MESAS 210.01: The Arab World: Culture & Society  
M-W 2:30-3:45 PM, 202 Language Hall

Instructor: Dr. Anouar El Younssi  
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Office phone: 770-784-4768

E-mail: aelyoun@emory.edu  
Office Hours.: M-W 11-11:40 AM & T-Th. 11:25-12 Noon & by appointment

Course Description:
This course will introduce students to a panoply of topics pertaining to Arab & Arabic-speaking societies and cultures. The course will offer a broad survey of the social, religious, political, cultural, artistic, linguistic, geographical, and historical aspects of the modern “Arab World”. Although the course will focus on the modern era, there will be at times connections to previous key historical periods—such as the rise of Islam, its presence in the Iberian peninsula, and the Crusades in the Middle Ages. In investigating politics in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, the course will delve into what precipitated the events of the so-called “Arab Spring” (a series of anti-government, pro-democracy protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across North Africa and the Middle East starting in 2010) and their ongoing ramifications and repercussions. This will lead us to discuss two important demographics—i.e., youth and women—and their dissatisfaction with both the political system (and the political culture) and patriarchal cultural, social norms in many parts of this region of the world. Youth activism and women’s struggle for more/equal rights will be key threads in the course. We will highlight the importance of Social Media, NGO’s, and other elements of civil society in the push for more democracy, justice, and human rights in MENA. Additionally, the course will introduce students to both contemporary Arab/Arabic cultural production and the rich Arab/Arabic classical heritage. We will survey cinema & television, theater, music industry, food & cuisine, mass media, literature, Islamic art and architecture, important historical sites and landmarks, modern art, etc. Since religion tends to be an integral part of MENA, the course will offer a window into the influence of Islam in everyday life and to religious holidays and celebrations. Additionally, we will take a look at the rise of “Islamism” and “political Islam” in the postcolonial era (i.e. second half of the twentieth century). We will also discuss the presence of religious and ethnic minorities. Last but not least, the course will devote some time to examine street life in MENA—with a focus on Morocco. An important goal of the course is to increase students’ cultural literacy and cultural understanding by providing them with a deeper knowledge of many dimensions of the modern “Arab World” and the richness of the Arab/Moslem cultural heritage.

The course has an 11-day travel component to Morocco on May 19-30. Students will have the chance to observe first-hand the dynamics of an Arab/Arabic-speaking society—many of which connect directly to what will be covered in the course.

Course objectives:
- Have a more informed understanding of the cultures of the Arab/Arabic-speaking world.
- Learn that Arab/Arabic-speaking societies do not form a monolithic entity.
- Gain a deeper knowledge of various elements of the Arab/Arabic-speaking world (history, politics, cultural production, food and cuisine, youth culture, etc.)
- Learn about important signposts, including European colonialism, decolonization, and the events of the “Arab Spring”.
- Gain an understanding of the impact of the colonial period on Arab culture and society.
• Get a better understanding of gender dynamics in a number of Arab societies.
• Be introduced to film industry, music industry, literary writings, and food culture from MENA (Middle East and North Africa).
• Demonstrate communication skills in writing and through presentations.
• Enhance critical skills through writing critical responses on a regular basis.
• Engage in collaborative learning and teamwork.
• Participate in the creation of a vibrant and rewarding learning community.

Required Materials:
➢ Canvas: In this course Canvas will be used to distribute course materials, communicate online, post assignments & announcements, etc.

Grade Distribution:
• Attendance, Preparedness, & Participation 10%
• Questions posted to Canvas 5%
• Critical Responses 15%
• Quizzes 15%
• Presentation 10%
• Exams 25%
• Final Paper & Abstract 20%

➢ Attendance, Preparedness, & Participation (10%)
You must attend class and come prepared for discussion of the assigned readings. This means you MUST read the material BEFORE class as indicated on the syllabus. You must attend all classes throughout the semester and arrive to class on time. You are allowed to be absent for a total of two (2) class sessions. With every additional absence your final grade for this class will go down 3%. This means you will have to plan ahead with your allowance of two absences. Talk to me ahead of time if you foresee any difficulties with this policy.

➢ Questions to post before class (5%)
To encourage you to think critically about the assigned materials and to be an active participant, you must post one question on Canvas before every class meeting. Make sure to post your question by 11:59 PM the night before class meets.

➢ Critical Responses (15%)
Students are required to post 8 critical responses on the assigned readings prior to our class meetings. You are of course welcome to post more than 10 responses. These are short responses (about 200-250 words) to help you engage better with the readings. You may choose one particular point/detail (or a few points/details) that stood out for you, and discuss why YOU think it is significant or interesting: Make your VOICE heard. You are also encouraged, but not required, to respond to other posts by classmates. Although the medium may seem informal, this is an important part of your evaluation and a good training to improve your writing and critical skills. Therefore, make sure to write in correct English, avoid colloquial expressions, and when you disagree with your classmates, remember to express a constructive and articulated criticism. Make sure to post your critical responses by 11:59 PM the night before class meets.

➢ Quizzes (15%)
These are short (7-10 minute) quizzes given on the assigned readings. I may or may NOT announce these quizzes in advance. Therefore, you should always come to class prepared. There are no make-ups for quizzes. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.
➢ **Presentation (10%)**

In pairs, students will give a 20-25 minute presentation on one of the course topics. I highly recommend PowerPoint presentations (or another medium) that incorporate audio-visual content (pictures, maps, charts, short videos, etc.). More guidelines TBA.

