

MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN STUDIES (MENA)

MENA 1103 Introduction to Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 18.

This course introduces students to contemporary Egyptian colloquial Arabic. The Egyptian dialect is the most widely spoken across the Arab world. Thus, it is a useful dialect not just in Egypt but in most Arabic speaking countries. There will be a particular emphasis on building up knowledge of spoken grammar and vocabulary as used by native speakers. Students develop interactive communicative skills through active participation in task-based conversations, listening comprehension and vocabulary-building activities. Resources may include authentic audio-visual materials, movie screenings, snippets of popular culture and excerpts of oral literary works. By simulating real-life situations through role-play among a number of crafted pedagogical strategies, students will develop proficiency in practicing conversational Egyptian Arabic. This course is intended for beginners though students at higher levels are welcome to join. (Same as: ARBC 1103)

Previous terms offered: Spring 2023.

MENA 1150 (c, IP) Introduction to the Religions of the Middle East

Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 50.

Begins by showing how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the modern Middle East are intertwined closely with politics and with their local contexts. Case studies include modern Iran, Israel, and Lebanon. Investigates how the foundational texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were politically and socially constructed. Considers throughout the influence of other Middle Eastern religions. (Same as: REL 1150)

Previous terms offered: Spring 2023, Spring 2021.

MENA 2040 (c, DPI, IP) Power and Empire: Modern Arabic Literature in Translation

Paige Milligan.

Non-Standard Rotation. Spring 2024. Enrollment limit: 35.

Focuses on the on the impact of European colonialism and modern globalization on Arabic literature. How have Arab writers and poets understood the massive historical changes taking place around them since the early 1900s? How have they "written back" against empire? Who gets marginalized in modern Arab societies, and how do the marginalized find their voice in literature? Examines diverse authors and genres in Arabic literature from the 20th and 21st centuries. Taught in English translation.

MENA 2126 (c, IP, VPA) Arts of the Islamic Book

Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 15.

Books are a way of containing and circulating knowledge, but are also objects to be studied in their own right. The richly illuminated manuscripts produced throughout the Islamic world offer an opportunity to study calligraphy, painting, and ornament in their artistic and cultural contexts. Focusing on the collections of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, this course presents and in-depth examination of the diverse visual traditions and techniques developed over from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. Students in this hybrid lecture/seminar will acquire a broad base of knowledge, while exploring material and thematic topics more deeply through readings, discussions, and hands-on workshops. No foreign language knowledge is necessary, but at least one previous class in Art History, Asian Studies, or Middle East/North African Studies is required. (Same as: ARTH 2126, ASNS 2755)

Prerequisites: ARTH 1000 - 2969 or ARTH 3000 or higher or ASNS 1000 - 2969 or ASNS 3000 or higher or MENA 1000 - 2969 or MENA 3000 or higher.

Previous terms offered: Spring 2022.

MENA 2208 (c, IP) Islam

Robert Morrison.

Every Other Year. Fall 2023. Enrollment limit: 35.

With an emphasis on primary sources, pursues major themes in Islamic civilization from the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad until the present. From philosophy to political Islam, and from mysticism to Muslims in America, explores the diversity of a rapidly growing religious tradition. (Same as: REL 2208)

Previous terms offered: Fall 2021, Fall 2019.

MENA 2210 (c, IP) An Introduction to Sufism and Islamic Mysticism

Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 35.

Explores, historically, the development and growth of Sufism and other esoteric movements of Islam. Questions that will arise include: Why is Sufism important for Sufis? Why is Sufism popular in modernity? How do we study religious ideas that thrive, sometimes, on defying description? Finally, how have Sufis been politically engaged now and in the past? (Same as: REL 2210)

Previous terms offered: Spring 2022.

MENA 2350 (c, IP) Modern Middle Eastern and North African History

Nasser Abourahme.

Non-Standard Rotation. Fall 2023. Enrollment limit: 35.

Examines modern Middle Eastern and North African history from the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the nation-state to the present conjuncture of revolution and war. Proceeds chronologically with attention to the main events and turning points in the region. Considers how the over-arching questions about the region have been posed. Key themes are empire and nationalism; colonialism, anticolonialism and revolution; war, humanitarianism, and migration; and oil and the history of capital. This course will satisfy the non-Euro requirement for the history major/minor. (Same as: HIST 2441)

Previous terms offered: Fall 2022.

MENA 2351 (c, DPI, IP) Palestinian Literature of Loss and Resistance
Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 35.

Palestinians are often imagined as terrorists or victims in U.S. media – or simply not covered. This course challenges such perceptions by centering the stories of Palestinians beginning with the British Mandate (1920s-1940s) and continuing to the present day. Course materials explore geographical, political, gender, and class divisions within Palestinian society, and how these interact with the larger anti-colonial struggle. Topics include the creation of national symbols and myths, resistance and collaboration, trauma and testimony, and artistic “commitment.” Genres include poetry, novels, short stories, and autobiography. Beginning with the Class of 2025, this class will fulfill the African American, Asian American, Indigenous, Latinx, multiethnic American, or global literature requirement for English majors.

Previous terms offered: Spring 2023.

MENA 2352 (c, IP) Approaches to the Qur’an
Every Other Spring. Enrollment limit: 35.

Explores a variety of approaches to and interpretations of the Qur’an, the foundational text of Islam. Special attention will be paid to the Qur’an’s doctrines, its role in Islamic law, its relationship to the Bible, and its historical context. While the Qur’an will be read entirely in English translation, explores the role of the Arabic Qur’an in the lives of Muslims worldwide. (Same as: REL 2232)

Previous terms offered: Fall 2022, Fall 2020.

MENA 2353 (c, IP) Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa
Every Other Spring. Enrollment limit: 35.

The concept of revolution, though a defining concept of our time, seems at once urgent and dated. The challenges of the term are blatant in the study of the Middle East and North Africa, which has been so often perceived as a passive place of inactive subjects and enduring “despotisms.” This course asks how might we open the concept of revolution onto histories it has been shielded from? Considers concept histories, and what it means to think about revolution from the colonial and postcolonial world. Works through the long history of revolution in the region, including the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, the Algerian War of Independence, the Palestinian Revolution, the Iranian Revolution, and the Arab Spring. It fulfills the non Euro/US requirement for history majors and minors. (Same as: HIST 2299)

Previous terms offered: Spring 2023.

MENA 2355 (c, IP) Nationalism and Marxism in the Middle East and North Africa

Nasser Abourahme.

Every Other Year. Spring 2024. Enrollment limit: 35.

For a long time, nationalism and Marxism appeared as the strongest answers to the questions facing much of the postcolonial world. Twinned ideologies—as often at odds as they were conjoined—that could uniquely navigate the challenge of postcolonial modernity. The Middle East and North Africa were no different. The modern period in the region has arguably been defined by the arc in which these ideologies have risen and fallen, and risen again. But nationalism and Marxism have not just been applied to this part of the world; they have been reworked and changed in the encounter. This is a lecture course with discussion sections. We’ll start with some foundational texts in postcolonial nationalist and Marxist thought, and we’ll then trace the history of these traditions in the MENA region around questions like: imperialism and sovereignty, labor struggles and class conflict, religion and the rise of Islamism. There will be an emphasis on memoirs, novels, and films.

MENA 2356 (c, DPI, IP) The Modern Arabic Novel
Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 35.

Examines the development and proliferation of the Arabic novel during the post-World War II period. Edward Said’s statement that narratives “become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” is the point of departure. Illustrates how the discourses and ideologies of colonialism influence the modern Arabic novel. Focuses on themes of struggle, resistance, nationalism, migration, and gender equality. Novels studied may include Naji#b Maḥfu#z’s Midaq Alley, Ghassa#n Kanafa#ni#’s Men in the Sun, Aṭ-Ṭayyib Ṣa#liḥ’s Season of Migration to the North, #Abd al-Raḥma#n Muni#f’s Endings, Ḥana#n Shaykh’s The Story of Zahra, Ahlem Mosteghanemi’s Memory in the Flesh, and Aḥmad Sa#da#wi#’s Frankenstein in Baghdad. Taught in English. (Same as: ARBC 2038)

Previous terms offered: Spring 2022.

MENA 2600 (b, IP) Capitalism, Modernity, and Religion in Turkey
Every Other Year. Enrollment limit: 35.

Investigates classical and contemporary sociological accounts of secularism, modernity, and capitalism by examining the social and political history of Turkey. Analyzes the emergence of modern Turkey, a successor state of the Ottoman Empire, which spanned three continents and was dismantled at the end of World War I. Maps out Turkey’s social, political, and economic landscape from the late nineteenth century until the present. Covers themes such as state violence, religion, hegemony, gender and sexuality, nationalism, and neoliberalism. (Same as: SOC 2260)

Prerequisites: SOC 1101.

Previous terms offered: Spring 2022, Fall 2019.

MENA 2610 (c, DPI, IP) Camp/Prison/Border

Every Other Spring. Enrollment limit: 35.

