

01:685:306
Multiple Identities of the Middle East
Course Syllabus

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Short Description:

A survey of the peoples, languages, and religions found in the contemporary Middle East, with a focus upon underrepresented groups and transnational issues. Emphasizes their histories, their roles in the contemporary Middle East, and their evolving relationships with the dominant groups of the nations in which they are found.

Long Description:

The course introduces the students to the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of the modern Middle East by examining various minority groups, their origins, their recent history (from 1798 onwards), their current status, and their future prospects. The minority groups examined include the Alawis, the Alevis, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Bahá'ís, the Berbers, the Druze, Eastern Rite Catholics (such as the Maronites, the Chaldeans, and the Melkites), the Kurds, the Mandaeans, Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews, Oriental Orthodox Christians (such as Armenians, Copts, and Syriac Christians), Yezidis, Zoroastrians, and others. The course will also examine various aspects of the minority question in the Middle East, comparing and contrasting the experiences of the different groups, both from a historical perspective and in the present day.

The course will address each group following a geographic order, starting in Turkey and proceeding clockwise through Iran, Iraq, the Levant, Egypt and the Sudan, and North Africa. After the first few weeks, students will select a group from the syllabus and give a presentation in class on the group in question. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with a broad selection of groups generally underrepresented in conventional descriptions of the Middle East, and have an appreciation of the origins of the Middle East's minority question, the impact of regional and international factors upon this question, the demands made by the various minority groups, the responses of the different governments to these demands, and the future prospects of these minority groups.

Grades will be determined by class participation (20%), the presentation (20%), the mid-term (20%), and a 10-15 page research paper to be submitted at the end of the semester (40%). The paper must focus upon some aspect of the minority question in the Middle East (e.g. the origins of the minorities in the Middle East, the history and evolving relationship between Islam and religious minorities, the question of cultural survival in the contemporary Middle East and in diasporic groups) but need not reflect the content of the presentation. Students should develop their paper topics in consultation with the instructor.

Prerequisites: None.

Required Texts:

Brett, Michael. *The Berbers*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
Lewis, Bernard. *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*. London: Phoenix, 1998.
McDowall, David. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004.
Dalrymple, William. *From the Holy Mountain*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997.
Supplemental Readings

Class will meet twice weekly most weeks. The readings for each lesson should be completed before each discussion section. Some discussion sections will require more reading than others; students are strongly encouraged to begin reading the four required texts well in advance of their discussion sections.

Week One: Multiple Identities in the Middle East

- First day of classes

Preparation: None

- The Roles of Religion and Language in Middle Eastern Identity

Preparation: Lewis, *Multiple Identities*, pp. 1-56

Week Two: The Three Languages

- State and Society in the Contemporary Middle East

Preparation: Lewis, *Multiple Identities*, pp. 57-106

- Future Prospects for the Minority Communities of the Middle East

Preparation: Lewis, *Multiple Identities*, pp. 107-44

Week Three: Turkey

- Minorities in Turkey at the end of the Ottoman Empire

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 1-51

McDowall, *The Kurds*, 115-83

- Minorities in Turkey Today: Christians and Kurds

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 51-129

McDowall, *The Kurds*, 184-213

Week Four: Eastern Anatolia and Northern Syria

- Minorities in Turkey Today: The Alevis

Preparation: McDowall, *The Kurds*, 397-454

- The Armenians and the Assyrians

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 133-176

McDowall, *The Kurds*, 87-114, 455-89

Week Five: Iran

- The Zoroastrians

Preparation: Boyce, Mary. "Zoroastrianism," pp. 171-90 in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *A Handbook of Living Religions*. London: Penguin, 1991

"Interactive Map: Pilgrimage through Iran."

http://newsinitiative.org/story/2007/07/26/interactive_map_pilgrimage_through_iran

“Persian Zoroastrians: Youth Struggle with Questions of the Heart and Soul”
http://newsinitiative.org/story/2007/05/29/persian_zoroastrians_youth_struggle_with

- The Mandaean

Preparation: Buckley, “The Mandaean,” in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*

“An Ancient Religion Endangered by Iraq War (video)”

http://newsinitiative.org/story/2007/07/26/an_ancient_religion_endangered_by

Week Six: Iran, cont.

- The Baha’is

Preparation: Cole, Juan R.I. “Bahai Faith or Bahaism,” pp. 438-46 in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*

“Persian Bahais: A Persecuted Minority (video)”

http://newsinitiative.org/story/2007/07/23/persian_bahais_a_persecuted_minority

“Drums Draw Strangers to Bahai Celebration”

http://newsinitiative.org/story/2007/06/18/drums_draw_strangers_to_bahai

- The Kurds in Iran

Preparation:

McDowall, *The Kurds*, 214-283

Week Seven: Iraq

- Kurds and Yezidis in Iraq

Preparation: McDowall, *The Kurds*, 287-396.

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Week Eight: Syria

- The Alawites and the Druze

Preparation: Zisser, “The Alawis, Lords of Syria: From Ethnic Minority to Ruling Sect,” in Bengio and Ben Dor (eds.), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*

Kennedy, “The Druze of Golan: A Case of Nonviolent Resistance,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13.2 (Winter, 1984): 48-64

- Syrian Christians

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 177-200

Week Nine: Lebanon

- The Maronites

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 200-66

- Palestinians in Lebanon

Preparation: El-Khazen, Farid. "Permanent Settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon: A Recipe for Conflict," in *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10.3 (1997)

Sayigh, Rosemary. "Imagining a Solution: Final Status Arrangements and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," in *Middle East Policy* 8.1 (2001): 94-105

Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 266-275

Week Ten: Israel and Palestine

- Israeli Arabs

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 279-338

- Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Jordan

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 338-72

Susser, Asher. "The Palestinians in Jordan: Demographic Majority, Political Minority," in Bengio and Ben Dor (eds.), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*

Week Eleven: Sephardic and Oriental Jewry

- The Jews of the Middle East (Iran and the former Ottoman Empire)

Preparation: "Persian Jews: A Political Paradox (video)"

http://newsinitiative.org/story/2007/07/23/persian_jews_a_political_paradox

Khattab, Azza. "The Guardian." *Egypt Today*, May 2005

- The Jews of the Middle East (Yemen, Sudan, and Ethiopia)

Preparation: Chapter 11 "Indiana Jones" in Kaplan, Robert, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 207-240

Week Twelve: Egypt

- The Copts and Arab Unity

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 395-429.

Ansari, Hamid. "Sectarian Conflict in Egypt and the Political Expediency of Religion," *The Middle East Journal* 38.3 (1984): 397-418

Week Thirteen: Egypt (cont.)

- The Pursuit of Survival

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 429-446.

Ayalon, "Egypt's Coptic Pandora's Box," in Bengio and Ben Dor (eds.), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*

- The Copts Today

Preparation: Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain*, 446-454.

Hatina, "On the Margins of Consensus: The Call to Separate Religion and State in Modern Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36.1 (2000): 35-67

Week Fourteen: North Africa

- The Berbers in Arabic Literature

Preparation: Brett, *The Berbers*, 81-119.

- The Arabs in Barbary

Preparation: Brett, *The Berbers*, 120-153

Week Fifteen: North Africa

- Berbers in the Modern Middle East

Preparation: Brett, *The Berbers*, 154-99.

Maddy-Weitzmann, "The Berber Question in Algeria: Nationalism in the Making?" in Bengio and Ben Dor (eds.), *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*

- The Berbers Today

Preparation: Brett, *The Berbers*, 200-82.

Exam Period