

Oberlin College
Department of History and MENA Program
HIST-214, Fall 2008
Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa

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TuTh 3:00-04:15pm

KING 327

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Office Hours: Tuesday 4:30-6, Thursday 4:30-6 and by appointment

Course Description

Why the MENA region is largely described as an "underdeveloped" economy today? Is this due to its "exceptionalism" as a "culturally" different region? Or its economic trajectories are part of greater global transformations in world economy? What could be a possible solution for human and economic development in the MENA? These are the questions that this course addresses through exploring the modern history of countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Iran, Israel and Palestine, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Libya. This course is based on a political economy approach, i.e., it looks at the economic only as it interplays with the political and inseparable from it. In addition, it presents a socio-economic perspective, i.e., it moves away from quantitative accounts to give more attention to the narratives and life tales of different socio-economic groups, such as peasants, workers, ruling elites, etc.

This course surveys the important stages in the economic history of the region. First, it explores some theoretical approaches that might be suitable to understand the region. Then it looks briefly at medieval and Ottoman Islamic economies. After that it moves to the nineteenth century, a period in which the MENA region was integrated into a European-led world economy. In the nineteenth and twenties centuries, many MENA countries were colonized by European powers, which left behind severe socio-economic predicaments. After wars of liberation and independence, several MENA regimes adopted socialist economy, along with many other "third world" countries resisting western imperialism. As socialism at large and Arab Socialism in particular failed, many of the MENA countries transformed to the market economy and applied the World Bank and IMF programs of neo-liberal reforms. Amidst these large changes, oil has played a major role in creating unique conditions in some of these countries. The region today attempts to offer alternatives to neo-liberalism, through Islamic finance and NGOs, but they apparently support the global dominance of the market instead of altering it.

Course Requirements and Grading

(1) Class attendance and participation (20%)

(Weekly "experts" on the subject)

(2) Two Response papers (1-2 pages) (20%, 10% each)

(One due in the first half of semester and the other in the second half. Due to be posted on Blackboard two hours before class)

- (3) Midterm Essay (5-6 pages) (20%)
 (Due Oct. 16 at Midnight. Questions will be given beforehand)
- (4) Role playing in a simulation (20%)
- (5) Final paper: An analytical report (6-8 pages) (20%)
 (Due Dec. 16 at Midnight)

Required Readings

No textbooks required. Assigned chapters from books are available on electronic reserve, in addition to articles available on JSTOR. You might select some books to purchase from the bookstore in accordance with your own research interests, such as books on a certain country, period of history, social group, subject, etc.

WEEK 1

Tu Sept 2 Introduction

- Th Sept 4 MENA in World Economies: Theoretical Approaches (1)**
 - Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "Associated Dependent Capitalist Development," pp. 283-288
 - Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality," pp. 49-65
 - James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, "NGOs in Service of Imperialism," pp. 128-138

WEEK 2

- Tu Sept 9 MENA in World Economies: Theoretical Approaches (2)**
 - Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, pp. vii-xxxviii
 - Timothy Mitchell, "The Character of Calculability," pp. 80-119

- Th Sept 11 Islamic "World System"**
 Janet Abu Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, ch. 1 pp. 3-24, ch. 7 pp. 212-244

WEEK 3

- Tu Sept 16 Ottoman Economy**
 Thabit Abdullah, *Merchants, Mamluks and Murder: the Political economy of Trade in Eighteenth-Century Basra*, introduction pp. 1-8, ch. 4-5 pp. 83-115

- Th Sept 18 19th cent.: Integration into Modern World System**
 Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, ch. 1, 2 pp. 21-70

WEEK 4

Tu Sept 23 19th cent.: Modernity and Consumption
Mona L. Russell, *Crating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863-1922*, pp. 11-78

Thu Sept 25 French Colonialism: Algeria
John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, ch. 4, 5 pp. 80-129

WEEK 5

Tu Sep 30 British Colonialism: Egypt
Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide*, ch. 1-2 pp. 3-60

Th Oct 2 British Colonialism: Egypt
Timothy Mitchell, "Can the Mosquito Speak?," pp. 19-53

WEEK 6

Tu Oct 7 Syria: French Colonialism
- Raymond Hinnebusch, "Formation of Modern Syria," pp. 18-46
- Philip S. Khoury, "The Syrian Independence Movement and the Growth of - Economic Nationalism in Damascus", *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1987), pp. 25-36
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/194452>

Midterm Essays Questions Handed Out (Covering Readings till Oct 16)

Oct 9 Happy Yum Kippur!

WEEK 7

Tu Oct 14 Iraq: British Colonialism
Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology*, ch.1, 2, 3 pp. 9-77

Thu Oct 16 Iran and British Imperialism
Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran*, Ch. 5, 6 pp. 73-131

Midterm Essay Due

WEEK 8 **Happy Fall Break!**

WEEK 9

Oct 28 **Arab Socialism: Egypt**
John Waterbury, *the Egypt of Nasser and Sadat*, ch. 11, ch. 13

Oct 30 **Arab Socialism: Syria**
Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution from Above*, pp. 47-114

WEEK 10

Nov 4 **Arab Socialism: Algeria**
John Rudey, *Modern Algeria*, pp. 214-265

Nov 6 **Arab Socialism and Oil: Iraq**
Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, ch. 6 pp. 186-239

WEEK 11

Nov 11 **Oil Economies: Saudi Arabia**
Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth*, ch. 4 pp. 139-192

Nov 13 **Oil Economies: Libya**
Drik Vandewalle, *Libya Since Independence*, ch. 4-5 pp. 61-141

WEEK 12

Nov 18 **Israel and Palestine**
Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development*, ch. 6-7, pp.135-199, ch. 10 pp. 291-304

Nov 20 **Transition to Market**
Ray Bush, *Counter-Revolution in Egypt's Countryside: Land and Farmers in the Era of Economic Reform*
(TBA)

WEEK 13

Nov 25 **Transition to Market**
Pradeep K. Chhibber, "State Policy, Rent Seeking, and the Electoral Success of a Religious Party in Algeria"
URL: <http://0-www.jstor.org.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/stable/2960352>

Nov 27 Happy Thanksgiving!

WEEK 14

Tu Dec 2

Transition to Market

Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Syria: The Politics of Economic Liberalisation"

URL: <http://0-www.jstor.org.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/stable/3993222>

Team Preparation for Simulation Begins

Th Dec 4

Alternative Economies? Islamic Economics

Ibrahim Warde, "Global Politics Islamic Finance and Islamist Politics" in
Clement M. Henry and Rodney Wilson, *The Politics of Islamic Finance*, ch. 2
pp. 37-62

WEEK 15

Dec 9

Alternative Economies? NGOs

Julia Elyachar, *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development,
and the State in Cairo*, pp. 1-12, ch.5-6 pp. 137-190

Dec 11

Simulation:

Best Road to Economic and Human Development?

Teams: (1) Socialists, (2) World Bank and IMF, (3) Islamic economy, (4)
NGOs and Microfinance

(Class Two Hours)

Final Paper Due Dec. 16 at Midnight