

University of Washington
NELC 496/596 B
SISME 496
Winter 2010

Parrington Hall 213
1:30-4:50

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Office Hours: TTh 11:00-12:00
Denny Hall M-25

Methodologies in Near Eastern Studies SYLLABUS

DEFINITIONS

Near East

The region comprising the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, formerly also sometimes including those of the Balkan peninsula, south-west Asia, or north Africa. Cf. FAR EAST n., MIDDLE EAST n.

The region defined by Near East is imprecise, allowing for some overlap with Middle East.

In quot. 1869 app. a nonce use with punning allusion to an article by N. Macleod in Good Words (1869) entitled 'Peeps at the Far East' on the subject of Christian missionary work in Singapore.

[1869 Wesleyan-Methodist Mag. (Sixpenny ed.) July 312 (heading) Peeps at the Near East [i.e. Spitalfields in London].] 1894 G. N. CURZON Probl. Far East i. 9 In the Near East population is sparse and inadequate. 1910 Chambers's Jnl. Dec. 800/1 In the Near East the keynote of cookery is disguise. The Turk brings his oriental love of mystery with him to the dinner-table. 1920 Sat. Rev. 16 Oct. 320 He took very little notice of Balkan intrigues, because the Near East was not his business. 1936 Discovery Sept. 264/1 The Wellcome Archaeological Expedition to the Near East. 1973 'D. JORDAN' Nile Green xlv. 283 Sue..told the Near East Desk, who..sent a cable to the Cairo Embassy. 2001 Nature 24 May 437/1 This Ugaritic shekel..can be inter-related with all other weight systems in the Near East and the Mediterranean.

Middle East

An extensive area of south-west Asia and northern Africa, now esp. the area extending from Egypt to Iran. Also (esp. in early use): the Indian subcontinent and adjacent countries; the area perceived as lying between the Near East and the Far East.

1897 Catholic World Feb. 700 The temptation to follow the wanderings of the genius of building back to its immemorial source in the middle East and the mystic Egypt has been resisted. 1900 19th Cent. Mar. 413 The most sensitive part of our external policy in the Middle East is the preservation of the independence and integrity of Persia and Afghanistan. 1903 V. CHIROL Middle Eastern Question i. 5 'The Middle East', that is to say..those regions of Asia which extend to the borders of India or command the approaches to India. 1913 Q. Rev. Jan. 297 The interests of Great Britain and Russia in the Middle East..are in reality irreconcilable. 1925 A. TOYNBEE Surv. Internat. Affairs 1920-23 I. i. 3 The affairs of Turkey and the other countries of the Middle East. 1958 LD. VANSITTART Mist Procession vi. 82 We had [in 1909] none of the sloppy modernism which lumps everything from the Mediterranean to Bengal as Middle East... Persia, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, India were the Middle East. 1988 Daily Tel. 14 Apr. 12 Potentates in the Near East (not 'Middle East', please{em}that's India) did indeed keep elephants. 1991 Guardian 1 Nov. 10/1 No venue had been fixed yesterday for the crucial stage of separate bilateral talks between Israel and the Arab parties to the Middle East peace process.

Source: OED Online Edition

Middle East

The lands around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, extending from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula and Iran and sometimes beyond. The central part of this general area was formerly called the Near East, a name given to it by some of the first modern Western geographers and historians, who tended to divide the Orient into three regions. Near East applied to the region nearest Europe, extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf; Middle East, from the Gulf to Southeast Asia; and Far East, those regions facing the Pacific Ocean.

The change in usage began to evolve prior to World War II and tended to be confirmed during that war, when the term Middle East was given to the British military command in Egypt. Thus defined, the Middle East consisted of the states or territories of Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Palestine (now Israel), Jordan, Egypt, The Sudan, Libya, and the various states of Arabia proper (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States, or Trucial Oman [now United Arab Emirates]). Subsequent events have tended, in loose usage, to enlarge the number of lands included in the definition. The three North African countries of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco are closely connected in sentiment and foreign policy with the Arab states. In addition, geographic factors often require statesmen and others to take account of Afghanistan and Pakistan in connection with the affairs of the Middle East.

Occasionally Greece is included in the compass of the Middle East because the Middle Eastern (then Near Eastern) question in its modern form first became apparent when the Greeks rose in rebellion to assert their independence of the Ottoman Empire in 1821 (see Eastern Question). Turkey and Greece, together with the predominantly Arabic-speaking lands around the eastern end of the Mediterranean, were also formerly known as the Levant (q.v.).

Use of the term Middle East, nonetheless, remains unsettled, and some agencies (notably the United States State Department and certain bodies of the United Nations) still employ the term Near East.

Source: "Middle East." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2006.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a seminar that investigates the prevalent approaches adopted in contemporary scholarship on the Near and Middle East. In this course students will be exposed to a variety of scholarly studies concerning the region, and how this region is imagined, considered and formulated by scholars working on different communities, spheres of culture and time periods.

Academic studies in the humanities generally work through a religiously conceptualized history of Near and Middle East. An ancient period precedes Judaism, Christianity and Islam as they developed among different ethno-linguistic groups around specific regions such as Mesopotamia and the Eastern Mediterranean. These studies are either informed by a teleology that culminates in the nation states that came into being in the first part of the twentieth century, or a criticism of such teleological approaches. In this course religiously-oriented historical narratives, as well as studies that are critical toward the prevalent nationalist discourses will be questioned through reading and discussion.

The class will include academic skill training in the form of, book review writing, peer-reviewing, paper presentation and question forming and asking.

