

HIS 266-01

Modern History of the Middle East and North Africa

Instructor: Adey Almohsen, PhD

Location: Humanities and Social Studies Center N3110

Meetings: Tue. 10:00 am – 11:50 am; Thu. 10:00 am – 10:50 am

Office hours: Tue. 1:00 pm – 2:15 pm; Thu. 12:00 – 1:15 pm (N3158 HSSC)

Course description:

The region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is home to a diversity of peoples, religions, cultures, languages, literatures, and stories. The region as we know it today is the product of successive dynasties, empires, revolutions, and military coups. This course offers an introductory survey of the MENA region, covering aspects of its political history, cultural history, economic history, and intellectual history. Given that this is an introductory course taught over a single semester, our coverage will focus on the Arabic-speaking nations of MENA alongside important examples from Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan. The course proceeds chronologically, beginning with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century and closing at the teens of the twenty-first century with the Arab Spring. Along this chronology, we will survey thematic topics such as orientalism, imperialism, and nationalism among others. Moreover, we will learn how history is read and interpreted. We will read primary sources in the form of treaties, speeches, memoirs, or newspaper clippings alongside (or against) secondary sources and academic analyses. Foreign primary sources from diplomats or imperial officers will be included, however, the course privileges sources from the women and men of the MENA region, examining their takes on local events and developments.

Course aims:

- Understanding the political and intellectual forces and trends that shaped MENA history.
- Connecting historical knowledge to present-day issues and contexts in a critical manner.
- Making sense of the nuances of historical events through primary-sources.
- Demonstrating the importance of interdisciplinary sources for historical study.
- Deconstructing narratives about MENA & its peoples through historical and interdisciplinary study.
- Learning how to work productively in small groups to develop an argument.
- Engaging meaningfully in the classroom with the instructor and with peers.
- Conducting sound historical analysis by deferring to a mix of primary and secondary-sources.

Grade breakdown:

Regular attendance	15%
Map quiz	5%
In-class team primary source exercises	20% (two times)
Manifesto exercises (1-3 pages)	30% (three times)
Reflection Essay (6-9 pages)	30%
Total Grade	100%

Important dates:

Sep. 7	Map quiz
Sep. 21	Primary source exercise I (Report due: Sep. 22, 10 pm)
Oct. 14	Primary source exercise II (Report due: Oct. 15, 10 pm)
Oct. 28	First manifesto due (10 pm)
Nov. 18	Second manifesto due (10 pm)
Dec. 9	Third manifesto due (10 pm)
Dec. 17	Reflection essay due (10 pm)

Readings and texts:

Weekly course readings range between 50-90 pages. You are expected to prepare all readings before class (highlighted in yellow). Suggested readings are not mandatory, however, they will be discussed and analyzed during the lecture component of the class. The course requires only one textbook (Rogan, 2017) to cut down student costs. All assigned readings and primary sources will be available on-line in the course's OneDrive.

Primary source collections:

Below are texts and websites which include primary sources covering the modern history of the MENA region. They include treaties, declarations, and other documents of a political or diplomatic nature. A couple are already on reserve at Grinnell's Burling Library.

- Clancy-Smith and Smith, *The Modern Middle East and North Africa: A History in Documents* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Khater, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Cengage Learning, 2011).
- Amin, Fortna, and Frierson, *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History* (Oxford University Press, 2006).
- "The Middle East 1916-2001: A Documentary Record," *Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy*. Yale University Law Library: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/mideast.asp.
- "Internet Islamic History Sourcebook." Fordham University: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/islam/islamsbook.asp>.
- "The Question of Palestine, Documents search." United Nations: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document-1/>.

Regular attendance (15%):

Class attendance is the difference between failing a class and excelling in it. In the lectures, I will offer insights that go beyond assigned readings. I will also contextualize arguments raised by the different authors and relate them to the present. In addition, student discussions bring to the class interesting perspectives that cannot be gained by a simple reading of assigned texts. That said, I am aware that some students are less shy than others, therefore, this grade is geared more toward showing up to class, taking notes, and being attentive as opposed to verbal participation—although the latter is always encouraged.

Map quiz (5%):

It is crucial to know where the different countries and capitals mentioned in this course are located geographically. Familiarize yourself with the map of the Middle East and North Africa and be sure to differentiate between the states of Iraq and Iran, or, between Libya's Tripoli and Lebanon's Tripoli.

In-class team primary source exercises (20%):

Students will be divided into teams and will be tasked to read and analyze primary source documents selected by the instructor. The analyses are meant to respond to a question or problematic posed by the instructor. Teams are then expected to prepare a brief report (350-500 words) which lays out their analysis of the source. Reports are to be submitted by 10 pm to OneDrive on the day following the class exercise.

