

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

ARABIC CULTURE

Course Description

This is a study of the structures, social patterns, and cultural production, both popular and elite, of the Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa. The analyses we will read are drawn primarily from the fields of folklore, anthropology, and cultural studies, while not excluding social history, art history, and literary history. The main topics investigated will be folk literature, music, dance, art, religious ritual, gender, theater, cinema, and television. This course will leave the treatment of high or elite literature for the Introduction to Arabic Literature course, and leave the discussion of political changes per se to the Arab History course, though many of the readings will show important relationships between politics and cultural production of various types. The extremely important topic of Arab cultural influence on Europe is not included here, and is treated instead in the Introduction to Arabic Literature course and the Arab History course. The readings are weighted toward the culture of the modern Arab world, and while no attempt will be made to provide a comprehensive overview of Arab history from pre-Islamic times until the present, the works studied will provide some understanding of the colonial and post-colonial history of the Arab world, which forms important background for the study of modern Arab culture. The relationships between nationalism and culture will be studied from a variety of perspectives.

About the Professor

Devin J. Stewart is associate professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at Emory University. His specialties include Islamic law and legal theory, Shi'ite Islam, the Qur'an, and Arabic dialects. His written works include numerous articles and reviews. Stewart has also published three books: *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelve Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System*; *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*; and *Law and Education in Islam*.

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ASSIGNMENTS

Instructions

Each paper will be 10-12 pages, double-spaced, and include full bibliography and footnotes, following either Chicago or MLA style. Writing should be formal throughout. The papers will be judged on both content and form: first, on argument, the use of explicit evidence, the marshaling of that evidence in a logical and cogent manner, and correct documentation; second, on the formal structure of the essay; and third, on style, mechanics, and so on.

Assignment for Paper #1:

Paper #1 will be due in Week 8 of the course. The paper may address any issue relevant to the first two sections of the course, classical Arabic literature or medieval Arabic literature and its influence on Western Europe, but the following are some suggested topics:

1. Interview members of an Arab family about their family history, education, professions, marriages, immigration, residences, future plans, relations with relatives, etc.
2. Analyze proverbs from any collection translated into English, focusing on one or several themes or topics.
3. Collect Arabic jokes from native speakers or from the internet. What categories of jokes are evident? What are the rules that govern their structure and content? What makes them funny? What ideas do they convey?
4. Analyze *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan*. What are the ideological assumptions behind the text? How is suspense created? What are the characteristics of the hero? Is he perfect, or does he have failings? How does the epic portray women? How does it portray other ethnic groups?
5. Write on a theme in the tales of Juha or in other collections of Arab folktales.
6. Analyze the lyrics and music of a popular Arabic song.
7. Watch a concert of traditional or popular music and analyze the performance.
8. Write an assessment of the career of Umm Kulthum, Fairouz, or other well-known performer.

Assignment for Paper #2:

Paper #2 will be due in Week 15 of the course and may address any issue relevant to the second half of the course. The following are some suggested topics:

1. Interview Arab men and women about different types of dancing and when and where it is appropriate or permissible to dance.
2. Research any saint's shrine in the Arab world and describe the practices associated with the shrine: pilgrimages, prayer, lighting candles, vows, supplications, and so on.
3. Interview several native Arabs about the celebration of Ramadan in their native region in general and in their family specifically. Or interview Christian Arabs about the celebration of Christmas and Easter.
4. Why is the Dome of the Rock important in the history of Arab/Islamic architecture?
5. Analyze the portrayal of women in any work of Arabic literature or film.
6. What does *Daughters of Tunis* reveal about the status of women in Tunisian society.
7. What are the features of Arab and Islamic traditions that restrict the freedom of women in society.
8. Read an entire issue of a newspaper in Arabic or an English language newspaper from the Arab world such as the Egypt's *Ahram* in English or the *Daily Star* from Lebanon. Analyze the content, presentation, and views expressed. What topics and views are emphasized? What is not discussed?
9. Analyze Arabic ads online or on satellite television for consumer products. What are the points emphasized? What types of products are advertised? What messages do the ads convey?
10. Interview a native of the Arab world about clothing, cars, cellphones, watches, and other consumer products that are connected with high status.
11. Analyze any film, television serial, or play that has been dubbed or provided with subtitles.
12. Analyze an outstanding work of Arab art or architecture, or a coherent group of such works.
13. Analyze the negotiation of power and hierarchy in rural Lebanese society as described by Gilson.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To gain an overview of the geographical factors, social structures, and modes of existence that have shaped Arab societies.
- To gain an overview of Arab cultural production, both high and popular forms, including language, folk literature, art, music, dance, theater, cinema, and television.
- To understand the roles women and men play in Arab societies and the historical factors affecting their status.
- To gain an understanding of the effects of the colonial period, independence, and nationalism on Arab culture and society.
- To improve composition skills.
- To improve skills of textual analysis.

REQUIREMENTS

- Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and to complete three out of a set of questions for each week. In many cases, there is not one correct answer. Students should aim to formulate their own opinions on the material and will not be expected to agree with the professor or the authorities whose studies we read. They should focus on explaining their points in a clear and logical manner, using examples from the text as evidence. Arguing from the text is absolutely essential for success in this course. Answers should be written. For the question sets, footnotes are not required. Citations from the particular works we are reading for that week may be parenthetical, e.g.: (Armbrust, p. 54). Students are encouraged to explore areas and ideas that may be tentative, unfamiliar, or unusual.
 - Two assigned papers, 10 pages each. The first will be due at Week 8, and the second at Week 15. The papers will be judged first on argument, originality of thesis, and the use of textual evidence; second on proper form, structure, and documentation; and third on mechanics, clarity of expression, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so forth. Footnotes and bibliography are required for the assigned papers and should follow the conventions of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
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TEXTS

- Eickelmann, Dale F. *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989.
- Reynolds, Dwight F. *Arab Folklore: A Handbook*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2007.
- Hammond, Andrew. *Popular Culture in the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007.
- Holmes-Eber, Paula. *Daughters of Tunis: Women, Family, and Networks in a Muslim City*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Westview Press, 2003.
- Jayyusi, Salma Khadra, Harry Norris, and Lena Jayyusi. *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan: An Arab Folk Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Jayyusi, Salma Khadra, Matthew Sorenson, and Christopher Tingley. *Tales of Juha: Classic Arab Folk Humor*. Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Books, 2006.
- Caton, Steven C. *"Peaks of Yemen I Summon": Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Racy, Ali Jihad. *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of Tarab*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Danielson, Virginia. *"The Voice of Egypt": Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998.
- van Nieuwkerk, Karin. *A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Hillenbrand, Robert. *Islamic Art and Architecture*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998.
- Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004.

FURTHER READING

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Bates, Daniel G. and Amal Rassam. *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 2000.
- Bowen, Donna Lee and Evelyn A. Early (eds.) *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Bushnaq, Inea. *Arab Folktales*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
- El-Shamy, Hassan. *Folktales of Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock. *Guests of the Sheikh: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.
- Freyha, Anis. *Dictionary of Modern Lebanese Proverbs*. Dearborn, Michigan: International Book Centre, 1974.

