

CURE 2228: History of the Arab World, Second Term, 2024-2025

Professor:	James D. FRANKEL (jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk)
Teaching Assistant:	Hussein HASSAN (1155201624@link.cuhk.edu.hk)
Lecture:	Thursdays, 1:30-3:15 p.m., LSK 308
Tutorial:	Thursdays, 3:30-4:15 p.m., LSK 308

Course Description:

The “Arab World” today refers to a large geographical area: from the Atlantic coast of North Africa in the West to the border of Iran in the East. Arabic is the principal spoken language of this region, which is also linked by shared cultural and religious traditions. The course presents a historical survey of the Arab World from pre-Islamic times to the modern era. The first part of this survey the rise and spread of Arab political rule and Arab language and culture with the advent of Islam in the 7th century, with later emphasis on some of the principal political, economic, social, religious, and cultural developments and their relevance to the contemporary “Middle East” region. Two main themes referred to throughout the course will be the unity and diversity of the Arab World and how various Arab cultures and societies have interacted with other peoples in this region and beyond.

I. Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Understand religions and cultures of the Arab World in their historical settings and contemporary contexts of modern living;
- 2) Recognize central themes and issues in the Arab World, especially with respect to cultural and religious dimensions;
- 3) Apprehend a basic outline of Arab history since the 6th century including important events, periods, individuals, and processes;
- 4) Communicate and present (orally and in writing) proficiently in English with accurate referencing and clarity of expression;
- 5) Engage in a critical analysis of issues pertaining to the Arab World by the methods of the humanities and social sciences;
- 6) Demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and intercultural literacy, specifically in regard to the Arab World;
- 7) Have awareness of plurality and multi-faceted complexity within Arab cultural, political and religious traditions, and of the issues of multiple and conflicting interpretations of language and symbols, texts and traditions;

- 8) Acknowledge the contested and provisional nature of knowledge and understanding.
- 9) Show tolerance of diverse positions and have respect for others' views;
- 10) Have a critical and yet sympathetic understanding and appreciation of religious and cultural traditions, political viewpoints and ideological positions, especially those one does not belong.

II. Course Content:

Basic texts:

Ali, Ahmed. *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001 (or a comparable English translation of the Qur'an).

Esposito, John L., ed. *The Oxford History of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Suggested Readings:

Abdo, Genevieve. *The New Sectarianism: The Arab Uprisings and the Rebirth of the Shi'a-Sunni Divide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Al-Budaiwi, Dalal. *Freedom of Expression in Kuwait*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011.

Ajami, Fouad. *Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation's Odyssey*. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.

Ajami, Fouad. *In This Arab Time: The Pursuit of Deliverance*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2014.

Angrist, Michele Penner. *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*. 2nd Edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013.

Anscombe, Frederick F. *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Arberry, A.J. *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957.

Bacik, Gokhan. *Hybrid Sovereignty in the Arab Middle East: The Cases of Kuwait, Jordan, and Iraq*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Barakat, Halim. *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Bennison, Amira. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the 'Abbasid Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Choueiri, Youssef M. ed. *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*. Oxford:

- Blackwell, 2005.
- Dabashi, Hamid. *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Diamond, Larry, et al., eds. *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*. 1st Edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Donner, Fred M. *The Early Islamic Conquests*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Donner, Fred M. *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Elbadawi, Ibrahim and Makdisi, Samir, eds. *Democratic Transitions in the Arab World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Fierro, Maribel, ed. *The New Cambridge History of Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Finkel, Caroline. *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.
- Haider, Najam. *Shi'i Islam: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Halm, Heinz. *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning*. New York: IB Tauris, 2005.
- Handoussa, Heba. *Arab Women & Economic Development*. Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2006.
- Hazleton, Lesley. *After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam*. New York: Doubleday, 2009.
- Hillenbrand, Robert. *Islamic Art and Architecture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999.
- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 1*. Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1977.
- Hoyland, Robert G. *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Ibn Munqidh, Usama. *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2008.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*. Edinburgh: Pearson, 2004.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2007.
- Khadduri, Majid and Ghareeb, Edmund. *War in the Gulf, 1990-91*. 1st Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1997.

- MacDonald, Margaret Read and Taibah, Nadia J. *Folktales from the Arabian Peninsula: Tales of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates, and Yemen*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2015.
- Nicholson R. A. *A Literary History of the Arabs*. New York: Cosimo, 2010.
- Ottaway, Marina and Choucair-Vizos, Julia. *Beyond the Facade: Political Reform in the Arab World*. Washington: Brookings Institution, 2008. Peter, F.E., ed. *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*. Abingdon, UK: Ashgate, 1999.
- Petry, Carl, ed. *The Cambridge History of Egypt, vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Ruthven, Malise. *Islam in the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Retsö, Jan. *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their history from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2003.
- Rogan, Eugene. *The Arabs: A History*. New York: Basic Books, 2011
- Sadiki, Larbi. *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2013.
- Wehrey, Frederic M. *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Term Schedule:

1. 9/1 **Introduction to the Course – Overview; Who are the Arabs?**

2. 16/1 **Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Byzantine/Sassanian Near East Late Antiquity: The Byzantines and Sassanians; Arabia and the Near East Before Islam – Conflict, Tribalism, and the *Jahiliyya* Age**
Readings:
“Pre-Islamic Poetry” (Blackboard)

3. 23/1 **Muḥammad and Early Muslim Community: Constitution of Medina and the First Islamic State**

FIRST TUTORIAL

4. 30/1 **NO CLASS – LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAY**

5. 6/2 **Successors to the Prophet: The Rashidūn Caliphs; *Ridda* Wars, *Fitna*, and Conquest**

6. 13/2 **The Umayyad Caliphate: The Umayyads, Reforms, and the Rise of the ‘Ulamā’**
7. 20/2 **The ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate: The Establishment of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate; The ‘Abbāsīd “Golden Age”; House of Wisdom, Baghdad and Samarra**
8. 27/2 **Rival Caliphates: The Fāṭimīds and Muslim Spain: Ismā‘īli Shi‘ism; Rise of the Fāṭimīds; Shi‘a Propaganda; Fāṭimīd Cairo; A lamūt; Umayyad Rule in Al-Andalūs**
9. 6/3 **NO CLASS – READING WEEK**
9. 13/3 **The Age of Sultans and Crusades: ‘Abbāsīd Fragmentation and the Rise of Sultanates: Seljuks, Zengīds, and Ayyubīds; Crusade and Jihad: Jerusalem, Crusader Kingdoms, and the Muslim Response**
10. 20/3 **Coming of the Turks and Mongols: Mamlūk Egypt; The Black Death; Mongol Conquest of Baghdad**
11. 27/3 **The Ottoman Age: Gunpowder Empires; Conquest of Constantinople; Ottoman Expansion**
12. 3/4 **The Colonial Age and Arab Responses: Napoleon; French and British Rivalries; Rise of Arab Kingdoms and Emirates**
13. 10/4 **Making of the Modern Middle East: World Wars; Zionism; Pan-Arab Nationalism; Pan-Islamism; The Cold War**
14. 17/4 **Contemporary Reflections: The Arab Spring; Extremism and Regional Conflict**

III. Course Requirements:

1. 20% Participation/Discussion/Tutorials
2. 40% Term paper (approx. 2,000 words in English), due 13/12 by 5 p.m. (See paper topics on pp.7-8)
3. 40% Group Presentation

Grade Descriptors:

A Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.

A- Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

B Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

C Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.

D Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes

F Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Class Participation:

The success of this course depends on the collaboration of professor, tutor and students. Students are also expected to participate in class discussions, with thoughtful questions and responses. Students are required to attend lectures and tutorials on time, unless they have a justifiable reason (medical or some other emergency) for being absent. Two (2) unexcused absences are permitted during the course. Beyond that, absences will be counted against the final grade (good attendance will likewise be rewarded); students who miss more than 25% of the total number of class meetings cannot pass the course.

Tutorials:

Tutorial sessions, led by the teaching assistant, will meet as scheduled beginning in week 3 of the semester (23/1).

Group Presentations:

Students will work together in groups of 4-5 people. Each group will make a 20-25-minute presentation on one of the weekly tutorial viewing assignments. The presentation may include PowerPoint, other audio-visual aids, and/or a written handout. Presentations will be assessed based on their clarity, content, and originality of their analysis.

Paper Guidelines:

All papers are to be based on the readings, classroom lectures and discussions, and/or outside research, with all sources cited appropriately (using either footnotes or MLA parenthetical citation). Each paper is to be approximately 1,800-2,000 words in English, typed and double-spaced. Grammar, punctuation, style, and content will be factored in the grading of the essay. Papers must be submitted on the due date via email (sent directly to the professor). Late papers will be penalized and papers more than one week late will not be accepted for a full grade.

Final Paper Topics (choose one):

1. Examine and describe the various leadership roles in Arab culture and society throughout history, and analyze how the concept of **authority** has evolved over time in the Arab world, citing examples of specific individuals in different historical periods.
2. Analyze the relationship of **religion and political power** in Arab history. How are they connected? In what ways have they cooperated? In what ways have they clashed? Please provide examples of this evolving relationship in different historical periods.
3. Enumerate some of the important **contributions of the Arab World to global civilization and geopolitics** through history. Analyze how this region and its peoples have played a pivotal role in culture, politics, economics and religion throughout history, and why it is still so important in international affairs today. What role(s) do you think it will play in the future, and why?

Academic Honesty:

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University. All student assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide (<https://veriguide2.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/cuhk/>). The system will issue a receipt, which should be signed and submitted to the professor together with the assignment.

Instructor's Contact Information:

Professor Frankel's office is located at KKB 228. Appointments are welcome and should be made via email at: jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk