

# TURKISH CULTURE

Cultural History of Turkey: From Empire to Nation

## **Course Description:**

Designed for English-speaking students, this course presents the story of the long and varied cultural history of Turkey from its Ottoman times to its contemporary face. The course is structured around five main sections: 1) "Historical and Political Context: From Empire to Nation State to Relativism," 2) "Cultural Dynamics of Ottoman Turkey: Historical Folklore, Literature, Architecture," 3) "Cultural Transformation and Enlightenment: From Semiotic Reconstruction to Deconstruction," 4) "This Turkey Which is Not One: Postmodernism, Capitalism and Culture," and 5) "Subversive Intent: Changing Values in Turkish Culture." The course is designed not only to provide students with more information about Turkey's cultural history through some of the most significant scholarly works, but also to introduce to them some theoretical tools. These theoretical approaches will help students comprehend some of the most radical changes that have been taking place in the Turkish cultural and political scene. After a brief but comprehensive introduction to Turkish history (1299–2007), we will be covering such subjects as the Ottoman women's culture; architects, pious foundations, and architectural aesthetics in the Ottoman Empire; Ottoman town life, urban identity, and lifestyles; ceremonies, festivals, and the decorative arts; Ottoman readers, writers, and story tellers; food, drink, and sociability in Ottoman Turkey; architecture in 18th-century Istanbul; building histories in verse; architectural culture of the early Republic of Turkey; postmodernism, reason, and religious fundamentalism; Islamic fashion; capitalism and Islamism; and many other key issues and discussions.

## **About the Professor**

This course was developed by Kemal Silay, Ph.D., Chair of Ottoman and Modern Turkish Studies Department, Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University.

## Required Texts:

- Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001.
- Neslihan Çevik, "The Theological Roots of Liberalism in Turkey: 'Muslimism' from Islamic Fashion to Foreign Policy," *The Hedgehog Review* (Summer 2011), pp. 87-93.
- Seda Demiralp, "Can Money Make Us Friends?: Islamist Entrepreneurs and Chances for Democratization in the Muslim World," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, edited by J. Peter Pham, Volume 1, Number 1 (January–June 2010), pp. 120-138.
- Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005.
- Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789–2007*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008.
- Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica*, No. 69 (1989), pp. 121-150.
- Halim M. Karaveli, "An Unfulfilled Promise of Enlightenment: Kemalism and its Liberal Critics," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 2010), pp. 85-102.
- Orhan Pamuk, *The Black Book: A Novel*. Translated by Maureen Freely. New York: Vintage Books, 2006.
- Birol Yeşilada and Peter Noordijk, "Changing Values in Turkey: Religiosity and Tolerance in Comparative Perspective," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 2010), pp. 9-27.

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Historical and Political Context: From Empire to Nation State to Relativism

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Cultural Transformation and Enlightenment: From Semiotic Reconstruction to Deconstruction

Unit IV Week 11-14

This Turkey Which is Not One: Postmodernism, Capitalism and Culture

Unit V Week 15

Subversive Intent: Changing Values in Turkish Culture

## **Historical and Political Context : From Empire to Nation State to Relativism**

### *Reading*

Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 3-109.

### *Discussion*

Discuss the following chapters from Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*. Focus on the historical facts of Ottoman history (1299–1789) as claimed, argued, and presented by the author.

"Chapter 1"

"Chapter 2"

"Chapter 3"

"Chapter 4"

### *Reading*

Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, 23-403.

### *Discussion*

Discuss the following chapters from Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*. Concentrate on the historical, modern, and contemporary events and figures that shaped a significant era in Turkish history between 1789–2007.

"The Return Toward Centralization"

"The Tanzimat"

"The Reign of Abdülhamid"

"Imperial Demise, National Struggle"

"The Early Republic"

"Turkey's Widening Political Spectrum"

"Turkey and the World"

## **Cultural Dynamics of Ottoman Turkey: Historical Folklore, Literature, Architecture**

### *Introduction*

Suraiya Faroqhi is one of the leading historians of Ottoman Turkey and its cultural history. What distinguishes her from many other scholars of the field is the fact that she has successfully turned some of the most complex Ottoman documents into accessible and digestible accounts by a general audience. Is Ottoman Turkish history all about wars and territorial ambitions? How about the daily lives and stories of people hidden in the paled folios of manuscripts? *Subjects of the Sultan* is one of the major answers to those questions.

### *Reading*

Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, 43-271.

Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," *Studia Islamica*, 121-150.

### *Essay Topics*

Discuss and analyze the following chapters, writing essays of approximately 2000 words. In your analyses, you are also expected to compare Faroqhi's method of treating Ottoman history with those of Itzkowitz, and Findley, highlighting their differences and similarities.

"The Economic and Social Structure of the Ottoman Empire in Early Modern Times"

"Images of the World and the Times"

"Borders and Those Who Crossed Them"

"Women's Culture"

"Architects, Pious Foundations and Architectural Aesthetics"

"Town Life: Urban Identity and Lifestyle"

"Ceremonies, Festivals and the Decorative Arts"

"Readers, Writers and Story Tellers"

"Food, Drink and Sociability"

"Crises and New Beginnings, 1770–1839"

"Elegance Alafranga, Social Criticism and Tomatoes: Transformations in the Culture of the Ottoman Upper Class, 1840–1914"

In a comparative manner, discuss Faroqhi's "Readers, Writers and Story Tellers" and Cemal Kafadar's "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature," pp. 121-150. Indicate if/where the two authors are differing from each other in terms of research design and data utilization.

## **Early Secularism**

### *Introduction*

In the words of Bernard Lewis, “[t]he first deliberate attempt at a Westernizing policy—the first conscious step, that is, towards the imitation and adoption of certain selected elements from the civilization of Western Europe—came in the early eighteenth century” (Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Second Edition [London: Oxford University Press, 1968], p. 45). The most significant and quite evident change in the eighteenth century was the weakening of the religious institution and Sharia among the Ottoman elite. These changes demonstrated a serious movement from within the imperial administration towards a secular society. Niyazi Berkes describes indications of the weakening of religious authority and an evident laxity in the observation of traditional moral values in the eighteenth century even among the common people (Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* [Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964], pp. 27-29). Naturally enough, a true modernist revolution could not take place in this early modern period. However, considering the much more rigid and canonical social structure of the classical times, what was happening during the eighteenth century was a significant step forward for Ottoman Turkey. Radical changes were taking place in all aspects of the Ottoman Turkish culture, as well. From poetry to architecture to miniature painting to music to fashion to philosophy... the society was anything but static. It is in this century that previously unthinkable level of interactions such as those between court and folk poetic traditions were happening from within the dynamics of Ottoman society. Shirine Hamadeh's *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* is a fascinating book on this captivating Ottoman Turkish century. Hamadeh fearlessly crosses boundaries (like the century she worked on) and presents a tangible cultural history of 18th-century Istanbul, with an interdisciplinary approach to its architecture, miniature painting, poetry, and many other fields.

### *Reading*

Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*, 48-237.

### *Essay Topics*

Analyze the following chapters by paying special attention to the primary sources of the author and how she challenges the previous scholarly notions of Ottoman cultural history of the eighteenth century. Write critical essays of approximately 2000 words.

“Architecture, Ceremonial, and Exhibitionism”

“In and Out of the Poetic Canon”

“Building Histories in Verse”

“Fruits, Flowers, and Sensory Pleasures”

“East, West, and the Appeal of Novelty”

## Cultural Transformation and Enlightenment: From Semiotic Reconstruction to Deconstruction

### *Introduction*

The Turkish cultural revolution of the early twentieth century in large part turned out to be a semiotic revolution despite Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's profound dedication to the philosophy of enlightenment and its implementation in every particle of society at every level. The Kemalist ideology intended to implement a major socio-political and cultural revolution without bloodshed in a remarkably short period of time. For sure, this was a top-down revolution, engineered and prescribed by the elite for the "goodness" of the masses. In this section of our class, we will focus on the architectural reshaping of Turkey in its initial foundation—especially after the death of its leader and founder in 1938. Although tainted by the current trend, popular with poststructuralists and Islamists, of demonizing just about everything that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk undertook, Sibel Bozdoğan's *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* is a well-researched, well-written, and significant book, one that offers valuable data and observations.

### *Readings*

Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, 3-303.

Halim M. Karaveli, "An Unfulfilled Promise of Enlightenment: Kemalism and its Liberal Critics," 85-102.

### *Essay Topics*

Discuss and analyze the following chapters by focusing on the historical conditions, the reflection of the ideology of Turkish nationalism, and that of the author herself on the conceptualization, creation, and interpretation of the very architecture itself. Write critical essays of approximately 2000 words.

"Introduction: Modernism on the Margins of Europe"

"First Moderns: The Legacy of Ottoman Revivalism"

"*İnkilap Mimarisi*: Architecture of Revolution"

"Aesthetics of Progress: Imagining an Industrial Nation"

"*Yeni Mimarî*: The Making of a Modernist Profession"

"Living Modern: Cubic Houses and Apartments"

"*Millî Mimarî*: Nationalizing the Modern"

"Conclusion"

Discuss and analyze how Halim M. Karaveli questions the ideological practices of what he calls "Turkish liberal critics" within the context of the relentless criticism of Kemalism and the poststructuralist counterrevolution in Turkey.

