



ARB/SLC 331: Arabic-Islamic Culture and Literature

Course and Faculty Information

Course Description: The Middle East including the Arab World has been one of the most misunderstood regions in the world. Reflecting the need to understand this volatile area, this course offers a general introduction to the Middle East that synthesizes cultural, literary, ethnographic, and socio-economic information. The course objective is to present and interpret the Middle East/Arab World as a culture area to enhance students' awareness and understanding of Arab/Islamic culture and provide a useful background for students interested in expanding their knowledge on the subject or planning to be involved in Middle East assignments. In addition, focusing on the experiences of ordinary people in the Middle East, the course conveys a grassroots sense of Middle East culture and society. Although the class locates Islam as a major influence in everyday life, it also demonstrates that other factors such as work patterns, community and gender relations are of great importance in shaping individuals' lives, beliefs, and hopes. We will use scholarly books, articles, films, videos, documentaries, and discussion to learn and reflect on the different cultural, religious, political, and social systems of this diverse area.

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: ENG 101, 105, or 107 with C or better; Credit is allowed for only ARB 331 or SLC 331 OR Visiting University Student

Professor: Dr. Souad T. Ali

Office: DH 404F

Email: souad.ali@asu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00 – 1:00 PM or by appointment: <https://asu.zoom.us/j/3813141796>

Course Learning Objectives

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

Articulate cultural, literary, social, religious, and ethnographic events and discourses in Middle Eastern Studies that would enhance their awareness and understanding of Arabic/Islamic Culture and Literature within intellectual, political, and cultural debates in the region.

Textbooks

The books below are available for purchase at the ASU bookstore or to be ordered by students on their own. Several of the titles are available through Amazon at affordable prices. A website called the Internet Archive (archive.org) also has several of these titles that can be borrowed for short periods of time.

Required Textbooks:

- *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East* (Daniel Bates and Amal Rassam), Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2001.
- *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East* (Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn Early), Indiana University Press, 2002.
- *Memoirs of A Woman's Doctor* (Nawal El-Saadawi), City Lights books, 1989 — later in the semester.

Optional Background Reading:

- *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (Roger Allen), Cambridge UP, 2000.

Course Access

Your ASU courses can be accessed by both my.asu.edu and asu.instructure.com; bookmark both in the event that one site is down.

Course Structure and Requirements

This course is divided into 7 weekly units detailed below. The units will be uploaded weekly in the Modules section of Canvas. Each unit will include the reading and other assignments, tests, due dates, etc., for a given week.

As has been the case in academia, the syllabus is regarded as a contract between the student and the professor. It includes the requirements for taking the course and the professor's expectations of your performance and behavior during the course. In return, the professor will honor the specifications of the course as outlined in this syllabus.

Computer Requirements

This is a fully online course; therefore, it requires a computer with internet access and the following technologies:

- Web browsers ([Chrome](#), [Mozilla Firefox](#), or [Safari](#))
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) (free)
- Webcam, microphone, headset/earbuds, and speaker
- Microsoft Office ([Microsoft 365 is free](#) for all currently-enrolled ASU students)
- Reliable broadband internet connection (DSL or cable) to stream videos.

Note: A smartphone, iPad, Chromebook, etc. will not be sufficient for completing your work in ASU Online courses. While you will be able to access course content with mobile devices, you must use a computer for all assignments, quizzes, and virtual labs.

Help

For technical support, use the Help icon in the black global navigation menu in your Canvas course or call the ASU Help Desk at 1+(855) 278-5080. Representatives are available to assist you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Student Success

To be successful:

- check the course daily
- read announcements
- read and respond to course email messages as needed
- complete assignments by the due dates specified
- communicate regularly with your instructor and peers
- create a study and/or assignment schedule to stay on track
- access [ASU Online Student Resources](#)

Digital Literacy

Below are some of the skills you'll need to utilize to be successful in this ASU Online courses:

- Using Canvas LMS - For additional help on this, visit the [Canvas Resources for Students](#) or the [Student Canvas Guide](#). Be sure to bookmark these resources for future reference!
- Using email with attachments
- Creating and submitting word files
- Copying and pasting
- Downloading and installing software
- Using presentation and graphics programs

The ASU Library has a number of tutorials available to support students in expanding their digital literacy skills: [ASU Library tutorials](#)

Assignments and Grading

Grade Breakdown:

Weekly Responses and Participation in Discussion	30%
2 Tests (Multiple Choice)	50%
Final Research Paper (or final exam)	20%

Your grade will be determined based on the following grading schema:

Grade	Percentage
A+	100% - 97%
A	<97-94%
A-	<94-90%
B+	<90-87%
B	<87-84%
B-	<84-80%
C+	<80-77%
C	<77-70%
D	<70-60%
E	<60%

Assignments

Discussion Board

You are required to read thoroughly; do not just skim over the text. After you carefully read the weekly assigned chapters, watch documentaries, or do any other assigned material for a given week, you are required to respond by posting your comments (a minimum of 300 words or more). The professor reads these comments and responds whenever needed; then a highly respectful discussion ensues.

Students have ample time to frame their questions and consider the responses. In addition to the most important objective of learning and expanding your knowledge, an online class also offers the pleasure of getting to know and interact with fellow students who share your interest in the subject of the class. **Respect** is the key word in our Discussion Board and, hence, students must refrain from using disrespectful language as they address each other. Rather than arguing or debating, it would be helpful and useful to listen and respect each other's ideas even when you disagree with someone. There will be disagreements no doubt about that, but even this can be quite positive when you deal with it respectfully as you respond to each other.

You earn full credit for this assignment by posting your weekly response on time and participating regularly (every week). Missing a week or more of participation will certainly hurt your grade as you lose points.

See the discussion assignment for specific guidelines.

Other course requirements

Readings and Participation: Do all assigned readings ahead and be prepared to discuss them on the weekly Discussion Board.

Attendance and Expected Class Behavior: As this is an Online course, you will be in “attendance” (good standing) as long as you actively participate in all assignments. Please do all your assignments by their due dates and you will enjoy the class and earn your grades.

Submitting Assignments

All assignments, unless otherwise announced, **MUST** be submitted to the designated area of Canvas. Do not submit an assignment via email.

Assignment due dates follow Arizona Standard time. Click the following link to access the [Time Converter](#) to ensure you account for the difference in Time Zones. Note: Arizona does not observe daylight savings time.

Grading Procedure

Grades reflect your performance on assignments and adherence to deadlines. Grades on assignments will be available within 72 hours of the due date in the Gradebook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Notify the instructor **BEFORE** an assignment is due if an urgent situation arises and you are unable to submit the assignment on time.

Follow the appropriate University policies to request an [accommodation for religious practices](#) or to accommodate a missed assignment [due to University-sanctioned activities](#).

Communicating With the Instructor

Community Forum

This course uses a discussion topic called "Community Forum" for general questions and comments about the course. Prior to posting a question or comment, check the syllabus, announcements, and existing posts to ensure it's not redundant. You are encouraged to respond to the questions of your classmates.

Email questions of a personal nature to your instructor. You can expect a response within 72 hours.

Email

ASU email is an [official means of communication](#) among students, faculty, and staff. Students are expected to read and act upon email in a timely fashion. Students bear the responsibility of missed messages and should check their ASU-assigned email regularly.

All instructor correspondence will be sent to your ASU email account.

Communication Expectations (Netiquette)

Learning takes place best when a safe environment is established. Students enrolled in this course have a responsibility to support an environment that nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engaged, honest discussions. Doing so will effectively contribute to our own and others' intellectual and personal growth and development. We welcome disagreements in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse, but please remember to be respectful of others' viewpoints, whether you agree with them or not. The following are some guidelines to consider when engaging in online discussion and discourse:

- **Be kind and polite.** Be mindful of your tone and do not make fun of another person for any reason.
- **Be respectful.** Being part of an academic community means being exposed to diverse perspectives and viewpoints. Be respectful in all situations and in your critiques. If you wouldn't say it face to face, don't say it online
- **Be wary of sarcasm.** In person, sarcastic comments can be funny and break up a tense situation. Online, it's hard to tell the difference between when someone is being sarcastic and when someone is genuinely being rude.
- **Avoid stereotyping.** Just because someone holds view X, and some people you know of who hold view X also hold view Y, doesn't mean that holding view X means holding view Y.
- **Use proper grammar and spelling.** Typos and basic spelling mistakes will happen, but if it's detracting from your message, it can be difficult to figure out what you mean. Also, you should avoid using all caps as this can imply shouting in the online environment.

