

HIS 181 -- A HISTORY OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

Dr. Heather Keane
hkeaney@westmont.edu
Deane Hall 214
Ext. 7148

Fall 2020 -- MWF 11:30-12:35 – XXXXXX
Office Hours: Mon & Wed 2-3:30
Thurs 3:30-5:30
or by appointment

BIG PICTURE

This course covers many countries and several thorny conflicts and topics. There is inevitably an element of selectivity in what we can cover and in how much depth. The chosen texts provide a good guide to the priorities of this course.

- Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)
- Dwight F. Reynolds, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arab Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- Boaz Yakin and Nick Bertozzi, *Jerusalem: A Family Portrait* (New York: First Second, 2013)
- Marjane Satrapi, (The Complete) *Persepolis* (Pantheon, 2007)
- James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (recommended)
- Selected Primary Sources & Reader for “Egypt’s Liberal Experiment”

This course fulfills both the Thinking Historically and the Thinking Globally GEs.

THINKING HISTORICALLY

Has three component parts: 1) appreciation for the particularities of time and place, (what historians call “context”), 2) a sense of the complex process of change and continuity over time, and 3) the ability to work critically with a range of primary and secondary historical texts.

1. In terms of particular place, this course explores what are the cultural characteristics and historical experiences that unite the modern Middle East. The core text, *Justice Interrupted*, proposes that a desire for justice repeatedly interrupted (usually by outside interference) is one of the things that the different countries of the region share. Likewise, the book on Modern Arab Culture, engages aspects of Arab culture built on the Arabic language: such as poetry, literature, film, and music. At the same time the course looks at the diversity within the region based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, and gender. The course tacks back and forth between region-wide trends and national specificity. Each chapter of *Justice Interrupted* is a case study of a particular individual in a particular movement in a particular country at a particular time. Weekly student presentations on different aspects of Arab culture will ask what unites and what divides the region. For example, is a TV show like

“Arab Idol” a sign of the unity of the Arabic speaking world, or a sign of disunity as contestants represent and viewers vote based on their different countries, or is it a sign of globalization as the entire premise of the show is taken from the West? In terms of particular time, a main focus of the course is to push back against a popular perception that the Middle East has been left behind, medieval in its outlook and antithetical to modern values. The course shows how the modern Middle East is in fact very modern, in the 19th century caught up in the tussle between nationalism and imperialism and then in the 20th century between communism and capitalism, and now the globalization of the 21st century. But the Middle East as a region and the individual countries within it also experienced these developments and responded to them in particular ways. Students will start to think in terms of “modernities” rather than modernity.

2. A theme running through the course is that aspects of Arab culture and a desire for justice are points of continuity in the Modern Middle East. At the same time what people think will deliver that justice, a constitution or the Quran, for example, or what they are willing to do to achieve it, has changed over time. The course explores the how and why of these shifts. Likewise, students will study and research aspects of cultural continuity (such as language, poetry, and religious festivals) as well as change (such as music, TV, and food).
3. *Justice Interrupted*, unlike a textbook, has a very clear argument with each chapter providing another layer of evidence in support of the author’s thesis. It is helpful to have this clear interlocutor. Students will question how convincing is the argument, what has the author left out in order to support her thesis. Is this within the realm of acceptability, or doth she “protest too much”? Students will be aided in this task by reading short primary sources along with each chapter from *J* and will compare the two. In addition, students will take on the role of an historical character and participate in a 4-week role play game. Each person will be trying to achieve certain goals and will need to convince others in the class to act in support of their goals. All arguments and responses must be consistent with those of the time period. A reader of primary sources will be provided in order for students to do this. In some ways this is the meat of Thinking Historically, putting oneself in the shoes of another person and trying to see the world through his or her eyes, taking on the values, assumptions, and constraints of their time period, while exercising personal agency.

While there is certainly a place for studying history “for history’s sake” and getting lost in the very “otherness” of the past, this is not that kind of course. Mistakes have been made and the course highlights those and asks students what lessons can be learned from them. It also asks what it means for us to be image bearers and hope carriers, or in Emmanuel Katongole’s words, to be “Kingdom realists.”

THINKING GLOBALLY

Much of the above intertwines with and can be framed as central to Thinking Globally, which also has three component parts. 1) to look for and to see the interconnections between places, experiences, and processes in different parts of the world, 2) to be

aware of one's own specific context and impact, and 3) to know something about different places and people and how they are impacting others and being impacted.

1. The course looks at the impact of European imperial rivalries and then US/USSR Cold War rivalries on the Middle East as well as the resistance to those by Middle East actors. Also, as stated above, the course looks at the ways in which ideas such as constitutionalism, nationalism, and Marxism transcend borders and yet take particular shape within the Middle East. Likewise, climate change, terrorism, and globalization draw the Middle East into direct contact with the wider world. For example, while contributing little to climate change the people of the Middle East will bear a disproportionate burden from rising sea levels, water scarcity, and desertification. The significance of the Middle East in geopolitics is predicated on the centrality of oil to the global economy. As the world shifts towards renewable sources of energy the impact on the Middle East will be huge.
2. The course regularly asks what has been more influential in the history of the modern Middle East: internal choices or external forces. It is difficult to underestimate the impact on the region of European imperialism and then the neo-Imperialism of the Cold War. As "westerners," Americans, and American Christians we are deeply embedded in, and implicated by, many of the struggles facing the modern Middle East. Continuing American support for dictators in the name of stability or the state of Israel in the name of prophecy are uncovered and interrogated. Likewise, students will see how their views on the relationship between church/mosque and state, men and women, individuals and society are historically and culturally based rather than objective or universal.
3. In order to appreciate inter-connectedness and impact one needs to care about other people in other places. We do that best when we have a personal connection, when we know *someone*. But if we cannot do that, an intellectual connection, when we know *something*, is a good starting point. It is my deep hope that students growing in the latter will be equipped and emboldened to pursue the former.

Why seek to understand the Middle East, especially at an American Christian liberal arts college?

- All truth is God's truth. Therefore, the more truthfully we understand the history and complexity of the world we live in the more fully we understand God and what He is doing in the world.
- All of us, whether we recognize it or not, hold *a priori* assumptions about the region, its peoples, and conflicts. You all have views on Arabs, Muslims, Israel, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Each one of us is not fully aware of these and even less aware of how we came by them. Our perception of truth will likely be enhanced and enriched by encountering people who have different *a priori* assumptions.

- As with any academic discipline, the truth revealed in scripture and the truth revealed in history should compliment each other. Our commitment in this class is to do rigorous academic work that deepens our understanding of the history of this region, driven by a confidence that as we so do we are fulfilling our Christian mandate to be truth seekers.

READING STRATEGIES

For some of you this will be your first encounter with the history and cultures of the Middle East. People, places and concepts will be new to you. Thompson is a good guide if you read her carefully. There is a lot there. You cannot breeze through it. Each chapter begins with an anecdote that illustrates the main topic of the chapter, she then backs up to provide the historical context. While the chapters are arranged chronologically, they are also thematic and so the book as a whole does not proceed as: this happened, then that happened...

If you want a more conventional approach then I recommend you pick up James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*. Gelvin covers the same material as Thompson, but Gelvin is excellent at drawing out the main points: the three causes of this, the four consequences of that. If you want more historical background Gelvin is the best there is for a sweeping overview that doesn't get bogged down in details. We will use select chapters from Gelvin to provide more of a chronological road map for the course.

DO NOT get bogged down by names and dates. If it is a name, place, event or date you should know, then it will be abundantly clear to you as it will be repeated frequently in the reading and in class. Think big picture. On the other hand, we only can see larger themes and patterns through how they manifest themselves in historical particularities. Thus "getting your facts right" is also of the utmost importance. We want to move through the course in a dialectic dance between the larger themes and the historical details.

COURSE GOALS

- Students will have greater understanding and empathy for the people of the Middle East.
- Students will be able to articulate clearly the challenges currently facing the region, their causes, and possible outcomes.
- Students will have a greater appreciation for the relationship between "historical forces" and "personal choices" – the bread and butter of history.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

- Construct a historically contextualized argument based on primary sources (Thinking Historically GE)

Commented [MOU1]: THGE CC #1

- Analyze the use of evidence to support an argument (Thinking Historically GE)
- Identify & Explain how prominent individuals, movements, ideologies, and events that have shaped the modern Middle East are connected chronologically and geographically, both within the region and with the wider world (Thinking Historically GE & Thinking Globally GE)

Commented [MOU2]: THGE CC #3

Commented [MOU3]: THGE CC #2
TGGE CC #1

EXPECTATIONS

PARTICIPATION -- 15%

- Participation means coming to class ON TIME having done the reading and ready to participate by contributing questions, answers or comments. Naturally you get no credit if you are not in class. Be there and be prepared!
- *To do well in this class you will need to take notes during lectures and discussions.* Notes should record the main point or theme of the lecture or discussion and the examples and arguments used to support them.
- It is impossible to escape the Modern Middle East: what do we do, how now shall we live?
- **No cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices may be used during class.**
- Class will *summarize & analyze* rather than *repeat* the reading.
- If you do not understand reading or are feeling lost in the details *PLEASE* come talk to me – sooner rather than later!
- No underwear or sleepwear should be visible in class.
- If you miss class, you are responsible to find out what material and announcements you missed.
- You will need to follow current events in the region. We will discuss the news at the beginning of class on Mondays. I recommend that you do not use news sources from the USA (unless you want to compare coverage). Better options are: Aljazeera.com bbc.com <http://www.jadaliyya.com> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html> <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg> <http://mondoweiss.net> <http://www.madamasr.com/> <http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/>

Commented [MOU4]: THGE #3
TGGE #1 & #3

READING RESPONSE PAPER/PARAGRAPH (RRP) – 10%

RRP is a 300-word (and no more) response to the reading. By my count there are 30 possible RRP's. You need to do **15** or 1-2/week throughout the semester. You need to turn this in by 9:30am the day of the reading/class topic.

For *Justice Interrupted* and selected primary sources I will provide a Reading Response Prompt (RRP) to which you will write a Reading Response Paragraph (RRP). This will be some variety of: “how does the chapter support the author’s thesis?” or “are you more struck by the elements of continuity or change in the

discussed movement?” or “what were the external forces and internal choices that shaped the justice movement and which do you think were more decisive?”
The RRP for the *Companion to Arab Culture* chapters, unless otherwise specified, is: How does this aspect of Arab culture compare with its counterpart in the US?
I will not grade RRP's *per se*. Everyone should assume if they do the assignment that it is a ‘base hit.’ If it is a “home run” I will tell you. Also, if you “strike out” (didn’t understand it) or punt (didn’t try) I will tell you.

Commented [MOU5]: THGE CC #2 & #3
TGGE CC #1

Commented [MOU6]: TGGE CC #1 & #3

COMPANION LEAD DISCUSSION – 5%

For the *Companion to Arab Culture* text you will in groups of 2 lead the first part of class discussion. You should come with some audio, video, literary, or artistic illustration of the topic of the chapter. You need to meet with me beforehand to discuss where you want to take the discussion and what cultural artifact you intend to use.

Commented [MOU7]: TGGE CC #1-3

PERSEPOLIS PAPER & JERUSALEM: A FAMILY PORTRAIT PAPER – 20%

The two graphic novels, *Jerusalem: A Family Portrait* and *Persepolis*, were chosen because they portray momentous events in the Middle East, in both cases involving war and conflict, through the eyes of children. A main goal of the course is to maintain the tension between the types of historical events that make it into textbooks and the lived experience of ordinary people. These novels also represent an Israeli and an Iranian point of view, two countries that are not covered in *The Companion to Arab Culture* and only peripherally in *Justice Interrupted*.

Commented [MOU8]: TGGE CC #1-3

For each graphic novel you will write a 1000-word (5-page) double-spaced paper. I will provide a writing prompt later in the semester, but one dimension of the assignment is to explore not just the content of the graphic novel, but the medium. What are the authors trying to convey and how does the form of the graphic novel facilitate the narrative. Essays must be uploaded to Canvas by the beginning of class on the day scheduled to discuss them.

Commented [MOU9]: THGE #1 & #2

ROLE PLAY ON EGYPT’S LIBERAL EXPERIMENT (see separate handout)

Presentations & Debates -- 10%

2 Papers - 20%

This roleplay is set during Egypt’s first experiment with parliamentary democracy in the 1920s. At the time Egypt was also a British ‘protectorate.’ This will enable us to look more closely at how different political forces and actors, inside and outside Egypt, helped and hindered its transition to constitutional democracy. Each student will play a real historical actor seeking particular objectives that reflect your personal ambitions as well as your national or social aspirations. Arguments in speeches and essays will be drawn from primary sources and will be assessed based on the degree to which they reflect the values and concerns of the time.

Commented [MOU10]: THGE CC #1
TGGE CC #3

Commented [MOU11]: TGGE CC #1-3

Commented [MOU12]: THGE CC #1

FINAL EXAM -- 20%

Two-hour essay exam. One question on the exam will ask what do the Christian disciplines of lament and hope have to offer in interpreting the history of the modern Middle East.

Commented [MOU13]: THGE CC #3

Commented [MOU14]: THGE CC #3
TGGE CC #4

Side note on integrity and plagiarism... or “intellectual property”

Plagiarism is claiming another’s work, ideas, or structure as your own. To avoid this you must cite (including page #) where you have acquired all of the above that is not genuinely your own. Putting everything in quotes is not a solution, but mere intellectual laziness. You can and should use the ideas of other people, but you need to acknowledge such usage in a footnote and ideally summarize the idea or information in your own words (rather than quote it) to indicate that you truly understand the point being made. Plagiarism is stealing intellectual property and is taken very seriously by the academy, this institution, and your professor. To avoid plagiarizing you should familiarize yourself with the Westmont policy statement:

http://www.westmont.edu/offices/provost/plagiarism/plagiarism_policy.html.