- Gendzier, Irene L. *The Practical Visions of Ya`qub Sanu*. Cambridge: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1996.
- Kilpatrick, Hilary. *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abu al-Faraj al-Isbahani's Kitab al-Aghani*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Lane, Edward. *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. London: C.A. King, 1846.
<http://archive.org/stream/accountofmanners00laneoft#page/n7/mode/2up>
- Kapchan, Deborah A. *Traveling Spirit Masters: Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace*. Wesleyan, 2007.
- Kishtainy, Khalid. *Arab Political Humour*. Quartet Books, 1986.
- Moreh, Shmuel. *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arabic World*. New York: New York University Press, 1992.
- Muhawi, Ibrahim and Sharif Kanaana. *Speak, Bird, Speak Again: Palestinian Arab Folktales*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989.
- Musil, Alois. *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins*. New York: American Geographical Association, 1928.
- Nisan, Mordechai. *Minorities in the Middle East: A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*. McFarland, 2002.
- Roded, Ruth. *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008.
- Shryock, Andrew. *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Stone, Christopher Reed. *Popular Culture and Nationalism in Lebanon: The Fairouz and Rahbani Nation*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Westermarck, Edward. *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1926.
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OVERVIEW OF ARAB SOCIETY

Historical, Geographical, and Social Background

Geography. The Arab world, a large part of which is adjacent to the Saharan, Arabian, and Syrian deserts, is overall very dry, and this has had a tremendous effect on the distribution of people and the workings of Arab culture. From ancient times, Arab populations concentrated in areas at the edge of the deserts, on the outskirts of settled areas. It is believed that the Semitic peoples originated in the Arabian peninsula, and that periodic waves of migration brought different groups out into adjacent areas: the Akkadians' move into Mesopotamia was the first such wave of migration, followed by those of Babylonians, Aramaic speakers, Canaanites. A wave of migration from the Yemen into adjacent region in Africa is evident from the extant Ethiopian languages, which are Semitic as well. The Islamic expansion in the seventh-ninth centuries may be seen as the last of these great waves of migration, spreading the Arabic language and aspects of Arab and Islamic culture throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of variety in the geography of the Arab world, which features verdant areas such as the mountains of Yemen and the valley of the River Nile, large cities, and extensive areas of farmland. For convenience, one may divide the types of people in the region into three groups: nomads or semi-nomads, village-dwellers, and city-dwellers. The first of these groups has dwindled in size, particularly over the last century, and represent a very small percentage of the population in the region. The twentieth century has witnessed a tremendous flux of the rural population to the major urban centers, producing crowded capital cities; Cairo, the largest city in Africa and one of the most populous cities on Earth, has increased in size many times over, and greater Cairo now boasts a population of approximately 17 million.

Tribal heritage. The Arabs traditionally lived in tribal groups, like the American Indians, Somalians, and other peoples, and some aspects of their tribal history has affected modern Arabs' social organization and customs. Thus, for example, the Arab tribes were traditionally focused on maintaining the strength of the agnatic group—the basic unit of a grandfather, his sons, and their sons. This meant that individual males sought to have as many sons and grandsons as possible. Tribal culture also favored father's brother's daughter marriages—i.e., a man would ideally marry his first cousin, the daughter of his uncle on his father's side—which preserved the wealth of the agnatic group by avoiding giving it to outsiders and increased the stability of the agnate group. In many Arab nations, marriage to one's first cousin is still considered the preferred or default marriage, even though most people live in cities and villages where tribal life and affiliation are not strong. Though the actual percentage of such marriages is small, a common term of endearment for one's wife—the equivalent of "honeybunch" or "sugarplum"—is *bint `ammi* "my cousin" even when she is not actually a blood relation. The emphasis on endogamy is not always the case in tribal cultures; Mongol tribes, for example, traditionally encouraged exogamy. The Arab values of hospitality and generosity likewise preserve nomadic traditions: it is widely understood that a guest is entitled to hospitality for three days without any conditions. These tribal traditions have interacted in complex ways with the traditions of Islam, since about 1000 C.E. the dominant religion of the Arab world, as well as Judaism and Christianity, and have being shaped and modified by urbanization, the influence of colonial powers, modernization, and other contacts with the West and other cultural regions of the world.

Colonialism. Nearly all the Arab nations were colonized by European powers for part of the 19th and 20th centuries: Southern Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Syria by France; Egypt, Palestine, the Hijaz, Yemen, Jordan, and Iraq by Great Britain; Northern Morocco by Spain; and Libya by Italy. The colonial period witnessed the importation of European technology and cultural institutions. Many of the Arab and Middle Eastern nations have experienced a very rapid modernization that entailed radical social, economic, and political changes. In Morocco, for example, there were no paved roads before 1912, and by independence only a several hundred Moroccan students had graduated high school. The introduction of automobiles, trains, airports, electricity, national education systems, newspapers, radio, television, and now the internet proceeded at a rate quite difficult to fathom. These developments created tensions in the culture that have been a major part of the colonial and post colonial experience of Arabs. On the one hand, modern technology increased central control of the modern nation state, creating more of a unified culture with an identifiable center of cultural production in the capital city of each nation. The 20th century saw the ballooning population of major cities with the immigration of farmers and villagers to urban centers. Pastoral nomads dwindled in numbers as the state strove to settle them. On the other hand, all sectors of society were exposed to forms of European cultural production through newspapers, radio, television, cinema, and schools, and all became more connected to the outside world.

Religious Identities. Though it is certainly the case that the dominant religion in the contemporary Arab world is Islam, and one would have a difficult time understanding many aspects of Arab culture without reference to Islam, it is important to realize that not all Arabs are Muslims. Arab tribes had adopted Judaism and Christianity centuries before the advent of Islam, and the two most important Arab principalities in the sixth century C.E., the Ghassanids in what is now Jordan and the Lakhmids in what is now southern Iraq, were populated primarily by Christian Arabs. Some scholars argue that the Bible was translated into Arabic before the advent of Islam. Christian Arab tribes such as the Tanukh fought on the side of the Byzantines against the Islamic expansion into Syria. Christian Arab communities have continued to inhabit the Middle East until modern times, and in most areas they probably remained more than half of the population until about 1000 A.D. Arab Christians now inhabit Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, and in some cases form a sizable part of the population. Christians and Jews from Arab lands speak Arabic and have many customs similar to those of their Muslim neighbors. While many consider the Arabs the “original” or “most authentic” Muslims (Arab Muslims often share this belief), it is important to remember that they are a minority in the Muslim world, and that there are more Indian and Pakistani Muslims, or Malay and Indonesian Muslims, than there are Arabs.

Ethnic Identities. The Islamic expansion brought Arabs into contact with many other ethnic groups that have influenced the make-up of the modern Arab world: Greeks, Egyptians, Ethiopians, East Africans, Persians, Turks, Indians, Mongols, Kurds, Berbers, and so on. Because of conversion, intermarriage, and political control, the native speakers of Arabic—who often identified themselves as Arab even though they were not wholly or even partially racially Arab—expanded to include many members of the conquered populations. In the early Islamic centuries, converts adhered to the tribal system, converting at the hands of a tribal Arab patron and thus becoming a client of that patron and adopting his tribal affiliation. This system had vanished by 1000 A.D., but the practice of adopting Arab names and an

Arab lineage did not, and there are many lines of supposed *sayyids*—descendants of the Prophet—in Morocco and elsewhere who are probably not ethnically Arab. This variety of ethnic substrates, as well as the influence of the various non-Arab dynasties that ruled over the region—Persian dynasties such as the Buyids or Turkish dynasties such as the Mamluks and the Ottomans—had a tremendous influence on the modern Arab world.

Questions:

1. How has geography affected Arab culture? Give examples.
2. How do the three Arab groups of pastoral nomads, village dwellers, and city dwellers differ, and how are they similar to each other?
3. How has modernization affected Arab culture?
4. Why have anthropologists and other writers and scholars been interested in the Arab world? What are some of their accomplishments and theories?
5. What are some salient features of marriage and family relationships in Arab culture?

Reading

Eickelman, *The Middle East*:

Chapter 1: Anthropology and the Middle East, pp. 1-22.

Chapter 2: Intellectual Predecessors: East and West, pp. 23-53.

Chapter 3: Village and Community, pp. 54-72.

Chapter 4: Pastoral Nomadism, pp. 73-94.

Chapter 5: Cities in their Place, pp. 95-125.

Chapter 6: What is a Tribe?, pp. 126-150.

Chapter 7: Personal and Family Relationships, pp. 151-178.

Reynolds, *Arab Folklore*, pp. 1-28.

Further Reading

Barakat, Halim. *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Lane, Edward. *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. London: C.A. King, 1846.

Musil, Alois. *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins*. New York: American Geographical Association, 1928.

Sabry, Tarik. *Arab Cultural Studies: Mapping the Field*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012.