Manifestos (30%):

This is an individual assignment. You will be tasked to assume the position of a thinker, political party, or terrorist organization—real or imagined. You will produce a text of 1–3 pages (300–900 words) which lays out the thought of your chosen individual or group in a language that is both historically accurate, ideologically coherent, and philosophically relevant to the worldview of your chosen individual or group. For example, if you opt to be an Islamist thinker from the 1960s, it would be unreasonable to call for secularizing society and it would be ahistorical to advocate for suicide bombings (which are the product of a later period).

Reflection essay (30%):

By Sep. 30, I will post to OneDrive a document with several topics/themes/questions, which students will respond to thoughtfully as well as critically in a reflective essay of 6–9 pages (1,800–3,000 words). Students should select one of these topics on or before October 29th. Students are expected to discuss their selected topic with the instructor during office hours. The instructor will help students formulate a thesis and direct them to relevant books or journal articles. This is not meant to be a research paper, but an essay—in the literal sense of the term: *essay*—where students attempt to expand on one of the class themes by relying on assigned readings in addition to 2–3 external sources (primary and/or secondary). Essays are due on December 17th by 10 pm.

Important note:

Deadlines are final. Failure to submit an assignment on time equals failure in the assignment (i.e., a grade of zero). Missing 6 sessions (of the total 28) will result in a zero grade for attendance. Missing 7 or more sessions will result in failing the course altogether. Accommodations will be made for students' needs (cultural, religious, personal, or otherwise) and for dire or special circumstances upon contacting and informing the instructor well in-advance.

Writing Center:

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, and presentations, as well as applications for internships, fellowships, and graduate school. In one-on-one sessions, students work with professional instructors to interpret readings, talk through ideas, choose and analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions,

organize and revise whole drafts, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, plan presentations, and more. Instructors do not proofread papers, but they can teach you how to edit your own work effectively. For a link to the schedule and appointment system, search for “Writing Center” on grinnell.edu or Grinnell Share.

Academic Difficulty and Advising:

College academics are demanding, and it perfectly normal to experience difficulty from time to time. If you are experiencing academic difficulty in my class (or any other class for that matter), I encourage you to get in touch with me and/or your academic advisor. We can all help you take advantages of the many resources Grinnell offers you to resolve problems you may be experiencing in a class.

Honor Policy:

Grinnell College’s Academic Honesty Policy is to be found in the Student Handbook. It is the College’s expectation that students are aware of and meet the expectations expressed in this policy.

Accommodations:

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom. Thus, I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, located on the ground level floor of Steiner Hall (641-269-3124).

Policy on Lateness, Absence, Illness:

I realize that circumstances can arise that are beyond your control, and I will be reasonable about such exceptional circumstances. But recurring episodes of lateness or unexcused absence will not be tolerated. Note that an excused absence is usually one that you have arranged with me in advance, not after the fact.

Communication:

You can always contact me by e-mail, but I don’t necessarily read e-mails after 5 pm and on weekends.

Week I: Syllabus and Introductions

Thu. Aug. 26, 2021

- No Readings

Week II: So, what exactly is the Middle East?

The course opens with a ‘pre-history’ of the modern MENA region, surveying the region’s history since antiquity into the rise of Christianity and later Islam and its successive dynasties. We will also try to understand how to use and interpret sources when studying history.

Tue. Aug. 31, 2021 + Thu. Sep. 2, 2021

- Clancy-Smith and Smith, *The Modern Middle East and North Africa: A History in Documents* (Oxford University Press, 2013): 1–17.
- Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2009): xiv-xxv, 8-65.
- Clancy-Smith and Smith: viii-xi.
- [Suggested] Bizup, “BEAM: A Rhetorical Vocabulary for Teaching Research-Based Writing,” *Rhetoric Review* 27 (2008): 72–86.

Week III: The ‘Orient’ as a subject of knowledge

This week we will consider the following question: how did the Middle East’s geographic neighbors conceive of it in civilizational terms? Were the Middle East and North Africa—in their complexities—reduced to the ‘other’ of a European self? We will explore this history of orientalism and its problematics.

Tue. Sep. 7, 2021

- Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Books, 2003 [1978]): 1–28.
- Lewis, “The Question of Orientalism,” *New York Review of Books* (Jun. 24, 1982).
- [Suggested] Said responds to Lewis; Lewis replies to Said, *New York Review of Books* (Aug. 12, 1982).

Map quiz (5%)

Thu. Sep. 9, 2021

- Halliday, “Orientalism and its Critics,” *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 20 (1993): 145–63.
- Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” *American Anthropologist* 104 (2002): 783–90.
- Omar, “Unexamined Life.” *The Baffler*, no. 58 (Jul. and Aug. 2021). <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/unexamined-life-omar>.
- [Suggested] Hafez, “Edward Said’s Intellectual Legacy in the Arab World,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33 (2004): 76–90.
- [Suggested] Amel, “Marx in Said’s Orientalism,” *Catalyst* 3, no. 1 (2019).
- [Suggested] al-‘Azam, “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse,” *Khamsin* 8 (1981): 5–26.

Week IV: Modernities

Here, our historical survey resumes, picking up around the late 19th century, where we will explore how different parts of the MENA region responded to the challenges posed by European modernity.

Tue. Sep. 14, 2021

- Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (Basic Books, 2017): 61–83.
- Clancy-Smith and Smith: 25–29 [primary source: *Napoleon's appeal in Arabic to Egyptians and Response to Napoleon* by 'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Jabarti (1754–1822)].
- Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge University Press, 2018): 8-33.

Thu. Sep. 16, 2021

- Rogan: 85–108.
- [Suggested] Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Faber and Faber, 2013): 263–98

Week V: Colonialism and Global War

We will discuss the legacy of European colonial rule in North Africa and the Middle East into the early 20th century, exploring indigenous reactions and the budding of nationalist movements.

Tue. Sep. 21, 2021

- Rogan: 109–46.
- Abrahamian: 35–64.
- Clancy-Smith and Smith: 54–6 [primary source: *Iranian Oil Concessions*].

In-class teamwork: primary source exercise I (10%)

- Selections from *An Imam in Paris* by Rifā'ah at-Taḥṭāwī (1801–73).
- Selections from *Theology of Unity* by Muḥammad 'Abdu (1849–1905).

Thu. Sep. 23, 2021

- Rogan: 147–74.

Weeks VI and VII: Redrawing of Borders and Displacement of Peoples

These two weeks will focus on the First World War and its brutal outcomes in the MENA region: from genocide in Armenia to the creation of British and French mandates.

Tue. Sep. 28, 2021

- Morris and Ze'evi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities 1894–1924* (Harvard University Press, 2019): 15–43.
- Bloxham, "Determinants of the Armenian Genocide," in: *Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Hovannisian (Transaction Publishers, 2003): 23–50.

- Kaiser, "Grinnell's Connection to the Armenian Genocide," *Grinnell Stories*, August 4, 2015. <http://grinnellstories.blogspot.com/2015/08/grinnells-connection-to-armenian.html>.
- Clancy-Smith and Smith: 109–113 [primary source: *The Armenian Question*]
- [Suggested] Dolbee, "The Desert at the End of Empire: An Environmental History of the Armenian Genocide," *Past and Present* 247 (2020): 197–233.

Class trip to Burling Library exploring Grinnell College's archives (extra 3% !!!)

Thu. Sep. 30, 2021

- [Film viewing] Goldberg, *Armenian Genocide*. United States: Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2006.

Tue. Oct. 5, 2021

- Rogan, 175–210.
- Arsan, "Versailles: Arab Desires, Arab Futures," Public Books (Jan. 26, 2021): <https://www.publicbooks.org/versailles-arab-desires-arab-futures/>.
- 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement.
- Clancy-Smith and Smith: 113–7 [Primary source: 'Promises, Promises'].

Thu. Oct. 7, 2021

- Rogan, 211–246.

Week VIII: The Arab-Israeli Conflict

This week will investigate the historical roots of the conflict in late Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine between the Palestinian Arab population and the incoming waves of Jewish migrants fleeing persecution in Europe and Russia and seeking to establish an independent society (and a state, eventually).

Tue. Oct. 12, 2021

- Rogan: 247–76.
- Clancy-Smith and Smith: 118 [primary source: 1917 Balfour Declaration]

Thu. Oct. 14, 2021

In-class teamwork: primary source exercise II (10%)

- Alami, "The Lesson of Palestine." *Middle East Journal* 3 (1949): 373–405 [primary source]
- Herzl, *A Solution to the Jewish Question* (1896) [primary source]
- Rabinowitz, *Zionists Are Not Our Saviors* (1900) [primary source]
- Jabotinsky, *What the Zionist-Revisionists Want* (1926) [primary source]
- [Suggested] Poetzl, "From Pan-Asianism to Safari-Zionism: Gendered Orientalism in Jewish-Austrian Literature." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (2019).