ASU Online Course Policies

View the [ASU Online Course Policies](#)

Inclusive Environment

Throughout this course, you may be presented with ideas or perspectives that you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with. We encourage you to critically examine these ideas and take risks by offering your own experiences and perspectives through civil discourse. In return, I will work to foster and create an environment where you feel supported in taking these risks.

When possible, human biases were addressed in the design of this course. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, please reach out to me with suggestions on how I can further improve this course for you or for others.

Inclusion and Accessibility Statements

View the [Accessibility section](#) to review accessibility statements for common tools and resources used in ASU Online courses.

If any other tools are used in this course, links to the accessibility statements will be listed below this sentence.

View the Statement of Inclusion policy listed in the [ASU Course Policies](#) page.

Syllabus Disclaimer

The syllabus is a statement of intent and serves as an implicit agreement between the instructor and the student. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. Remember to check your ASU email and the course site often.

Weekly Schedule

Please follow Modules as well for any updates added to the Online Weekly Units.

August 17- 20

Introduction: Introduce yourself to class.

- Explain what motivated you to participate in this course.
- Share a story of your culture to allow your peers to get to know you.

Location: Discussion Board.

Week One

Background documentary: PBS Documentary:

- Islam: An Empire of Faith – Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF6VPZsHDZQ>

Part 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_mqO910jUQ

Responses to and Discussion of documentary (Discussion Board).

Unit Objective and Learning outcomes:

The Rise of Islam

- Identify the most important overarching concepts from the documentary.
- Discuss how these concepts relate to your own culture/modern society.
- Outline the primary aspects of Islam.
- Compare the rise of Islam to the rise of a particular religion or culture within your own society.

Responses and Discussion – Discussion Board.

For every subsequent week, trace the week dates on Canvas Discussion Board

Week Two

Islam as Religion and Culture. Ethnic Groups:

Reading assignment: Bates and Rassam: Introduction and Chapters 1 to 3 including “Islam: the Religion and the Prophet,” and “Islam as Identity, Islam as Culture. Chapters 4 and 7 “Communal Identities and Ethnic Groups” and “Cities and Urban Life.”

Themes: 1. Religion, Culture, and Ethnicities. 2. Ethnic Groups in the Middle East:

PowerPoint Lecture Highlights:

- [Communal Identities & Ethnic Groups. Cities and Urban Life.pdf](#)
- **Summarize the 5 pillars of Islam.**
- **Explain how the pillars impact Islamic religion and culture.**
- **Compare how the pillars were interpreted in the past to how they are now.**
- **Identify the ethnic groups of the Middle East.**
- **Differentiate between the various ethnic groups in the Middle East.**
- **Examine how Islamic religion and culture varies between ethnic groups of the Middle East.**

Responses and Discussion.

Week Three

Arab Women, Patronage, and Tribalism

Reading Assignment: Bates and Rassam chapters 8 and 9, “Sources of Social Organization: Kinship, Marriage, and Family” and “Women and the Moral Order: Identity and Change.” The Bowen and Early short chapter on “The Veiled Revolution” p. 151 by Elizabeth W. Fernea. Bates and Rassam chapters 10: “Local Organization of Power: Leadership, Patronage, and Tribalism,.” Watch in the library video, “The Veiled Revolution,” based on Fernea’s chapter.

PowerPoint Lecture Highlights on Women in Islam.

PowerPoint Lecture Highlights on Bates and Rassam chapters 10 and 11. Location.

Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMSNUX3n6yA>

- **Compare and contrast cultural expectations of Arab women and men.**
- **Describe the system of leadership within Arab society.**
- **Differentiate the role of leadership from ancient Arab society to today.**
- **Identify aspects of Islamic Tribalism.**
- **Critique how Tribalism has affected Arab society in comparison to today's other modern societies.**
- **Discuss the controversy over the veil from both Arab and Western Perspectives.**

Responses and Discussion.

Test 1 (Opens Friday; please see discussion board for dates per a given week). 10 points. (Note: addressing combining Tests).

Week Four

Gender Relations. Home Community and Work. Challenges and Dilemmas. Stereotypes

Reading Assignment: The Bowen and Early chapters on Gender Relations: pp. 98-150. including the first three chapters. Bowen and Early Part III on Home Community and Work: pp. 159-238.

Bates and Rassam, Chapter 11: "Challenges and Dilemmas: The Middle East Today."

Stereotypical images of the Middle East, Arabs, and Islam. Research how Arab/Islamic cultures and peoples are portrayed in Western media.

PowerPoint Lecture Highlights:

- Describe how Arab/Islamic cultures and peoples are portrayed in Western media.
- Compare gender relations in Arab society to that of your own country, region, or religion.
- Explain how the home, community, and work environments interact.
- Evaluate in what ways gender and gender relations affects the home, community, or work environment.
- Discuss some of the challenges and dilemmas facing the Middle East Today.

Responses and Discussion.

Week Five

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

Discuss what you perceive as the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict. What do you see as the future of the region? What have your studies in this and other classes contributed to enhancing your understanding of the problem?

Theme: Pros and Cons of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Assignment and Class Discussion/Participation. Read the ProCon document and discuss the following:

<http://israelipalestinian.procon.org/?gclid=CNCuo9XlopYCFRIRagod7y1R5w>Links to an external site.

<https://israelipalestinian.procon.org/top-10-pro-con-arguments/>Links to an external site.

- Summarize the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Identify possible root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Defend what you perceive to be the primary root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Predict the future of the Middle East region.

- **What have your studies in this and other classes contributed to enhancing your understanding of the Middle East? In light of recent developments, what do you see as the future of the region? Do you agree that the ProCon organization is 'balanced'? Is it a fair document? Or is it biased? If so, in what direction in your opinion? Respect of the other opinion is required, in the democratic context of my classes. Thank you.**

Responses and Discussion.

Test 2 (Opens Friday; please see Modules and discussion for dates) 20 points.

Week Six

Nawal El-Saadawi

Reading assignment: Sadaawi's novel, *Memoirs of A Woman Doctor*.

Additional Reading will be posted on Black Board.

Interview with Nawal El-Sadaawi (Black Board) Responses and Discussion – Discussion Board.

Nawal El-Sadaawi as a Freedom Fighter

Readings from the Bowen and Early Book Continued:

"Generations and Life Passages" pp. 18 – 91.

- **Summarize El-Saadawi's biography.**
- **Explain El-Saadawi's impact on Arab women's rights.**
- **Compare El-Saadawi's cultural significance to that of an influential activist within your own culture/society**

Responses and Discussion – Discussion Board

Week Seven

Popular Expression of Religion

Reading assignment: Bowen and Early pp. 246-305.

Video (Modules)

-Reading assignment: chapters from the Bowen and Early section Five on

"Performance and Entertainment" (pp. 335-376).

Video (Modules)

Responses and Discussion – Discussion Board.

Roger Allen: Chapter 3: "the Quran: Sacred Text and Cultural Yardstick." (Scanned on Weekly Units).

Watching Documentary on Qur'an Recitation (*Tarteel*).

PowerPoint Lecture (Modules)

Responses and Discussion.

Revolution in the Middle East

- Review how concepts of Islamic society are portrayed in popular entertainment.
- Interpret how modern members of Islamic society perceive how they are portrayed in popular entertainment.
- Estimate how Islamic stereotypes might affect Islamic culture and personal identity.

Discussion of cultural aspects of Movie/Documentaries: Discussion Board.

Test 3 (Opens Friday; please see Modules and discussion board for dates) (20 points)

OR Final Research Paper (due last day of class).

Course Review

Final Research Paper OR Final Exam: Due: Last Day of Class.

20 points

Based on the development of class, this schedule might slightly change and it will be your responsibility to monitor class closely to know what changes have been made, if any. You will be notified of any updates

Semester Holidays and breaks:

Please see the University Calendar for the following holidays and breaks:

- Labor Day
- Fall Break
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving

Wishing you a Wonderfully Educational and Informative Semester