

**Anth 4701**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

Contemporary Middle East: Society, Culture & Politics  
ANTH 4701, Thursday, 6:30 – 9:20, Env. 115  
Instructor: Dr. Mahmoud Sadri  
Office hours: by appointment  
Email: MSadri@mail.TWU.edu

**Course Objectives:**

This is an innovative approach to the study of the Middle East. This course will unfold in three expanding and concentric circles. First we will take a penetrating look into the history of the contemporary Islam through an innovative biography of an Iranian scholar, interspersed with explanations of the episodes of the protagonist's life. Second, we will engage in a wider investigation of the history and culture of the modern Middle East through the lens of a work that examines the modern encounters that shaped the present Middle East and Islam. Third, we will widen the circle to include Islam and the advent of extremism that envelopes the Middle East and beyond. The three books then, will serve as springboards for our discussions of the region. There will be a strong visual component to this course in the form of documentary and narrative films that illuminate the issues under discussion. Also, each session will have class discussion sections as well. This part either echoes or contradicts the reading for that week.

**Required Readings:**

- **Roy Mottahedeh, The Mantle of the Prophet**
- **Bernard Lewis, What Went Wrong?**
- **Khaled Abu El Fadl, The Great Theft**
- **Readings posted on BlackBoard or handed out in class**

**Method of Evaluation:**

- **Attendance and Participation:**  
Attendance is required and responses to questions concerning the materials covered each week will be recorded as participation grades. 15%
- **Weekly News Discussion:**  
We will begin every session with a discussion of the Middle East relevant news of the week. All students are required to listen, watch, or browse media sources and have a daily log of their results. These discussions will start on Week 3. These logs will be submitted to the instructor and will be part of the participation grade for this class. 15%
- **Weekly News Presentations:**  
Every week 2 students will lead discussions on current Middle Eastern affairs. These presentations will start on Week 3. A list of presenters is attached to the end of this

**Anth 4701**

syllabus. 15%

- **Visual Reflection Notes:**

Following each visual presentation (documentary and narrative films and clips) each student is required to submit a reflection note including the summary and commentary on the presentation. 10%

- **Examinations:**

Upon completing each of the three books assigned for this class there will be an exam in the form of short answers, 45%

**Schedule of classes:**

***Section I. Middle East in Context: History, Geography, Migration***

Week 1  
Jan.22

**Middle East: Migrations, Empires and formation of the modern map**

**Resources:**

Human Family Tree: 96 minutes (class viewing)

- Imperial history of the Middle East: (home viewing)  
[www.stumbleupon.com/su/1VRyQX/www.mapsofwar.com/images/EMPIRE17.swf](http://www.stumbleupon.com/su/1VRyQX/www.mapsofwar.com/images/EMPIRE17.swf)
- Iranian history: time line: (home viewing)  
[www.iranchamber.com/history/historic\\_periods.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/historic_periods.php)
- <http://www.on-the-matrix.com/mideast/IranTimeline.aspx>
- Egyptian history: time line: (home viewing)  
[www.touregypt.net/ehistory.htm](http://www.touregypt.net/ehistory.htm)
- Turkish history: time line: (home viewing)  
[www.allaboutturkey.com/history.htm](http://www.allaboutturkey.com/history.htm)
- Guns, Germs and Steel episode 1. (home viewing)
  - Class discussion: History, Deep History, Historical Timelines

***Section II. Religion, Culture and Personality in the Middle East***

Week 2  
Jan. 29

**Culture and Biography**

**Readings:**

The Mantle of the Prophet, prologue, Ch. 1-4

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class discussion: Intercultural Encounters

Resources:

Rick Steve's Iran (class screening)

Week 3  
Feb.5

Culture and Religion

Readings:

The Mantle of the Prophet, Ch. 5-8

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Ethno-Mysticism, the Sufi path; Ascetic and Mystic, inner-worldly and otherworldly religion; mystic Islam, Three stages of the path toward the divine, rituals, music and remembrance.

