

**Popular Culture and Politics in the Middle East (undergrad, David A. McDonald, Indiana University, 2015)**



**Course Description**

This undergraduate/graduate course will examine the dynamics of popular culture and mass media throughout the Middle East (including Turkey, Israel, and Iran) and North Africa. Although performative arts, mass media, and popular culture have often been deemed as epiphenomenal in Middle Eastern studies, this course proceeds from the idea that popular culture and performance arts are in fact foundational means for negotiating power and resistance, social interaction, and identity. Through our readings, lectures, discussions, and various written assignments students will confront the many ways in which popular culture has had a formative and foundational impact upon conceptions of identity throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Our readings will build upon fundamental anthropological understandings of social groups, the linkages of culture and agency, and the various forms of power and resistance articulated through expressive, performative, and material culture. Various case studies will explore Egyptian soap operas, Iraqi comic books, Turkish heavy metal, Arab pop music, Israeli and Palestinian cinema, Algerian love songs, and the impact these media have had on contemporary understandings of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and globalization in the Middle East.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this class students will be able to:

- Connect contemporary issues to relevant historical precedence.
- Recognize human agency and assess its relationship to social structure.
- Situate a given cultural artifact or practice within broader temporal and spatial contexts.

- Evaluate and assess the workings of power and hierarchy within social groups and contexts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the various processes through which identity is conceptualized and constructed.
- Evaluate the impact of the movement of people and expressive practices.
- Differentiate and appraise the various ways in which authenticity is conceptualized and articulated.
- Describe the aspects of culture such as world view, beliefs, classification, and ideology.
- Demonstrate the ability to work effectively both individually and in groups.
- Compose high-quality essays and research papers.
- Produce and deliver an engaging and informative oral presentation.
- Demonstrate the ability to contribute effectively to group discussion.
- Demonstrate an ability to collaborate and communicate via multiple electronic platforms.
- Summarize and restate the argument of a given source.
- Assess the theoretical and rhetorical approaches of an author or source.
- Appraise evidence, and its use, and supporting an argument.
- Assess the biases, intentions, and positionality of an author or source.
- Devise or envision alternative interpretations.
- Articulate the importance of diversity in contemporary society.
- Recognize and critique various forms of ethnocentrism.
- Discuss the importance of local perspectives.
- Produce viable representations of the experiences of others.

### **Required Texts**

- Armbrust, Walter. 1996. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- El-Hamamsy, Walid and Soliman Mounira. 2013. *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Post-Colonial Outlook*. New York: Routledge Press.
- Gilman, Daniel J. 2014. *Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Schade-Poulsen, Marc. 1999. *Men and Popular Music in Algeria: The Social Significance of Rai*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

### **Recommended Texts**

- Hammond, Andrew. 2007. *Popular Culture in the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*. New York: The American University in Cairo Press.
- McDonald, David A. 2013. *My Voice is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Stein, Rebecca L., and Ted Swedenburg. 2005. *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

### **Course Materials and Website**

Formal course materials, readings, study guides, audio and video files, may be made available to the student via the course Canvas web portal. This course website will be an integral means for participation in this class, turning in all assignments, accessing reading and listening

assignments, lectures, and other on-line resources. It is essential that the student familiarize him/herself to the navigation of this site within the first week of class. This will better orient the student to the course structure as well as reveal any potential networking glitches with logins, rosters, etc. **All assignments and exams will be submitted through this web interface.** In addition, we will be using various outside readings (book chapters, articles, stories, etc.), assembled into a resources folder, which will be made available to the student via the course website.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

This course is intended to be an advanced undergraduate/graduate seminar. Students are expected to maintain good standing; **do the reading, come to class, participate in class discussions.** Classes will be structured largely on seminar discussions of course readings and other critical thinking activities. The ultimate success of this course will be determined by your full participation in all class activities and discussions.

Final grades will be assessed based on the following:

- **Attendance:** Students will be allowed 3 absences, after which **final grades** will be negatively impacted by 5% for each additional absence.
- **Full Participation in All Course Activities (15%).** Basically this entails being a good citizen in class. Timely completion and preparation of all course activities. **Do the Reading!** Class attendance and contributions to group work are extremely important to the success of this class. Periodically, short quizzes and other creative writing assignments may be assigned to ensure that readings have been completed and that students are prepared for seminar.
- **Take Home Midterm Examination (30%).** Expect a take-home midterm examination that requires the student to critically assess and synthesize course readings, discussions, movies, and other materials in a series of essay questions.
- **Movie Response Papers (20%).** Over the course of the semester we will be viewing 5 feature films and documentaries on course topics and themes. Based on these films you will complete 4 critical response activities. Details on the structure and format of these activities will be forthcoming.
- **Take Home Final Examination (35%).** For the final exam expect a take home examination similar in format to the mid-term. Students will be given a series of essay questions to complete based on a comprehensive and cumulative understanding of core issues, themes, and concepts.

