

**ATH/BWS 307-MA, The Middle East: Anthropological Perspectives:
Blackness in the Middle East and North Africa, Spring 2014 (3 credits) (CRN 74633)**

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Classroom: Thesken 115 Office Hours: MW 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; T 6-7 p.m.
Class Times: T 7-9:50 p.m. (Please contact me if these times are not ideal)
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Bulletin Description

Survey and analysis of various cultural groups in contemporary Southwest Asia and North Africa.

Course Objectives

Westerners commonly learn about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through media reports and limited experiences such as military operations or business trips. In this course we will review some of the cultural trends and diverse legacies of MENA. Instead of attempting to gain a systematic survey of the entire region, we instead choose to focus in-depth in a few distinctive cases, most of which revolve around the anthropology of Blackness in the Middle East and North Africa—several historical cases, followed by longer contemporary studies from Israel, Morocco, and Tunisia. For the purposes of this course, MENA is limited to the 22 member states of the Arab League plus Iran, Israel, South Sudan, and Turkey.

Overall, the primary goal of this class is to learn what is entailed by employing cultural relativism and a holistic approach for the theories and methods associated with the study of MENA. Specifically, in reading, researching, writing, viewing, observing, and discussing in and for this class, students will demonstrate their mastery of the material by showing that they understand

1. basic general information about culture, national identity, ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, social class, regional identity, religion, etc. in MENA, and
2. the history of MENA in the 20th-21st century, including how the region came to be defined thus and in what specific contexts, and
3. problems associated with representing MENA in 20th-21st century media and scholarship, and
4. diversity within MENA—Arabs and non-Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims, urban and rural people, class, race, gender, etc.—and the ways power is distributed unevenly within and between these groups.

Successful students will also

5. read one or more ethnographies of MENA and become familiar with basic terms and methods of MENA anthropology, and
6. respond to these ethnographies in writing projects and presentations using key anthropological insights, and
7. demonstrate the ability to reflect on current cultural and political events using the perspectives of MENA anthropology.

Finally, because this class is part of the Global Miami Plan, students will

8. develop their potential to communicate and act respectfully across linguistic and cultural differences with people from MENA, and
9. explore and understand their place in and influence on MENA and vice versa, and
10. determine and assess relationships between MENA and other parts of the world in terms of reciprocal—though not necessarily symmetrical—interactions, benefits, and costs, and
11. describe the development and construction of differences among contemporary groups and regions of MENA.

(Adapted in part from Dr. M. Peterson's syllabus for ATH 175, Miami University.)

Required Readings

Course participants will read the following books. All books are available in area bookstores, in the library, and through online retailers, often in downloadable or e-book form.

1. Troutt Powell, Eve. (2012). *Tell This In My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire*. Stanford University Press. ISBN: 978-0804788649
2. Seeman, Don. (2010). *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian-Israelis and the Return to Judaism*. Rutgers University Press. ISBN: 978-0813549361
3. Walz, Terry, and Kenneth M. Cuno, Editors. (2010). *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in 19th Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean*. American University in Cairo Press. ISBN: 978-9774163982
4. Kapchan, Deborah. (2007). *Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace*. Wesleyan University Press. ISBN: 978-0819568526
5. Jankowsky, Rich. (2010). *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226392196
6. Middle East Report No. 265: *Egypt: The Uprising Two Years On* (Winter 2012).
7. A number of required readings will be provided via Niihka.

Assignments

(Note: Late papers will be deducted 10 percent, plus another 10 percent for each additional week. All papers will be submitted to Niihka by 11:59 p.m. on the due date.)

