HERITAGE, HISTORY, AND MEMORY IN THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
V140800, SPRING 2011
MON/WED: 2:00–3:15pm

DRAFT COPY: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Course Description

In popular Western discourse, the Middle East is routinely depicted as “traditional,” “timeless,” and thus, in some ways, a-historical or it is depicted as an area whose inhabitants are unusually obsessed with their past. At the same time, the Middle East is considered the cradle of “Western Civilization,” the location of an integral part of the world’s patrimony, possessing vital aspects of “our” religious and cultural past. But how do those who live in this region relate to their past(s) and what discourses do they draw on to represent and authorize it today? How is the “the past” recovered, commemorated, embodied, erased, marketed and consumed in the modern Middle East? Considering recent ethnographic work on heritage, history, and memory in the Middle East, we will investigate the symbolic import of “the past” and the underlying dynamics that drive the purported tensions between “authenticity” and “modernity” in this region. This course will provide a brief introduction to the colonial and postcolonial history of this region, but will focus more explicitly on various thematics of history: national commemorations, competing pasts, invented traditions, the role of nostalgia, and the construction (and destruction) of cultural heritage.

Required Readings

The following books are available at the NYU Bookstore and are on reserve at Bobst Library:


All other readings (articles and book chapters listed below) are listed or linked to on Blackboard. Please also check Blackboard regularly for postings on films, events, or talks at NYU that are relevant to this course.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Given your active and full participation in this class (including attending all classes and reading all of the assigned materials), by the end of the semester you will be able to:

1. Identify some of the multiple political, social, and economic developments to have occurred in the Middle East since the beginning of the 20th century.
2. Demonstrate a familiarity with anthropological approaches to the study of nationhood, history, heritage, collective memory, and nostalgia and to related topics (identity, gender, religion) discussed over the course of the semester.
3. Engage with contemporary ethnographies of the Middle East in an open and direct way that shows a willingness to understand how the various peoples inhabiting the region experience their own circumstances and challenges.
4. Compare and contrast some of the various encounters with modernity(s) discussed in this class, and describe and analyze anthropologists’ discussions of “modernity.”
5. Compose thoughtful responses to sets of readings and films on contemporary Middle Eastern societies.
6. Evaluate and critique conventional depictions of “history,” “collective memory,” and “heritage” in terms of their hegemonic nature and political purpose.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS, GRADING, AND EXPECTATIONS**

**General Expectations**

- Students are expected to abide by the New York University Honor Code, and to exhibit a positive attitude in the classroom and toward their fellow classmates.
- All assignments must be completed and submitted by their respective due dates, unless you have consulted with me beforehand. Otherwise, a half-grade penalty per assignment per day will be deducted whatever the reason for the delay might have been.
- **More than three unexcused absences** from class will result in forfeiting the 20% for attendance and participation out of the final grade.
- Students are responsible for announcements made and materials distributed in class. If you miss a class, arrange to meet with a classmate for missed announcements, material, and content (Power Point presentations, used to supplement lectures, will be posted to Blackboard.)
• I request that you do not use cell phones or laptop computers during class as the presence of
electronics and screens creates a distracting barrier between yourself, the professor, and your
fellow students, and hampers class discussion. If you require a computer for note-taking
purposes, please come see me during my offices hours so that we can make alternative
arrangements.

Attendance/Participation
Your attendance and active participation during each class period is expected (more than three
unexcused absences from class will result in forfeiting the 20% for attendance and participation out
of the final grade). You should come to class having prepared the readings, that is, having completed
them and having noted the main arguments, their relation to other readings, as well as any questions
or disagreements you may have regarding them. You should also expect to be called upon regularly
to offer your opinions or questions on the readings and course material, including the lectures.
While the reading load varies each week, the number of pages assigned average around 100 pp/wk.

Presentation
Each participant will be expected to lead/begin one class’s discussion with a 10-minute presentation.
As a presenter, you must not summarize the readings, but should synthesize the critical themes that
emerge from the readings (perhaps pointing to the particular issues that piqued your interest) and
offer a few questions to begin the class discussion. Your grade for the presentation will make up 5%
of your total attendance/participation grade.