Today, camps and prisons are thought of as distinct and separate forms. How might we think of mass incarceration and mass migration together? What might a region like the Middle East and North Africa add to such an inquiry? Situates the region within wider global regimes of movement control by tracking the entangled history of camps and prisons. Centers the struggles and modes of expression of the detained and encamped. Topics include the emergence of camp and penal forms, humanitarianism and refugeehood, migrant workers and dispossession, environmental history and urbanization, partition and race. Engages prison writing and memoir, aesthetic practices, and film making. (Same as: URBS 2210)

Previous terms offered: Spring 2023.

MENA 2620 (c, DPI, IP) Race and Settler Colonialisms, Today

Nasser Abourahme.

Every Other Year. Spring 2024. Enrollment limit: 35.

What is settler colonialism today? How is that what we call settler colonialism understood both as something that has passed or been overcome and at the same time something enduring, even expanding again? What is about settler colonial histories that makes them not only fraught, but also seemingly unfinished and unsettled? What might this have to do with the persistence of forms of racialization in our political lives? How, in other words, should a global history of the idea of race account for settler colonialism? We will answer these questions with readings that address the connected questions of race, property, and land. Focuses on the Middle East and North Africa, particularly Palestine and Algeria. Locates both these sites within a comparative global history.

Previous terms offered: Fall 2022.

MENA 2690 (b, DPI, IP) Islam and Politics

Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 35.

Analyzing the intersection of politics and multiple expressions of Islam in both state governments and transnational movements, studies Islam as a social, ethical, and political force in the modern era. Offers a basic introduction to Muslim history and the Islamic religion, explores various Islamic social and political movements, analyzes contending understandings of the interaction between politics and Islam, as well as investigating the tensions between the Islamic and western political traditions, including democracy and Islam. Relying on texts from influential revolutionaries such as Qutb and Khomeini as well as perspectives on political Islam from academic scholars, explores the heart of politics, society, and religion in the modern Muslim world. (Same as: GOV 2690)

Previous terms offered: Fall 2021.

MENA 3216 (c) North African Cinema: From Independence to the Arab Spring

Non-Standard Rotation. Enrollment limit: 16.

Seminar. Provides insight into contemporary film production from the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco). Explores questions of gender and sexuality, national identity, political conflict, and post- and neo-colonial relationships in the context of globalization and in conditions of political repression and rigid moral conservatism. Examines how filmmakers such as Lakhdar Hamina, Férid Boughedir, Moufida Tlatli, Nedir Moknèche, Malek Bensmaïl, Lyès Salem, Hicham Ayoub, and Leyla Bouzid work in a challenging socio-economic context of film production in consideration of setbacks and obstacles specific to the developing world. Taught in French. (Same as: FRS 3216, CINE 3352)

Prerequisites: Two of: either FRS 2409 (same as AFRS 2409 and LAS 2209) or FRS 2410 (same as AFRS 2412 and LAS 2210) or FRS 3000 or higher and either FRS 2409 (same as AFRS 2409 and LAS 2209) or FRS 2410 (same as AFRS 2412 and LAS 2210) or FRS 3000 or higher.

Previous terms offered: Fall 2020.

MENA 3222 (c, DPI, IP) The Anticolonial Tradition

Nasser Abourahme.

Every Other Fall. Fall 2023. Enrollment limit: 16.

What is decolonization? What might decolonization still be? It is hard from the vantage point of our present to appreciate the extraordinary political hope that once was the promise of decolonization. And it is harder still to think about what kind of place in our present that promise might still have. To think through this question, this seminar course takes up the anticolonial tradition as a universal and world-making body of thought and practice that once challenged the very foundations of knowledge. This course will introduce students to the classics of anticolonial thought, and we'll think together about what kind of relevance they still carry in the present.

MENA 3223 (c) Representations of the Algerian War of Independence

Every Other Year. Enrollment limit: 16.

Analyzes the depiction of the Algerian War of Independence in Algerian and French novels and films, drawing on trauma, postcolonial and decolonial theories. The Algerian War of Independence lasted nearly eight years (1954–62), cost between one million and one and a half million lives, saw atrocities like the use of torture by the French army and remained an obscure part of the national history of both Algeria and France. Algerian and French writers and filmmakers depict this war differently. Adopting a chronological and comparative approach to the representations of the conflict in Algeria and France, this seminar follows the various phases behind the construction of the collective memory of the Algerian War of Independence in each country. From state censorship, trauma, melancholic renderings of the past and nationalist appropriations of history, Algerian and French writers and filmmakers confront distinct problematics. (Same as: FRS 3223)

Prerequisites: Two of: FRS 2409 (same as AFRS 2409 and LACL 2209) and FRS 2410 (same as AFRS 2412 and LACL 2210).

Previous terms offered: Spring 2022.