Minorities of the Middle East
NES 3655; JWST 3655
Spring 2015
Professor D. Starr

Class Meets: T, Th 1:25-2:40
Location: White Hall 110
Office: 415 White Hall
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Phone: (607) 254-6594
Office Hours:
M 10:00-12:00
Th 2:45-3:45

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the media we read about conflict in Iraq between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds; strife between Muslims and Copts in Egypt; rebellion in Syria against the ruling Alawite minority; and violence between Israelis and Palestinians; and the list goes on. This course aims to enrich students' understanding of the diversity of Middle Eastern countries, exploring histories of inter-communal contact and conflict. In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, we explore the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and the impact of its dissolution. We will focus our attention on commercial centers that fostered inter-communal relations, as well as investigating sites of strife and cases of minority repression. We will read histories, memoirs, and fiction, and view films that help us better understand inter-communal relations, tensions, and conflict. We will also interrogate the terms for exploring a range distinctions among majority and minority populations including: religious difference (Muslims, Christians, and Jews); divisions of religious rite (Sunni and Shi’a); entho-linguistic minorities (Armenians and Kurds); national identities (Israelis and Palestinians); cultures of origin (Mizrahi, Sephardi, and Ashkenazi Jews).

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Books available at the Campus Store:


Course Website: There is a website for the course on the Cornell Blackboard service: [http://blackboard.cornell.edu]. [Course title: “NES 3655 Minorities of the Middle East Starr,D.”] Readings from electronic sources listed on the course calendar are accessible via the Blackboard site. Please note that the syllabus is hyperlinked so that you should be able to access readings by clicking on the link in the syllabus while you are logged into blackboard. Films will be available to stream via the course website, as well. The site will
also serve as a source of information about the course and as a communication tool. If you have trouble accessing the site, please let the professor know.

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

**Class Participation (25%)**
Students are expected to attend class regularly, complete the required reading assignments, and participate in class discussions and activities. Please bring the text to class. There will be a map quiz on Thursday, January 29. Additional quizzes may be administered unannounced. Quiz grades will be factored into the overall class participation grade.

**Exams**
There will be three exams. Each exam will consist of an in-class component and a take-home component. The take-home portion of the exam will be passed out prior to the exam date. On the day of the in-class exam, students are expected to hand in their response to the take-home portion of the exam. Take home exams should be typed, double spaced and printed with one inch margins, using 12 point font.

- **Tuesday, March 3** Exam 1 (20%)
- **Tuesday, April 14** Exam 2 (20%)
- **Date TBA** Final exam (25%)

**Presentations (10%)**
Students will be assigned to work in pairs or small groups to give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class. Presentations will be scheduled to take place at the beginning of each unit. Presentations are intended as an introductory overview. Teams are encouraged to seek out and utilize visual aids, including relevant maps, charts, or photographs, etc. You must identify your sources. Please post a copy of your digital materials to the discussion board feature of the course Blackboard site within 24 hours of your presentation.

All members of a presenting team must speak during the presentation, but you can divide the work as you see fit (research, preparing visuals, presenting, etc.). Presentations will be graded on the quality and accuracy of information presented, clarity, and effectiveness of supporting materials. All members of the group will be assigned the same grade for the presentation.

Presentation dates will be assigned the week of January 27, and will begin following the first exam. On the date of your presentation, please arrive 5 minutes early to set up and test any technology.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY**

I find the use of computers and electronic devices to be more of a distraction than a learning tool in discussion-based classes. Class time will be devoted primarily to discussion and the exchange of ideas. To avoid distractions (yours and your classmates’),
I restrict the use of electronic devices in this class. I ask that you use paper and the writing implement of your choice for taking notes during class discussion. You may use a computer or tablet only if you are reading an electronic version of the text, and you need to reference the text. In that case, please make sure that all other windows are closed, and notifications silenced. Please silence and put away cell phones prior to the start of class.

**Cornell Code of Conduct**

Freedom of speech, within commonly accepted limits of safety and civility, is a paramount value in a university community. In a university community, as in society as a whole, freedom of speech cannot be absolute. Speech that is libelous, or that incites a crowd to riot, deserves no protection. Perhaps no one, in real life, has ever falsely shouted "Fire!" in a crowded theater, but surely no one has a right to do so. Within such commonly accepted limits, however, freedom of speech should be the paramount value in a university community. Because it is a special kind of community, whose purpose is the discovery of truth through the practice of free inquiry, a university has an essential dependence on a commitment to the values of unintimidated speech. Name-calling and the shouting of obscenities, even when they are not carried so far as to abridge freedom of speech, are nevertheless deplorable in a community devoted to rational persuasion and articulate controversy. Civility is a fragile virtue, but one upon which a university ultimately depends. For the full statement of Cornell’s Code of Conduct see: [http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/cms/ treasurer/policyoffice/policies/volumes/governance/upload/CCC.pdf](http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/cms/ treasurer/policyoffice/policies/volumes/governance/upload/CCC.pdf)

**Cornell Code of Academic Integrity**

Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student and faculty member in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework situations, but in all University relationships and interactions connected to the educational process, including the use of University resources. A Cornell student's submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student's own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student's academic position truthfully reported at all times. In addition, Cornell students have a right to expect academic integrity from each of their peers, and from their professors. For the full statement of Cornell’s Code of Academic Integrity see: [http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html](http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html)

**Students with Disabilities**

Appropriate and confidential accommodations will be made for students eligible for support from Student Disabilities Services. Students in need of special accommodations should bring the letter from SDS to the professor at the beginning of the semester.
**Course Calendar**

*From Dhimmi to Minority*
Tuesday, January 27


*Copts*
Thursday, January 29


**Map Quiz**

*Copts and Jews in Cosmopolitan Egypt*
Tuesday, February 3


Thursday, February 10


*Jews of the Middle East*
Tuesday, February 10


- Michelle U. Campos *Between Others and Brothers*. pp 585-588.
• Rami Ginat. Jewish Identities in the Arab Middle East: The Case of Egypt in Retrospect. pp 593-596.

Thursday, February 12


**Tuesday, February 17—NO CLASS**

Armenian Genocide and the end of the Ottoman Empire
Thursday, February 19


• Fatma Müge Göçek, “Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on 1915.” pp. 42-55.

** Monday, February 23 -- Special Screening**
Film: Ararat (Canada, 2002) Directed by Atom Egoyan.
Cornell Cinema, Willard Straight Theater, 7:00 PM

Tuesday, February 24

Discussion of Ararat

Exam Review

Greek-Turkish Population Exchange and the Consolidation of Turkish Nationalism
Thursday, February 26

Film: Smyrna: The Destruction of a Cosmopolitan City - 1900-1922 (Greece, 2012) Directed by Maria Iliou.

**Take home exam distributed**

**Tuesday, March 3 — EXAM 1**

**Domne**

Thursday, March 5


**Kurds**

Tuesday, March 10

Film: Marooned in Iraq (Iran, 2002) Directed by Bahman Gobadi.


Thursday, March 12


Words without Borders, special issue on Kurdish Literature (January 2014).

- Bakhtiyar Ali, “The Beginnings of Ja’far-i-Magholi and Hasan Tofan”
- Yavuz Ekinci from “The Lost Lands of Paradise”
- Murathan Mungan, “Omaira”
- Alber Sabanoglu, “Breaking the Taboo: Turkish Writers Face the Kurdish Past”
- Abdulla Pashew, “Union”
- Ziad Rashad, “The Poetry of Truth: An Interview with Abdulla Pashew”
- Murat Özyaşar, “Mirror Shock”
- Kajal Ahmad, “Separation from the Earth”
- Jamal Khambar, “If You See Fatima”
- Hama Jaza, “Sudden Sorrow”
Mizrahi Jews in Israel
Tuesday, March 17

Film: *Forget Baghdad* (Germany, 2002). Directed by Samir.


Palestinians in Israel
Thursday, March 19

TV Series: *Arab Labor* (Israel 2007), Created by Sayed Kashua
Episodes: “The Car” and “Crime on the Border.”


**Tuesday, March 24 — No Class **

**Wednesday, March 25 – Special Lecture**
Sayed Kashua, “The Foreign Mother Tongue”
4:30 PM, McGraw Hall 165

Druze
Thursday, March 26


**Spring Break—No Class **

Berbers
Tuesday, April 7


**Baha’i**
Thursday, April 9


**Take home exam distributed **

**Tuesday, April 14 — EXAM 2**

**Shi’a in Iraq**
Thursday, April 16


**The Iraq War and Beyond—Dissolution of Iraqi Pluralism**
Tuesday, April 21


Thursday, April 23


**Iraqi Christians and Yazidis**
Tuesday, April 28


Sinan Antoon
- *They Kill Christians (Too).* Jadaliyya.com. 3 Nov. 2010.
• An Excerpt from Sinan Antoon’s “Ave Maria.” *Jada liyya.com.*  
21 Aug. 2014.


*Alawites*
Thursday, April 30


*ISIS and the Current Threat to Minorities*
*Conclusion and Review*
Tuesday, May 5

"Between The Millstones: The State of Iraq's Minorities Since the Fall of Mosul." February 2015. Report by: The Institute for International Law and Human Rights (ILHR); Minority Rights Group International (MRG); No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ); Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO).


**Take home exam distributed **