

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN (MENA) STUDIES PROGRAM
MENA 301 Sequence

Fall 2013

301-1: "Reform and Revival in Modern Islam"

Professor Brannon Ingram

In the previous two centuries, Muslim societies from Morocco to Indonesia contended with new conditions of modernity and the global dominance of the West. As many of these societies transitioned from empire to colony to postcolony, Muslim thinkers, scholars, activists and political leaders grappled with these momentous shifts through vocabularies of 'reform' and 'revival'. But what did it mean to 'reform' or 'revive' Islam? While some conceived the revivalist project as an embrace of modernity, others saw it as a return to Islam's 'origins', even as that very notion was informed by the modernity these revivalists sought to circumvent. After reviewing some approaches to what we mean by 'the modern' and 'modernity', we will explore these debates via a number of intersecting problematics: new discourses on Shari'a and the Islamic state, challenges to 'traditional' structures of religious authority, the impact of print and the emergence of lay Muslim reading publics, critiques of Sufism and its defense, and the rise of Islamist thought. While these changes were felt throughout Muslim societies, we will draw our examples principally from three locales: Egypt, Iran and the Indian subcontinent.

Winter 2014

301-2: "Gender in the Middle East"

Professor Amina Tawasil

This course looks at gender as an analysis of how ideas about gender came to be in different parts of the Middle East. Because portions of the course will have a slightly different object of study, for this course, the Middle East is considered a mosaic of different peoples with different histories but are also linked together in some way. The course takes into account ideas of sexuality, race, class and political economy and how these interact in the context of gender analysis. Finally, assumptions that are made about gender politics are examined through various readings of ethnographies.

Spring 2014

301-3: "20/21 C Lit & Film from MENA: National Traditions, Global Influences"

Professor Brian Edwards

This course has two objectives: first, to introduce the literary work of several novelists and a few filmmakers from postcolonial North Africa and the Middle East. Second, to interrogate the methodological question of what sort of evidence literature and film offers about contemporary reality. These two objectives are pursued simultaneously via close readings of fiction (including a graphic novel) and film from the region, with a special focus on three diverse sites (the Maghreb, especially Morocco; Egypt; and Iran), and methodological and theoretical readings that attempt to identify the place of literature and culture in society, including those that challenge this relationship. We will not assume an easy relationship of literature or the literary and society, but rather put that relationship on the table for consideration. Topics we will pursue include: Orientalism, postcoloniality, globalization and literature, the field of cultural production, and the politics of literature and art.