Exams Two exams—a midterm and a non-cumulative final, each worth 200 points and composed of multiple-choice, matching, short-answer and essay questions—will measure student mastery of the major themes of the course. (400 points total)

Critical Essay A 4- to 5-page essay that will engage major themes of the course in a critical fashion. (100 points)

Map Test Each student must pass a quiz that requires them to identify each of the 26 countries of MENA on a blank map. (20 points)

Quizzes There will be an online quiz over the reading each week. These must be completed by 6:45 p.m. each Tuesday. Missed quizzes may not be made up. (100 points total)

Final Project The final project will consist of (1) an 8- to 10-page independent research paper over a topic chosen by the student concerning the Middle East and North Africa (200 points) and (2) an oral presentation of the topic (50 points). (250 points total)

Participation Credit for the six-minute interview is included here, as well as speaking up in class, asking and answering useful questions, coming to office hours, listening attentively to fellow classmates, paying attention to films, completing all work on time and as assigned, giving advance warning about foreseeable absences, and other less tangible aspects of the learning experience, as determined subjectively by the instructor (130 points).

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|--|-------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| In sum, your final grade will be based on: | | Letter grades: | | |
| Midterm Exam | 200 points | A: 950-1000 | B+: 870-899 | C+: 770-799 |
| Final Exam | 200 points | A-: 900-949 | B: 830-869 | C: 730-769 |
| Critical Essay | 100 points | | B-: 800-829 | C-: 700-729 |
| Weekly Quizzes | 100 points | | | |
| Map Test | 20 points | | | |
| Term Paper | 250 points | D+: 670-699 | F: 0-599 | |
| Active Participation | 130 points | D: 630-669 | | |
| Total possible | 1000 points | D-: 600-629 | | |

Note: Regular attendance is expected. No bonus credit will be available. Final grades will not be “rounded up.” Missed quizzes cannot be “made up.”

Attendance

Exams will include material from lectures and class discussions. One absence is “free.” At the second unexcused absence, your grade will be reduced by 5 percent; at the third, 10 percent (a letter grade); at the fourth, 20 percent. A failing grade (F) will result from more than four absences. Illness, family emergency, religious observance, and official university activities count as excused absences, but be sure to keep up with the readings. Contact me ahead of time if possible to explain why you are not in class. When you return, ask your classmates for feedback on what happened during the missed class.

Classroom Etiquette

Be in the classroom and ready to begin at the time listed above. Latecomers may be counted absent—habitual lateness will affect your grade. Turn off your mobile phone prior to the beginning of class. If you have a dire need not to be out of contact for 80 minutes, set your mobile phone to “vibrate” and sit near the exit. If you are needed, please leave the room to take the call. Do not receive calls, talk on your mobile phone, or send text messages during class. You are permitted to use a laptop to take notes, but please do not use it if doing so distracts your neighbors. Once you enter the classroom, please do not leave and return. Leaving without a valid excuse will result in an absence for the day. Failure to follow these rules of etiquette demonstrates disrespect of me and of the majority of the students in the class, who arrive on time, who turn off their mobile phones, and who pay attention to one another and to me during the entire class. Failing to follow these rules will affect your grade: Late arrivals and early departures may be counted absent, and more than one unexcused absence will always affect your grade negatively. Moreover, habitual disregard for the rules will significantly reduce the number of points awarded above under “Participation” (13 percent of the final grade).

Academic Misconduct

The Department of Anthropology is committed to supporting students' intellectual growth. In order for students to achieve their academic potential, it is critical that students practice new skills, assess their current level of understanding, and receive feedback from their instructors about their progress. The learning process is undermined by practices in which students submit work that is not their own. Students who do so rob themselves of the opportunity to practice and receive feedback, and thus prevent themselves from acquiring the skills that they will need in order to be successful. The student who engages in academic dishonesty may also hurt other students, by preventing them from receiving an accurate assessment of their knowledge or abilities. Such conduct is unethical, in that it is equivalent to stealing another person's work or ideas, and then lying by saying it is one's own. It violates the relationship between the student and the instructor and peers, which should be founded on mutual trust and respect. Students who gain a grade dishonestly are only pretending to become educated. They defraud themselves and others (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel 2002).

Academic misconduct, as defined by the MU Student Handbook, covers a wide variety of activities, including, for example, copying or allowing others to copy one's exams or assignments, or turning in an assignment that the student has not written. Instances of academic misconduct will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Student Handbook, which is available online at http://www.miami.muohio.edu/documents_and_policies/handbook/.

One form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which is presenting the work, words, or ideas of another person as though they were one's own, without giving the originator credit. For example, it is plagiarism to paraphrase material from another source without proper citation. This includes material from Internet websites such as Wikipedia.

Here is an example. The following statement comes from Barbara Myerhoff's 1980 ethnography *Number Our Days*: “**Thus, in addition to being an intrinsic good, learning was a strategy for worldly gain.**” In a paper, the student might write “**Obviously, not only was learning inherently good, but it was also a strategy for worldly gain**” without any attribution. This is plagiarism. Although a few words have been changed, the sentence is basically the same, and Myerhoff is not given credit.

Avoiding such plagiarism is simple. The student could easily change the sentence to the following: “Myerhoff (1980) notes that learning was not only inherently good, but it was also 'a strategy for worldly gain.’” Here, Myerhoff is given credit for her ideas overall, the student is given credit for his or her paraphrase of the first part, and Myerhoff's exact words are placed within quotation marks. A guide for avoiding plagiarism is given on the Center for Writing Excellence website: http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page_id=28

- Students sometimes cheat because they procrastinate on studying for a test or writing a paper. The MUM Learning Assistance Center in Johnston Room 1 gives students help with time management and study skills.
- Students sometimes plagiarize because they are embarrassed to ask for help on writing assignments (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel 2002). Please ask for help, rather than turn in work that is not your own. The Writing Center provides a number of links to guides for how to cite sources properly and avoid plagiarism: http://writingcenter.lib.muohio.edu/?page_id=28
- Students sometimes plagiarize because they think that the instructor will think they are stupid or unoriginal if the paper is full of citations to other people's work (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel 2002). But good, scholarly work consists of organizing prior ideas and evidence in support of your own ideas. If you don't have any citations, it might look like you are claiming to have invented the wheel! Look at the extensive references in any textbook to see how important it is to cite other people's work.
- Students sometimes commit academic misconduct because they are unsure of the rules in a particular class, e.g., how much “working together” is acceptable. It is important to ASK your instructor for clarification on any questions you have about assignments. If you don't ask, instructors will assume that your understanding of the assignment is the same as theirs. According to the Student Handbook, “Misunderstanding of the appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic misconduct.”

Many students recognize that academic dishonesty hurts the dishonest student. Students give such reasons as “You miss out on opportunities to master research and writing skills—two essential abilities in today's marketplace,” “You do not experience the gratification that comes from creating something that is distinctly your own,” and “If you commit plagiarism and it is discovered, your career is ruined before it starts” (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel 2002). Academic integrity is the foundation of self-respect. It is the responsibility of every member of the Miami community.

Students found guilty of academic misconduct in my class will *at the least* receive an F (zero points) on the assignment, and they may also receive a course grade of F in addition to being reported to the university's honor system.

Work cited: Whitley, B.E., Jr. & P. Keith-Spiegel. (2002). *Academic dishonesty: An educator's guide*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Adapted from various course syllabi of the MU anthropology department. This statement is copied, *verbatim* in most paragraphs, from Miami University's Department of Psychology ad-hoc committee report on Academic Dishonesty, May 1, 2003.

Conferences, Office Hours, Communication

You will have a six-minute individual interview with me early in the semester. You are encouraged to meet with me during office hours: MW 11:30 to 1 and T 6 to 7 pm. If you cannot come to office hours, please call or email me to set up an appointment. I will communicate via Niihka and through your official miamioh.edu email account.

Paper Submission

You are urged to print and retain copies of all the papers you write for your own records. You are also encouraged to maintain soft copies of all papers online via cloud computing (Google Docs, Dropbox, iCloud, etc.) and to back papers up via external memory (hard drive, USB memory stick, etc.).

All papers will be submitted via Niihka to Turnitin.com. **No paper** will be accepted in either paper form or as an email attachment. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Grading Criteria (Adapted in part from Dr. M. Peterson's syllabus for ATH 175, Miami University, Fall 2011.)

- **A: General:** Outstanding performance; consistent excellence in both written work and class participation. Exceeds course expectations by showing creativity, originality, critical thinking, understanding of relevant anthropological concepts, and insight.
Written work: Exhibits a superior understanding of relevant issues, information, and concepts, as well as an ability to link these to larger analytical and theoretical approaches. Papers are well organized and written, clear, and show mastery of course concepts as well as original insights.
- **B: General:** Strong performance in both written work and class participation. All assigned work is completed competently and in a timely manner; both written and oral work demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant issues, course themes, and larger anthropological contexts.
Written Work: Demonstrates a firm grasp of relevant information, issues, and concepts; makes an effort to draw on larger analytical and theoretical concerns. Papers are generally well organized, clear, and competently written.
- **C: General:** Adequate performance in both written work and class participation. Shows understanding of many of the basic concepts of the course, but there is frequent inaccuracy or error.
Written Work: Basic average writing and understanding of subject matter. Papers show an understanding of basic course information and concepts and make some effort to link these to larger anthropological concerns. Writing may show some problems in organization or in grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling. Conversely, writing may be formally strong, but there may be significant errors, gaps, or inaccuracies in content, evidence, or reasoning.
- **D: General:** Mediocre performance in both written work and class participation. Work demonstrates some familiarity with basic concepts but is only barely acceptable.
Written Work: Shows insufficient or incomplete understanding of basic course information, issues, and concepts while failing to link these in a satisfying way to larger anthropological concerns. Papers may also be poorly organized, unclear, and contain significant errors of content and form.
- **F: General:** Unacceptable performance in written work and class participation. Work is missing or fundamentally deficient.
Written Work: Little or no understanding of basic course information, issues, or concepts. Papers are fundamentally inaccurate or show minimal relation to class goals.

The Miami Plan

This course is part of three thematic sequences in the Miami Plan: ATH 3: World Cultures; ATH 4: World Cultures, Policy, and Ecology; and ATH 5: World Cultures and Social Relations. (Adapted in part from Dr. M. Peterson's syllabus and from the MU website.)

ATH 3: World Cultures is designed to provide an appreciation of human cultural diversity and how anthropologists interpret that diversity in marriage and family patterns, political and economic organizations, and symbol systems. In this sequence students examine various perspectives anthropologists use to understand human cultural variability. In the final course, students learn about cultural diversity in one of the world's major culture areas or in the relations between culture and one specific aspect of life for all people, such as personality, environment, or cognition.

ATH 4: World Cultures, Policy, and Ecology is designed to provide an appreciation of human cultural diversity and explore anthropological approaches to understanding diversity in political and economic organizations, marriage and family patterns, and other aspects of life. In this sequence students examine regional diversity through an in-depth study of a selected geographical area, and they develop conceptual approaches to understanding and comparing human diversity through a topic course on one of the primary aspects of culture.

ATH 5: World Cultures and Social Relations is designed to provide an appreciation of human cultural diversity and an exploration of anthropological approaches to understanding sociocultural relations and systems, including kinship, nationality, religion, race, class, and gender. In this sequence students examine regional characteristics and diversity through an in-depth study of a selected geographical area, and they develop conceptual approaches to understanding and comparing social organizations and relationships through a topic course on intercultural relations, sociocultural identities, or social anthropology.

As one of the final courses in these sequences, ATH 307 provides the opportunity for students to put into practice what they have been learning in the previous courses. Since the culture area is limited to the Middle East and North Africa, students may take the opportunity to approach the region holistically, examining how changes have come about in the Middle East and North Africa in culture, language, religion, art, social organization, economics, politics, history, and globalization. Students should also find the opportunity to analyze cultural phenomena of MENA, develop approaches to questions of ecology and policy in MENA, and be equipped to understand social relations in MENA more accurately.

