Middle Eastern Studies:
Islam from a Religious, Cultural and Political Perspective (CMEN12)

Course Coordinator:
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Description:
This course will examine the intersections of cultural and political processes in the Middle East, with a focus on the role of Islamic discourse and symbolism in modernity. Students will study the political functions of Islam and religion, culture and gender from anthropological perspective. Also, the course gives a historical perspective on Muslim modernity and Islamic reform movements. Students will explore a range of current politico-cultural developments in the Middle East.

Assessment:
Individual assessment is based on a minor written assignment to be handed in halfway through the course and a final written assessment. Missed sminars can be compensated for by submitting written assignments.

Grades Marking Scale:
Fail, E, D, C, B, A. The highest grade is A and the lowest passing grade is E. The grade for a non-passing result is F.

Scale of grades:
A = 92 - 100 % of total points
B = 84 - 92 % of total points
C = 76 - 84 % of total points
D = 68 - 76 % of total points
E = 60 - 68 % of total points
F = 0 - 59 % of total points.

All assessed course components are graded.

The grading criteria for written assignments roughly corresponds to those specified in CMES Master Thesis Guidelines (available at Live@Lund).

A: The written work is well-structured, has clear objectives and a well defined and relevant research question, uses appropriate methods/data to answer this question, undertakes a thorough and critical literature review with references to key texts, provides a compelling discussion of the research question and/or the case at hand, shows how the selected theoretical perspective helps (or fails to help) us to understand the questions/case under study. Keyword: Excellent.
B: The written work is relatively well-structured, has clear objectives and a research question, uses somewhat appropriate methods/data to answer this question, undertakes an adequate literature review with references to a limited number of key texts, provides a satisfactory discussion of the research question and/or the case at hand, shows – to a certain extent – how the selected theoretical perspective helps (or fails to help) us to understand the questions/case under study. **Keyword: Good.**

C: The written work has some structural problems, is wanting when it comes to defining objectives and the research question, has problems regarding methodology, fails to undertake an adequate literature review, i.e. omits some important texts, does not offer a convincing discussion of the research question and/or the case at hand, does not engage fully with the selected theoretical perspective. **Keyword: Average.**

D-E: The written work is disorganized and incoherent, does not have clear objectives and a proper research question, fails to use appropriate methods/data, shows little, if any, familiarity with existing literature, does not address the research question and/or discuss the case at hand, fails to engage with the selected theoretical perspective. The difference between D and E is a matter of degree. **Keyword: Below average.**

F: The written work fails to fulfil any of the above-mentioned criteria regarding structure, aims and objectives, identifying and addressing a research question, using a proper methodology, showing some familiarity with existing literature and an ability to engage with theory, or a particular case for that matter. **Keywords: Inadequate, Fail.**
**Weekly schedule** (all lectures will be in the CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00)

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Lecture 1: Introduction to Islamic Studies
15/1 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Anders Ackfeldt, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

This first lecture will introduce the field of Islamic Studies. Key concepts, perspectives and theories will be discussed. The lecture seeks to develop a critical understanding of religion and of Islamic traditions as well as give the students a foundation of basic concepts of Islamic theology that will be used full during the course.

Compulsory Reading:
Huges W. A. Muslim Identities – An Introduction to Islam, Columbia University Press (Pages 1-11 & 225-254)


Hjärpe, J “What will be chosen from the Islamic basket?” European Review, Volume 5, Issue 3 July 1997. (Pages 267-274)

Suggested Reading:
Huges W. A. Muslim Identities – An Introduction to Islam, Columbia University Press.


Seminar 1: Key Concepts and Theories of Islamic Studies
22/1 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Anders Ackfeldt, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

During the seminar the texts, key concepts and perspectives presented during the first seminar will be discussed in small groups.

Lectures 2: State Islam and politics
29/1 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Jonas Otterbeck

As the nation state became the prime way of organizing societies in the Middle East, Islam became caught up in the political apparatus of these states. In the lecture, we will look into the situation from primarily two angles. First, we will study the general historical process beginning with the reorganization of the Ottoman state during the later stage of its rule, through there formation of the state of the Middle East during the 20th century to the political campaigning of influential states using Islam as a vehicle of soft power. Second, we will specifically focus on a case study to develop an analytical understanding of state Islam.

