetics and Ethics of Fieldwork, pp. 1-12

9/17 Kinship: Families and Other Relations
Readings:
1. Elizabeth W. Fernea 1965 Excursion into the Country - a selection from *Guests of the Sheikh*.
3. Abu-Lughod Afterward to *Veiled Sentiments*
9/20 Honor and Shame, among the Bedouin
Readings:
2. Abu-Lughod Chapter 1

9/24 The Gendered Debates over the Veil
Readings:
1. Abu-Lughod Chapters 2-4

9/27 Sentiment, Discourse, and Ideology
Readings:
1. Abu-Lughod Chapters 5-8

10/1 The Social Geography of Peasants
Readings:
1. Eric Wolf 1968 Algeria  *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*.

10/4 Presentations on the Religions of the Middle East
Readings:

10/8 Middle Eastern Memories
Readings:
2. Bryant Introduction and Chapter 1

10/11 Nationalism as Identity, focused on Cyprus
Readings:
1. Bryant Chapters 2-6
2. Yael Navaro-Yashin 2006 De-Ethnicizing the Ethnography of Cyprus: Political and Social Conflict between Turkish Cypriots and Settlers from Turkey. *In Divided Cyprus*, pp. 121-139
10/22 The Cyprus Problem through Ethnographic Informants
Discussion of Assignment for The Past in Pieces
Readings:
1. Bryant Chapters 7-Conclusion

10/25 On Violence, in the Middle East
Readings:
1. Frantz Fannon 1963 Concerning Violence. The Wretched of the Earth, pp. 35-106.

10/29 Divides of the Region and Reconciliation, focused on Israel/Palestine
Readings:
1. Rashid Khalidi 1997 The "Disappearance" and Reemergence of Palestinian Identity Chapter 8 of Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness, pp. 177-210
5. Watch Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish 2013 I Shall Not Hate by Manatee Educational TV http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6_MdsIiDgM or Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish 2013 Educate For Change

11/1 Presentation on the Cities of the Region
Readings:

11/5 Representing Morocco
Readings:
1. Newcomb Introduction
2. Newcomb Chapter 1 Transnational Suspicions: Marriage and Changing Gender Roles

11/8 Globalizing Morocco Families, Work, and Food
Readings:
1. Newcomb Chapters 2-4
November 12 Veteran’s Day – Class does not Meet

11/15 Morocco in a Neoliberal World
Readings:
1. Newcomb Chapter 5. Dwell: Urban Nostalgia as Neoliberal Critique
2. Newcomb Conclusion

11/19 Archaeology of an Antique Land
Readings:
1. Wynn Chapters 1-3
Supplemental:

November 22 Thanksgiving – Class does not Meet

11/26 Touring an Antique Land
Readings:
1. Wynn Chapters 4-5

11/29 Egyptian Landscapes and the Complexities of the Middle East
Readings:
1. Wynn Chapter 6

12/3 Ongoing Events and Anthropology for the Middle East Today
Readings: