UNDERSTANDING MODERN NORTH AFRICA

Course Syllabus

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Class Meetings MW, 6:30-7:45 P.M., IRB, (154 Bay State Road), Rm. 102
Office Hours Monday, 2:00-4:30; Wednesday, 11:00-1:00; By Appointment
Office 156 Bay State Road, Rm. 302

Course Description

An introduction to the politics, cultures, societies, economies of the region of northwest Africa called by medieval Arab geographers and travelers the Maghrib. The term describes a large and geographically varied landscape whose inhabitants have indentified culturally with the Islamic Middle East since the area’s conquest by Muslim Arabs after the seventh century, while maintaining an identity of their own which combines elements of their Arabo-Islamic heritage with that of the Amazigh (Berber), Mediterranean, and African world of which they have also been a part since ancient times. Since the 1950s and 1960s, this region has been divided politically into the nation-states of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, and the disputed territories of the Western Sahara.

In the Middle Ages, Maghrabi merchants, scholars, soldiers, and governing dynasties were part of and, in several periods, politically dominated the western Mediterranean, including Muslim Iberia (al-Andalus). They participated fully in the flowering of Islamic Civilization in that region: in the production of the brilliant scientific, institutional, and artistic achievements epitomized in its wealth of surviving monuments and the widely influential work of its renowned philosophers, physicians, and writers, both medieval and modern.

Prior to its conquest and colonization by European regimes in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, its governments and fleets of privateers played a significant role in the political and economic affairs of Western Europe and the United States—not to mention in their collective imaginations—as the “Barbary Corsairs”. As colonies, and later, as independent states, the nations and societies of this region have developed deep and complex cultural, political and economic relationships with Europe, especially...
France, which became the dominant colonial power there after its conquest of Algeria in the nineteenth century.

Today, several million of the region’s people live in Europe and are having a significant impact on its political, socio-economic, and cultural life. The region provides Europe— and to some degree the United States— with critical supplies of oil and gas, is seen as an important and growing market for European goods and continues to be a place of critical political and strategic concern for European and American governments. While it continues to interact closely with the Arab and Islamic world, it persists in sustaining its own architecture of interests, identity, and priorities based on its own geographical, cultural, and historical experiences and context, all of which merit serious study and appreciation on their own and which also provide a unique vantage point from which to better comprehend the greater Middle East/North African and Mediterranean region generally. Since January, 2011 the entire region has been shaken by popular protests which had their beginnings in North Africa: governments in Tunisia and Libya were overthrown, Morocco’s monarchy was moved to undertake important reforms, and Algeria and Mauritania struggled to maintain an uneasy status quo.

The course will focus on the region’s political, social, economic, and cultural development since 1900, with emphasis on the period post- World War II. It will provide an overview of the its medieval legacies, but its principal emphasis will be on the Maghrib’s experiences as French, Spanish, or Italian colonies emerging independent nations and states. The course and readings will also provide an in-depth consideration of the problems, achievements, and challenges confronted by the Maghrib since it achieved independence. This section will include discussion of critical issues, such as the quest for democratic government, economic development, education policies, gender equality, immigration, and human rights. Substantial attention will also be given to social and cultural developments and their critical interaction in the political process, with particular attention to the “Arab Spring”. Salient in this regard is the role being played by Islam in politics and the search among all North Africans for cultural authenticity, democracy, and justice throughout the region as it enters the more and more fully globalized setting of the twenty-first century. The focus on Islam has become more urgent and intense in recent years as extremist Islamist organizations like al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghrib and now, ISIS, have made their threatening appearance throughout the region.

PREREQUISITES: None

REQUIRED TEXTS:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, PROJECTS:

I. Class Attendance and Participation

II. Map Exercise (materials provided by instructor)

III. Readings—As Indicated in the Syllabus

IV. Two Examinations: Mid-Term and Final

V. Two Short Writing Projects:

a. Analytical paper on the image of North Africa in film based on a critical review of one (1) of the following films: *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966), *Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Streets* (Nabil Ayuch, 2000), *Halfaouine: Boy of the Terraces* (Ferid Boughedir, 1990), *Casablanca Calling* (Rosa Rogers, 2014), *Bastards: Outcast in Morocco* (Deborah Perkin, 2014), *Tinghir-Jerusalem* (Kamal Hachkar, 2011), *Tunisia, Year Zero* (Feriel Ben Mahmoud, 2011). All of these films raise social, political, historical, and cultural issues critical to Tunisians, Algerians, and Moroccans today and convey an impression of how they see and deal with these issues. This paper should describe and analyze the focus and interpretive stance of the film reviewed. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, and 1,500-2,000 words in length.

b. A Review and analysis of one (your choice) of the books from the “required texts” list. In this essay describe briefly the scope of the work selected and analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Does the book have a thesis or a particular perspective/bias? Is it adequately documented? How has it been useful to you in this course? Would you recommend this work to others? Your paper should be typed, double-spaced, and 1,500-2,000 words in length.
THE ASSIGNED FILMS ARE AVAILABLE AT KRASKER FILM/VIDEO SERVICES IN THE MUGAR LIBRARY

ALL DUE DATES for writing projects are given in the syllabus. Work not received on the date due will be penalized one full grade for each day it is late (allowances made, of course, for excusable delays).

ALL QUOTATIONS AND PARAPHRASES from published sources must be identified with page and source citations. Useful guides for the form and content of footnotes, endnotes, in-text notes, bibliographical entries, and other questions concerning organization and style are: Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers, Andrea A. Lunsford, The Everyday Writer, Diana Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual, Joseph Gibaldi, The MLA Handbook, and the Chicago Manual of Style. Recent editions of these titles should be available in the library, online, or at local bookstores.

**Academic Misconduct:** All class members are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. You are expected to provide citations in papers for all quotations, paraphrases, and ideas taken from any source other than your own original thoughts. Boston University has very strict standards for intellectual integrity, and punishment for plagiarism is severe, and can include permanent expulsion from the university. For more on the definition of plagiarism and the standards to which you will be held, see the CAS Academic Conduct Code, available at [http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/) or the GRS Academic Conduct Code:

[http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/](http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/)

**COURSE GRADE VALUE OF PROJECTS AND EXAMINATIONS:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map Exercise</td>
<td>05%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film Essay</td>
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<td>Book Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
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LECTURE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

January 23  Orientation to Course Procedures and Content


January 25  The Physical Environment and Environmental Issues


January 30  Social Orders and Issues


February 1  Maghrib States and Societies on the Eve of Colonial Conquest


February 6  Colonial Legacies and Their Impact on Modern States and Societies, Part I: Colonial Conquest and Primary Resistance


MAP EXERCISE DUE

February 8  Colonial Legacies, Part II: Colonial Regimes -- Algeria

February 13  Colonial Legacies, Part III: Colonial Regimes -- Tunisia and Morocco

February 15  Colonial Legacies: Part IV: Colonial Regimes -- Libya and Mauritania

February 20  PRESIDENTS’ DAY – NO CLASS

February 21  MONDAY SCHEDULE

Achieving Independence and Creating Modern States, Part I: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco


February 22  Achieving Independence and Creating Modern States, Part II: Libya and Mauritania


February 27  Security Forces, State Building, and Authoritarian Regimes


March 1  Making the Transition From Colonial to National Economies


March 4-12  SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

March 13  The Quest for Democracy and Justice: Political Parties and Social Movements


March 15  MID-TERM EXAMINATION
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Authors/References</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Feminism and Its Discontents</td>
<td>Doris Gray, <em>Beyond Feminism and Islamism</em>, 63-131 and 217-218</td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td>Women as Agents of Change in the Modern Maghrib</td>
<td>Doris Gray, <em>Beyond Feminism and Islamism</em>, 132-207 and 219-224</td>
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April 12  The “Arab Spring” – Libya and Mauritania


April 17  PATRIOTS’ DAY --- NO CLASS

April 19  Intraregional Relations: The Quest for a “United Arab Maghrib”


April 24  Immigration and Displacement


April 26  The Maghrib in the Larger World: Relations with Europe and Asia


May 1  North Africa and the United States


May 3  Review and Course Evaluation

BOOK REVIEW PAPER DUE
May 4-7    STUDY PERIOD
May 8-12   FINAL EXAMINATIONS (Time and place to be announced)
May 19-21  COMMENCEMENT WEEK