Compulsory Reading:
Eickelman D. F., & Piscatori, J, Muslim Politics, Princeton UP chs. TBA

+ 3 articles TBA

Suggested Reading:
Eickelman D. F., & Piscatori, J, Muslim Politics
Lectures 3: Social movement organisations, Political parties and Islam
5/2 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Jonas Otterbeck

The prior lecture focused on the state, this one will focus on social movement organisations and political parties inspired by Islam. First, we will run through the basic theoretical tools to be able to grasp what kind of organisations is being discussed. Then we will discuss the growth of Islam-inspired NGOs, political parties and other social movement organisations. How do they organize? What do they specialize in? Who do they legitimize what they do? We will also discuss these organisations and parties’ relationship to different states through concrete examples in a couple of countries.

Compulsory Reading:
Shehata, S. S. “Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change”, Routledge. (selected chapters)

Emin Poljarevic, Ambiguity of Citizenship in Contemporary Salafism

Lecture 4: Muslim minorities in the Middle East
12/2 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Svante Lundgren

This lecture deals with different Muslims minorities in the Middle East. When we label certain religious traditions “minorities,” we characterize them in terms of demographics, we highlight the fact that they constitute a small percentage of the populations of the states in which they live. The lecture focuses on groups like for example the Shabaks, Druze (are they Muslims?), Alevis and Alawis from historical, political and anthropological perspectives.

Compulsory Reading:
ALEVIS: Markus Dressler: “Alevis” Encyclopaedia of Islam
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/alevis-
COM_0167?s.num=1&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=alevi
Marianne Aringberg-Laanatza: “Alevis in Turkey – Alawites in Syria: Similarities and Differences”
In: Olsson, Özdalga & Raudvere (Eds.): Alevi Identity. Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives.

ALAWITES: Meir M. Bar-Asher: “Alawis, classical doctrines” Encyclopaedia of Islam
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/alawis-classical-
doctrines-COM_23431?s.num=2&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=alawites
Mervin S: “Alawis, contemporary developments” Encyclopaedia of Islam
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/alawis-contemporary-
developments-COM_22953?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=alawites

DRUZES: Kais M. Firro: “Druzes” Encyclopaedia of Islam
http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/druzes-druzu-
COM_26097?s.num=2&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-3&s.q=druze

Lecture 5: Sufism and the Everyday in the Islamic world
19/2 2 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Joshka Wessels

Sufism, often described as the mystical form of Islam, can be found both in Shi’i and Sunni communities. This lecture gives the students an overview of the role of Sufism in everyday life in northern Syria. Sufism in northern Syria played a pivotal role in rural and urban communities, not only from a spiritual point of view but also in the everyday lives of Syrian and the social cohesion of communities. Sufis from Syria were also known outside the borders of Syria. Every year Sufi communities from Syria, Turkey and Iraq would come together at shrines of important Sufi shaykhs and carry out their annual rituals in northern Syria. This lecture will shed some light how Aleppo Sufis travelled throughout the Islamic world historically and generated followers throughout to Iran, Central Asia and as far as places like Bidar in India creating a religious community of religious co-existence and tolerance. For example, Sufis with Syrian and Iranian origins, were founders of the Order of Nimatullah, the largest Sufi community (Ni'matullāhī) in contemporary times which expanded to places such as Mexico, Russia, Western Africa, Spain, and Australia. The lecture will conclude with a situation sketch on what happened to the Sufis and their communities in northern Syria, when the Islamic State took over in their areas in 2014. We will discuss the deep tensions and differences between century-old orthodox Sufism, the Salafiyah and contemporary radical extremist ideas of ISIS-followers.

Compulsory Reading:


**Seminar 2: Group Presentation**

26/2 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Anders Ackfeldt, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

During the seminar, the students will present chapters from the book “The Anthropology of Islam Reader” for their peers. This seminar will be introduced further during the first lecture. Each group will also write a 1500-word review of the assigned chapter.

**Islam and the Music and Art of Branding**

5/3 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Mark Levine

This section explores the way religion, art, politics and performance intersect in to “moderate” Arab monarchies – Morocco and Abu Dhabi. For several decades, and under the influence of the global reputation as a place of exotic aesthetic discovery first made famous by the Beats and other fellow travelers, the Moroccan government has allowed and even sponsored various music festivals that have become a major source of tourism revenue as well as a major component of its identity as a “moderate Muslim country.” But festivals such as the Mawazine festival in Casablanca, the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, and the Gnaoua World Music Festival in Essaouira both promote a vision of a moderate and Sufi-inspired Islam and also serve to constrain the ability of artists in the country to engage in any kind of counter-narrative—either socially, politically or religiously—
to the particular vision of Islam, and of the King Mohammed VI as a modern-day “Amir al-Mu'minin” (leader of the faithful) standing above politics and any sort of criticism. In so doing, the music festivals, and the variety of Islam they represent, are the most recent in a centuries’ long process by which the “Makhzen”, Morocco’s age-old power elite, has maintained its hegemony across an otherwise fractured society.

Although commenced far more recently, the Gulf Emirate of Abu Dhabi has spent billions of dollars to create a similar image of a “moderate Muslim country,” in this case through the sponsoring of European and American cultural and educational institutions such as NYU Abu Dhabi and now, quite prominently, the Louvre Abu Dhabi. As with Morocco, these institutions cater largely if not exclusively to Western or Western educated elites and expats, who consume them and go on to export the preferred identity of Abu Dhabi as a moderate Muslim country even as in terms of its political and legal systems, as well as social mores, the country, like Morocco, remains in many ways staunchly patriarchal, conservative and authoritarian. Our discussions will focus on how Islam is deployed by both governments as part of a branding process for their images and systems, set up for consumption by citizens, foreign visitors—Arabs/Muslims and non-Muslims alike—and used to frame a broader debate about the legitimacy of the ruling system and the relationship between a particular kind of Islam and a particular ideology of modernity which both exclude large sections of their respective populations.

Compulsory Reading:

LeVine M., *Why They Don’t Hate Us*, ch. 6;

_____, *Heavy Metal Islam*, Introduction, ch. 1.


Louvre Abu Dhabi (https://www.louvreabudhabi.ae/).


Islam – From Arab France to Italian Tunisia and Greek Alexandria
7/3 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Mark Levine

The heartland of Islam has long been thought of as the Arabian peninsula and the Middle East. But the Mediterranean has been part of the “Dar al-Islam,” or “terre d’Islam” within decades of the conquest of the peninsula. Since that moment, Mediterranean history has been inseparable from Islamic history, on both sides of the Middle Sea. From the conquest of Morocco 15 years after Muhammad’s death in 632 to its arrival in what today are Spain, France, Italy and Greece, Islam has played a major role in the development of capitalism and its attendant political economies, and ultimately European empire and nationalism as well. Based on the pioneering work of scholars such as Fernand Braudel, Julia Clancy-Smith, Ian Coller, Jairus Banaji and other historians of the Mediterranean and Islam, and with a focus on primary textual sources as well deep histories, we explore both how Islam penetrated the northern Mediterranean far earlier than is normally discussed, while Europeans shaped the Islamic history of North Africa long before the onset of European imperialism on the Mediterranean’s southern shores.

Compulsory Reading:

Clancy-Smith, J., Mediterraneans, UC Press, 2012. chs. TBA

Coller, I., Arab France, UC Press, 2010. chs. TBA


Brown, L. C., The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey, 1837-1855, Princeton, 1974. chs. TBA

Brown, N., “Early Constitutional Documents in the Middle East”. chs. TBA

Islam, The “Global Middle East” and the Re-Imagination of Area Studies
9/3 (CMES seminar room 10.00 – 12.00) Mark Levine

It is today a commonplace that the study of Islam was profoundly impacted—many would say distorted—by the emergence of areas studies as a way of organizing, studying, teaching and to various degrees governing the Middle East. But scholars have yet to consider how the seismic shift in the understanding, methodologies and pedagogy of area studies in the last two decades has impacted Islamic studies as a field. We explore how the end of the Cold War, the rise of the idea of “globalization” and a set of policy prescriptions—neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus—and opposition to them, and of new critical methodologies such as postcolonial, gender, ethnic and related areas of “subaltern” studies has quite literally changed the map of area studies as well as its pedagogical and theoretical reference points and groundings. In many
respects, “Middle Eastern” and “Islamic studies” have been at the forefront of these developments methodologically, however geographically the region is still largely studied in isolation from other regions of the Muslim majority world, and even more so from the broader globalized context. This lecture and its attendant readings explore how scholars are transforming “Middle Eastern studies” into “Global Middle Eastern studies,” retooling curricula and analyses and analytical frameworks to ensure that the core of pedagogy and research is a concern for the Middle East’s innumerable global intersections and links to migration/diaspora networks as well aesthetic and economic circuits and exchanges that highlight the inherently transnational and transdisciplinary nature of the “global Middle East.”

**Compulsory Reading:**

Harris, H., "Coyote Goes to School," available [here](#).


LeVine, M., *Why They Don't Hate Us*, chs. 3, 5.


Lust, E., *The Middle East*, chs. TBA

Hafez S. and Slyomovies, S. eds., *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium*, chs. TBA

Schwedler, J., ed., *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, chs. TBA

Ibrahim, S. E. “Cross-Eyed Sociology in the Arab World”

Tim Mitchell, "The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science" Soraya Altorki, *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Middle East*, ch. 2 (Mahmood Mamdani, "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism."