

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

<https://www.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

***Arab 399 B1 (Winter Term 2020):  
Introduction to Arab Culture***

**Instructor: Iman Mersal**

**Tues & Thurs, 3:30 -4:50 PM**

**Place: TBD**

**Office: Arts 242C**

**Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m, Thursdays 11:00 a.m.– 12 p.m. or by appointment**

**E-mail: [imersal@ualberta.ca](mailto:imersal@ualberta.ca)**

**Course Website: eClass**

**Bachelor of Arts / Major in Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:**

<http://bit.ly/MLCS-major>

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- ***Course-based Ethics Approval*** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.? *Not required.*
  - Community Service Learning component. *None*
  - Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material: Exam registry – Students' Union (<https://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>)

***Course Description and Objectives:***

This course offers a critical introduction to Arab culture as represented in expressive media—literature, cinema, music. Such culture offers a rich source of representations of the Arab colonial past and post-colonial present, and serves also as a means of introducing students to a variety of topics, theories, and debates within the field of post-colonial studies. The focus will be on four central themes and their implication in identity formation across the Arab world:

1. The Discovery of the West and the Onset of Colonialism.
2. Tradition and Modernity.
3. Colonialism, Post-colonialism, and Questions of Identity.
4. Feminism, Gender, and Sexuality.

During the course of the semester we will read autobiographies, novels, short stories, poetry and interviews with intellectuals; students will also be introduced to Arab films, TV programs, and music. These materials have been selected not only on the basis of their literary and artistic value, but also their textual, cultural and historical engagement with the four themes. Authors include 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Naguib Mahfouz, and Salwa Bakr (Egypt); Tayeb Salih (Sudan), Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmoud Darwish (Palestine), Hanan Al-Shaykh (Lebanon), Inaam Kachachi, Buthayna al-Nasiri, Alia Mamdouh and Sargon Boulus (Iraq), and Assia Djebar (Algeria).

Students are expected to complete the required readings and viewings in advance, attend every class, and participate fully in classroom discussions in order to receive the maximum participation grade. All readings are drawn from required texts, available in the SUB bookstore, or online, as explained below.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explore some essential questions of modern Arab culture, including issues concerning modernity, traditions, colonialism, identity, and sexuality.
- Formulate and explore relevant new questions on their own.
- Identify the output and significance of some of the most important intellectual, literary, and artistic figures of modern Arab culture.
- Situate different artistic genres, movements, and productions within their respective historical and cultural contexts.

Beyond the scope of MLCS 399, students will enjoy reading texts and watching films from the Arab world, while continuing to ask critical questions about how such expressive culture reflects core social issues, and how it relates to corresponding expressive arts elsewhere in the world.

**Note: This course counts towards the Certificate in International Learning (CIL)**

**Course Format:** The objectives of this course will be achieved via a combination of formal lectures, assigned readings and audiovisual materials, class discussions, guided questions, student presentations, and group activities. There will be three hours of instruction per week, three office hours, and individual consultations in preparation for final papers.

**Texts:**

**Available in the SUB bookstore:**

1. Naguib Mahfouz. *Midaq Alley*.
2. Tayeb Salih. *Season of Migration to the North*.
3. Ghassan Kanafani. *Men in the Sun*.
4. Hanan al-Shaykh. *The Story of Zahra*.

**Online required reading:**

- 1- Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, "Marvelous legacies of biographies and events" in Louis Awad: *The Literature of Ideas in Egypt*, pp. 8-24.
- 2- Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, in Louis Awad: *The Literature of Ideas in Egypt*, pp. 25- 43.
- 3- Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West*, pp.1-23.
- 4- Mahmoud Darwish's poems.
- 5- Sargon Boulus's poems.
- 6- Assia Djebar, "The Foreigner, Sister of the Foreigner Woman," pp. 121- 128 in *The Heinemann Book of Contemporary African Short Stories* (AWS African Writers Series), edited by C. L. Innes and Chinua Achebe.
- 7- Salwa Bakr, "That Beautiful Undiscovered Voice" pp. 57-70 in *The Wiles of Men and Other Stories*. (Trans. Denys Johnson-Davies.) London: Quartet Books, 1992.
- 8- Three short stories by Inaam Kachachi, Buthayna al-Nasiri, Alia Mamdouh from (Denys Johnson. *Under the Naked Sky: Short Stories from the Arab World*).
- 9- Selected poems from Arab female poets.

**Online required films:**

- 1 - *Saladin*. Feature Film (1963). Director: Youssef Chahin. (145 minutes).
- 2- *West Beirut*. Feature Film (1998). Director: Zaid Doueiri. (105 minutes).
- 3- *Paradise Now*. Feature Film (2005) Director: Hani Abu- Assad. (91 minutes).
- 4- *Umm Kulthum, A Voice Like Egypt*. Documentary (1996). Director: Michal Goldman. (67 minutes).
- 5- *The Dupes*: Feature Film (1972). Director: Tawfik Saleh. (107 minutes).

**Offline films (viewed in class or in library):**

- 1 - *Mahmoud Darwich - As the Land is the Language*. Documentary (1997). Director: Simone Bitton. (60 minutes)
- 2 - *Divine Intervention*: Feature Film (2002). Director: Elia Suleiman. (92 minutes).

**Online optional reading:**

- 1- Albert Hourani. *A History of the Arab Peoples*, pp. 373- 400.
- 2- Samah Selim. "The Nahda, Popular Fiction and the Politics of Translation." *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 71-90.
- 3- Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem* (Trans. Myrna Godzich & Wald Godzich; intro. Barbara Harlow.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. (Selections)
- 4 - Interview with Naguib Mahfouz from *The Paris Review*, Summer 1992. (23 pages).
- 5- Frederic Lagrange, "Male Homosexuality in Modern Arabic Literature" pp. 169-190 in *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Middle East*. (Mai Ghoussoub & Emma Sinclair-Webb, eds.) London: Saqi Books, 2006.
- 6- Magda al Noweih, "Constructions of Masculinity in Two Egyptian Novels" pp. 235-263 in *Intimate Selving: Gender, Self and Identity in Arab Families*. (Suad Joseph, ed.) Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999.
- 7- Yusuf Idris, *A Leader of Men*. Translated by Saad ElKhadem. Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1988.

***Additional Course Fees: none***

***Important Dates: See Academic Schedule in current Calendar***

1. ***First Day of Winter Class: January 6, 2020.***
2. ***Add/Delete Date: January 17, 2020.***
3. ***50% Withdrawal Date: February 5, 2020.***
4. ***Winter Term Reading Week: February 18-21, 2020***
5. ***Withdrawal Date: April 1, 2020.***
6. ***Last Day of Winter Classes: April 8, 2020.***

***There is no final exam for this course. Students have to meet the instructor on Friday, March 13 (or by appointment) to discuss their final papers and class presentations. Due April 14.***

**Course Schedule (\*):**

	Tuesday	Thursday	Topic
Week 1	January 7		Introduction
<i>Unit one: the discovery of the West and the onset of colonialism</i>			
Week 1		January 9	Lecture: An Overview of Arabic Poetry
Week 2	January 14		Lecture: The discovery of European civilization in the 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> centuries.  Required readings: Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, “ <i>Marvelous legacies of biographies and events</i> ” in Louis Awad: <i>The Literature of Ideas in Egypt</i> , pp. 8-24. (online)
		January 16	Lecture: Occidentalism  Required readings: -- Rifa`a al-Tahtawi, in <i>The Literature of Ideas in Egypt</i> , pp.25-43. (online).  Required watching: - <i>Saladin</i> . Feature Film (1963). Director: Youssef Chahin. Time: 145 minutes.
Week 3	January 21		Lecture: 50 years of Popular fiction (1875- 1925)  Required Reading: Hisham Sharabi, <i>Arab Intellectuals and the West</i> , pp.1-23. (online).  Optional Reading: Albert Hourani. <i>A History of Arab Peoples</i> . Pp.373- 400. Required Watching: Saladin (online)
<i>Unit two: tradition and modernity</i>			
		January 23	Lecture: Arab theater and cinema.  Required Reading: Naguib Mahfuz. <i>Midaq Alley</i> .
Week 4	January 28		Lecture: Naguib Mahfouz: Narrating a Nation Required Reading: Naguib Mahfuz. <i>Midaq Alley</i> . Optional Reading: Samah Selim “ <i>The Nahda, Popular Fiction and the Politics of Translation.</i> ” (online)

