

**Harvard University
Department of Government**

**Gov 90tm: Contemporary Arab Political and Social Thought
Preliminary Draft**

Spring 2008
T, 2:00-4:00
CGIS N108

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Instructor: Emad Shahin
Office Hours: T&TH: 11:00-12:30
Office CGIS 437

Course Description

This course focuses on the main intellectual trends in the contemporary Arab political and social thought. It analyzes their evolution and influence since the end of the nineteenth century. The course examines the various attempts at achieving political and social reform or an “Arab awakening,” and the contexts that gave rise to several competing ideological currents. Discussions cover the intellectual encounters with the West, Islamic modernism, regional nationalism, Arab nationalism, radical Arab ideologies, and Islamic revival. The course also examines the ongoing intellectual debates that are vigorously resurfacing among intellectuals in today's Arab world. Such issues include the debate over secularism, identity and nationhood, globalization, women, and democratization.

Course Objectives

It is expected that students in this course will be able to:

- Understand the main intellectual currents in the Arab world and the contexts that led to their evolution;
- Analyze the tenets and evolution within each intellectual trends;
- Explain the intellectual, political, and social themes that pre-occupied Arab intellectuals;
- Understand the nature, focus, and extent of the contemporary intellectual debates among Arab thinkers;
- Critically success or failure of Arab intellectuals to build a consensus or some agreement over main values.

Requirements and Grading

- Final grades will be assigned according to your performance on the following items:
- Mid-Term Examination (T, March 20) 20%
- 20-page Term-paper (May 17) 50%
 - Abstract: 5 points
 - Annotated Bibliography 5 points
 - Detailed Outline: 5 points
 - Final Paper: 35%
- Paper Presentation 10%
- Class attendance and participation 20%

In the beginning of each session, we will conduct a discussion of the assigned readings. As a seminar course, you are expected to attend regularly and not miss

classes; do the assigned readings before coming to class; and contribute positively to the class discussions.

The mid-term exam will be designed to test your familiarity with the assigned readings. It will consist of: (i) a set of short-answer items (you will have a choice), usually calling for definition and brief discussion of key concepts; (ii) one or two long essay questions selected from two or three.

The writing assignment: We will discuss together possible paper topics. The paper (20 pages) should address a main research question on one of the topics in the course.

It should be focused, analytical, and well documented. It should be typed, font 12, paginated, double-space, and submitted on time.

All topics should be approved in advance to ensure that the topic is doable and that adequate sources are available.

Your paper should reflect the following criteria:

1. clear research focus;
2. clear and fresh research problem and/or questions;
3. clear understanding of the main concepts and themes;
4. coherent analysis;
5. solid research and documentation;
6. clear conclusion

Each student will turn in a one-page abstract containing:

1. Research Topic;
2. Research problem/questions;
3. Main argument (Thesis statement or your tentative answer(s) to the questions);
4. Annotated bibliography of the sources you are planning to use on a separate page.

Grading Criteria for the Paper: Theoretical framework (or knowledge of the literature), research problem and questions; coherence and organization, writing style, level of documentation, bibliography and sources.

Late submission will not be accepted.

The papers and presentations must be submitted in hard copy and by email.

Grading Scale: A = 92 and above; A- = 91-90; B+ = 89-88; B = 87-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-78; C = 77-73.

You will receive a numerical grade for each assignment. This means that you have to be extra-careful not to lose points as you proceed in the course.

No incomplete grade or make up examinations will be granted

Readings

The following books are required for the course and are available at the Coop.

- Abu Rabi`, Ibrahim, Contemporary Arab Thought (London: Pluto Press, 2004).
- Hourani, Albert. Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- Salim, Paul. The Bitter Legacy (Syracuse University Press, 1994).

Additional reading materials are available as course packages at Gnomon.

Course Outline

T, Feb. 5: General Introduction to the Course

T, Feb. 12: Ideology: Consensus and Discord

Salim, The Bitter Legacy: chapter 1.

The Old Order: The Islamic State

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapters 1 and 2.

T, Feb. 19: The Early Encounter with Europe

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapter 3 and 4.