## Postmodernism, Capitalism and Culture : This Turkey Which is Not One

### *Introduction*

"Postmodernism is a contemporary movement. It is strong and fashionable. Over and above this, it is not altogether clear what the devil it is. In fact, clarity is not conspicuous amongst its marked attributes. It not only fails to practice it, but also on occasion actually repudiates it. But anyway, there appear to be no 39 postmodernist Articles of faith, no postmodernist Manifesto, which one could consult so as to assure oneself that one has identified its ideas properly...The movement and its ideas, I fear, [are] a little too ethereal and volatile to be captured and seized with precision: perhaps the acute awareness of the movement that all meanings are to be deconstructed in a way which also brings in their opposites, and highlights the contradictions contained in them, or something like that, actually precludes a crisp and unambiguous formulation of the position... But there is a certain theme within this cluster of ideas which does profoundly concern the present argument, and that is *relativism*," Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22-24.

Since the 1980 Military Coup, the dominant philosophical, cultural, and political condition in Turkey has been what is often referred to as "postmodernism." In the words of Ihab Hassan, this chaotic condition "... suffers from a certain *semantic* instability" (Ihab Hassan, "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism" in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, edited by Thomas Docherty [New York: Columbia University Press, 1993], p. 149), thus creating perfect opportunity structures for many counter-revolutionary and fundamentalist movements, in the context of the Republic of Turkey. Hassan attempts to distinguish postmodernism from modernism by listing certain oppositional characteristics of the two movements. Among these characteristics are: Modernism (M): "purpose," Postmodernism (PM): "play" / M: "design," PM: "chance" / M: "hierarchy," PM: "anarchy" / M: "semantics," PM: "rhetoric" / M: "synthesis," PM: "antithesis" / M: "symptom," PM: "desire" / M: "origin," PM: "difference-differance" / M: "determinacy," PM: "indeterminacy." (Hassan, "Toward a Concept of Postmodernism," p. 152.)

### *Readings*

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1-66, 181-278.  
Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, 2-40.  
Orhan Pamuk, *The Black Book: A Novel*.

### *Essay Topics*

During the following four weeks, students are expected to write essays discussing the arguments of Fredric Jameson, and Ernest Gellner, followed by an analysis of a postmodernist novel by the Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk.



"The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"

"Theories of the Postmodern"

"Immanence and Nominalism in Postmodern Theoretical Discourse"

"Postmodernism and the Market"

"Religious Fundamentalism"

"Postmodernism and Relativism"

### *Literary Analysis*

After briefly providing a description of the plot, themes, and main characters of *The Black Book* by Orhan Pamuk, analyze the novel as a postmodernist text—one that is described as "unreadable" by many critics. Focus on Pamuk's intertextual playfulness and his (re)reading of the literary and religious works of the pre-Modern Islamic era.

## **Changing Values in Turkish Culture : Subversive Intent**

### *Introduction*

"The Republic expects you to create generations whose thoughts are free, whose conscience is free, whose wisdom is free." — Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Today many scholars argue that the Republic of Turkey in the last decade or so created a powerful "Islamic bourgeoisie"; Turkish Islamists are not concerned with Islamizing society but rather they are after an economic mobilization; Turkey has become a major economic power and therefore there cannot possibly be a danger of religious totalitarianism and dictatorship in that country. (See, for example, M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009]). Yet, in a mere eight years, the Republic of Turkey went through such extreme political and cultural transformations, moving away from the West and running towards the Islamic East—often with direct logistical support from various fundamentalist factions and powers.

### *Readings*

Neslihan Çevik, "The Theological Roots of Liberalism in Turkey: 'Muslimism' from Islamic Fashion to Foreign Policy," 87-93.

Seda Demiralp, "Can Money Make Us Friends?: Islamist Entrepreneurs and Chances for Democratization in the Muslim World," 120-138.

Birol Yeşilada and Peter Noordijk, "Changing Values in Turkey: Religiosity and Tolerance in Comparative Perspective," 9-27.

### *Essay Topics*

Below you will find three different approaches to the current state of affairs in Turkey. Compare, discuss, and challenge these articles writing essays of approximately 2000 words.

Neslihan Çevik, "The Theological Roots of Liberalism in Turkey: 'Muslimism' from Islamic Fashion to Foreign Policy."

Seda Demiralp, "Can Money Make Us Friends?: Islamist Entrepreneurs and Chances for Democratization in the Muslim World."

Birol Yeşilada and Peter Noordijk, "Changing Values in Turkey: Religiosity and Tolerance in Comparative Perspective."