➢ **Exams (25%)**

These are scheduled comprehensive exams covering materials learned in class. Only students with valid documented absences may take the makeup exam, which will have to take place no later than one week from the student’s resumption of attendance. More guidelines TBA.

➢ **Final Paper & Abstract (20%)**

You should write a final paper (5-7 pages, double-space, 12’’ font) on a topic related to the course. More guidelines TBA. The first draft is due in class on Monday, April 6 and the final draft is due in class on Monday, April 27.

Also, you should submit a one-page abstract no later than March 18. Your abstract must clearly present your central idea or the research question you plan to examine, identify the texts you will investigate, and give a brief explanation of how you intend to develop your topic.

**Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70-74</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75-79</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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**Policies**

**Academic Integrity**

All students deserve an atmosphere of fairness, honesty and maturity. All of us at Oxford College live by the standards set forth in the Honor Code, which includes the “responsibility for maintaining standards of unimpeachable honesty in all academic work.” The Honor Code also indicates that we cannot tolerate actions in others that violate this code, so we (and you) are obligated to report violations. Oxford College takes this honor code very seriously, as do I, and penalties for violations are severe. Please read the Honor Code carefully; I will trust you to conduct yourselves accordingly. See the Honor Code: [http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/student-services/student-honor-code](http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/student-services/student-honor-code).

**Accommodating Students with a Disability**

- If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at oas_oxford@emory.edu.

- If you are a student that is currently registered with OAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify OAS immediately. Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate sometime with your professor, during the first week of the semester, to communicate your specific needs for the course as it relates to your approved accommodations. Accommodations are not implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course face to face with the OAS student. All discussions with OAS and faculty concerning the nature of your disability remain confidential. For additional information regarding OA: [http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access](http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access).
**Religious Holidays**

Instructors are encouraged, not required, to accommodate students’ academic needs related to religious holidays. Please make every effort to negotiate your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester; waiting longer may compromise your instructor’s ability to extend satisfactory arrangements. If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, ppace@emory.edu, Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help. **Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors.**

**Affirmative Action & Sexual Harassment**

All persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by university policies. Discrimination against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, gender, sexual orientation, or veteran status is unacceptable.

**Title IX Reporting**

Every Emory employee who is informed about an allegation of sexual misconduct involving any student is required to notify a Title IX Coordinator either directly or through their relevant reporting structure. However, employees who serve in a professional role in which communications are afforded confidential status under the law (e.g., medical providers, therapists, and professional and pastoral counselors) are not bound by this requirement but may, consistent with their ethical and legal obligations, be required to report limited information about incidents without revealing the identities of the individuals involved, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. All members of the Emory community are encouraged to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination. For more info: [http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html](http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html)

**Course Schedule (subject to change):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W 1</th>
<th>W 1/15</th>
<th>Introduction to the course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 2</td>
<td>M 1/20</td>
<td>No Class—MLK Holiday</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
-“Modern Arab culture: introductory remarks” pp. 1-18, *The Cambridge Companion* |
| W 3 | M 1/27 | “Islam: A Historical Overview”—Article on Canvas  
-Read the section “Holy Days” on this link [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/)  
| W 4 | M 2/3 | “Nahda: the Arab project of enlightenment” pp. 54-74, *The Cambridge Companion*  
-W 2/5 | “European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States”—Article on Canvas  
| W 2/12 | | *On linguistic diversity in MENA (Middle East and North Africa)*  
-“From Minority to Majority: Inscribing the Mahra and Touareg into the Arab Nation”—Article on Canvas  
-“Language and Ideology in the Maghreb: Francophonie and Other Languages”—Article on Canvas |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W 6</th>
<th>M 2/17</th>
<th>“Law” pp. 75-95, <em>The Cambridge Companion</em></th>
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| W 2/19 | -“Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Middle East” —Article on Canvas  
-“The Arab Spring” —Article on Canvas  
-“Women, Youth, and the Egyptian Arab Spring” —Article on Canvas |
| W 7 | M 2/24 | -“Morocco’s ‘Arab’ Spring”—see article on this link:  
https://www.mei.edu/publications/moroccos-arab-spring  
-“Governance and the Future of the Arab World.” —see article on this link:  
| W 2/26 | Exam 1 |
| W 8 | M 3/2 | -The Economic Determinants of Arab Democratization” – see article on this link:  
https://www.mei.edu/publications/economic-determinants-arab-democratization |
| W 3/4 | On mass media, social media, and NGO’s—Readings TBA  
-“The Media Revolution”—Article on Canvas |
| W 9 | March 9-13 | *No Classes—Spring Break* |
| W 10 | M 3/16 | -“The Rise of Islamism” & “The Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan” —Article on Canvas  
-“Islamists and the Brotherhood: Political Islam and the Arab Spring”—Article on Canvas |
| W 3/18 | On gender and “Arab feminism” —Readings TBA  
**Final paper abstract due** |
| W 4/1 | “The Politics of Hybridization in Rai Music”—Article on Canvas |
**First draft of final paper due** |
| W 4/8 | -“Theater” pp. 182-190, *The Cambridge Companion*  
-“Theatre in Morocco and the Postcolonial Turn”—Article on Canvas |
| W 4/15 | Exam 2 |
| W 16 | M 4/27 | Street life & conclusion  
**Final draft of final paper due** |