Resources:

- Sufi ceremonies: (Class viewing)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=q7QtM79pBs4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7QtM79pBs4)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=2--ax5XrF1o&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2--ax5XrF1o&feature=related)

Introduction: Explore the meaning and the varieties of Sufi orders

- <http://www.uga.edu/islam/Sufism.html> (home reading)
- poems by Rumi: Read and comment on one poem (home assignment)

Week 4  
Feb. 12

Culture and Personality

Readings:

The Mantle of the Prophet, Ch. 9-Epilogue

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Intercultural Dialogue: Middle East and the Rest, (Communication)

Resources:

*Mahmoud Sadri: "Irani-Bazi", Notes on Liminal Predation. Powerpoint Presentation.*

*Film: A Separation (subject to revision)*

**Section III. Middle East and the Confrontation with**

## **West**

Week 5  
Feb. 19

**Dealing with a resurgent West**

**Readings:**

**What Went Wrong? Ch. 1-3**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class discussion: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, Post-Postcolonialism

**Resources: Mahmoud Sadri: Iran and US, between trust and distrust: Powerpoint presentation.**

**(Quiz from the previous section)**

Week 6  
Feb. 26

**Modernization and Secularization**

**Reading**

**What Went Wrong?, Ch. 4, 5**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Extremism and Terrorism: A general introduction

**Resources: Mahmoud Sadri: Communal Approach to Terrorism. On line Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri: Juan Williams and Million to One Fear (on line)**

Week 7  
March 5

**Inevitability of Cultural Change**

**Reading:**

**What Went Wrong?, Ch. 6,7**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class discussion: Natives and Colonial Powers

**Film: Lawrence of Arabia**

**March 13 Spring break**

### ***Section IV. Puritanism, Extremism, and Fundamentalism in the Middle East***

Week 8

**The Rise of Puritan Islam**

**Anth 4701**

March 19

**Reading:**  
**The Great Theft, Part I**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Geopolitics, Extremism and Terrorism

**Resources:**  
Mahmoud Sadri, *Terrorism, Suicidal Homicide*  
Mahmoud Sadri, *The Only Survivor*, (on line)

(Quiz from the previous section)

Week 9  
March 26

**Moderate versus Puritan Islam**

**Reading:**  
**The Great Theft, Part II, Ch. 5-8**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Dilemma of Islam

**Resources:**  
Mahmoud Sadri, "Reframing Reform: Lessons Learned from the Apostasy Trials in Iran"

Week 10  
April 2

**Moderate Views on Islam**

**Reading**  
**The Great Theft, Part II. Ch. 9-12**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Three Faces of Dissent (online)
- Civil Society, Dissent and Reform

**Film: Paradise Now**

## ***Section V. Most Recent Developments***

Week 11  
April 9

**The Iranian Green Movement and the Arab Spring**

**Readings:**  
Hamid Dabashi, *Arab Spring*; Mahmoud Sadri and Nader Hashemi: *How Green is the Arab Spring?* (On BB)

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion based on presentations of papers

**Anth 4701**

(Quiz from the previous section)

Week 12  
April 16

**Rise of the “Islamic State”**

**Resources:**

**Mahmoud Sadri: Da’esh and Resurgent Puritan Sunni Islam**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: Extremism in Shi’a and Sunni Islam

<http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp352.htm>

○ <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/30/world/europe/30turkey.html>

○

**Islam and Reform Islam: the case of Iran:**

○ <http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/2002/February/Theology/index.html>

○ <http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/Oct98/Soroush/index.html>

Week 13  
April 23

**Toward a Global Community of Compassion**

**Resources:**

**Mahmoud Sadri, Premonitions of Interfaith Dialogue**

<http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp352.htm>

○ <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/30/world/europe/30turkey.html>

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class Discussion: *Islam and Reform Islam: the case of Iran*

○ <http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/2002/February/Theology/index.html>

○ <http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/Oct98/Soroush/index.html>

Week 14  
April 30

**Culture, History, and Ideology in the Middle East: A recapitulation**

- News discussions and presentations.
- Class discussion: Wrapping up

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## Disability Policy

Anthropology does not discriminate on the basis of an individual’s disability as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The program provides adjustment and aids to individuals with disabilities in the program and its activities.

**Weekly presentation teams:**

**Week 3: Steven Bates, Logan Brewner, Kyle Zapor**

**Week 4: Clayton Carney, Daniel Cavins, Heather Wood**

**Week 5: Dionca Davis, James Downie, Hassana Woodham**

**Week 6:, Malaika Fergeson, William Freeman**

**Week 7:, Kylee Gagne, Gregory Glover**

**Week 8:, Alyssia Gonzalez, Alexis Hakalmazian**

**Week 9: Leslie Hamilton, Lauren Hykel,**

**Week 10: Corderon Jackson, Mark Johnson**

**Week 11: Katlyn Johnson, Valeria Martinez**

**Week 12: Regina Orona, Julissa Ramos, Daniela Serrano**

**Week 13: Cadence Sisco, Philip Sternitzke, Leisly Torres,**

**Week 14: Michale Ventura, Lauren Woodall, Whaley,**