Course Description:

Over the past few decades the rise of globalization and the spread of technology have radically transformed media and popular culture in the Arab world. From the proliferation of Arab pop music and reality TV to the advent of non state-sponsored news networks like Al-Jazeera and the growing use of Facebook and Youtube across the Middle East, the socio-cultural landscape of the Arab world is shifting dramatically. In this course we will examine Arab media and pop culture through a variety of different mediums in order to better understand issues in modern Middle Eastern society such as the role of religion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, women’s rights, political participation, nationalism and westernization.

Syllabus:

Week 1: Introduction to Media in the Middle East
In Class Discussion:
• General introduction to Middle Eastern culture and society and media’s role within it.
• Class Expectations/Objectives Discussion
Assignment:
• Popular Culture In the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media, Andrew Hammond: Chapter 1

Week 2: Radio, Nasser and the Rise of Arab Nationalism
In Class Discussion:
• Introducing Nasser: The Rise of Nasser and Arab Nationalism
• Radio and Arab Nationalism
Assignment:
• Write journal entry in response to class discussion

Week 3: Marriage Traditions and Arab Reality TV
In Class Discussion:
• Marriage and Dating in the Arab World
• Match Making Reality TV Shows
Assignment:
• Handouts from Class/Blackboard

Week 4: The Internet and Transnational Terrorism
In Class Discussion:
• The rise of Internet in the Arab World
• The role of Internet in Terrorist Recruiting
Assignment:
  • Write Journal Entry in response to class discussion

Week 5: Music and Regional Unity
In Class Discussion:
  • The Lebanese Civil War and how music transcended conflict
  • Case Study: Fairuz and Nancy Ajram
Assignment:
  • *Popular Culture In the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*, Andrew Hammond: Chapter 4

Week 6: Library Research Techniques
Class in Tisch Library: Room TBA
  • Research Librarian Lecture to prepare for the research paper
  • Discussion of topics and sources
Assignment: Come up with preliminary topic for research paper

Week 7: Arab News Media (Part 1)
In Class Discussion:
  • Introduction to structure of news media: State vs non-state sponsored networks
  • How is the Israeli Palestinian Conflict portrayed?
Assignment:
  • *New Media and the New Middle East*, Philip Seib: Chapter 4

Week 8: Arab News Media (Part 2)
In Class Discussion:
  • How the US is portrayed in the Arab World?
  • Coverage of the Iraq War
  • Arab World’s reaction to Obama
Assignment:
  • Write Journal entry in response to class discussion

Week 9: Introduction to TV and Film
In Class Discussion:
  • How did the TV and film industries develop in the Arab world?
  • Popularity of Arab vs Western films in Arab world
  • How is film used to raise social and political issues?
  • Watch film
Assignment:
  • *Popular Culture In the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*, Andrew Hammond: Chapters 5 and 8

Week 10: Arab Reality TV Contests
In Class Discussion:
  • Introducing Star Academy and Million’s Poet
What does it say about society/culture?

**Assignment:**
- Write Journal Entry Responding to Class Discussion

**Week 11: Religious TV**

**In Class Discussion:**
- Reading on role of religion in society (more detailed)
- Islamic televangelists
- Religious Minorities use of Television

**Assignment:**
- *Popular Culture In the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*, Andrew Hammond: Chapter 3

**Week 12: Advertising and Commercial Media**

**In Class Discussion:**
- What do products and advertising say about society?

**Assignment:**
- *Popular Culture In the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*, Andrew Hammond: Chapter 4

**Week 13: Research Presentations and course wrap up**

**In Class Discussion:**
- In Class Research Paper Presentations

**Course Reading List:**

Hammond, Andrew. *Popular Culture in the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*. Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2007. (See syllabus Assignments that include a series of readings from this book)

Seib, Philip M. *New Media and the New Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. (See syllabus Assignments that include a series of readings from this book)

Zanani, Mohamed *The Al-Jazeera Perspective: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005. (Excerpts to be read during course introduction as well as during weeks 7 and 8 when we discuss Arab News Media.)

Stein, Rebecca *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. (Excerpts to be read in week 7 during discussions of the portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Arab film.)

**Annotated Bibliography:**

This book puts forth an explanation of how media and popular culture can be used to understand global security and issues in international relations today. The authors describe how “the proliferation of digital technologies in the twenty-first century has transformed our knowledge of near and distant events so that it has become impossible to separate the politics of war, suffering, terrorism, and security from the practices and processes of the media.”

This work analyzes the role of Arab transnational media in the emergence of a new regional Arab identity that has been impacted by globalization and the convergence of tribal identities. The book describes the emergence of “McArabism” and its impact on Arab society, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the portrayal of the West in the Islamic World.

This work puts forth Benedict Anderson’s widely referenced theory of the origins of nationalism. We will use this book to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the changes in Arab identity that have been influenced by the advent of new media.

This book explores modern Arab society and will provide us with useful insight into how to present social, political, economic, and religious issues in the Arab world to our students as we conduct our seminar.

This book gives a useful overview of the origins of society, politics, and economics and popular culture in the Middle East and will serve as useful background as we analyze a variety of media sources with our students.