Westermarck, Edward. *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1926.

Language, the State, and Consumption.

Language and Identity. Arab identity in modern times and throughout much of Arab history meant being a native speaker of Arabic rather than being racially or genetically Arab. Given the nature of the Islamic expansion into the Middle East and North Africa, the Arab portion of the gene pool in Egypt, Morocco, or Lebanon, for example, is probably quite small, probably far less than 10%. It is the Arabic language that ties the region together culturally. The Arabic linguistic situation is complex, a fact that is sometimes obscured by the fact that all of its varieties are termed simply "Arabic." Classical Arabic, the language of the Qur'an and classical Arabic literature, served in the Islamic world the role that Latin served in medieval Christendom. It was the language of prayer and of most religious discourse, and of most academic discourse in the religious sciences, literature and the arts, as well as non-religious sciences such as mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and so on. This written language remained relatively unified until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though it did change over time, as did Latin. Written Arabic change significantly, however, with the arrival of newspapers, radio, television, and the translation of European language materials into Arabic, creating modern standard Arabic. The modern written language retains many features of classical Arabic grammar but has changed quite a bit in style, including a great deal of innovated vocabulary and calques on English and French idioms and grammatical constructions. It eschewed many of the popular rhetorical figures of pre-modern Arabic, especially the frequent use of rhyming and rhythmically parallel phrases that were often semantically redundant. Modern Standard Arabic is an artificial language of sorts, in that it is only used in writing and formal speech and is not the native language of any Arab and must be learned in school.

Arabic Dialects. The Arabic dialects differ radically from classical Arabic and modern standard Arabic, somewhat less than Italian, French, and Spanish differ from Latin, but much more than the various varieties of Spanish differ from each other. Like Latin, Classical and Modern Standard Arabic are both inflected languages, in which the various cases of the noun are distinguished by particular endings, while the modern dialects, like the Romance languages, have across the board jettisoned the inflection of nouns. In many areas of the Islamic Empire, Arabic replaced the local languages. Coptic died out by the sixteenth century in Egypt; Nubian survives in Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan. In what are now Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, Arabic replaced various dialects of Aramaic. The small Aramaic-speaking communities that remain are Jewish and Christian villages and small communities in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Persian and Kurdish, which have survived as major languages, are the major exceptions in the Middle East. The spread of Turkish in the northern tier of the Middle East postdates the expansion of the Islamic Empire in the early centuries. In North Africa, Berber language is dying out in Libya, Tunisia, and the Oases of Egypt but remain strong in Algeria and Morocco, where significant portions of the population continue to be raised as native speakers of several Berber languages. Each Arabic dialect is influenced to some extent by the substrate (the languages that existed before Arabic became widespread), such as Aramaic in Syria and Iraq and Berber in North Africa, as well as by the languages imposed by foreign regimes, such as Turkish in Arab regions that were formerly under Ottoman domination, or by the colonial powers, such as French in Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, English in Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, and Italian in Libya. Though the Arabic dialects differ from each other, most Arabs can communicate through a complex mix of standard Arabic and elements of their

own and other dialects. In the mid-late 20th century, Egyptian Arabic became something like a lingua franca in the Arab world on account of the influence of Egyptian radio, music, television, and cinema throughout the Arab nations, as well as Gamal Abdel Nasser's policy of sending Egyptian graduates to teach throughout the Arab world in elementary and high schools. Since the 1990s, satellite television has changed the linguistic situation radically by exposing Arabs everywhere to a variety of dialects, including Syrian, Lebanese, and Gulf dialects, even on the same talk show, where guests from several nations are made to interact with each other.

Questions:

1. Hammond stresses the divide between high and low culture in the Arab World. Does a similar divide exist in the United States? Compare and contrast the two situations. Who are the representatives of high culture, and why do they criticise low culture so much?
2. What is the Great Qur'an Debate (Hammond, pp. 73-78), and why is it important?
3. Describe the ways in which Ramadan has been commercialized.
4. In order to show high status, Arab families often spend enormous sums on weddings. What are some of the things on which they spend this money?
5. McDonalds does not represent the same thing in the Arab World that it does in the United States. How and why does this difference exist?
6. How do sensationalism and paranoia affect the press in the Arab World?

Reading

Eickelmann, *The Middle East*.

Chapter 8: Change in Practical Ideologies: Self, Gender, and Ethnicity, pp. 179-227.

Chapter 9: The Cultural Order of Complex Societies, pp. 228-254.

Chapter 10: Islam and the "Religions of the Book," pp. 255-338.

Chapter 11: State Authority and Society, pp. 339-395.

Hammond, *Popular Culture*.

Chapter 1: Culture and Politics in the Arab World Today, pp. 1-52.

Chapter 2: The Arabic Language: The Key to Arab Identity, pp. 53-78.

Chapter 4: Arab Consumer Culture: The Packaging of People and Places, 107-136.

Chapter 9: The Trials and Tribulations of the Arabic Press, pp. 237-62.

Further Reading

Beeston, A.F.L. *The Arabic Language Today*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006.

Gully, Adrian. *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society*.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Haeri, Niloufar. *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Hourani, Albert. *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Stetkevych, Jaroslav. *The Modern Arabic Literary Language*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006.

Suleiman, Yasir. *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003.

Tahtawi, Rifa`ah Rafi`. *An Imam in Paris: Al-Tahtawi's Visit to France 1826-1831*. Trans.

Daniel L. Newman. London: Saqi, 2011.

Folk Poetry and Popular Genres in the Arab World

Popular poetry. The high art of the pre-Islamic Arabs was poetry, and poetry remained the prestige genre in Arabic literature until it was overtaken by the novel in the twentieth century. Oral poetry played important roles in popular culture, in which it took on a variety of forms and was used in many contexts for diverse purposes. In her book *Veiled Sentiments*, Lila Abu-Lughod wrote of the *ghinnawa*, a genre of lyrical couplets used by Bedouins of the Libyan Desert in northwestern Egypt to express deep personal emotions. The *zajal* is popular in Lebanon and Syria and is often performed in competitions in front of a larger audience. The Egyptian *mawwaliya* is a plaintive lament, a stanza of four lines that usually involves multiple puns. There are many specific genres—we will explore just a few in detail.

The folk epic. One particularly interesting genre of oral poetry is that of the folk epic, termed *sirah* in Arabic, which usually recounts the exploits of a hero. Many such epics were popular in pre-modern times, including the epic of `Antar, the epic of the Banu Hilal tribe, the epic of Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan, the epic of Baybars, the epic of `Ali al-Zaybaq, and others. The plots of 12 well-known epics are summarized in M.C. Lyons' work listed below. From travelers' accounts and works such as Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* we know that storytellers performed these epics regularly in coffeehouses and other venues for the entertainment of rapt audiences. This practice continued into the twentieth century, and one of Naguib Mahfouz's novels, *Midaqq Alley* (1947), shows just such a storyteller being replaced by a radio at Kirsha's café, a sad transition that happened elsewhere throughout Egypt and the Arab world. There are still a few places in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab nations where the epic of the Banu Hilal tribe is performed, and Dwight Reynolds provides a fascinating description of a modern performer in the Nile Delta village of Bakatush. The *sirah* is a long series of poems describing various scenes and events, connected by prose narrations, often rhyming and rhythmical prose as well.

The Epic of Banu Hilal is a very long epic that has a cast of many characters, including not just one but several heroes. An interesting feature of this epic is that it portrays its heroes not as perfect but as psychologically flawed, and also includes an Amazon-like woman warrior names al-Jaziyah. It tells the story of the great migration of the Banu Hilal tribe from Arabia, through Egypt to North Africa, where they nearly succeeded in establishing a kingdom but then were over-run, after which the tribe was scattered throughout North Africa.

The Epic of Sayf ben Dhi Yazan. The epic of Sayf ben Dhi Yazan, like many of the other popular epics, is based on historical events. Sayf ben Dhi Yazan was the Yemeni commander credited with ending the Ethiopian occupation of Yemen a century prior to the advent of Islam. Curiously, he is mentioned at the beginning of Ibn Hisham's *Sirah* of the Prophet in a manner that suggests that the rise of Islam was intimately related to Yemeni political history and the revolt of Sayf.

Questions:

1. Explain the form, social context, and main themes of one form of popular poetry in the Arab world.
2. How are modern popular forms related to the divide between classical Arabic and local dialects of Arabic?
3. What are some of the religious purposes that popular poetry serves?

4. What are some famous epics from around the world? What characteristics do they have in common? How are their heroes portrayed? What specific qualities do they have? Compare and contrast with the Arabic epics.
5. Which elements of *The Adventures of Sayf ben Dhi Yazan* are reminiscent of *The 1001 Nights*?
6. What is the structure of the epic?
7. How is Sayf portrayed as a hero?
8. Discuss one salient theme of the epic.

Reading

Reynolds, *Arab Folklore*, pp. 29-77.

Jayyusi, Salma Khadra, Harry Norris, and Lena Jayyusi. *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan: An Arab Folk Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Further Reading

Heath, Peter. *The Thirsty Sword: Sirat `Antar and the Arabic Popular Epic*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996.

Lyons, M.C. *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-telling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Reynolds, Dwight F. *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Folktales.

Arab Folktales. Folktales form a very large corpus of material and have been categorized according to types and motifs. In *Types of the Folktale in the Arab World*, Hasan El-Shamy has divided folktales into five broad types: 1) animal tales, 2) ordinary folktales, 3) jokes and anecdotes, 4) formula tales, and 5) unclassified tales. Certain cycles of folktales also form more specific genres, featuring recurring characters like Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox of American folklore, as well as conventions of plot and message. This week we will read examples of a number of different types of folktale in Reynolds' *Arab Folklore*, as well as a collection of tales about Juha, the most famous Arab folkloric character of all. In 1956, Egyptian essayist `Abbas Mahmud al-`Aqqad (1889-1964) published a book entitled *Juha al-dahik al-mudhik* (Laughing and Entertaining Juha). While it includes a section devoted to anecdotes of the folkloric character Juha, the book is actually a general work on humor, drawing on such theorists as Bergson and others, with some focus on Arab and Egyptian humor in particular. The choice of title reflects not merely a ploy on the part of the publisher to sell more books by referring to a popular folkloric character but also recognition of Juha's status as the leading representative of folk humor in Arab societies.

Juha as Everyman. Juha is at the same time ubiquitous and relentlessly local. He is found in every region of the Arab world, in medieval Persian literature, and in the modern folklore of southern Italy and Sicily, where, like couscous, he stands as remaining evidence of the intense but sparsely documented medieval cultural contact between the Arab, Islamic world and Christian Europe in the region. His name varies slightly from place to place. In the thirteenth-century Persian *Mathnavi* of Rumi he is *Juhi*, in Egypt *Guha*, in North Africa *Zheha* or *Si Zha*, in Sicily and southern Italy *Giufà* or *Giucà*. Yet everywhere he appears, he is portrayed as local and typical of the region. In Iraq he is Iraqi, in Egypt, Egyptian, and in Morocco, Moroccan. He is a Muslim among Muslims, but a Christian in Sicily, and a Jew in Sefardic tales throughout the Mediterranean. He represents the character of Everyman, the local peasant or villager with no education or attainments to speak of, limited resources, and a humble social position.

A Fool's Long History. The character of Juha may have originated in Iraq in the early Islamic centuries or may go back even further to Arab lore that precedes the Islamic period. Whether Juha was a historical person or simply a mythical figure has been the subject of some debate. Juha is supposed to have been a real man, a native of Kufa in southern Iraq by the name of Abu 'I-Ghusn Juha of the Arab Fazarah tribe. This would fit with what is known of other famous paragons of specific character traits in Arab lore, such as gluttony, avarice, generosity, and so on. Just as Hatim al-Ta'i is the archetype of the generous host in Arabic lore, so is Juha the archetypal fool, and the adage "More foolish than Juha" appears to be quite old. Stories about Juha have been recorded for over a thousand years. He appears already in a verse attributed to the Umayyad poet `Umar ibn Abi al-Rabi`ah, who lived in the seventh century: "You have so addled my mind and toyed with it / that, in my madness, it's as if I were Juha." If the attribution of this verse, or Juha's historical reality, is not entirely sound, the ninth-century author al-Jahiz (d. 255/868) certainly mentioned Juha as a famous example of a fool. In the late tenth century, the Baghdadi scholar Ibn Nadim (d. 990) listed an anonymous work by the title *Kitab nawadir Juha* (Book of the Anecdotes of Juha) in a section of his *Fihrist* (Catalogue) devoted to entertaining tales. Al-Maydani (d. 1124), the author of a

collection of proverbs compiled in Iraq in the eleventh century, reproduces several anecdotes about Juha the fool, including the following:

One example of [Juha's] foolishness is that `Isa ibn Musa al-Hashimi passed by him while he was digging in an area on the outskirts of Kufah. He asked him, "What's the matter, Abu al-Ghusn?" He answered, "I buried some silver coins in this desert, but I can't find the correct spot." He said, "You should have marked it with a sign." He said, "I did." He asked him, "What was [the sign]?" He replied, "A cloud in the sky which was shading the spot. But now I don't see the sign."

These anecdotes and many others portray Juha as a simple fool. Upon being asked, "What day is it?" he replies that he's not from around here. On one occasion, he supposedly got rid of some annoying street urchins by telling them that there was a feast, but then followed them because he is hungry. Another anecdote relates that he inherited half of his father's house, but wanted to sell that half so that he could buy the other half and then own the whole house.

Trickster and Wise Fool. To limit Juha to the role of fool would be to do him an injustice. Everywhere where Juha figures in local folklore, and as far back in history as the sources reveal, Juha's stories embody two other character types in addition to that of the fool: the trickster and the wise fool. The trickster proves wiser than his interlocutors, despite his lack of formal education or status. It is said that a poor man would stand by the shop of a kebab seller, eating bread but smelling the roasting meat that he could not afford. Annoyed by his constant presence, the kebab seller demanded payment from the poor man, who asked Juha to intercede. Juha agreed to pay the man, shook a few coins in his hand so that they jingled, and said to the kebab seller, "Do you hear that? That's your payment!" The wise fool is wise naively, as if by accident rather than cunning. A characteristic feature of wise fool stories is the difficult or impossible question. As a jest, members of the public ask the fool a question, expecting to stump him or to get a nonsensical, humorous, or ridiculous answer. The wise fool, however, answers the question in an unexpected way that not only sidesteps its difficulty but also says something profound about social life or the world. For example, it is commonly reported in Egypt that people demanded of Juha, "Count the waves." After consideration, he answered, "The ones coming are more than the ones going." He thus avoided giving a definite and patently wrong answer to an impossible question. In addition, his answer is an aphorism meaning that future opportunities will outnumber the missed ones of the past. In another anecdote, people ask Juha, "What town are you from?" and he answers, "I haven't married yet." While this sounds at first like a non-sequitur, it conceals an important point: the customs and behavior of a family, and perhaps their social ties as well, often depend more on the wife than on the husband, despite the patriarchal social systems found in the Arab world. As the saying goes, "Take wisdom from the mouths of madmen." All three versions of Juha's character coexist in the tradition, broadening the multifarious applications of his lore to social life.

Questions: Think about these questions as you do the reading, and answer 2-3 questions in writing (2-3 pages).

1. How do fairy tales begin and end in English? What do these conventional beginnings and endings signal to the audience? What are the Arabic

- equivalents to these beginnings and endings? Compare and contrast their literal meanings. Do they convey some different sense to the audience?
2. What is the difference between a folktale and a legend?
 3. What are the supernatural creatures that appear in Arabic folktales, and what are their characteristics?
 4. How would you interpret the two tales involving a *ghula* (female ghou) (pp. 93-98). What do the similarities between the tales reveal about Arab folklore or about these particular folktales?
 5. Who are the other characters that appear in Juha stories, and what are their characteristics?
 6. Identify several stories in which Juha appears as a fool. In which stories does he appear as a trickster or clever man? In which stories does he appear as a wise fool?
 7. Analyze two Juha stories that are meant to deliver a moral message.
 8. Analyze two Juha stories that are meant to comment on an aspect of social life.
 9. Do Juha stories have a unified ideology?
 10. Are there any hints about historical period, geographical region, or social environment in the Juha stories? Can you detect different layers or categories of tales?

Reading:

Reynolds, *Arab Folklore*, pp. 77-110.

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Popular Speech Genres

Speech Genres. Every linguistic community shares not only a grammar and a vocabulary but also a repertoire of formal types of spoken utterances that follow certain rules and conventions. One may label these types “speech genres”, just as the written language has a repertoire of written or literary genres. Usually, the existence of a particular genre is signaled by the existence of a title or generic label that refers to that particular formal type. Thus, we know that American English has a genre of “jokes” because people use this term to refer to the genre, and within that larger category there exist many specific sub-categories, with specific generic labels such as “knock-knock joke”, “dead baby joke”, and so on. Some genres, such as greetings, blessings, curses, oaths, proverbs, lullabies, fairy tales, and jokes, are found in nearly every language, but others are not. Knock-knock jokes do not exist in any of the Arabic dialects, and jokes about the ant and the elephant, which are popular in Egyptian Arabic, are not a significant category in American English. The formalist Russian literary critic Mikhail wrote the seminal article “On Speech Genres” in 1952. In his view, the complex form of the novel is made up of smaller units that derive from spoken genres. Since then, linguists, folklorists, and anthropologists have done interesting work on speech genres—the work of Dell Hymes stands out as crucial—but the field remains in its infancy.

Conventional Rules. Speech genres are conventional, meaning that, when using them, speakers follow certain rules that society has somehow agreed on through repeated usage. Thus, when an Egyptian greets someone in the morning, saying *sabaah il-khayr* “morning of goodness”, the usual answer is *sabaah in-nuur* “morning of light”. When a special guest comes to the house, the host may say *khatwa `aziiza* “a precious step” or *zarna n-nabi* “the Prophet has come to visit us.” These rules may change over time, and they may be adjusted or violated by individual speakers under certain circumstances, but they are nevertheless identifiable through observation. The investigation of Arab speech genres has not produced a substantial body of scholarship to date. Folklorists have paid attention to certain genres such as the folktale and the proverb. Textbooks of Arabic, even those that focus on the dialect of a particular Arab nation, only give the most rudimentary description of greetings and politeness formulas. Many dictionaries only give limited information about speech genres, even when they contain expressions that appear only in one highly demarcated speech genre. Speech genres therefore have tended to fall in between other areas that are studied with more care, such as lexicon, which involves the study of individual words, and grammar, which involves the study of sentences. According to Bakhtin, the basic unit of the speech genre is the utterance, which may be a fragment of a sentence or a speech that lasts hours. These units have not been well studied, and grammar books generally do not have chapters that explain how to complain, whine, cajole, insult, threaten, seduce, shoot the breeze, and so on, even though one may detect through observation their generic conventions and rules, including set expressions and vocabulary, regular structures, definitions of typical or appropriate performers and contexts, rhetorical strategies, and underlying concepts, or ideologies.

Proverbs, riddles, jokes, and more. Bakhtin points out that a catalogue of speech genres does not exist and that we do not even have the principles on which to construct such a catalogue. Politeness formulas and jokes are fruitful ground for the investigation of the workings of speech genres because they have many well-defined and highly structured sub-genres, each with its own rules. This week, you

will read about proverbs, riddles, curses, and greetings in Reynolds' book, as well as several articles on Arab humor, politeness formulas, blessings, and curses as an introduction to the speech genres of the Arabic dialects.

Questions:

1. What are the identifiable genres of jokes in American English or in your native language? What are the required elements in these jokes? Do they adopt a particular structure? How do they function? Who tells them, and in what context?
2. What are the rules for greetings in Egyptian Arabic?
3. What are some of the main types of jokes in Arab nations? Interview a native of any Arab nation to find out. What are the conventions of such jokes? Who tells them? When, and where? How do they work? What are their structural features?
4. Do jokes express an ideology? Are they based on unstated cultural assumptions?
5. Proverbs have often been seen as expressing the genius or mentality of a folk or nation. What do you think of this? What should one make of proverbs that appear to be contradictory?
6. What structures do proverbs adopt? What key elements make a proverb memorable? Compare and contrast Arabic and English proverbs.
7. Discuss the function of blessings and curses.

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Jordanian/Palestinian Proverbs:

http://www.freewebs.com/arabic_raed/arabicproverbs.htm

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Tribal Poetry

Distinct culture. Yemen remains something like the Wild West of the Arab world. Its mountainous terrain, lack of the oil wealth of its neighbors in the Arabian peninsula, relative lack of infrastructure, and the strength of tribal allegiances have made it difficult for central governments to control. It is very common for Yemeni tribesmen in vast regions of the country to appear in public with their *jambiyyah* (a dagger worn in the belt at one's side) and machine gun. Yemen differs from most of the Arab world in climate, having tall mountains, in some areas watered plentifully by rainfall, so that they have traditionally engaged in terraced farming on the hillsides, growing coffee and *qat*, a leafy green plant that is a mild narcotic and chewed by Yemenis in afternoon social sessions. Yemen also boasts a very distinctive architecture; the Yemenis excel in building strikingly lofty mud-brick houses three, four, or more stories high. These and other aspects of Yemeni culture make it look physically quite different from many other areas in the Arab world.

Divided history. Yemen has been the site of important civilizations since the second millennium B.C.E. The Queen of Sheba is mentioned as a wealthy monarch from the region in the time of King Solomon of Israel, and Yemen was famed throughout the Ancient Near East for the perfumes frankincense and myrrh. The ruins of fortresses and temples dot the landscape, and many bear ancient inscriptions in South Arabian languages. Yemen, especially the port of Aden, was a crucial way station for Indian Ocean trade of spices and other luxury goods in the high Middle Ages. The British East India Company occupied Aden in 1832 to serve as a coaling station on the route to India, and a British Protectorate over Aden was established in 1839. This resulted in a historical divide between South Yemen and North Yemen, which had different experiences with the colonial powers. The British considered South Yemen part of the colony of India until 1937, when they declared it a crown colony in its own right. In 1967, the British withdrew from South Yemen, and the People's Republic of South Yemen was formed. The Zaydi Imam of the family of al-Mutawakkil ruled North Yemen after the Ottomans lost control in World War I. This kingdom came to an end in 1962 when, with Egyptian support, the Yemeni Arab Republic was established in North Yemen. In 1990, North and South Yemen were officially unified, a move that appears to be successful despite a civil war in 1994.

Poetry. Caton's work treats the social and political uses of poetry in a North Yemeni tribal region, Khawlan al-Tiyal, in the hinterland of San`a'. It brings into relief the tremendous importance of poetry in Arab culture among the various verbal forms of art. Whereas the novel has replaced poetry as the prestige literary genre in many Arab societies, poetry still holds pride of place in most nations of the Arabian Peninsula, including Yemen. Caton's study may be viewed as studies of the oral performance of specific genres. Mikhail Bakhtin drew attention to what he termed speech genres, formal categories that resemble literary genres but that occur in speech and are in some cases never written down. Anthropologists and folklorists such as Dell Hymes and Gumperz worked on the ethnography of communication beginning in the 1960s, and Bauman, Sherzer, and others have since investigated specific genres in Mayan, Indonesian, and other languages. Caton's account enables the reader to understand in detail the social setting of several genres of oral Arabic poetry, termed *balah*, *zamil*, and *qasidah*, in this tribal context. Caton observed these types of poetry being performed in all-male gatherings, and his account provides little idea of what poetry women might be performing in these same

communities. The most surprising element of his work, to many, is the crucial role that poetry plays in resolving serious legal and political disputes.

Questions:

1. Describe the *balah* poetic form. What are the building blocks of the poem, the rhyme scheme, and its other formal conventions? What are the usual themes? On what occasions is it performed? How?
2. Describe the *zamil* poetic form.
3. Describe the *qasidah* form.
4. How is the *qasidah* form used in dispute mediation and politics? Does this strike you as odd?
5. What ideological messages do these forms of tribal poetry convey?
6. How is this poetry related to identity?
7. Can an understanding of modern tribal poetry help scholars understand classical and medieval Arabic poetry?

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Arabic Musical Traditions

Instruments. Music is one of the most complex, varied, and ubiquitous aspects of cultural production in the Arab worlds. It is found even in the most conservative communities. In Arabic music, drums are the most important instruments for dancing and group singing such as wedding songs, and the lute is the most important for accompanying solo singing. Other traditional instruments include the *mizmar*, similar to an oboe, various types of flute called *nay* or *kawala*, a *rabab* or spike fiddle, and the *qanun* or zither. In modern times, the violin has replaced the *rabab* in many contexts. The piano was introduced and adapted, the electric guitar came and went, and the synthesizer and drum machine are now standard in pop music.

Distinguishing features. Arabic music is readily distinguished from Western music by several factors. It has distinct rhythms, usually played on a variety of ceramic or frame drum, and represented by a series of heavy and light strokes termed *dum* and *tak*. While a few of the most common rhythms fit into a 4-4 bar, many are more complex, having 7, 9, or 13 beats. The popular rhythms in the Middle East are distinguished from those found in Iran—where 6/8 rhythms are the most popular—and from rhythms in areas where sub-Saharan African influence is strong, such as the Gulf and Morocco, where 3 on 2 rhythms (i.e., two simultaneous rhythms) are popular. The equivalent of Western key signatures or scales are called *maqams* or modes, of which dozens exist, each with a name such as *rast*, *saba*, *nahawand*, and so on. Each *maqam* has a set scale, but also a set of rules about the relative importance of the notes in the scale and the patterns in which they should be presented. Each is associated with a particular emotion. In addition, many of the *maqams* involve scales that have quarter-tones—notes in between the notes on a Western piano, like B half-flat—that do not exist in Western music. In addition, traditional Arabic music is based on heterophony. All the instruments and the singer follow the same tune, rather than producing several different parts of harmony, but each improvises embellishments as he or she wishes. Often, the same phrase is repeated several times with different embellishments and flourishes each time. Another important aspect has to do with the process by which songs are written. Instead of coming up with a melody first and then finding words to make up the lyrics, classical Arabic songs were based on poems that were composed first, then set to music later. The close relationship between song and poetry remains important in Arabic music to this day.

Tarab. A key concept in Arabic music is *tarab*, a term that denotes both the joy one experiences from listening to great music and the artistry that produces that feeling. A singer is therefore often called a *mutrib*, someone able to create *tarab*. Racy's work endeavors to explain this concept in detail and in particular to describe the complex interlocutor between a performance of Arabic music and the audience.

Questions:

1. What are the main instruments in traditional Arab music?
2. How does Arab music differ from Western with regard to scales and rhythms?
3. What was the place of music in the medieval Islamic world? What kinds of music are allowed according the strict interpretations of Islamic law? Were bans of music effective?
4. How did the colonial period affect music in the Arab world?

5. Discuss any of the regional traditions of Arabic music: Andalusian music in North Africa, *rai* in Algeria, *simsimiyya* music in Port Said, and so on. What role do these traditions play in modern culture? How have they developed and been preserved?
6. What are some of the historical connections between Western music and Arab music?
7. According to Racy, what does *tarab* mean? Are there equivalents to this word in English (or other languages)?
8. Who are *sammi`ah*, and what role do they play in musical performances?
9. Define *saltanah*.
10. Define three of the following terms:
 - A. Maqam, p. maqamat.
 - B. Taqasim.
 - C. `Alma, pl. `awalim
 - D. Qaflah.
 - E. Asalah.
 - F. Dawr.
 - G. Firqah.
 - H. Takht.
 - I. Layali.
 - J. Mawwal.
 - K. Waslah.
 - L. Sahrah.
 - M. Bast.
 - N. Kayf.
11. Explain the stages involved in a *jalsah* or informal gathering for listening to music.
12. What are the stages involved in an Arab musician's training?
13. How is the performance of music related to hashish and alcohol?
14. What are the typical themes in Arabic song lyrics, and how are they related to musical performance and *tarab*?

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Racy, Ali Jihad. *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of Tarab*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

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Song

Singers. Since the early Islamic period, the musicians who have gained the greatest fame have been singers. Many of these have also played the lute, the main instrument accompanying solo singing. In the Umayyad period, Medina became a prominent center for the performance of music and the training of musicians. During the Abbasid period, skilled slave girls (*qayna*, pl. *qiyan*) gained prominence as the most expert musicians of their day by performing for the caliphs and other elite households. They were endowed not only with beautiful voices and an extensive repertoire of songs but also with ready wit and the ability to compose poems and set them to melodies on the spot. A number of these women became close companions of Abbasid Caliphs and later rulers. Singers such as `Arib al-Ma'muniyyah were also appreciated by contemporary musicians and poets for their skills. One of the most famous male musicians of all times is Ziryab (Abu al-Hasan `Ali b. Nafi`, 789-857), a skillful singer, composer, and player of the lute who was trained in Baghdad under the prominent musician Ishaq al-Mawsili (d. 850) but left to seek his fortune at the Andalusian capital, Cordoba, then under the rule of the Umayyad Abd al-Rahman II (822-52). He quickly gained renown not only for his musical talents but also for his role as trendsetter and arbiter of taste at court. He supposedly introduced new fashions in dress, cuisine—introducing asparagus—and hairstyles—supposedly wearing his hair cut short, with bangs across his forehead. He was held up as a founding figure in the musical tradition of al-Andalus, and later sources credit him with technical innovations such as the addition of a fifth pair of strings to the lute and the use of a beak or quill as a pick rather than a wooden one. Andalusian music exerted profound influences on European musical traditions, introducing instruments such as the lute and the rebec. The songs of the troubadours indebted to Arabic poetry and song, and flamenco music and dance also draw on Arabic music and dance traditions.

The Book of Songs. One of the most important works of Arabic literature and at the same time musical lore is *Kitab al-Aghani (The Book of Songs)*, written by the Shiite historian and literary scholar Abu al-Faraj al-Isbahani (d. 356/967), who was active at the court of the Hamdanid rulers at Mosul in northern Iraq. This massive work, 20 volumes in modern editions, includes an extensive commentary on 100 of the best songs of the time of Harun al-Rashid, as well as the author's selection of later favorites. Al-Isbahani reports that it took him over 50 years to compose the work, which draws on an earlier *Book of Songs* by the eighth-century musician Yusuf al-Katib. The collection includes the stories of songs' original composition and anecdotes about their famous performers. It contains a great deal of information about singers and musicians, performance contexts, music, instruments, and lyrics, and is thus one of the major sources on medieval Arabic music.

Umm Kulthum. Umm Kulthum, who was born in 1904 and passed away in 1975, is still considered the greatest Arab singer. From humble origins in northern Egyptian village, she sang as a child with her father who performed devotional music. She was endowed with an extremely powerful voice and had an extraordinary range, was trained in the techniques of Qur'anic pronunciation and recitation. She came to Cairo in her youth and quickly become a regular performer on Egyptian radio and then in films. In a spectacular career that spanned five decades, she rocketed to stardom and became known simply *al-Sitt ("The Lady")*. From the 1930s to the 1970s, she gave a concert on the first Thursday of every month which was broadcast throughout Egypt and the other nations of the Arab World (and Israel as well). It was as if the

entire Arab World came to a halt to listen to her concert. In general, each concert was only one song, with a long instrumental introduction, followed by Umm Kulthum's performance of the song. Umm Kulthum would sing each verse of the poem many times over with skillful variations. She always wore dark glasses in her later years because of an ailment that caused her eyes to bulge, and was careful to assume conservative dress. She never married, though many men declared their love for her, including several of the poets who wrote songs for her. Rumors suggest that she may have been a Lesbian; whether this is true or not, it is probable that any husband she married would have asked her to stop singing in public, something she was not willing to do. She was also known for her sharp wit and good humor in addition to her taste in music.

Questions:

1. How has technology affected modern Arab music?
2. In Arabic popular music there is an evident divide between low-brow and high-brow culture, similar to that seen in other areas of cultural production. What are the views representing the two ends of the spectrum regarding the positive and negative aspects of these two types of music? What is your view on the music and on the debate?
3. Describe the relationship between Arabic music and the post-colonial Arab nations. Describe the role of music in pan-Arab nationalism.
4. What made Umm Kulthum the greatest Arab singer of the 20th century? How do the songs she sang differ from American pop songs?
5. How was Umm Kulthum's career related to Egyptian nationalism?
6. Watch a performance of Umm Kulthum, Fairouz, Abdel Halim Hafez, or other famous singer from the 20th century and write a commentary on the performance.
7. Watch the video clip of any recent Arabic pop song on youtube or elsewhere and analyze it. What ideas are the images intended to convey?
8. Why is the Western music industry challenged in the Middle East?
9. Analyze "Desert Rose" by Sting and Cheb Mami, or "Diddi" by Cheb Khaled.

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Dance

Belly dance. Belly dance is one of the best-known cultural exports of the Middle East, after oil and religion. It is telling that the term for it in Arabic is “Eastern dancing” without any reference to the belly. “Belly dance” is actually a misnomer of sorts, because the hips are actually the center of attention, not the belly, and for most of history, the belly of the performer was covered. Tensions surround its status. In many Arab societies, dancing is an essential part of the culture and must accompany weddings and other celebrations. However, it is associated with inappropriate mixing of men and women and other forms of suspect behavior such as drinking alcohol and smoking hashish. Professional dancers are often associated with prostitution. Women and girls are often discouraged from dancing in front of men, and some Arab women will only dance in front of other women.

Old traditions. In the Middle East, singing and dancing performances date back thousands of years to the times of the Pharaohs and ancient Near Eastern kings. The New Testament connects the murder of John the Baptist with an episode in which Salome danced before King Herod. Dance performances occurred at rulers’ courts throughout the Islamic period, and it was one of the skills, along with singing and playing musical instruments, that women in royal harems were supposed to perfect. Dance of various types occurs in all Arab societies, and both men and women perform it. Some male dances involved stylized battles with staves or swords. Many regions feature line dances, such as the *dabke*, a dance performed by both men and women, often together, in Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria. One of the main functions of dance is to mark a celebration—the archetypal example is a wedding, but any joyous occasion will do—and dancing is understood to express joy and jubilation. Belly dance was also an important part of popular culture.

Belly dance and the cinema. The tradition underwent a radical transformation in the twentieth century with the introduction of belly dancing in Hollywood films. Drawing on many sources, Hollywood directors transformed the image of belly dance, and this cinematic use of belly dance was soon mirrored in Egyptian films and nightclubs such as those of Badia Masabni in Cairo from the 1920s on. Thus began the age of belly-dance stars, such as Tahia Carioca, Na`ima `Akif, Samia Gamal, Nagwa Fuad, and Suheir Zaki, who acquired huge followings of fans through their appearances on screen. Since the 1980s, belly dance has retreated somewhat from center stage in popular culture because of the influence of Islamic fundamentalism. Famous dancers have “repented”, donned the veil, and given up dancing. In many countries, fewer weddings feature belly dance performances, and divided weddings, in which men and women celebrate separately, have become more prevalent. At the same time, though, at other end of the spectrum, Lebanese videos of popular songs are including increasingly risqué dance numbers.

Social stigma. Professional dancers and musicians must often face the critical views of the society in which they live. Van Nieuwkerk’s work brings out the difficulties that dancers and other performers face on account of the social stigma attached to their work. She argues that they are not entirely marginalized but that they face serious social difficulties. Her work provides an excellent overview of the workings of the nightclub circuit and of the lower middle-class weddings and festivals. Absent from her work is a treatment of the most famous belly-dancers, who perform regularly at Egypt’s most expensive hotels.

Questions:

1. What social functions does dance serve in the Arab world?
2. How is dance related to other popular art forms?
3. How is belly dance viewed in the Arab world and outside it?
4. How has dance in the Arab world been affected by the types of gender segregation that occur in Arab societies?
5. Using the internet, find out about one Arab dance form that we have not studied, describe its features and its place in society.
6. Briefly summarize the history of the entertainment trade in Egypt over the last century. How has the status of performers changes over time?
7. Compare and contrast performances in nightclubs and performances in lower middle-class weddings and saints' festivals.
8. To what extent are female performers socially marginalized? How is their situation similar to or different from that of male entertainers?
9. How do the performers view themselves?
10. Define the following terms:
 Usta.
 Nu'ta.
 Mi` allim.
 Mi` allima.
 Mulid.
 Mawaldiyya.
 Ghawazi (sing. Ghaziyya).
 Bint il-balad.
 `Alma (pl. `Awalim).
11. Explain the performers' secret jargon. What purposes does it serve?

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Art and Architecture

Many Influences. The Islamic expansion produced a new, major world civilization, and with that civilization developed distinctive forms of art and architecture, influenced by pre-existing traditions and by those of neighboring regions but nevertheless distinct from them. The Umayyads, with their capital in Damascus, were influenced primarily by Roman and Byzantine architecture, producing frescos and mosaics, while the Abbasids, with their capital in Baghdad, were influenced by Persian exempla. Coptic influence is seen in the manufacture of textiles in medieval Egypt. Turkish military brought with them Central Asian artistic models, and the Pax Mongolica in the 13 and 14th centuries opened up communication with China and led to substantial Far Eastern influences on painting, porcelain, and tile. The Crusades brought European engineering techniques for the building of fortresses to the Levant. Contacts with Europe before, during, and after the colonial period in the 19th and 20th centuries introduced to the Middle East new techniques and styles of architecture, painting, and other arts.

The Islamic City. Cities in the Arab world differed in some respects from their counterparts in Europe. In many European cities, the central focus of the city was a large, open square. In many Islamic cities, the central open place was the large courtyard inside the main mosque. Nearby would be the ruler's palace or the governor's residence, as well as a central market, but the latter would be a conglomeration of alleys and arcades, often covered on account of the extreme heat in the region. The city was usually walled, with a limited number of large gates. In many parts of the Arab world, the medieval walled city remains intact; this is particularly true of areas colonized by the French, whose standard practice was to house their administration in a new center—the *ville nouvelle*—outside the old city—the *medina* (Arabic for "city")—and separated from it by an intervening space. The city of Fez in Morocco is an excellent example of a walled city, with its traditional gates still intact; to this day, cars may not enter the streets and alleys of the medina, and all goods, including refrigerators, stoves, and crates of Coca-cola, must be brought in on horses or donkeys. Cairo is a counter-example. In the late 19th century, the Egyptian Khedive Ismail had wide boulevards cut through sections of the old city, as Hausmann had done in Paris.