The grading scale for this course is the following:

A+	100-98%	B+	89-88%	C+	79-78%	<i>etc. . .</i>
A	97-94%	B	87-84%	C	77-74%	
A-	93-90%	B-	83-80%	C-	73-70%	

## Course Schedule

Date	Topic	• Readings / Discussion
8/24/15	Class Introduction: Popular Culture and Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop Culture and the Politics of Representation</li> <li>• Islamophobia in American Cinema: Consequences for thinking about Popular Culture in the Middle East</li> <li>• MOVIE:</li> <li>• <i>Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People</i></li> </ul>
8/26/15	Class Introduction: Popular Culture and Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rowe, John Carlos. 2013. "Cultural Hegemony: Popular Representations of the Middle East in the US. American Orientalism After Said" in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: Post-Colonial Outlook</i>.</li> <li>• Nashef, Hania A. M. 2013. "Barbaric Space: Portrayal of Arab Lands in Hollywood Films" in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: Post-Colonial Outlook</i>.</li> </ul>
8/31/15	Defining Popular Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storey, John. 2006. "What is Popular Culture?"</li> <li>• Browne, Ray. 1972. "Popular Culture: Notes Toward a Definition."</li> </ul>
9/2/15	Defining Popular Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, Russel B. 1971. "Notes for an Introduction to a Discussion of Popular Culture."</li> <li>• Browne, Ray. 1984. "Popular Culture as the New Humanities"</li> <li>• Fiske, Jonathan. 1989. "Understanding Popular Culture."</li> </ul>
9/7/15	No Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor Day</li> </ul>
9/9/15	Understanding Popular Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bennet, Tony. 1986. "Introduction: Popular Culture and the Turn to Gramsci"</li> <li>• Miller, Toby and Alec McHoul. 1998. "Introduction to Popular Culture and Everyday Life"</li> </ul>
9/14/15 (Online)	Cultural Politics in the Arab World Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hammond, A. 2007. "Culture and Politics," and "Arab Consumer Culture," in: <i>Popular Culture in the Arab World</i>.</li> </ul>
9/16/15 (Online)	Algerian Popular Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langlois, Tony. 1996. "The Local and the Global in North African Popular Music."</li> <li>• Shoup, Joseph A. 2013. "Rai: North Africa's Music of the Working Class" in: <i>Popular Culture in the</i></li> </ul>

		<i>Middle East and North Africa: A Post-Colonial Outlook</i>
9/21/15	Rai and Masculinity in Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schade-Poulsen, Mark. 1999. <i>Men and Popular Music in Algeria</i>. (Chapters 1-3)</li> </ul>
9/23/15	Rai and Masculinity in Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schade-Poulsen, Mark. 1999. <i>Men and Popular Music in Algeria</i>. (Chapters 6-7)</li> </ul>
9/28/15	Rai and Masculinity in Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOVIE:</li> <li>• <i>100% Arabica</i></li> </ul>
9/30/15	Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armbrust, W. 1996. <i>Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt</i>. (Chapters 1, 2)</li> <li>• Herrera, Linda. 2010. "Young Egyptians' Quest for Jobs and Justice"</li> </ul>
10/5/15	Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armbrust, W. 1996. <i>Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt</i>. (Chapters 4, 5)</li> </ul>
10/7/15	Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armbrust, W. 1996. <i>Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt</i>. (Chapters 6, 7)</li> </ul>
10/12/15	Cairo Pop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilman, Daniel. 2014. "Introduction: Good Music, Bad Music, and Youth Music" and "My Patience in Short: Youth Talk about Grandpa's Music" in: <i>Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt</i>.</li> </ul>
10/14/15	Cairo Pop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilman, Daniel. 2014. "The Hardest Thing to Say: Taxonomies of Aesthetics" in: <i>Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt</i>.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
10/19/15	Cairo Pop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilman, Daniel. 2014. "A Poem Befitting Her: Ambiguity and Sincerity in Revolutionary Pop Culture" and "Epilogue: On the Counterrevolution" in: <i>Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt</i>.</li> </ul>
10/21/15	Popular Culture and The Egyptian Revolution of 2011	<b>MOVIE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Square</i></li> </ul>
10/26/15	Popular Culture and The Egyptian Revolution of 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboubakr, Randa. 2013. "Popular Culture and Revolution: The Voice of Dissent. "The Role of New Media in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011: Visuality as an agent of Change" in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Post-Colonial</i></li> </ul>