Writers' Corner, Westmont’s writing center, is a creative space where student writers can find friendly “test readers” as they develop projects for professors, employers, and others. Tutors support peers as they mature into more skillful and confident writers. Tutorials are free of charge; come visit us in Voskuyl Library 215. Clients with appointments get first priority; drop-ins are also welcome. Make an appointment using WOnline at <https://westmont.mywconline.com/>

STUDENT WELFARE Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive in college. For helpful resources contact counseling center or a member of the student life team (such as your RA or RD).

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who have been diagnosed with a disability (chronic medical, physical, learning, psychological) are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as early as possible to discuss appropriate academic accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Office of Disability Services. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your equal access to this course.

Please contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services. (310A Voskuyl Library, 805-565-6186, snoble@westmont.edu) or visit the website for more information: <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability>

COMMUNICATION

You can reach me by email or during the weekday in my office (x7148). I do not check emails on Sundays and cannot guarantee that I will read email on Saturday. I will send class emails through web advisor or post readings and notices on Canvas.

CLASS & READING SCHEDULE

Week ONE

August 26	Introductions
August 28	Cultural, Religious & Political Foundations Gelvin, chpt 1 & “Seven Fundamental Questions”
August 30	Arab Culture & Arabic <i>Companion</i> , Intro & chpt 1

Week TWO

Sept 2	Circle of Justice JI I
Sept 4	19 th Century Overview Gelvin, (3 rd ed) pgs 71-99; sharif of Gulhane
Sept 6	<i>Companion</i> : Nahda & Gelvin photo essay

Week THREE

Sept 9	Lebanon: Medieval to Modern Sectarianism JI 2
Sept 11	Constitutional Justice JI 3 TBA
Sept 13	Minorities <i>Companion I</i> : Minorities & <i>news article</i>

Week FOUR

Sept 16	Turkey’s Trajectory JI 4
Sept 18	Introduction to Role Play Game: “Egypt’s Liberal Experiment”
Sept 20	ELE: primary source analysis Huda Shaarawi & Qasim Amin

Week FIVE

Sept 23	ELE: historical context I: Gelvin, (3 rd ed) pgs 180-195, 217-226
Sept 25	ELE: regional context JI 5
Sept 27	ELE: character intros & faction meetings
<u>Week SIX</u>	
Sept 30	ELE 1: Salon Discussion (1925)
Oct 2	ELE 2: Cabinet meeting & vote (1925)
Oct 4	ELE 3: faction meetings
<u>Week SEVEN</u>	
Oct 7	FALL HOLIDAY
Oct 9	ELE 4: Salon Discussion (1926)
Oct 11	ELE 5: Cabinet meeting & vote (1926)
<u>Week EIGHT</u>	
Oct 14	ELE 6: Saad Club debate (1927)
Oct 16	ELE 7: cabinet meeting & vote (1927)
Oct 18	ELE 8: debrief
<u>Week NINE</u>	
Oct 21	2 nd Half of 20 th Century Overview Gelvin, (3 rd ed) pgs 233-265
Oct 23	Modern Jihad JI 6
Oct 25	<i>Arab Culture</i> Presentation II: folklore
<u>Week TEN</u>	
Oct 28	Communists in Iraq JI 7
Oct 30	Baath in Syria JI 8
Nov 1	<i>Arab Culture</i> Presentation III: music

Week ELEVEN

- November 4 *Jerusalem: A family portrait (paper due)*
- November 6 the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
 JI 9A, 239-260 + UN Res 242
- November 8 *Arab Culture* Presentation IV: Cinema & Television +
 Kismet <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX8Un4nneXg>

Week TWELVE

- November 11 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
 JI 9B, 261-274 + Interview w/ Khaled Meshaal
- November 13 Christian Zionism
 Reading TBA
- November 15 Hope
 Faith in the Face of Empire, 109-130

Week THIRTEEN

- Nov 18 Islamic Revolution
 JI 10A (275-298); Qutb & Shariati
- Nov 20 The Arab/Sunni Revolution
 JI 10b (298-308) & Primary Sources TBA
- Nov 22 *Arab Culture* Presentation V: Humor

Week FOURTEEN

- Nov 25 The Iranian (Shii) Revolution
 (review JI 292-298) *Persepolis* **paper due**
- Nov 27 THANKSGIVING
- Nov 29 THANKSGIVING

Week FIFTEEN

- Dec 2 Arab Spring
 JI 11
- Dec 4 Arab Winter
<https://www.facebook.com/Vox/videos/875076916013245/?v=875076916013245>
 TBA
- Dec 6 *Arab (& Turkish & Persian) Culture VI: Food*

FINAL EXAM

Tuesday December 10, 12:00-2:00

*"He who controls the past controls the future.
He who controls the present now controls the past. Now testify."*
--Rage Against the Machine.