

**Anthropology 2219A-650  
Cultures of the Middle East  
COURSE OUTLINE  
Fall 2022**

Version date: September 7, 2022



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:**

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**Course information:**

This course will be conducted online for Fall 2022.

Requisites:

Antirequisite: the former Anthropology 2219F/G.

Prerequisites: none.

**Land Acknowledgment:**

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples. The local First Nations communities are the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Munsee-Delaware Nation.

**Course Description:**

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 9<sup>th</sup>-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 to various fields of knowledge, and the myriads of connections and interactions with the rest of the world, including Europe. Media representations, however, depict the relationship between “East” and “West” as inherently oppositional, hostile, and mutually exclusive. In this course, we challenge some of the racist and stereotypical representations of Arabs and Muslims in Western societies and examine the relationship between the production of knowledge about the Middle East, Arabs, and Muslims, and imperial domination. We learn that the Middle East is a vast and heterogeneous region with diverse histories, as well as changing political and sociocultural formations. Because of its diversity and complexity, 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.

We 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 the societies and cultures, mainly: the rise of the Arab-Islamic empire in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, including the Andalusian period (Spain today). We then examine the legacies of European colonialism, with a focus on Algeria, Western Sahara, and Palestine. Third, another important component of the course is *Orientalism*. The title of a book and a paradigm within which much of the knowledge in the “West” about the “East” is reproduced. Supporting the stereotypical images are Hollywood films that 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 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 popular culture. Through lectures, readings, films and

documentaries, short assignments, 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.

### **Evaluation**

- Reflection Papers      20% each x 2 = 40%
- Online Quizzes        15% each x 4 = 60%

Reflection paper

### **Evaluation Details**

#### **Reflection Papers (20% each x 2 = 40%)**

**First reflection** paper is due in week 8 on Friday, Oct 28 at 5 pm (EST). It covers lectures, readings and videos from week 1 – 8.

**Second reflection** paper is due in week 13 on Thursday, Dec 8 at 5 pm (EST). It covers lectures, readings and videos from week 9 – 12.

Each reflection paper should be **750-1000 words** long. Use at least 3 readings for each reflection paper, two videos, and draw on lectures if relevant. You may also add outside sources from peer-reviewed journals (or academic books). Reflect critically on the readings, videos and lectures for the weeks covered for each paper. This is an opportunity to express your own ideas and analytical insight; for example, how the readings changed some of your assumptions about the region. Whether you agree or disagree with the ideas and assumptions, explain why. Outline some of the main points or arguments that stood out for you. Some of the readings, and/or lectures, and/or videos might touch upon a similar point, in this case, do not summarize the main

point of each reference, rather, amalgamate them, but make sure you **cite all the sources** within the text as follows (example only): (Smith 1998, 31-33; Hourani 2005, 12; Khoury 2021, 40-42; Davies 2001 (director [for doc or video]); Lecture Pt 1, week 2) and make a list of all references you used at the end. Was there something in the material you reviewed (lectures, readings, videos) that was inspiring, or interesting, or that you found new, and/or that challenged your assumptions? If entirely surprising or new, ask why you have misconceptions about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). What are the sources that shaped the knowledge and perceptions you acquired? Did the material help you understand better the region's history, society, culture, etc.? Try to connect ideas together. The aforementioned are just suggestions, the point is for you to reflect on what you learned and express your opinion on what you learned.

**Please note: You have a grace period of two days after the due date to submit your reflection paper without penalty, after which I will deduct 2% per day, and no submissions are accepted 4 days after the due date.**

### **Quizzes:**

There will be 4 quizzes for the term (15%) each.

Format: 10 multiple choice questions, 3 True and False, and 2 Fill the Blanks.

These will cover readings, lectures, and videos/documentaries.

