Sculpture of ninth-century Persian scholar Al-Khwarizmi in Khiva, Uzbekistan. Latin discovery of Al-Khwarizmi’s work introduced the numerals 0-9, one of many ways in which Islamic cultures have contributed to Western Civilization.

Source
**Instructor:** Dr. Randa Farah (she/her)  
**Email:** rfarah2@uwo.ca  
**TA:** Ibtesum Afrin  
**Email:** iafrin@uwo.ca  
**Office Hours:** (Zoom) individual meetings as needed  
**Credit value:** 0.5 credit

**Mode of delivery**

For 2020/2021 this course will be conducted online. It is *asynchronous*, meaning that students will be provided with a variety of lesson materials and activities that can be done throughout the week, although there may be tasks that must be completed by specific times.

**Calendar Course Description**

An examination of the broad historical shifts and the consequences of imperial domination in variously shaping peoples’ lives and societies in the “Middle East”. Topics covered include: the rise of Islam including the Andalusian period, colonialism, Orientalism, media (mis)representations in western societies including the question of veiling, class and gender, the Arab uprisings and popular culture.

**Antirequisites:** None.

**Prerequisites:** Any Arts and Humanities or Social Science 0.5 or 1.0 Essay course.

*Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.*

**Course Syllabus**

Did you know that the word “algorithm” comes from the name of a Persian-Muslim polymath by the name of *al-Khawarizmi*? This brilliant scholar lived much of his life in Baghdad, wrote in Arabic, and the word “algebra” appeared in his 9th century manuscript, which is from Arabic meaning *al-jabr* and *jabara* (reintegration, or reunite). This is but an example of numerous English words that come from or through the Arabic language attesting to their contribution and relationships to the rest of the world, including Europe. Historically, the Middle East, also known as the “Cradle of Civilization” and Europe traded and had social, economic, and cultural entanglements, despite contemporary negative media stereotypes and misrepresentations that depict the relationship between “East” and “West” as oppositional, hostile and mutually exclusive entities. In this course, we challenge some of the racist representations of Arabs and Muslims in Western societies and examine how these are related to the constant attempts by imperial powers to dominate the region, which vie for control of this important strategic region rich with resources, especially oil and gas. We learn in this course that the “Middle East” - a colonial nomenclature - is a vast and heterogeneous region with changing histories, as well as political, social, and cultural formations. Thus, we are only able to focus on a few specific themes and topics that enrich students’ knowledge and are of interest and relevance to contemporary debates.
But we must begin with a general overview of its geography and demography asking where and what is the Middle East. Secondly, we examine the critical historical transformations that shaped societies and cultures over time, mainly: the rise of the Arab-Islamic empire in the 7th century, including the Andalusian period (Spain today), and European colonialism, especially its legacy in places like Algeria and Palestine. Third, we look at the central arguments that Edward Said made in his groundbreaking book *Orientalism*. Orientalism is a perspective or paradigm through which much of the knowledge in the “West” about the “East” is produced. Hollywood produces films which are underpinned by an orientalist worldview in that they reinforce images of Arabs and Muslims as violent (terrorists) and backward; in Western societies generally speaking, such characterizations are wrongly associated with the religion of Islam. Fourth, we will read and discuss issues pertaining to class and gender and ask for example why is it that in western societies there is an obsession with women’s bodies and veiling? Fifth and final section we will select readings about the mass popular uprisings beginning in 2010/11 in Tunisia, popular culture, youth, or art production in the Middle East.

Through lectures divided into short segments, readings, films and documentaries, and online activities, the course will help students engage critically in academic and current public debates about the Middle East.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Examine, situate, and connect social and cultural phenomena pertaining to Arab and Islamic societies within larger historical and political (power) contexts.
- List some contributions and discoveries in science, philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and other kinds of knowledge made by Arabs and Muslims.
- Identify popular clichés, propaganda, and racist stereotypes and discourses about Arabs and Muslims, and distinguish these from scholarly knowledge and analytical approaches to Middle Eastern societies.
- Analyze racism against Arabs and Muslims situating it within a broader racist ideology that enables discrimination and racism against other groups.
- Define and grasp some basic knowledge of ‘Orientalism’ and the relationship between knowledge production and imperial projects of domination.
- Analyze contemporary and publicly debated issues, such as the question of women’s veiling, or the Arab uprisings within regional and global social and historical processes.
- Identify some of the contemporary popular cultural trends.

**Course Materials**

*Registered students will be able to access course readings through the course site in OWL before the first day of class.*

**Evaluation (Details are in the following section)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Test 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Covers week 1 – 7 (due Friday, March 12, 4:30 pm (EST))</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Take-home Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Covers weeks 8 – 12 (Exam period April 14-30, exact dates TBA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Due Friday, February 5 at 4:30 pm (EST)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Due Monday, April 12 at 4:30 pm (EST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: 10% x2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Due Jan 29, March 26- both at 4:30 pm (EST)</td>
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Note: Some of the Arabic names, especially in the history section might seem daunting for students, rest assured that you will NOT be required to memorize these. Although I hope you will remember the few names of historical importance, all tests and final exam are open book so you can always look these up.

1. **Take Home Test (25%) and final exam 20% (total 45%)**: The take home will be in essay form and/or short answers.
   a. Test 1 will be posted on the morning of March 10 and submission is March 12 at 4:30 pm (EST). The test will be 750-1000 words. It will cover lectures, readings, videos/doc and any materials introduced from week 1 – week 7.
   b. The final exam will be during the exam period and exact time will be decided later in the term. It will also be in essay/short answer form and will cover week 8 – week 12.

2. **Proposal (5%)** due Friday, February 5th at 4:30 pm EST. Submit 200-400 words excluding references. To encourage you to start thinking about your final term essay early on, choose a topic from the course outline including themes you might find in readings. The proposal should include a tentative title, some sources you looked at, a question/topic you want to research. You have a grace period (no penalty) until February 7th at 4:30 pm, but no submissions are accepted after February 12th.

3. **Activities 10% x 2 (20%)**: Students are expected to complete 2 short activities during the term (300-500 words), which are designed to help you stay engaged and to enhance your knowledge of the themes we cover. Hopefully you will find them inspiring and interesting. I gave you a choice of topics and you are required to answer ONLY one of the two.
   
   Activity 1: due Friday, Jan 29 4:30 pm EST – 300-500 words, 2-day grace period, after that 1% of the grade will be deducted for each day it is late.

   Activity 2 -March 26th both by 4:30 pm EST – 300-500 words, 2-day grace period, after that 1% of the grade will be deducted for each day it is late.

4. **Final Essay 30%**: Due April 12 (2500 words) at 4:30 pm EST. No papers will be accepted after April 15 (unless you have accommodation – see statement on Special Accommodation below). The paper should be 2500 words long (250 – 300 words more or less is okay)- double-spaced, include page numbers and a title page.

   Essay Content: The topic should be based on the themes for the course or related topics. If in doubt, feel free to contact me or the TA to discuss it. The paper should have a question you are researching, and a position you are taking on the subject. This means it is more analytical/argumentative than descriptive. For example, “In this paper, I argue that mainstream media in Canada, especially television reinforces (or not) stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims or people from the Middle East and North Africa”. Then you may want to specify further such as choosing which newspaper or TV channel or a time period (example between 2011-2020), or focus on how men or women are depicted in popular culture. Important points to remember is to avoid broad generalizations and to use scholarly sources to support your arguments. Ensure it is well-written, avoiding spelling mistakes, jargon and repetitive ideas and use a consistent style of referencing, such as the Chicago Style. Double-space and submit online. More details will be provided at the beginning of the course.
5. **Zoom (Optional) with instructor and TA**: These are optional meetings to discuss readings, lectures and raise questions about ideas or material you found difficult. This is in addition to individual meetings you can sign up for in order to discuss assignments, term papers and so on. These zoom meetings will be one hour long, four times during the term: Monday, Jan 11, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm, Wed, Jan 27, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm; Thu, Feb 25 10:00 – 11:00 am; Mon, April 5, 10:00-11:00 am. I encourage you to attend to directly engage with the instructor and Teaching Assistance, and more importantly to exchange ideas with other students.

6. **Sign-up for individual meetings**: You also have the option to sign up in OWL to book a meeting with the instructor or the TA. Reserve these individual meetings for your own assignments and the open group zoom meetings to discuss topics covered in class.

**Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course**

In order to pass this essay course, students must submit and receive a passing grade on their final essay.

**Course Specific Statements and Policies**

Make sure you watch all documentaries or films as these are included in tests and the final exam.

**Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism:**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

**Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations:**

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment’s due date or a missed test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

**Accommodation Policies**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.

**Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration
is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student’s Home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see: Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Student Medical Certificate (SMC)

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western’s current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined in Western’s academic policies by clicking on this link: Western’s academic policies.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>Jan 11 - 17 Introduction, Expectation and Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture: What and Where is the Middle East?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings: None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video/Doc: (will provide link) Comedy, one of the best tools to counter racism and stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom meeting (optional): Meet and Greet Monday Jan 11 at 11:30 am – 12:30 pm (EST).</td>
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**WEEK 2** Jan 18 - 24 A Brief Historical Review

**Lecture:** The Birth of Islam and the Rapid Expansion of the Empire  
**Video/Doc:** None

**WEEK 3** Jan 25 – 31 The Andalusian Period

**Lecture:** Contributions to European Civilization  
**Video/Doc:** When the Moors Ruled Europe Part I and II watch documentary

**Activity 1:** due Jan 29 at 4:30 pm (EST): Choose ONLY one of the following and write 300-500 words about the topic, you have a two-day grace period after which 1% of your grade will be deducted for each day you are late.

a. Jot down the number of stereotypes that the comedians addressed about Arabs and Muslims. Do you agree? What would you add to these? Are there similarities with such stereotypes with other groups?  
OR,

b. What was the main point of the documentary *When the Moors Ruled Europe*? What did Bethany Hughes seek to explain about historical representations?

**Zoom meeting (optional):** Open discussion about topics covered so far, Wed, Jan 27 at 11:00 am – 12:00 pm (EST).

**WEEK 4** Feb 1 - 7 European Colonialism

**Lecture:** European Colonial Rule in the Arab World  
**Video/Doc:** None

**Term Paper Proposal** Due Friday, February 5 at 4:30 pm

**WEEK 5** Feb 8 – 12 The Legacy of European Colonialism

**Lecture:** The Legacy in Algeria  
**Video/Doc:** none
READING WEEK Feb 13 – 21!

WEEK 6 Feb 22 – 28 The Legacy in Palestine

Lecture: The Nakba (Catastrophe)
Video/Doc: TBA

Zoom meeting (optional): Open discussion about topics covered so far. Thu, Feb 25, 10:00-11:00 am.

WEEK 7 Mar 1 - 7 Veiling in the West

Lecture: Why Does the Veil Attract So Much Attention and Controversy?
Video: Watch on YouTube.

WEEK 8 Mar 8 - 14 TEST 1

Take-home, covers weeks 1 – 7: 20%
Video/Doc: TBA

WEEK 9 Mar 15 – 21 Orientalism and Islamophobia

Lecture: Orientalism and Islamophobia

Video/Doc: Orientalism watch youtube
## WEEK 10  Mar 22 – 28 Hollywood and the Media

**Lecture:** Representations of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood Films  
**Readings:** Khaleq, Rania. 2015. “American Sniper” Spawns Death Threats Against Arabs and Muslims, *The Electronic Intifada*,  
**Video/Doc:** Reel Bad Arabs. Watch on YouTube.

**Activity 2:** due March 26th both by 4:30 pm EST  Choose ONLY one of the following and write 300-500 words about the topic, you have a two-day grace period after which 1% of your grade will be deducted for each day you are late.

a. Select a film (not mentioned in Reel Bad Arabs) or TV series that features or talks about Arabs or Muslims and argue why or why not you think the film/series/images reinforce racist/Orientalist perspectives.  

OR,

b. Imagine you are required to develop an educational program to teach grade 12 high school students about the Middle East, what subjects would you include and how would you approach it?

## WEEK 11  Mar 29 - April 4 The Arab Uprisings

**Lecture:** The Arab Uprisings: When the glimpse of Spring turned to a Dark Winter  
**Readings:**  
**Video/Doc:** Noam Chomsky (5 min) Watch on YouTube.

## WEEK 12  April 5 - 11

**Zoom meeting** (optional) Review: Open discussion about topics covered so far. Monday, April 5, 10:00 – 11:00 am.

## Week 13  April 12

Catch up day!

**Final Take-home Exam** (mixed format) will be during exam period (April 14 – April 30) and the exact date will be decided in the last three weeks of the course. It covers readings, lectures and videos for weeks 8-12.

~ END ~