COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The aim of the course is to probe the following question: To what extent are Western social science theories and the narrative of Western modernity appropriate for the study of non-Western societies? To answer this question, we will examine a wide range of historiographical traditions, theoretical paradigms, and methodological debates that have thus far shaped the field of Middle Eastern Studies. Afterwards, we will examine such topics as fundamentalism, secularism, modernity, patrimonialism, authoritarianism, and transition to democracy.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY:
You should consider this seminar a collective exercise in critical thinking. My role is to steer class discussion and engender an informal participatory class environment where we can all search collectively for a broader understanding of the subject matter at hand. The readings will introduce you to some of the more important scholarship on the subject, and they will form the springboard for class discussions. Please keep in mind that the present structure of the course reflects my interests. However, I welcome a broadening of aims and interests. Also, please take note of the fact that this syllabus represents anticipated scheduling of lectures/readings/assignments; changes may be made to suit the actual composition and competencies of the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Participation: In addition to being physically present, I expect you to be mentally present as well! As such, you should complete all assigned readings before each class meeting so that you are familiar with the concepts, facts, theories, and controversies with which we are dealing. Furthermore, you can engage in discussion through the course page in Blackboard (http://Blackbord.syr.edu) and the course listserv (psc682@listserv.syr.edu). You and I will use this mediums to (a) post interesting or informative e-mails about the subject matter of the course; (b) share your reflections on the films we have seen; and (c) respond to points and issues raised by the instructors or your peers.

Oral Presentations: To ensure class participation and to spread out the work a bit, each student is required to make at least one oral presentation in class concerning one of the topics listed in the syllabus in which they are interested. The presenters will provide a critical summary of the assigned or suggested readings pertaining to their chosen topic. They are expected to answer such questions as: (a) what is the author's thesis?; (b) what is the major point s/he is trying to make?; (c) what are the major assumptions the author makes (and expects readers to accept) in arguing that thesis?; (d) what are some useful concepts s/he presents?; (e) how does the reading relate to previous readings?; (f) what are the major strengths and weaknesses of the work?; (g) what questions have come to mind in light of past readings?; and (h) what are the implications for research practice if the author's thesis and
underlying assumptions are valid or true? Each presentation should last 20 to 30 minutes and should be accompanied by a class handout of 2-3 single-spaced pages. In order to make this a worthwhile exercise, each presenter is expected to post their comments over the class listserv at least two days before their scheduled presentations. You will sign up for the presentations during our first class meeting.

**Reflection/Research paper or Journal of Notes:** You can choose one of the following two options:

(a) Write one major reflection/research paper, 20-25 double spaced pages long, focusing on a particular paradigm (i.e. Orientalist, Weberian), concept (i.e., Oriental city), or problem/issue (i.e., Islamic revivalism, durable authoritarianism) examined in class. This paper, which should have a theoretical rather than a descriptive focus, is due on *May 1.*

(b) Turn in a "journal of notes" (a reading log with critical commentary and opinion) on some of the reading assignments for this course that you have found the most interesting. In at least seven entries (each of which must be 3-4 double spaced pages), you are expected to analyze, compare, and contrast works read in the seminar by entertaining the set of questions (a through h) mentioned above under “Oral Presentations.” The deadline for turning in your journal of notes is *May 1.*

Undergraduate students enrolled in the course under the MES 430 designation are expected to maintain the same attendance record, fulfill the same presentation requirements, and do the same amount of readings as the graduate students. However, their writing assignments will be somewhat less demanding. Instead of writing a 20-25 page paper, these students will be expected to turn in a 13-16 page paper or, alternatively, if they decide to do the “journal of notes” assignment, instead of writing 3-4 pages on each topic, they will be asked to write 1-2 pages.

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see [http://academicintegrity.syr.edu](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu)

Students who may need academic accommodations due to a disability are encouraged to discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. In order to obtain authorized accommodations, students should be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498 and have an updated accommodation letter for the instructor. Accommodations and related support services such as exam administration are not provided retroactively and must be requested in advance.

**GRADING CRITERIA**
- Quality and degree of participation in class and listserv discussions: 20%
- Oral presentations with handouts: 30%
- Final Paper or Journal of Notes: 50%
REQUIRED TEXTS (books available at Orange Student Bookstore)

- Course Reader - collection of required course readings which you should purchase from Campus Copy Center in the Marshall Square Mall. The reader number is 1097.

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The future is under no obligation to mimic the past.
-- David Hume

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READINGS ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 23: Introduction - The Nature and Structure of the Course
- Talking about the logistics, trajectory, expectations, and goals of the course.

Jan. 30: What Can Comparative Historiography Teach Us?

Further Readings:

Feb. 6: The Contributions and Shortcomings of Area Studies
- Mark C. Kennedy, “Dilemmas in Middle Eastern Social Sciences: Contours of the Problem of the Relevance of Western Paradigms as Guides to Research, Policy and

- Binder, pp. 24-84.

Further Readings:


Feb. 13: Orientalism

- Said, entire book (skim if needed)
- Video: “Edward Said on Orientalism” (VC 8109) [40 min.]

Feb. 20: Orientalism and Its Critics

- Binder, pp. 85-127.

Further Readings:


Feb. 27: The Weberian Approach

Further Readings:

Mar. 6: Understanding “Islam,” and “Fundamentalism”

Further Readings:
• Binder, pp. 293-335.
• Mohammed Arkoun, Rethinking Islam Today, Occasional Papers Series (Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1987), pp. 1-25.


Mar 13: *No Class* (Spring Break)

Mar. 20: **Understanding Secularism**


**Further Readings:**


Mar. 27: **Apprehending Modernity**


**Further Readings:**


Apr. 3: The Political Culture Paradigm

Further Readings:
- Sami Zubaida, The Search for Authenticity in Middle East Cultures: Religion, Community and Nation, Occasional Paper Series (Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 2004), pp. 1-12.

Apr. 10: The Political Economy Paradigm

Further Readings:

Apr. 17: Social Movement Theory

Further Readings:

Apr. 24: Durability of Authoritarianism

Further Readings:

May 1: Transition to a Democracy with Adjectives? Papers/Journals Due

Binder, pp. 336-359.

Further Readings:
