

Modern Arabic Literature

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Office hours: Tuesday 9-10 am

Course description

This course provides an introduction to modern Arabic literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The course aims to reflect the different spaces of literary development in diverse parts of the Arab world, including North Africa. The questions we will pursue throughout the semester include: How do these Arab writers conceive of “modernity”? How do they conceive of their relation to politics, and how do they understand the role of intellectuals in their societies? Finally, how do these authors relate to the Arabic literary tradition—including its myths and classical texts—and how is it different from the way they relate to the European and American literary traditions?

General themes such as the conflict between tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, anti-colonialism and revolutionary discourses, language and nationalistic ideologies, as well as war, emigration, poverty, alienation, childhood, education, freedom of expression, religion and politics, and changing gender roles will be the focus of the course

All required readings are in English. Students who wish to discuss selected passages from the original Arabic (or French), are encouraged to make an appointment with me outside class.

Required Texts

All course readings will be uploaded to the Sakai course website at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>.

1. Yahya Haqqi “The Lamp of Um Hashim” in *The Lamp of Um Hashim and Other Stories*
2. Zeina Abirached, *I Remember Beirut*
3. Ghassan Kanafani, “Returning to Haifa” in *Palestine’s Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories*
4. *The Sea Cloak* by Nayrouz Qarmout
5. *In Her Feminine Sign* 1st Edition by Dunya Mikhail

Reading Responses:

Once a week you will post a short (1 page) response paper to the reading on Sakai’s online forum. These responses will count collectively toward your final grade. The purpose of these responses is to help you engage critically with the readings and to formulate written queries, hypotheses, and arguments pertaining to them. I therefore expect these responses to be well composed and thoughtfully argued. Each response must discuss one or more of the readings for the upcoming week.

Oral Presentation:

Each student will give one 10-minute pre-recorded oral presentation over the course of the semester. The presentation should engage with all the readings assigned on that day, discussing their main arguments and raising creative and invigorating thoughts.

Final Paper:

There will be one final paper of 5-7 pages. In advance of this paper, you will hand in an outline of your argument and supporting claims, as well as an annotated bibliography that includes at least two secondary sources. Late papers will lose one letter grade for each week they are submitted after the deadline.

Sakai

You are expected to check the Sakai site for the course as I may post additional readings, revisions to the syllabus, and course announcements.