Rifaa Rafi al-Tahtawi, "The Honest Guide for Girls and Boys," introduction and translation by Emad Shahin, in Kurzman, Charles, ed., Modernist Islam. Check course website.

T, Feb. 26: Islamic Modernism

Esposito, Islam: The Straight Path, chapter 4.

Nafi, Bashir, The Rise and Decline of the Arab-Islamic Reform Movement (London: The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, 2000): 37-78.

Jamal Eddin al-Afghani

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapter 5.

Muhammad Abduh

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapter 6.

T, March 4: Ideological Proliferation:

Regional Nationalisms: Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese Nationalisms

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapter 7.

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapter 8.

Salim, The Bitter Legacy: chapter 5.

Hussein, Taha, The Future of Culture in Egypt, translated by Sidney Glazer, American Council of Learned Societies: 1-27.

T, March 11: Arab Nationalism: Origins and Evolution

Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: chapter 11.

Salim, The Bitter Legacy: chapter 2

Dessouki, Ali E. Hilal, "Arab Intellectuals and Al-Nakba: The Search for Fundamentalism," Middle Eastern Studies, 9: 187-195.

T, March 18: Contemporary Debates: Secularism

Abu-Rabi`, "Contemporary Arab Intellectual Trends," in Abu-Rabi`, Contemporary Arab Thought: 63-92.

Salem, Paul, "The Rise and Fall of Secularism in the Arab World," Middle East Policy, Vol. 4, No. 3 (March 1996): 147-160.

Abu-Rabi`, "Secularism and its Hazards," in Abu-Rabi`, Contemporary Arab Thought: 93-113; and "Contemporary Arab Views of Secularism," 114-125.

Flores, Alexander, "Secularism, Integralism and Political Islam: The Egyptian Debate," Middle East Report, No. 183 (July-Aug. 1993): 32-38.

April 1, This class is rescheduled for April 12

**April 8: Mid-term Examination
(Covers up to Contemporary Debates: Secularism)**

April 12: Identity and Political Community

Abu-Rabi`, "Formation of Contemporary Identities: Nationalism and Islamism in Contemporary Arab Thought," in Abu-Rabi`, Contemporary Arab Thought: 126-149.

Rida, Muhammad Rashid, "Renewal, Renewing and Renewers," introduction and translation by Emad Shahin, in Kurzman, Modernist Islam. Check course website.

T, April 15: Westernization and Globalization

Abu-Rabi`, "Globalization: A Contemporary Islamic Response," in Abu-Rabi`, Contemporary Arab Thought: 164-184; and "Contemporary Arab Thought and Globalization," 185-202.

T, April 22: Arab Feminism

Taraboulsi, Fawaz, "An Intelligent Man's Guide to Modern Arab Feminism," Al-Raida, Vol. 20, No. 100 (Winter 2003): 15-19.

<http://www.iiav.nl/eazines/email/AlRaida/2003/No100.pdf>

Hatem, Mervat, "In the Eyes of the Storm: Islamic Societies and Muslim Women in Globalization Discourses," Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2006): 22-35.

Women, Religion, and Ethics, Nawal El-Sadawi and Heba Raouf, Reviewed by Elbendary, Amina in Al-Ahram Weekly Online, 9 - 15 August 2001, Issue No.546.

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/546/bo2.htm>

Raouf, Heba, "Women and the Interpretation of Islamic Sources,"
http://www.irfi.org/articles/articles_451_500/women_and_the_interpretation_of.htm

Rasmussen, Lene Kofoed, "Muslim Women and Intellectual in 20th Century Egyptian Public Debate," The Fourth Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies: The Middle East in Globalizing World, Oslo, August 13-16, 1998.
<http://www.smi.uib.no/pao/kofoed.html>

T, April 29: Democratization

Azmeh, Aziz, "Popularism Contra Democracy: Recent Democratic Discourse in the Arab World," in Salameh, Ghassan, Democracy without Democrats: 112-129.

Esposito, John and John Voll, "Islam's Democratic Essence," Middle East Quarterly (September 1994).

Pipes, Daniel, and Muqtadar Khan, "Debate: Islam and Democracy," PBS, "Wide Angle," July 15, 2003. <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/1167>