Four Short Response Papers (due February 16, March 11, April 8, April 29)
You are responsible for four short “response” papers that should demonstrate your ability to draw on
and critically evaluate the readings assigned for class. For the first paper, you will be asked to compare
and contrast the readings covered in weeks 2 through 3. For the second paper, you will be asked to
discuss the ethnography by Özyürek. For the third paper, you will be asked to critically synthesize and
contrast the ethnographies by Joelle Bahloul and Susan Slyomovics. For the fourth paper, you will be
asked to compare and contrast the ethnographies by Shryock, Özyürek, and Bahloul, among others.
Exact assignment questions and instructions will be handed out and discussed in class ten days prior to
the paper deadlines. Length: 4-5 pages (each paper).

Final Take-Home Exam (due May 16)
This is a comprehensive exam that will consist primarily of short essay questions drawing on the
course lectures and assigned readings. Please return your exam responses to me via email by 5pm.

Grading
• Attendance and Participation (20%);
• First Response Paper due on Wednesday, February 16 (15%);
• Second Response Paper due on Friday, March 11 (15%)
• Third Response Paper due on Friday, April 8 (15%)
• Fourth Response Paper due on Friday, April 29 (15%)
• Final Take-Home Exam due on Monday, May 16 (20%)
On Plagiarism
Plagiarism is when you present as your own the ideas and writings of others (including material found online). Your written work and oral presentations must reflect your individual thoughts and deliberations, while also giving credit to others where credit is due. Even paraphrasing without proper acknowledgement of the source is a form of plagiarism, a serious offense. Anyone caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment, if not the course, and may encounter further disciplinary action through the university. For more information on academic integrity at New York University, see http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. You may also find it useful to consult one of the many online guides on avoiding plagiarism and improving your writing. See, for example, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (and its “safe practices” guide): http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/ or any of the style and writing guides supplied by NYU Libraries: http://nyu.libguides.com/content.php?pid=27555&sid=200118. If you have any questions about how to acknowledge sources or whether your use of sources is proper, please come see me during my office hours. I will be happy to look over your work before it is submitted.

When citing sources, you should indicate: Author (Last, First). Date of Publication. Title. Place of Publication: Publisher, Page Number. (For in-text citations, the following will suffice: Author_Date of Publication: Page Number, e.g., Özyürek 2006: 64). You may use any other standard, if consistent.

Academic Accommodations
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 for further information.

COURSE OUTLINE, DISCUSSION TOPICS, AND READINGS

WEEK 1  
**Histories, Heritage, and Tradition: An Introduction**

Mon. Jan. 24  
no readings assigned

Wed. Jan. 26  

WEEK 2  
**Nationalizing the Past: Egypt**

Mon. Jan. 31  

Wed. Feb. 2  

WEEK 3  
**Recovering the Past: Israel**

Mon. Feb. 7  
Wed. Feb. 9  

**WEEK 4**  
**Excavating the Past: Archaeologies of the Nation**

Mon. Feb. 14  

Wed. Feb. 16  
**Paper #1 due 2:00pm in class** (no reading assignments due)  

**WEEK 5**  
**Commemorating the Past: Turkey**

Mon. Feb. 21  
NO CLASS

Wed. Feb 23  

**WEEK 6**  
**Commemoration and Contestation**

Mon. Feb. 28  

Wed. March 2  

**WEEK 7**  
**“Tradition” as a Vehicle of Change: The Politics of (Muslim) Piety**

Mon. March 7  

Wed. March 9  

Fri. March 11  
**Paper #2 due 5:00pm by email**

**WEEK 8**  
**SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 9**  
**Places of Memory: Palestine**

Mon. March 21  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 10</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gendered Memory: Palestine, Algeria</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Film (in-class): <em>500 Dunam on the Moon</em> (dir. Rachel Leah Jones).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Genealogical Time: Jordan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. April 8</td>
<td><strong>Paper #3 due at 5:00pm by email</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Structural Nostalgia and Imagined Communities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>World Heritage: Worlds on/of/as Display</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>Erasing the Past: Armed Conflict and the Protection of Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heritage, History, and Memory in the Modern Middle East


Gravois, John. “A Tug of War for Iraq’s Memory.” Available at: http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i22/22a00701.htm

Fri. April 29  

**Paper #4 due at 5:00pm by email**

**WEEK 15**  

The Past as Future?


**WEEK 16**  

Conclusion

Mon. May 9  No readings due

Mon. May 16  **Take-Home Exam due at 5:00pm by email**

---

**COMPREHENSIVE READING LIST (FULL CITATIONS)**


### Class Calendar

#### January 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### February 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### March 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PAPER DUE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### April 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PAPER DUE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>PAPER DUE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### May 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>EXAM DUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>