

Anthropology 25

**THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE MIDDLE EAST**

Scripps College

Spring 2011

Mondays &amp; Wednesdays 12:00-1:10pm

Humanities 121

**Instructor:** Anthony Shenoda**email:** ashenoda@scrippscollege.edu**Course website:** can be accessed via Sakai**Office Hours:** Fridays 10am-12pm or by appt.

Vita Nova 112

**Course Description**

Among the best ways to explore the diversity and complexity of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is through the ethnographic accounts that have been produced about the region. This course surveys topics from colonialism to gender, from war to citizenship, from nationalism to suicide bombing, by engaging with a variety of book-length ethnographies on the MENA. In this course we will largely be concerned with the ways in which anthropologists have theorized, and in many ways constructed the MENA. We will also benefit from the fact that several of the anthropologists whose texts we will be reading have agreed to join us for discussion of their books (Caton, Deeb, Mittermaier).

**Learning Objectives**

The goals of this course are:

- To familiarize students with the diversity and complexity of social life in the Middle East and North Africa.
- To sharpen critical thinking skills and close reading by engaging with several book-length ethnographies.
- To help students learn how to locate authors' argument and put them into conversation with other literature.
- To encourage students to appreciate different forms of knowledge production and presentation.
- To challenge normative and stereotypical understandings of the Middle East and North Africa.

**Assignments***Reading & Participation*

This course will be run as a discussion based seminar. This means that all the readings for a given day must be completed before coming to class. You are also expected to contribute to discussion and debate throughout the semester by raising questions about the material and engaging with your colleagues. Your participation in discussion is paramount to making this a successful and enjoyable course.

*Presentations*

Each of you will be responsible for leading discussion by giving one, brief (8-10min.) presentation at

some point during the semester. Your presentation should consist of: 1) the main argument and points made in the text(s) (in other words, what is the author's goal in writing the book or article), 2) a brief discussion of the way in which the ethnography illuminates something about the people discussed while perhaps also concealing something about them (here you can consider the style of writing, the organization of the text, and the way in which theory and empirical evidence are brought together), 3) questions and concepts for discussion that come out of the readings. In other words, the readings should *not* be summarized but used as a foundation for the analysis of central issues. You are encouraged to consult with me prior to your presentation if you would like some guidance with regard to posing good discussion questions and some clarity on authors' arguments.

Fortunately, several of the authors whose books we will be reading this semester have agreed to join us for discussion. Those who choose to lead discussion on those days should formulate questions to direct to the guest scholar. Please consult with me prior to our class meeting regarding the questions you will pose.

### *Collaborative Projects*

Each of you will be grouped with two other classmates to work on a collaborative project to be presented to the class during the last week of course meetings. Each project must take any topic related to the Middle East (e.g. art, oil, war, gender, religion) and explore it critically drawing on the literature we will be using in this course. You are especially encouraged to counter the stereotypical accounts of the Middle East and the people that live in the region frequently presented in Western news media. You should take advantage of the skills that each individual in the group has in order to be as creative as possible with your projects. Examples of final projects could include: writing poetry or a short story, producing a short film, designing a website, making a comic strip, writing a research paper, writing a travelogue (could be fiction or based on actual travels or a combination of both), a photo essay, etc.

Your midterm assignment (due Wednesday 9 March by 9pm via email) will be to write a one to three, single-spaced prospectus about the project—what topic it will deal with, what questions it asks, what critique it will offer, and the format in which it will be presented. Each group must see me to discuss project ideas before the midterm prospectus is due. I encourage you to look through the entire syllabus before deciding on a project in order to get a sense of the themes we will be dealign with beyond the midterm.

The final project will be presented to the class during the last week of course meetings.