READING MATERIAL

(No.s 1, 5 and 6 below are available online through the UW Library Catalog)

1. John E Toews, "Intellectual History after the linguistic turn: the autonomy of meaning and the irreducibility of experience", *American Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (Oct., 1987), pp. 879-907.
2. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "The Role of Islam in World History" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1:2 (April 1970): 99-123.
3. Timothy Mitchell, "The Middle East in Past and Future of Social Science," <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3618c31x>
4. *Orientalism: A Reader*
5. Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*
6. Richard Bulliet, *The Camel and the Wheel*.
7. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*

7. Each student will also select a book that is related to her/his interests (and which may have been assigned for another class) to work on latest by the third week of classes. Those registered SISME and NEAR E 496 must schedule a meeting with the instructor to discuss their choice of reading material for the second week of the classes during his office hours. See below under Presentation for further information...

DISCUSSION POINTS

Each selection will be read and evaluated in reference to the following questions:

1. What are the geographical boundaries of topics discussed by the author(s)?
2. Who is the author of the book in review, what other works s/he has produced?

3. Is there a discussion of a particular methodology and/or theoretical approach in the text? If there is, what sort of references does the author present; what corpus of works, hypotheses, or personal experiences does s/he draw on? What kind of a tradition does s/he connect to her/his work? The answers for such questions are generally found in the introductory chapters and/or conclusions of the books.

4. If there is not a specific discussion of methodological concerns and theoretical approaches, can we glean those through a detailed analysis of the work? What are our tools to identify methodologies and theoretical concerns, or lack of them?

Students must go beyond the information in the books to discover the underlying premises, hypotheses, discursive constructions and theoretical frameworks.

REQUIREMENTS

Each student will prepare:

- 1) a 1000/1500-word book review,
- 2) a 30-minute long presentation, and
- 3) a 15-20 page research paper.
- 4) short assignments throughout the quarter.

1) Book Review: Each student writes a book review on the book the student selects for her/his presentation. Students have to schedule a meeting with the instructor and have the title they are willing to choose approved by him. The review will include a bibliography of previously published reviews of the work. Students will gather photocopies and/or PDFs of the book reviews which will be presented along with their book review online. **The book reviews will be 1000-1500 words in length.** While preparing for this assignment, students must follow certain guidelines for writing a professional book review. Students must consult review articles published in *The Bulletin of Middle Eastern Studies Association* and *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* as models. Book reviews will be submitted on January 22nd Friday to the instructor through e-mail. Late submissions take out the participation grade (See grades section below). It is strongly recommended to have a title to work on by January 12th in order to have time to study the book and the reviews on it to be able to write a decent book review.

Book reviews will be peer reviewed anonymously as follows: Instructor will e-mail each book review to another student and the student will work and comment on the work anonymously and send their comments on their classmate's review back to the instructor no later than January 29th.

2) Presentation: Each student will deliver a presentation on the book which s/he reviews. Electronic versions of the book review will be circulated to all students in the class one week before the presentation, and the book will also be made available with selected pages to be read (not exceeding 50 pages for each presentation). Students will read the other students' book reviews, skim through the extra reading material and prepare at least five questions for the presenter (a total of up to 20 questions/week). Send the questions to the instructor immediately after each class meeting through e-mail. During each class period there will be 3 or 4 presentations, and each student must ask at least one well-

formed question to one presenter and submit questions to the instructor at the end of the class. This will also count towards the participation grade. Student presentations will not exceed 20 minutes to let at least 10 minutes for questions. Focus of the presentation must be the approach of the author(s) chosen and discussed.

3) Research Paper: The research papers will be the discussion of the presentation material with reference to the books that are covered in the class and other presentations. Student will locate the book of her/his choice within the context provided by the first four weeks' reading material and her/his peers' selections. Each paper must have a clear argument regarding the prevalent approaches in Middle and Near Eastern studies with a focus on the book chosen.

Deadline for research papers is March 12th, 2010. The research papers will be 10-15 full pages for undergraduates and 15 to 20 for graduate students (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font, default page borders) and will be submitted in Microsoft Word through e-mail.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

In short, these assignments will follow a natural progression from the beginning to the end of the course. First, the book review will prepare the student for the presentation, meanwhile allowing him/her practice writing a book review. The book presentation will give the student a chance to work on her/his paper presentation skills with particular stress on time consideration, development of the argument, clarity of presentation and the ability to lead the discussion during a question and answer session; all of these will be considered toward the presentation grade. Finally, the research paper will be the culmination of this process of thinking, outlining, argument development and discussion through writing.

GRADING

Research Paper	30%
Presentation	25%
Book Review	15%
Participation	30%

TIME SCHEDULE

WEEK I

January 5

Introductions, presentation date assignments, and review of the syllabus.

January 7

John E Toews, "Intellectual History after the linguistic turn..." Skim and outline for the class.

WEEK II

January 13

RETURN OUTLINE OF "The linguistic turn..."

Hodgson, "The Role of Islam ...".

Mitchell, "The Middle East in Past "

Read, compare, and outline both in reference to Toews article.

Orientalism A Reader, Selections TBA

WEEK III

January 20

JAN 13 RETURN OUTLINE OF READINGS

Contending Visions, Read 1-37, 182-272, skim through the rest.

Bulliet, The Camel and the wheel, Read in order to identify the main arguments.

JAN. 22 SUBMIT BOOK REVIEWS

WEEK IV

January 27

Mitchell, Colonizing Egypt, pages to be assigned.

Review of the first four weeks

JAN. 29 SUBMIT PEER REVIEWS

WEEK V

Presentations

February 3:

WEEK VI

Presentations

February 10:

WEEK VII

Presentations

February 17:

WEEK VIII

Presentations

February 24:

WEEK IX

Presentations

March 3:

WEEK X

Presentations

March 10:

MARCH 12 SUBMIT PAPERS