		January 30	Required Readings: Naguib Mahfuz. <i>Midaq Alley</i> .  Optional Reading: Interview with Mahfuz from The Paris Review. Summer 1992. (online).
<i>Unit Three: Colonialism, post- colonialism, and questions of identity.</i>			
Week 5	February 4		Lecture: What is the Historical Experience?  Required Reading: Tayeb Salih. <i>Season of Migration to the North</i>
		February 6	Required Reading: Tayeb Salih. <i>Season of Migration to the North</i> Optional Reading: Malek Alloula. The Colonial Harem. (online)
Week 6	February 11		Lecture: Palestinian Diaspora Required Reading: Ghassan Kanafani. <i>Men in the Sun</i> .  Required Watching: Paradise Now. Feature Film (2005) Director: Hani Abu- Assad. (91 minutes)
		February 13	Required Reading: Mahmoud Darwish's poems. (online). Watching in class: Mahmoud Darwish - As the Land is the Language. Documentary (1997). Director: Simone Bitton. (60 minutes)
Week 7	February 18	February 20	Reading Week - no classes
	February 25		<b>Midterm (25%)</b>
Week 8		February 27	<b>General Discussion</b>
<i>Unit Four: Feminism, gender and sexuality in Arab society.</i>			
Week 9	March 3		Lecture: An Overview of Arab Feminism.  Required Readings: Assia Djebar. " <i>The Foreigner, Sister of the Foreigner Woman</i> ", pp. 121- 128. (online). Three short stories by Naam Kachachi, Buthayna al-Nasiri and Alia Mamdouh (Online)

		March 5	Required Reading: Salwa Bakr. “ <i>That Beautiful Undiscovered Voice</i> ” pp. 57-70. (online)
Week 10	March 10		Lecture: Memory and War. Required Reading: Hanan al-Shaykh. <i>The Story of Zahra</i> .
		March 12	Required Reading: Hanan al-Shaykh. <i>The Story of Zahra</i> .
Friday, March 13, Individual meetings (to discuss presentations and final papers)			
Week 11	March 17		Required Reading: Hanan al-Shaykh. <i>The Story of Zahra</i> .
		March 19	Required Watching: West Beirut. (Online). (105 minutes).
Week 12	March 24		Required reading: Sargon Boulus’s poems (online).  Required Watching: <i>Divine Intervention</i> : Feature Film (2002). Director: Elia Suleiman. Time: 92 minutes.
		March 26	Guest Lecture: Writer Yasser Abdel latif Required reading: Sound Tracking (online) Poems and short stories (Online) Interview with Yasser Abdel Latif (Online)
Week 13	March 31		Special Lecture on Arab Spring & Oral presentations
		April 2	Oral presentations
Week 14	April 7		Oral presentations

(\* **Instructor** may readjust this schedule if needed according to class situation and level.

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):**

Activity	%
Attendance and participation.	20%
Midterm (February 25).	25%
Two reading reports (Due Feb 13 & March 24).	10%
Oral presentation (March 31, April 2, and 7).	10%
Final paper (due April 14).	35%
Total	100%

### ***Explanatory Notes***

- Every student will be responsible for presenting one of the readings (schedule TBA)
- Midterm, **February 25. 25%.**
- **Two reading reports, 5% and 500 words each. Each report to answer one of the questions posted by the instructor online. First set of questions will be posted on February 6; the report is due February 13. Second set of questions will be posted March 17; the report is due March 24.**
- Individual meetings (to discuss final papers and presentations), **March 13.**
- 15 minute oral presentation on your research paper topic, **March 31, April 2, and 9.**
- Paper on your research topic (15 pages, double spaced, 12 pt, 1” margins) elaborating your presentation, based on class readings plus at least 5 additional scholarly sources relevant to your topic. Citation MLA. **Submit via eClass.**

### ***Required Notes:***

Policy about course outlines can be found in *the Evaluation Procedures and Grading System* of the University Calendar.

### ***Student Responsibilities:***

#### ***Academic Integrity:***

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the *Code of Student Behaviour* and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

All students should consult *the Academic Integrity website*. If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the *Academic Discipline Process*.

Students involved in language courses and translation courses should be aware that the use of on-line translation to complete assignments constitutes a form of cheating as the student's own understanding and work is therefore not reflected. Also, students in language courses should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, excessive editorial and creative help in assignments is considered a form of cheating that violates the Code of Student Behaviour.

#### ***Learning and Working Environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or

If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the *Office of the Student Ombuds*. Information about the *University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures* is described in *UAPPOL*.

### ***Sexual Violence Policy***

It is the policy of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct. Resources and more information can be found at <https://www.ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence>

### ***Territorial Statement:***

“The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.”

### ***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections *Attendance and Examinations* of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

Deferral of term work is a privilege and not a right; there is no guarantee that a deferral will be granted. Misrepresentation of facts to gain a deferral is a serious breach of the Code of Student Behaviour.

**In this course**, “attendance and participation” means attending each class, from the beginning to the end, paying attention to the instructor, and participating fully in all class activities.

Regular attendance is mandatory; **unexcused absences and lateness will negatively impact your grade.**

If absence is due to severe illness or any other considerable reason, student should inform the instructor before ***the beginning of class (even by e-mail)***.

Tardiness or early leaving the class is counted as an unexcused absence.

***No excuse will be accepted if the instructor is not informed before class, unless in case of emergency. The instructor may accept a reasonable excuse for absence with no penalty twice throughout the course, otherwise frequent excused/unexcused absences (with no emergency reasons) will impact your grade.***



**In case of unexcused and unjustified absence from test and/or exam, the instructor may *not* accept to reschedule this particular exam.**

- Please check your emails regularly for any update regarding class (assignments, test dates, cancellation, etc.)

- In case of unforeseen circumstances that may lead to class cancellation, students will be notified in advance during previous classes or by e-mail (in case of an emergency). So please do NOT leave class before consulting your emails.

***Policy for Late Assignments:***

1. Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension twice throughout the course with no penalty.

1. Otherwise, all assignments should be handed in on the stated deadline. Any assignment not handed-in in time, unexcused late assignments will not be given any marks. No third excuse will be granted.

- Late excuses will not be accepted for any reason.

***Disclaimer:***

Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be announced in class and posted on eClass. The date of the final examination is set by the Registrar and takes precedence over the final examination date reported in this syllabus.

**Student Resources:**

The best all-purpose website for student services is: <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

**Accessibility Resources: (1 – 80 SUB)**

The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources](#) web page.

**The Academic Success Centre: (1-80 SUB)**

[The Academic Success Centre](#) offers a variety of workshops on effective study and exam strategies. There are in-person and online sessions available for a modest fee.

**The Centre for Writers: (1-42 Assiniboia Hall)**

The [Centre for Writers](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

**Health and Wellness Support:** There are many health and community services available to current students. For more information visit the [Health and Wellness Support](#) web page.

**Office of the Student Ombuds:**

The [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) offers confidential interviews, advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties.

**“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”**

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on “a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class” (University Calendar, Evaluation Procedures and Grading System). The University Grading Procedure mandates that “a student’s level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned” (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

<b><i>Descriptor</i></b>	<b><i>Letter Grade</i></b>	<b><i>Grade Point Value</i></b>	<b><i>%</i></b>
<b><i>Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.</i></b>	<b><i>A+</i></b>	<b><i>4.0</i></b>	<b><i>97-100</i></b>
	<b><i>A</i></b>	<b><i>4.0</i></b>	<b><i>93-96</i></b>
	<b><i>A-</i></b>	<b><i>3.7</i></b>	<b><i>90-92</i></b>
<b><i>Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.</i></b>	<b><i>B+</i></b>	<b><i>3.3</i></b>	<b><i>87-89</i></b>
	<b><i>B</i></b>	<b><i>3.0</i></b>	<b><i>83-86</i></b>
	<b><i>B-</i></b>	<b><i>2.7</i></b>	<b><i>80-82</i></b>
<b><i>Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.</i></b>	<b><i>C+</i></b>	<b><i>2.3</i></b>	<b><i>77-79</i></b>
	<b><i>C</i></b>	<b><i>2.0</i></b>	<b><i>73-76</i></b>
	<b><i>C-</i></b>	<b><i>1.7</i></b>	<b><i>70-72</i></b>
<b><i>Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.</i></b>	<b><i>D+</i></b>	<b><i>1.3</i></b>	<b><i>65-69</i></b>
	<b><i>D</i></b>	<b><i>1.0</i></b>	<b><i>60-64</i></b>
<b><i>Failure.</i></b>	<b><i>F</i></b>	<b><i>0.0</i></b>	<b><i>0-59</i></b>

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