### **Grading**

- Attendance & participation (15%)
- Presentations (20%)
- Midterm prospectus (25%)
- Final project (40%)

### **A Note About Responsibilities**

We will be reading works that deal with highly politicized and sensitive topics such as suicide bombing. You are expected to engage in debate with your colleagues but to do so with utmost respect and dignity. The point of debating difficult or contentious topics is to work through their

very difficulty, to try to understand the logics of certain ways of perceiving and living in the world (this is, after-all, the aim of anthropology), and to come to the realization that we will often be hard-pressed to find any singular approach or argument that fully captures the complexity of social life in the Middle East and elsewhere. Our goal is to learn about the diversity and complexity of the MENA from an anthropological point of view.

You are responsible for producing honest academic work. Plagiarism and cheating are intolerable and will result in your failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Credit must be given to the author(s) from whom you attain particular ideas or whose texts you quote verbatim. Please familiarize yourself with the college's definition of plagiarism:

<http://www.scrippscollege.edu/academics/department/writing/plagiarism.php>

You are also responsible for checking the course website on Sakai regularly for any announcements and/or updates.

Please make sure that all mobile phones are silenced or turned off in class. While I realize that many of you might prefer reading course materials on the computer, it is *strongly preferred* that you print hard copies that you bring with you to class and keep laptop computers closed, as they tend to prevent proper discussion while several students are checking email, surfing the web, keeping tabs on friends on Facebook, and chatting via Skype.

### Readings

As stated, all reading must be completed before the beginning of class for each day of assigned reading and brought to class with you. It is a good idea to always look at the reading for Wednesday when you start the Monday readings. By doing so you will not find yourself with more to read than expected at the last minute. All readings, except the required books, are available on the course website (Sakai) under the “resources” link.

### Background Reading on the Region & its History (recommended, but not required)

Yapp, Malcolm

1987 The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792-1923. London: Longman.

Yapp, Malcom

1996 The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995. 2nd edition. London: Longman.

### Required Books (available at Huntley & on reserve in the Honnold/Mudd Library)<sup>1</sup>

Asad, Talal

2007 On Suicide Bombing. New York: Columbia University Press.<sup>2</sup>

Caton, Steven

2006 Yemen Chronicle: An Anthropology of War and Mediation. New York: Hill & Wang.

<sup>1</sup> As of 14 January neither the Mittermaier nor Wedeen books are available at the Claremont Libraries, but have been ordered.

<sup>2</sup> Note: this book is available electronically and will not be on hard copy reserve.

<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.libraries.claremont.edu/lib/claremont/docDetail.action?docID=10177992>

Dalrymple, William

1999 From the Holy Mountain: A Journey among the Christians of the Middle East. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Deeb, Lara

2006 An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mittermaier, Amira

2011 Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Al-Ali, Nadjie Sadig

2007 Iraqi Women: Untold Stories From 1948 to the Present. London: Zed Books

Rabinowitz, Dan and Khawla Abu Bakr

2005 Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wedeen, Lisa

1999 Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

## WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS

### Wednesday 19 January

Quiz: Map of the Middle East

## WEEK 2: SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND & ORIENTALISM

### Monday 24 January

Sakai:

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

Film: *Umm Kultbun. A Voice Like Egypt*

### Wednesday 26 January

Sakai:

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage. (selections)

Mitchell, Timothy. 1992. "Orientalism and the exhibitionary order"

Film: *Edward Said On Orientalism*

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**WEEK 3: WAR, POETRY, EVENT I**

**Monday 31 January**

Ethnography:

Caton, Steven. 2006. *Yemen Chronicle*.

Read: Prologue, Chapters 1-3

**Wednesday 2 February**

Ethnography:

Caton, Steven. 2006. *Yemen Chronicle*.

Read: Chapters 4-7

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**WEEK 4: WAR, POETRY, EVENT II/ POLITICAL SPECTACLE AND THE POLITICS OF SYMBOLIC POWER I**

**Monday 7 February**

Ethnography:

Caton, Steven. 2006. *Yemen Chronicle*.

Read: Chapters 8-11, Epilogue

Guest: Professor Steven Caton

**Wednesday 9 February**

Sakai:

Abu Lughod, Lila. 2001. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

Read: Introduction

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**WEEK 5: POLITICAL SPECTACLE AND THE POLITICS OF SYMBOLIC POWER II**

**Monday 14 February**

Ethnography:

Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination*.

Read: Chapters 1-4

**Wednesday 16 February**

Ethnography:

Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination*.

Read: Chapter 5

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**WEEK 6: PIETY & MODERNITY**

**Monday 21 February**

Ethnography:

Deeb, Lara. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern*.

Read: Introduction, Chapters 1-3

**Wednesday 23 February**

Ethnography:

Deeb, Lara. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern*.

Read: Chapters 4-7

Guest: Professor Lara Deeb

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**WEEK 7: IMAGINATIONS & DREAMING I**

**Monday 28 February**

Sakai:

Stewart, Charles. 2004. Introduction: Dreaming as an Object of Anthropological Analysis.

Dreaming 14(2-3):75-82.

Ethnography:

Mittermaier, Amira. 2011. *Dreams That Matter*.

Read: Prelude, Introduction, Chapters 1-2

**Wednesday 2 March**

Ethnography:

Mittermaier, Amira. 2011. *Dreams That Matter*.

Read: Chapters 3-4

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**WEEK 8: IMAGINATIONS & DREAMING II**

**Monday 7 March**

Ethnography:

Mittermaier, Amira. 2011. *Dreams That Matter*.

Read: Chapters 5-7, Afterword

Guest: Professor Amira Mittermaier

**Wednesday 9 March**

**\*Midterm due by 9pm**

Video: *Nadje Sadig Al-Ali on Untold Stories*

[http://fora.tv/2007/11/05/Untold\\_Stories\\_of\\_Iraqi\\_Women\\_1948\\_to\\_Present#fullprogram](http://fora.tv/2007/11/05/Untold_Stories_of_Iraqi_Women_1948_to_Present#fullprogram)

**WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK**

NO CLASS

**WEEK 10: LIFE STORIES & THE MAKING OF HISTORY**

**Monday 21 March**

Ethnography:

Al-Ali, Nadjé. 2007. *Iraqi Women*.

Read: Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-3

**Wednesday 23 March**

Ethnography:

Al-Ali, Nadjé. 2007. *Iraqi Women*.

Read: Chapters 4-6, Conclusion

**WEEK 11: CITIZENSHIP & ITS DISCONTENTS**

**Monday 28 March**

Ethnography:

Rabinowitz, Dan and Khawla Abu Bakr. 2005. *Coffins on Our Shoulders*.

Read: Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-4

Film: *The Inner Tour*

**Wednesday 30 March**

Ethnography:

Rabinowitz, Dan and Khawla Abu Bakr. 2005. *Coffins on Our Shoulders*.

Read: Chapters 5-6

Film: *The Inner Tour*

**WEEK 12: SUICIDE BOMBING**

**Monday 4 April**

Ethnography:

Asad, Talal. 2007. *On Suicide Bombing*.

Read: Introduction, Chapters 1-2

Film: *Paradise Now*

**Wednesday 6 April**

Ethnography:

Asad, Talal. 2007. *On Suicide Bombing*.

Read: Chapter 3, Epilogue

Film: *Paradise Now*

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**WEEK 13: CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST I**

**Monday 11 April**

Travelogue:

Dalrymple, William. 1999. *From the Holy Mountain*.

Read: Chapters 1-3

**Wednesday 13 April**

Travelogue:

Dalrymple, William. 1999. *From the Holy Mountain*.

Read: Chapter 4

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**WEEK 14: CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST II**

**Monday 18 April**

Travelogue:

Dalrymple, William. 1999. *From the Holy Mountain*.

Read: Chapter 5

**Wednesday 20 April**

Travelogue:

Dalrymple, William. 1999. *From the Holy Mountain*.

Read: Chapter 6

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**WEEK 15: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**

**Monday 25 April & Wednesday 27 April**

Project Presentations

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**WEEK 16: NO CLASS MEETING**

Professor Shenoda at conference