**The quizzes will be open for 12 hours on Fridays from 10:00 am (EST) to 10:00 pm (EST). The quiz should not take more than 30 minutes to complete, but all students will have 1.5 hours (one hour and a half).**

- Quiz 1 Friday, Sept 23      online open from 10 am – 10 pm (EST)
- Quiz 2 Friday, Oct 7      online open from 10 am – 10 pm (EST)
- Quiz 3 Friday, Oct 21      online open from 10 am – 10 pm (EST)
- Quiz 4 Friday, Nov11      online open from 10 am – 10 pm (EST)

**The quizzes and reflection papers assigned are essential requirements for the course.**

Quizzes will test your knowledge of the materials covered, namely: readings, lectures and docs/videos, as well as your comprehension of concepts and analytical arguments. The reflection papers, although relatively short, will help you develop your own ideas, your critical and analytical skills, as well as your ability to communicate these in writing.

**Please note: There will be a section on the website where you are able to exchange and share ideas, but also raise questions and comments – no grades are assigned to this activity, but I encourage you to share ideas with each other. You will find this section in the Lessons page.**

### **Academic Statements and Policies**

#### **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. Please visit Western Libraries to read about [What is Plagiarism?](#)

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](https://www.turnitin.com).

### **Academic Considerations for Medical Illness**

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the [University's medical illness policy](#).

### **Accessible Education**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. More information can be found on the [Accessible Education site](#), as well as the accommodation policy in the [Academic Calendar](#).

### **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 on Academic Rights and Responsibilities with regards to academic appeals, accommodation, scholastic discipline and code of conduct. These policies are outlined in the [Academic Calendar under Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#).

### **Zoom appointments:**

I will be more than happy to meet with you over zoom (in lieu of office hours), please send me an email so we may arrange the time/date for the appointment. I usually respond within 24 hours, except on weekends.

### **Statement on Technology:**

Because this is an online course, make sure you have all the technology required to participate fully in the course, and to familiarize yourself with OWL. If you have technical difficulties with OWL please contact the Helpdesk, Western Technology Services.

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1** Sept 8 (Thu) to Sept 11 (Sun): Introduction to the Course

**Lecture:** Introduction to the Course

**Readings:** Course Outline

**Video/Doc:** Axis of Evil Comedy Tour Watch here: [Video link](#)

**WEEK 2** Sept 12 (Mon) to Sept 18 (Sun): Historical Review Part 1

**Lecture:** The Birth of the Arab-Islamic Empire (Part 1)

**Readings:** Hourani, Albert. 1991. *History of the Arab Peoples*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts. **Read** Chapter 1: A New Power in an Old World. pp. 7-21.

**Video/Doc:** None

**WEEK 3** Sept 19 (Mon) to Sept 25 (Sun): Historical Review Part 2

**Lecture:** The Birth of the Arab-Islamic Empire (Part 2)

**Readings:** Cleveland, William, L. 2000. *A History of the Modern Middle East (Second Edition)*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado. **Read** Chapter 2 The Rise and Expansion of Islam pp. 4- 19.

**Video/Doc:** Jim al-Khalili "Science and Islam" Watch here: [BBC documentary](#)

**Quiz 1 (Weeks 1, 2, 3) 15%**

**WEEK 4** Sept 26 (Mon) to Oct 2 (Sun): The Andalusian Period and Culture

**Lecture:** A Vibrant Culture

**Readings:** Al-Hassani, Salim T.S. (Chief Editor), 2006. *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in Our World*. Manchester, UK. **Read** House of Wisdom: 46-48; Universities: pages 54 – 59; Mathematics 64-67; Chemistry: 72-75; Surgery 164-168; Astronomy 282-285.

**Video/Doc:** When the Moors Ruled Europe Part I and II [watch documentary](#)

**WEEK 5** Oct 3 (Mon) to Oct 9 (Sun): Transformations: New Imperial Encounters.

**Lecture:** Transformations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

**Readings:** Khalidi, Rashid. 2005. *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path In The Middle East*, Beacon Press, Boston. **Read** "The Legacy of the Western Encounter with the Middle East" pp. 1- 36.

