University of Pennsylvania
Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations
NELC 239/ASAM 239/SAST 269

Migration and the Middle East
A CWiC-affiliated course
Spring 2012

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Description

This reading- and discussion-intensive seminar examines the phenomenon of migration into, out of, within, and across the Middle East and North Africa. We will focus on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, and will emphasize the cultural (rather than economic) consequences of migration. Along the way we will trace connections between the Middle East and other regions – notably the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Europe. Readings are interdisciplinary and include works of history, anthropology, sociology, medical research, literature, political science, geography, and human rights advocacy. As students develop final projects on topics of their choice, we will spend time throughout the semester discussing tactics for research and writing.

This class has a formal affiliation with Penn’s program for Communication within the Curriculum (CWiC), which provides coaching for public speaking and oral presentations. A student trained as a CWiC advisor will come to our class early in the semester to provide general tips for successful presentation-giving. Later in the semester, the advisor will schedule meetings with students in one-on-one sessions as they prepare for their short, final research presentations, which are scheduled for the last two weeks of the semester. The goal is to help students to improve their speaking skills in ways that will benefit them in this class and in other endeavors.

Structure, Requirements, and Grades

Students are expected to participate actively, to prepare occasional presentations on selected readings, and to join discussions. Failure to attend classes will result in deductions from the final course grade.

Policies: Students can bring drinks or snacks to class. Students can bring laptops but may not keep the laptops consistently open during class. No web-surfing, message-sending, Facebooking, etc.

Writing assignments include two short review essays (600 words each); a preliminary proposal for the final paper; a preliminary draft of the introduction for the final paper; and the final paper itself (10-15 pages). The goal of the final paper is to give students an opportunity to formulate
and pursue independent research during the last month of class, by analyzing current research on a selected issue or sub-field. Note that students are required to follow the Chicago style for citations or bibliographies. We will spend some time discussing the Chicago method in class. Extensions for papers are not routinely granted. Late papers will be subject to daily five-point penalty deductions. The professor will not accept papers that are more than one week late. Towards the end of the semester students will meet with a CWiC advisor in one-on-one sessions. At the end of the semester students will give a short (10-to-15-minute) oral presentation on their research. Students should regard this presentation to the class as an intrinsic part of the final project. Final papers are due on May 3rd, one week after the last class, and should be submitted in both paper and electronic versions. Throughout the semester we will devote time to discussing practical techniques for planning oral presentations; structuring, writing, and revising essays; and conducting independent research.

If you wish to see me during office hours, contact me by email in advance to schedule an appointment. There will be no final exam.

**Grades will be calculated as follows:**
- attendance & participation: 20%
- oral presentations (including meeting with CWiC advisor): 10%
- short essay #1: 20%
- short essay #2: 20%
- final paper: 30%

**Books & Articles**
The following required books are available for purchase at the Penn Book Center, 130 South 34th Street (34th & Sansom), Philadelphia. They are also on reserve in Van Pelt library. Unless otherwise indicated, articles and book excerpts are posted as PDF files on our Blackboard site.


**Week 1: Jan. 17 Introducing the Class**
- Students will choose a chapter from the book *Migration Theory* to discuss in next
week’s class.

Questions for Discussion: How has migration affected your own life and worldview? In a brainstorming session, let us consider some of the major issues relating to our topic – including some that the syllabus does not cover. How does migration connect the Middle East to the wider world, and with what long-term cultural consequences?

Week 2: Jan. 24 Migration Theory

Everyone should read the Introduction by Caroline B. Brettell & James F. Hollifield, “Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines” (pp. 1-29); and Chapter 9 by Adrian Favell, “Rebooting Migration Theory: Interdisciplinarity, Globality, and Postdisciplinarity in Migration Studies,” pp. 259-78.

Everyone should discuss one of the discipline-focused chapters, which relate migration to history, demography, economics, sociology, anthropology, geography, politics, and law.

Questions for Discussion: What does it mean to talk across disciplines? What insights or interests do different fields have vis-à-vis migration?

Week 3: Jan. 31 Displacement and Emigration in the Late Ottoman World
• Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-133.


• Albert Hourani, “Introduction”, in Hourani & Shehadi (Eds.), *The Lebanese in the World*, p. 3-11.


Questions for Discussion: What were some of the major migrations affecting the late Ottoman world? What propelled the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migrations of Muslim peoples (e.g., the Chechens) from the Caucasus and Balkans into Ottoman domains? What propelled the late nineteenth-century migrations from what is now Lebanon? Where did the Lebanese go, and why? Thinking as historians, how can or should we distinguish between “good” and “bad” migrations (e.g., voluntary vs. forced, seeking brighter pastures vs. escaping poverty)?

Class Discussion: How to Write a Book Review

Week 4: Feb. 7 Amrika
• Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).

☑️ Short Essay #1: Write a 700-word review of Alfaro-Velcamp’s *So Far from Allah*.

• Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*, pp. 134-278.
Questions for Discussion: What accounted for what Chatty calls the “tragic conclusions of the ‘Armenian question’” in the closing years of the Ottoman Empire? Was it a genocide (and what is a genocide)? Why did the “Palestinian exodus” (as Chatty’s calls it) happen and why did so many Arabs from the former territory of mandate Palestine become “stateless refugees without protection or rights of return”? How has the experience of displacement shaped a Palestinian consciousness? Who are the Kurds, how has a history of dispersion challenged them, and how has their location at the crossroads of four states (Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey) compounded their difficulties? What role have nationalisms played in the displacements of Armenians, Palestinians, and Kurds?

Week 6: Feb. 21 Passports and Border Control: The State of the Field


[Required: Blackboard Discussion: Post a comment (100-200 words reacting to the Exceptional People book) on our Blackboard site; go to Communication, then Discussion Forums.)

Questions for Discussion: How new, how modern, is what the authors call “the international refugee regime” (p. 82)? Are barriers to migration stronger or weaker than in the past? What new technologies of identification and surveillance are affecting the experience of migration today? What about the use of “third-party actors” (p. 157), as states cede responsibilities to others? The authors briefly discuss student migration, too: how distinct is this as a type of historical migration?

Week 7: Feb. 28: Out of Africa: Human Trafficking


[In-class: Choosing a Final Paper Topic and Planning Your Research; Tips for Doing Preliminary Research to Develop a Bibliography]
Questions for Discussion: Adepoju concentrates on trafficking in sub-Saharan countries like Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, and Gabon, and does not comment on North Africa. But piecing Adepoju’s story together with insights from the other articles this week, what role do countries like Morocco and Libya play in Africa’s human trafficking? Zhang and Pineda discuss a (confusing) four-tier system for categorizing corruption vis-à-vis human trafficking. Can you make sense of this tier system? Strikingly, five Arab countries are listed in “Tier 4” as “countries that have greater wealth but the worst trafficking situations”: Qatar, U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Sudan (see pp. 49, 54). Thoughts?

SPRING BREAK, March 3-11

Week 8: March 15 Migration and the New Europe


Final Paper Proposal Due: This proposal has two parts. (1) Submit an abstract (250 words maximum) of your final paper topic, describing what you intend to study and what preliminary hypotheses you have. (2) Submit a bibliography listing at least four relevant published books or academic articles -- not internet sources.

Questions for Discussion: Among English-speakers, Samuel T. Huntington popularized the term “clash of civilizations”. How does the term and the concept appear in Lakhous’s novella? And how does his story capture the immigrant experience in Italy? What roles are xenophobia and more specifically Islamophobia playing in Europe popular culture and politics today? Do Europeans have any legitimate grounds for sensing “peril” in the face of immigration?

Week 9: March 20 Migrant Media


Short Essay #2: Write a 700-word review of Kosnick’s Migrant Media.

Week 10: March 27 Migration and Human Rights: South Asians in the Gulf


Questions for Discussion: What roles do migrant workers play in the economy and society of Dubai? Indeed, are migrant workers having – or will they have in the long run – a cultural impact on Dubai? What scholarly methods has Pardis Mahdavi used in her study? Despite awareness of the exploitation and ill treatment of migrant South Asian workers cited in these readings, why have the governments of sending and host countries failed to extend and impose labor protections? How or when will circumstances change, and what role can human rights groups like Human Rights Watch play in this process? What features of this week’s readings do you find most surprising or significant?
Week 11: April 3  Old Israelis, New Israelis?

**Ethiopian Jews, Darfurian Refugees, Thai and Chinese Workers, and Others**


**Film Screening:** Reut Vraneski, Director, *Evelyn*, DVD, The Hebrew Reali School, Haifa, Israel, 2010.

**Questions for Discussion:** What are Israeli immigration policies towards Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants, and how have these changed over time? How have policies varied relative to different kinds of Jewish immigrants? After the onset of the second Intifada in 2000, when Israel closed doors to Palestinian day-workers from Gaza and the West Bank, how did Israeli policies change vis-à-vis non-Palestinian foreign laborers (e.g., Chinese workers)? And what about the arrival of Darfurian Muslim refugees in Israel in the aftermath of the Darfur conflict (post-2003)? What is the future of Israeli immigration?

**In-class:** Advanced research strategies for the final project AND sign-ups for final presentations.

Week 12: April 10  Migration and Public Health


**In-class:** How to write the introduction of a research paper.

**Questions for Discussion:** What are the implications – both health- and culture-related – of pilgrimage as a form of migration? How does migration influence health? How can we use medical journals like these to illuminate cultural studies?

Week 13: April 17  Final Presentations
**Preliminary Draft of Final Paper Due:** Submit the introductory section of your paper (approx. two pages). This introduction should provide an overview of your topic, explain the structure of your paper, and point to your general thesis or argument. The introduction is often the most difficult part of a paper to write, so it is critical that you give yourself the opportunity to get early feedback before revision.

**Week 14: April 24  Final Presentations**

**Final Papers Due: May 1st.**