AIMS
This course has a dual aim: 1) to introduce students to major Arab contributions to political thought across history, and 2) to temper (if not transcend) the Eurocentrism of most modern courses in political thought. It also seeks to challenge and inspire students to aspire to make their own contributions to political thought, first by providing role models who have made significant contributions. No less important, however, is to provide students with a critical view of Arab political thought and pointing out the gaps and shortcomings that remain to be overcome.

The course starts by highlighting major contributions to political thought in the classical age, including by figures like al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun, and moves on to the contributions and debates in the era of Nahda by the likes of Tahtawi, Afghani, Abduh, Farah Anton, and Taha Hussain, among others. It then moves to modern intellectual contributions by figures like Edward Said, Sadiq al Azm, Adunis, Samir Amin, Anouar Abd al-Malki, Aziz al Azmeh, Hisham Sharabi, Nazih Ayubi, and Fouad Ajami, among others.

The course also covers major themes which preoccupied modern Arab political thought, including the theme of political identity, nationalism, Arab unity, liberation, religious revivalism and secularization, sectarianism, democracy, social justice, etc. The focus is on how modern political ideas and experiences have impacted (even disrupted) traditional conception of politics and polity in modern Arab thought, and to what extent have Arab thinkers and activists managed to respond to the intellectual and ethical challenges of modernization?

The Arabs are often seen as the object of modern political thought rather than its subjects as equal participants in the global conversation on the optimization of systems of governance. To what extent is this notion accurate? Have Arab thinkers been merely passive consumers of Western political thought and ideologies, or have they made some positive contributions of their own? If the latter, then what are the areas in which these contributions were made? If not, then what are the challenges facing Arab political thinkers today?

The idea is not to engage in any wishful thinking about imagined contributions, nor to blow our own trumpet and exaggerate trivial or peripheral contributions. Rather, it is to have a
sober look at modern political thought from an Arab angle, gauging the value of contribution accurately and without illusions, acknowledging what has been achieved, recognize its limits and limitations, and then asking the most relevant question: where do we go from here? What is needed intellectually in order to make substantive and original contributions to political thought?

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOME

1) Subject-specific skills:

At the end of this course students should:

- Become familiar with the key Arab intellectual figures that have contributed to and shaped some of the key concepts of Arab political thought
- Understand the history, genealogy and morphology of key movements and trends throughout the history of Arab intellectual thought.
- Conduct original research on the contribution of salient figures within each movement.
- Be able to relate emergence of distinct intellectual currents to the broader political and socio-economic parameters which have shaped ideas and ideologies.
- Be conversant in some of the major themes and ideas in modern Arab political thought.

2) Core academic skills:

Methodologically, students will learn how to conduct research bilingually by fusing findings and drawing connections between Arabic and Western sources.

Students will be challenged to:

- Formulate original, critical responses to the framework outlined and theses advanced by the instructor during the lectures, their fellow students' presentations, and the assigned readings.
- Structure these responses in their own original research paper with proper argumentation
- Evaluate different causal arguments and independently assess their merits and shortcomings.
- Synthesize variant methodologies and cross-disciplinary findings
- Create original synergies between qualitative and quantitative research in discerning the socio-economic context and possible prerequisites of intellectual currents.
- Come up with original research topics in consultation with professor.
- Enhance both their oral and written skills of argumentation.
- Conduct autonomous research drawing from a plethora of sources utilizing library and online facilities.
3) **Personal and key skills:**

This course provides students with the opportunity to enhance their communication and presentation skills through graduate-level presentations and class discussions and to develop their critical thinking abilities by exposing them to important primary sources and thought-provoking reviews and critiques of various intellectual works. In addition to improved writing skills, students also get a chance to improve their IT skills through the use of standard and specialized software in conducting and presenting their research.

4) **Contribution to Program objectives:**

This is a core course in the Comparative Politics concentration. In addition to complementing other core courses by providing students with sound grounding in the concepts, main themes and theoretical approaches in Comparative Politics, it also fulfils the Institute’s key policy of giving the course a distinctively Arab dimension. This will provide students with an extra advantage, on top of the combination of skills and knowledge acquired in this and other courses course, in particular critical thinking, independent research, and mastery of the methodologies, theories and key concepts in Comparative Politics. For the students will be made aware of the positive contributions to modern Arab political thought, which will give them confidence and something to build on when attempting to make their own original contributions. It will also alert them to the gaps and shortcomings of contemporary Arab output in the field of political science, and this will motivate them to respond to these gaps and provide them with future research projects. This will deepen understanding of Political Science theories and methodologies, and cumulatively contribute to the Institute’s overall objective of producing competent academics and original researchers.

**LEARNING/TEACHING METHODS**

**One-Hour Lectures**

The class will convene weekly for one hour lectures. In these, the instructor will introduce the major thematic and theoretical themes of the course and provide the students with the historical and theoretical background to the individual intellectuals and ideas broached in the course.

The lectures will allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Arab intellectual thought as well as of the major themes discussed in landmark works of social and political thought that continue to challenge and engage Arab thinkers today. The lectures follow both a chronological and thematic approach that enables students to situate the various intellectual works within a wider geopolitical context as it has changed over time. The instructor will try to utilize a variety of audio visual methods ranging from power-points, analytical charts, to guest lectures and live, in-class interviews with topical experts as available. Powerpoint presentations and pre-exam exercises and study aids will be made available to the students online at Blackboard.

**Two-Hour Seminars**

In the two hour seminar sections we will then critically discuss the assigned authors’ argumentations as well as the framework of understanding proposed by the instructor.
Select, short audiovisual segments and other documentaries and talk shows will be introduced. Students are expected to come prepared to actively engage in the debates and to present on weekly topics drawn from the readings in a 15 minute in-class presentation on the assigned dates as specified in the sign-up sheets handed out in class at the begin of the semester. The presentation will be preceded by the prior distribution of a one page handout outlining the abstract and core questions to be discussed in the paper and presentation. The critical feedback received by the student during his or her presentation by the professor and fellow students is designed to enhance the quality of the final paper.

ASSIGNMENTS

1- Presentation, 15-20 mins

A significant portion of class time will be dedicated to critical and in-depth discussion of the reading material. It is the responsibility of each student to keep class discussions lively, yet civil. To achieve this, students will be asked to give a presentation on the seminar readings.

2- Response papers (total of 30%):

Students must submit two short response paper of 1000 words each on a pre-approved topic or intellectual of their choice drawn from the weekly readings. The papers will each amount to 30% of the final grade. While it could take the form of an in-depth book review, the paper will serve as a trial run for the final paper. Students are highly encouraged to incorporate Arabic-language sources – both primary and secondary – into their research, and are tasked to consult with the professor during his office hours. Students will receive extensive comments on their paper and suggestions for possible final paper topics.

3- Final Exam (2 hours) (40%)

Scheduled during the exam period, this will be a two-hour closed-book exam, details of which will be available in course handbook.

4- Final Paper (30%)

Building on responses generated from their previous presentations and response paper, students are required to write an original research paper about a salient topic of contemporary relevance of Arab foreign policy formation. The subject choice should be discussed with and approved by the professor. Paper topics can be thematic or (comparative) case-studies with a word count of no more than 3000 words including citations. Papers must be coherent and must reflect a clear understanding of the main ideas discussed throughout the course.
ASSESSMENT

- 2 Response papers (1000 words each) 30 %
- Final Exam (2 hours) 40%
- Final Paper (3,000 words) 30 %

SYLLABUS PLAN

The course follows a chronological sequence of the key intellectual movements in the Middle East. Its first weeks will be dedicated to early Arab contributions to political thought, following which the discussion will shift to the period of Arab Awakening, nationalism, and ultimately globalization. The last weeks will be devoted to discussing the varying intellectual responses to the enduring subject of secularism and, finally, the 2011 Arab Uprisings and their fallout and repercussions for present day predicaments.

Week 1: The Arab Polis in History: A Tribal, National or Linguistic Community?

Required reading:


Sultan Al Qasemi, *Jadaliyya*, “Tribalism in the Arab Peninsula: It’s a Family Affair”

“Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun”, Robert Irwin, *Middle Eastern Studies*

Optional:


Michael Cooperson, “Al-Jahiz: A Muslim Humanist for our Time”
Week 2: The Legacy of Ibn Khaldun and the Question of Communal Loyalties

******RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS OCTOBER 14******

Required reading:

Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah, (abbreviated Rosenthal translation, Bollingen series, Princeton UP) pp. 5-9, 91-101, 123-166, 230-25. (original Arabic will be preferable:

ابن خلدون، عبد الرحمن. المقدمة. تحقيق علي عبد الواحد وافي، القاهرة: لجنة البناء العربي، 1965.

Arnold Toynbee, The Study of History (excerpts on challenge and response, Ibn Khaldun, Herodianism and Zealotry)


Adam Schatz, “The Native Informant”, The Nation

http://mondoweiss.net/2012/04/bernard-lewis-revises-bernard-lewis-says-he-opposed-invasion-of-iraq

‘Essays on Ibn Khaldun’, in Contemporary Sociology, Vol. 34, No. 6, 2005

The Ibar: Lessons of Ibn Khaldun's Umran Mind (pp. 585-591)

Mahmoud Dhaouadi
Ibn Khaldun and Anthropology: The Failure of Methodology in the Post 9/11 World (pp. 591-596)

Akbar S. Ahmed
Theorizing from within: Ibn Khaldun and His Political Culture (pp. 596-599)

Lawrence Rosen

Recommended Reading:

محمد عابد الجابري، العقل السياسي العربي، بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية، 1995.
Week 3: The Nahda: Arab Awakening or Liberal Illusion? (Oct 19, 21)

Required reading:

Fouad Ajami, *Dream Palace of the Arabs* (intro, chapters 1-3)


Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy,* “The Nahda and Neopatriarchal Society


Recommended reading:


Week 4: Birth of the Watan / Early Contributions/Origins of Arab Intellectual Thought (Oct 26, 28)

******RESPONSE PAPER 2 DUE IN CLASS OCTOBER 28******

Required reading:


Khalid Mohammad, Khalid, *Min Huna Nabda*, (Maktabat al Iskandariyya).


**Week 5: Contributions of Islamic Intellectuals (Dr Khalil Anani) (Nov 2, 4)**

*Required reading:*


Week 6: Contesting Modernity: Islamism and its Critics

Required reading:


Week 7: Intellectual Contributions of Arab Women (Dr Samer Shehata)

Required reading:


مجموعة باحثين, المرأة العربية في المواجهة النضالية والمشاركة العامة (بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية), الطبعة الأولى, 2006.


Week 8: Orientalisms and Occidentalisms: Arab-Western Confrontations (Guest Lecturer: Professor Hamid Dabashi)

Required reading:


Week 9: Arab Political Reason: The Maghrebi Contributions (Guest Lecturer: Dr. Mohammad Al Mesbahi)

Required reading:

عبدالله العروي، مفهوم الدولة، المركز الثقافي العربي، 2006.

عبدالله العروي، مفهوم الحرية، المركز الثقافي العربي، 2008.

عبدالله العروي، الأيديولوجيا العربية المعاصرة، المركز الثقافي العربي، 1995.

محمد أركون، تاريخية الفكر العربي الإسلامي، المركز الثقافي العربي، 1998.

محمد عابد الجابري، العقل السياسي العربي، مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية، 2007.

محمد عابد الجابري، الخطب العربي المعاصر، مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية، 2007.
Recommended Reading:

أبو يعرب المرزوقي، إصلاح العقل في الفلسفة العربية: من واقعية أرسطو وأفلاطون إلى إسمية ابن نعيم وابن خلدون (بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية)، الطبيعة الرابعة. 2010.


ندوة فكرية، الفلسفة والحداثة في المشروع الفكري لعلي أومليل، (بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية)، 2011.

Week 10: Arab Secularism: Origins, Future

Required reading:

ch.2 (class handout) 
فؤاد زكريا. الحقيقة والوهم في الحركة الإسلامية المعاصرة


Recommended Reading:

Al-‘Azm, Sadiq, "Is Islam Secularizable?"; “The Importance of Being Earnest About Salman Rushdie”

Al-‘al-Azmeh, Aziz, “Postmodern Obscurantism and 'The Muslim Question.'"


Week 11: The *Naksa* and Beyond: What Went Wrong?


Week 12: The Arab Democracy Debate (Dr. Samer Shehata)

*Required reading:*


Recommended Reading:

Eva Bellin, “Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East,” in Comparative Politics, January (44) 2, 2012.

Week 13: The Arab Spring and its Aftermath (Dr. Khalil Anani)


Week 14: FINAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS
**********************************FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS JANUARY 6, 2016**********************************

The final research paper should be selected by the student upon consultation with the instructor. Students will be asked to briefly present their papers with 5 to 7 minute Powerpoint presentations for feedback in class.

Ideally, the material covered in course will serve as a foundation to which Arabic primary and secondary sources are added.

These additional materials will be determined by the instructor and student and assigned to the rest of the class one week prior to the presentation. Students also are responsible for drafting a one-page abstract of his or her topic along with a list of at least SIX individual scholarly articles or books, of which no less than THREE should be in Arabic. Select magazine and newspaper articles may also be considered in consultation with the instructor. This abstract will be reviewed and returned by the instructor.
Final paper subjects may focus on the oeuvre and thought of one of the Arab intellectuals covered in the course, an ideology (secularism, liberalism, Islamism, Salafism etc.). A further possibility is to examine these topics within the context of a country (i.e. secularism in Syria, Salafism in Lebanon, the Brotherhood in Egypt). Students will be graded according to cogency of argument, lucidity, originality of methodological or theoretical approach, level of engagement with the existing literature and depth, breadth and variety of sources.

**INDICATIVE READING LIST**

عزيز العظمة. العلمانية من منظور مختلف. بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية.


ابن خلدون. عبد الرحمن. المقدمة. تحقيق علي عبد الواحد وافي. القاهرة: لجنة البيان العربي.


Fouad Zakhariyya, *Myth and Reality in the Contemporary Islamist Movement*

فؤاد زكريا. الحقيقة والوهم في الحركة الإسلامية المعاصرة. 1986

Fouad Ajami, *Dream Palace of the Arabs*


محمد عابد الجابري. إشكاليات الفكر العربي المعاصر. بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية. 2010.