		<p><i>Outlook.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• El-Hamamsy, Walid and Mounira Soliman. 2013. “The Aesthetics of Revolution: Popular Creativity and the Egyptian Spring” in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Post-Colonial Outlook.</i></li> </ul>
10/28/15	Comics and Graphic Novels in the Arab World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Douglas and Malti-Douglas. 1994. <i>Arab Comic Strips.</i> (Chapters 1-4)</li> </ul>
11/2/15	Comics and Graphic Novels in the Arab World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Layoun, Mary. 2005. “Telling Stories in <i>Palestine: Comix Understanding and Narratives of Palestine-Israel</i>” in: <i>Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture.</i></li> <li>• Comics in the Arab world Online Source</li> </ul>
11/4/15	Popular Culture in Israel/Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stein and Swedenburg. 2005. “Popular Culture, Relational History, and the Question of Power in the Palestine and Israel.” in: <i>Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture.</i></li> <li>• El-Hamamsy, Walid and Mounira Soliman. 2013. “Popular Culture: a Site of Resistance” in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: Post-Colonial Outlook.</i></li> </ul>
11/9/15	Popular Culture in Israel/Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swedenburg, Ted. 2000. “Sa‘ida Sultan/Danna International: Transgender Pop and the Polysemiotics of Sex, Nation, and Ethnicity on the Israeli-Egyptian Border.”</li> <li>• Horowitz, Amy. 2005. “Dueling Narrative: Zehava Ben Sings Umm Kulthum” in: <i>Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture.</i></li> <li>• Assaf, Nadra Majeed. 2013. “Dancing without My Body” in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: Post-Colonial Outlook.</i></li> </ul>
11/11/15	Popular Culture in Israel/Palestine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McDonald, David A. 2013. “New Directions and New Modalities: Palestinian Hip-Hop in Israel” and “Carrying Words Like Weapons: DAM Brings Hip-Hop to the West Bank” in: <i>My Voice is My Weapon.</i> (Chapters 8-9)</li> <li>• Rooney, Caroline. 2013. “Music San Frontieres? Documentaries on Hip-Hop in the Holy Land and DIY Democracy” in: <i>Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Post-Colonial Outlook.</i></li> </ul>

11/16/15	Popular Culture in Israel/Palestine	MOVIE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Channels of Rage</i></li> </ul>
11/18/15 (Online)	Popular Culture in Israel/Palestine	MOVIE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Slingshot Hip-Hop</i></li> </ul>
11/23-27/15	No Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanksgiving Break</li> </ul>
11/30/15	Heavy Metal and Morality in Turkish Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hecker, Pierre. 2012. <i>Turkish Metal</i>. (Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2)</li> </ul>
12/2/15 (Online)	Heavy Metal and Morality in Turkish Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hecker, Pierre. 2012. <i>Turkish Metal</i>. (Chapter 3 and 4)</li> </ul>
12/7/15	Heavy Metal and Morality in Turkish Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hecker, Pierre. 2012. <i>Turkish Metal</i>. (Chapters 5, 6, and 7)</li> </ul>
12/9/15	Theorizing Popular Culture and Politics in the Arab World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Wrap up</li> <li>• Final discussions</li> <li>• Flex Day</li> </ul>
12/18/15	Final Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Examination 12:30-2:30</li> </ul>

### Resources

- **Disability Services for Students:** Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities (e.g. mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision, neurological, etc.). You must have established your eligibility for support services through Disability Services for Students. Note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive. Captions and alternate media for print materials may take three or more weeks to get produced. Please contact Disability Services for Students at <http://disabilityservices.indiana.edu> or 812-855-7578 as soon as possible if accommodations are needed. The office is located on the third floor, west tower, of the Wells Library (Room W302). Walk-ins are welcome 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. You can also locate a variety of campus resources for students and visitors who need assistance at <http://www.iu.edu/~ada/index.shtml> ([Links to an external site.](#)).
- **Writing services:** the Indiana University writing tutorial services (WTS) offers a students help with improving their writing skills. Students may sign up for a tutorial, or schedule a face-to-face or online appointment with a WTS Counselor by going to their website. <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/> ([Links to an external site.](#)) ([Links to an external site.](#))

- **Technology services:** As this is an online class, you may experience problems with the online course interface or other online aspects of this course. For all technology related inquiries please us submit a request to University information technology services. <http://uits.iu.edu/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)
- **Academic Integrity:** As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies detailed in the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (Code). When you submit an assignment with your name on it, you are signifying that the work contained therein is yours, unless otherwise cited or referenced. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged. If you are unsure about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or exam, be sure to seek clarification beforehand. All suspected violations of the Code will be handled according to University policies. Sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment, reduction in your final course grade, a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities, and must include a report to the Dean of Students, who may impose additional disciplinary sanctions. Any work that is found to be involved with such misconduct may result in failing the course, and will be handled according to the policies set out in the Indiana University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct. <http://dsa.indiana.edu/Code/> (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

### **Course Accessibility**

Indiana University is committed to creating a learning environment and academic community that promotes educational opportunities for all individuals, including those with disabilities. Students requesting disability-related accommodations and/or services should contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at (812) 855-7578 or visit the website for Disability Services for Students (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)

Course directors are asked to make reasonable accommodations, upon request by the student or the university, for such disabilities. **It is the responsibility of students with documented physical or learning disabilities seeking accommodation to notify their course directors and the relevant campus office that deals with such cases in a timely manner concerning the need for such accommodation.** Indiana University will make reasonable accommodations for access to programs, services, and facilities as outlined by applicable state and federal laws.