Gelvin, James L. 2005. *The Modern Middle East: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Read** Ch. 7: "Wasif Jawhariyyeh and the Great Nineteenth-Century Transformation", pp.100-109.

**Video/Doc:** None

**Quiz 2 (Weeks 4, 5) 15%**

**WEEK 6** Oct 10 (Mon) to Oct 16 (Sun): French Colonialism in Algeria

**Lecture:** French Colonialism in Algeria The Colonial Legacy in Algeria

**Readings:** Bennoune, M. 1988. *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830-1987*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Read** Chapter 2 "The Nature of Colonialism", pp. 35-51.

**Video/Doc:** The Battle of Algiers, Gillo Pontecorve, 1966 (film)

**WEEK 7** Oct 17 (Mon) to Oct 23 (Sun): *Nakba*: Before and After the Palestinian Catastrophe

**Lecture:** The Road to the *Nakba* (Catasrophe)

**Reading:** Ahmad H. Sa'di & Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.). 2007. *Nakba : Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, New York: Columbia University Press. **Read** "Introduction: The Claims of Memory" pp. 1-24.

**Video/Doc:** Occupation 101: Voices of the Silenced Majority, directed by Sufian Omeish and Abdullah Omeish watch here: [Video link](#)

**Quiz 3 (Weeks 6, 7) 15%**

**WEEK 8** Oct 24 (Mon) to Oct 30 (Sun): Western Sahara: The Refugee-Citizens in Exile

**Lecture:** Fieldwork in Sahrawi Refugee camps

**Readings:** San Martín, Pablo. 2010. *Western Sahara: The Refugee Nation*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, **Read** :Chapter 4 "From Soldiers to Shopkeepers" pp. 87-126

**Video/Doc:** None

**Reflection Paper 1 (Weeks 1 to 8) 20%**

**READING WEEK** Oct 31 (Mon) to Nov 6 (Sun) No assignments

**WEEK 9** Nov 7 (Mon) to Nov 13 (Sun): Veiling and Western Stereotypes

**Lecture:** The Veil: Why the Attention and Controversy?

**Readings:** Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" *American Anthropologist* 104(3):783-790.

Alvi, Sultana Sajida, Hoodfar, Homa Hoodfar and Sheila McDonough. 2003. (eds). *The Muslim Veil in North America*, Toronto: Women's Press. **Read** Chapter 1 "More Than Clothing: Veiling as an Adaptive Strategy" pp. 3-40.

**Video:** [Watch on YouTube](#)

**Quiz 4 (Weeks 8, 9) 15%**

**WEEK 10** Nov 14 (Mon) to Nov 20 (Sun): Orientalism

**Lecture:** Orientalism

**Readings:** Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. Read pp. 1-31.

**Video/Doc:** Orientalism [watch youtube](#)

**WEEK 11** Nov 21 (Mon) to Nov 27 (Sun): Media & Hollywood Stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims

**Lecture:** Media and Hollywood Stereotyping

**Readings:** Khaleq, Rania. 2015. "American Sniper" Spawns Death Threats Against Arabs and Muslims, *The Electronic Intifada*,

**Video/Doc:** Reel Bad Arabs. Watch here: [video link](#)

**WEEK 12** Nov 28 (Mon) to Dec 4 (Sun): The Arab Uprisings

**Lecture:** The Arab Uprisings

**Readings:** Saad, Reem. 2012. "The Egyptian Revolution: A Triumph of Poetry", *American Ethnologist*, 39 (1): 63–66.

**Video/Doc:** None

**WEEK 13** Dec 5 (Mon) to Dec 8 (Thu): Popular Culture

**Lecture:** Popular Culture (guest lecture)

**Readings:** DeTurk, Sabrina. 2015. The "Banksy effect" and street art in the Middle East", *Street Art and Urban Creativity*, vol 1, pp. 22-30.

**Video/Doc:** None

**Reflection Paper (Weeks 9 to 13) 20%**