This course is an optional component of the BIS concentration in Cross Cultural Leadership. As a result, the course is geared toward developing students' skills in participating in and managing diverse organizations and groups. The course will focus on anthropology's contribution to cross cultural leadership, but it will draw on a wide range of interdisciplinary sources in order to present students with the opportunities to examine the nature of organizations operating in relation to MENA, to develop the skills needed to manage people in diverse environments and think from multiple perspectives and particularly those of MENA, and to learn to analyze similarities and differences in verbal and non-verbal communication between their own languages and those of MENA and in relation to norms, values and practices.

Special Needs

Miami University is committed to ensuring equal access to students with disabilities. Students who are entitled to accommodations (academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, etc.) are encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Services. The office assists with determining eligibility for services and accommodation planning. Please understand that formal communication from the Office of Disability Services must be presented (usually a "letter of accommodation") prior to the coordination of accommodations for this course. Please visit this website for assistance with meeting your needs: <http://www.mid.muohio.edu/disability/> Contact Leslie True Omais in the Office of Counseling and Disability Services at (513) 727-3312 or in Johnston 14A for more information.

Contract

This syllabus serves as a kind of contract between the instructor and each student. By remaining in the course, the student is demonstrating that he or she agrees to abide by the terms above. By offering this syllabus, the instructor agrees to abide by the terms above. Any necessary change to assigned work or readings will be decided by the instructor and students together and will not by itself negatively affect any student's success. The section below, the schedule of assignments, **will change at my discretion. Students are responsible for keeping up** with changes to the schedule of assignments.

Schedule of Assignments (subject to change):

| Date | Topic | Reading | Quizzes | Assignments |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Week 1 Jan. 28 | What is MENA? | Introduction to course and materials MENA basic fact sheet and map Go over Fact Sheet | | |
| Week 2 Feb. 4 | Why does MENA matter? | Edward Said (1981), from <i>Covering Islam</i> , Ch. 1 “Islam as News,” Ch. 3 “Knowledge and Power” (on Niihka) | Quiz 1: Fact Sheet, Said selections | Map Test |
| Week 3 Feb. 11 | Revolutionary Egypt | Middle East Report No. 265: <i>Egypt: The Uprising Two Years On</i> , selections | Quiz 2: MER 265 | |
| Week 4 Feb. 18 | Race in MENA | Schaefer Walz and Cuno: Intro, Chs. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 Race and Blackness articles on Niihka | Quiz 3: Race in MENA readings | |
| Week 5 Feb. 25 | Ottoman slavery I | Troutt Powell, pp. 1-113 | Quiz 4: Troutt Powell First Half | Critical Essay Due |
| Week 6 March 4 | Ottoman slavery II | Troutt Powell, pp. 115-211 | Quiz 5: Troutt Powell Second | |
| Week 7 March 11 | Midterm Exam | Midterm Exam | | Midterm Exam |
| Week 8 March 18 | Black Israel I | Seeman, pp. 1-108 | Quiz 6: Seeman First Half | |
| March 25 | | Spring Break, No Class | | |
| Week 9 April 1 | Black Israel II | Seeman, pp. 109-211 | Quiz 7: Seeman Second Half | |
| Week 10 April 8 | Black Morocco I | Kapchan, pp. 1-128 | Quiz 8: Kapchan First Half | |
| Week 11 April 15 | Black Morocco II | Kapchan, pp. 129-241 | Quiz 9: Kapchan Second | |
| Week 12 April 22 | Black Tunisia I | Jankowsky, pp. 1-91 | Quiz 10: Jankowsky First | |
| Week 13 April 29 | Black Tunisia II | Jankowsky, pp. 95-204 | Quiz 11: Jankowsky Second | |
| Week 14 May 6 | Final | Final Exam | | |
| TBA | | Presentations | | Final Project Due |