Preparation for first manifesto

Week IX: NO CLASSES, FALL BREAK

Tue. Oct 19, 2021

Thu. Oct. 21, 2021

Week X: The Second World War and Its Intellectual Upshots

The Second World War and the establishment of Israel in 1948 unleashed a wave of intellectual reassessments that sought to break with the Arab past. Many thinkers hoped for liberation from both the bonds of imperial legacy and the tyranny of the present. We will assess the promises and failures of these projects.

Tue. Oct. 26, 2021

* Class will be on-line over Cisco WebEx (link to be provided later).

- Rogan: 277–318.
- Di-Capua, “Palestine Comes to Paris: The Global Sixties and the Making of a Universal Cause,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50 (2020): 19–50.

Thu. Oct. 28, 2021

* In lieu of class meeting, watch the following movie independently or with your classmates:

- [Film viewing] Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers*. Italy: Igor Film, 1966.

First manifesto (10%) due by Thu. Oct. 28, 2021 (10 pm latest)

Week XI and XII: The Long Sixties

This week looks at the causes and effects of the 1967 Six-Day War. Like 1948 before it, Arab defeat in 1967 stirred serious intellectual and political strife in the region and gave rise to a defiant Palestinian national movement and a new left in the Arab world.

Tue. Nov. 2, 2021

- Rogan: 319–54.
- Hasso, “Modernity and Gender in Arab Accounts of the 1948 and 1967 Defeats,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000): 491–510.
- Haugbolle, “The New Arab Left and 1967,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44 (2017): 497–512.

Thu. Nov. 4, 2021

- Selections from *Self-Criticism After the Defeat* (1967) by Ṣādeq J. al-‘Az̧m (1934–2016).
- Selections from *Arab Women are Liars, Hypocrites, and Losers* (1966) by Thurayā Malḥas (1925–2013).

Preparation for second manifesto

Tue. Nov. 9, 2021

- al-Rashoud, "From Muscat to the Maghreb: Pan-Arab Networks, Anti-Colonial Groups, and Kuwait's Arab Scholarships 1953-61," *Arabian Humanities* (2019): 1–20.
- Takriti, "Colonial Coups and the War on Popular Sovereignty," *American Historical Review* 124: 878–909.

Thu. Nov. 11, 2021

- Giacaman, "Political Representation and Armed Struggle." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 43 (2013): 24–40.
- Matar, "PLO Cultural Activism: Mediating Liberation Aesthetics in Revolutionary Contexts," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 38 (2018): 354–64.

Week XIII: Civil War and Revolution

This week focuses on the 1970s in the Middle East and North Africa, focusing on two crucial events that determined the region's future for many decades after: the Lebanese Civil War and the Iranian Revolution.

Tue. Nov. 16, 2021

- Rogan: 355–96.
- Abrahamian: 159–204.
- [Suggested] Matthiesen, "The Cold War and the Communist Party of Saudi Arabia 1975–91," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 22 (2020): 32–62.

Thu. Nov. 18, 2021

- [Film viewing] Satrapi and Paronnaud, *Persepolis*. France: Diaphana Distribution, 2007.

Second manifesto (10%) due by Thu. Nov. 18, 2021 (10 pm latest)

Week XIV and XV: Political Islam

We begin here with the Soviet-Afghan War and assess its repercussions on the culture and politics of the Middle East and trace the roots of violent Islamist movements against the corruption of Arab republics and monarchies.

Tue. Nov. 23, 2021

- Rogan: 397–438.

Thu. Nov. 25, 2021 (Thanksgiving – No class)

Tue. Nov. 30, 2021

- Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam* (Saqi, 2005): 1–69.

Thu. Dec. 02, 2021

- Selections from the writings of Sayyed Qutb (1906–66) [primary source].
- Hegghammer, *The Caravan: Abdullah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad* (Cambridge University Press, 2020): 288–327.

Preparation for third manifesto

Week XVI: A New Middle East?

We will conclude our historical survey, looking at the late 20th century, 9/11, 2003 US occupation of Iraq, and the ongoing Arab Spring.

Tue. Dec. 07, 2021

- Rogan: 439–82, 483–512.

Thu. Dec. 09, 2021

- Film viewing: el-Said, *Ākher Ayām al-Madinah [In the Last Days of the City]*. Egypt: Zero Production, 2016.

Third manifesto (10%) due by Thu. Dec. 9, 2021 (10 pm latest)

Reflection essay (30%) due by Fri. Dec. 17, 2021 (10 pm latest)