The Mosque. It is said that one can understand a great deal about a society by examining its greatest buildings. In the modern United States, the largest buildings are insurance company office buildings. In modern Egypt, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi, the largest buildings are hotels. Just as the greatest edifices in medieval Europe were churches, the largest buildings in the pre-modern Arab world were mosques, such as the Muhammad Ali mosque in Cairo, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, and the Great mosque in Cordoba. A more recent example, the Hasan II mosque in Casablanca, Morocco, completed in 1993, is an enormous edifice that juts out into the Atlantic Ocean with a minaret 60 stories high. These buildings had regular features: the *mihrab* or a niche in the wall indicating the direction of prayer; the *minbar* or pulpit, the minaret or turret from which the call to prayer could be made. Just as Islamic law and theology developed in conversation and debate with Jewish and Christian law and theology, the mosque evolved in close contact with Jewish and Christian models. In some cases, history dictated parallel evolution, so the *minbar* resembles the Christian pulpit. In others, a conscious decision was made to go against Jewish and Christian practice, so Friday was recognized as the special day for prayer in the week, and prayer was convened by calling rather than by using bells or

clappers. Mosque architecture often followed earlier models. The original model for many early mosques was the Prophet's mosque in Medina, many North African mosques were modeled on the Great Mosque of Cordoba, and the Muhammad Ali mosque built in early 19th-century Cairo was modeled on the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul; m. Innovations included domes, horseshoe and pointed arches, *muqarnas* (a type of decoration involving hanging geometric recesses in domes, doorways and niches), and other ornate decorations. Other major building types included palaces, fortresses, *madrasahs* (colleges of law), *khaniqahs* (colleges for students of Islamic mysticism), and mausolea or shrines.

A Ban Flouted. It is commonly believed that in Islam, as in Judaism, it is forbidden to paint or represent living things. While this rule certainly had an effect on Islamic art, the ban was violated as often as the embargoes on dancing and the consumption of alcohol. In some cases, decorations represent plants and flowers, but not animals; in some cases, animals but not humans; in other cases, humans but not revered figures from sacred history such as prophets, the Prophet, or his Companions. In some cases, even the Prophet is represented, but with a blank space or flames representing light in place of his face or head. In some cases, Ali, Husayn, or other figures are represented in total, without any blank spaces, flames, or haloes. Nevertheless, despite these instances in which the ban was not upheld, its strength led to an abundance of alternative strategies for ornament and decoration in architecture, metal work, glasswork, textiles and other art forms. Floral designs were common, as were geometric patterns and calligraphy, the latter often quotations of verses from the Qur'an in religious contexts such as the Dome of the Rock and verses of poetry in secular contexts such as the palace of Alhambra in Granada.

Architecture and propaganda. Art and architecture in the Islamic world served purposes of propaganda for the patrons, who were rulers, ministers, military commanders, governors, judges, women of the ruling family, and other members of the elite. The Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was a strong statement about the Muslims' control over a holy site revered by Jews and Christians as well. Completed just after a civil war had prevented the Umayyads' access to Mecca and Medina in the Hijaz, it has also been interpreted as an attempt to raise Jerusalem's importance as a holy place in the Islamic religion, perhaps even surpassing the Arabian sites. During the Crusades, the Christians converted it into a church, but after Saladin took Jerusalem following the battle of Hittin in 1187, it was reconverted to a mosque. Decades before, the Syrian Zengid ruler Nur al-Din had had built for al-Aqsa Mosque a splendid wooden *mihrab* with intricate inlaid decorations. After 1187 it was brought from Aleppo and installed in Jerusalem with great fanfare. The opposite may be seen in the Great Mosque of Cordoba; the modern visitor to the mosque is struck by the incongruous Gothic church sitting in the midst of the monument's vast arcades of columns. Throughout the Islamic period, great mosques, *madrasahs*, *khaniqahs* and other architectural feats served to bolster legitimacy of rule, standing as public, visible evidence of the ruler's charity, piety and commitment to the faith of Islam.

The Arts of the Book. Beginning in the eighth century, the production of affordable, abundant paper revolutionized intellectual and artistic production in the Arab and Islamic worlds. A great deal of art became attached to the book. Calligraphy was especially prized in the Arab world, and a number of calligraphers such as Ibn Muqlah (d. 940) and Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022 or 1031) acquired legendary acclaim during their own lifetimes. Highly ornate Qur'ans in various

calligraphic styles, decorated with gold leaf and many hues of ink, ranging from pocket-sized copies to huge tomes over a meter tall were produced for various rulers. Elaborately carved and embossed cases termed *rab`ah* were built to carry 30-volume sets of the Qur'an for the major mosques, one volume for each *juz'* or 1/30th of the text. Illuminations and elegant miniature paintings graced the pages of dynastic histories, stories of the prophets, and triumphal accounts of battles, as well as literary works such as *The Book of Songs*, *Kalila and Dimna*, and the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri (d. 1122).

Questions:

1. Discuss the salient features of Umayyad art and architecture.
2. Discuss the salient features of Abbasid art and architecture.
3. Discuss the salient features of Fatimid art and architecture.
4. Discuss the salient features of Andalusian art and architecture.
5. It is often stated that Islam, like Judaism, bans the portrayal of people and animals. To what extent was this ban upheld in Islamic history? What are some of the works that violated this rule? What are some of the consequences of the rule?
6. What are the standard features of a mosque? How did they change over time?
7. Define the following terms:
 Madrasah.
 Khaniqah.
 Iwan.
 Wikala.
 Sabil.
 Mashhad.
8. What role did women play as patrons of art and architecture?
9. How did architecture play a role in political propaganda?

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RITUAL, GENDER, AND SOCIETY

Popular Religion and Other Ceremonies

Life Cycle Events. Popular ceremonies form a large part of Arab culture that is often omitted in accounts that remain on an official level. Life cycle events such as circumcisions, engagement parties and weddings, and funerals show a great deal of variety across the region. In Moroccan tradition, the bride is dressed in seven different costumes in the course of the wedding. In many Arab societies, the bride is feted with a special celebration the day before the wedding called the night of henna, at which the bride and the women guests have their hands and feet decorated with henna, either covering the whole palm or in floral or geometric designs on the back of the hands. In some conservative areas, weddings are celebrated with gender segregation, the women in one area of the house or building and the men in another. Circumcision is done often at a relatively late age—4, 5, 6, or older—rather than immediately or a week after birth. In many regions boys are dressed up as Arab shaykhs and treated as heroes for a few days. In some regions such as Egypt and Sudan, corresponding ceremonies are performed for the “circumcision” of girls. The parade in which the bride is taken from her house to that of her husband, the *zaffa*, is a traditional, distinctive part of the wedding and is associated with particular songs and chants. Many Arab societies have a practice that involves the official naming of the newborn a week after his or her birth. Islamic law terms this *`aqiqah*, prescribing a sacrifice—usually of a sheep—and shaving of the child’s head. In Egypt, this is called *subu`*. For the occasion a child is given a special clay pitcher, shaped differently for boys and girls. The child is shaken on a large sieve, a mortar and pestle are pounded nearby and statements such as “Obey your mother! Don’t obey your father!” are yelled at the child.

Islam’s Main Holidays. While Islam in general has two main holidays, many other Islamic festivals in the calendar in various regions of the Arab world. The big holiday, the equivalent of Eastern in Christianity and Passover in Judaism, is the Feast of Sacrifice, which coincides with the high point of the annual pilgrimage on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the twelfth month of the year. On this holiday, families who can afford to do so sacrifice an animal—this was preferably a camel in early Islamic times, but the most common animal in modern times is a sheep—and give away some of the meat to the poor. The second major holiday is the Breaking of the Fast at the end of Ramadan. The month of Ramadan has created a bewildering variety of customs and rituals. Special foods are associated with Ramadan, such as dates, nuts, pastries, and so on. In Morocco, *hrira*, a type of hearty soup made with lentils and chickpeas, is *de rigueur* during Ramadan. Special drummers roam the streets around 3 am in order to wake up people for *suhur*, the late night meal consumed before the early morning hour when one must refrain from eating or drinking for the next day of fasting. Arab Christians and Jews also have their particular ways of celebrating Easter and Passover.

Extra Holy Days. Chief among the additional festivals is the Prophet’s Birthday (*al-Mawlid*), which apparently originated in Fatimid Egypt in imitation of the Christians’ celebration of Christmas, which in Egypt at that time involved fanfare and parades in the streets. It has become popular in many other regions but has been rejected as an innovation by the Saudis. Another smaller holiday is the celebration of the New Year according to the Islamic (*hijri*) calendar. Among Shiites, the calendar includes

many events associated with the lives of the Imams, including their birthdays and the dates of their deaths. During Ramadan fall the dates on which Ali was stabbed by the Khariji Abu Muljam—the 19th of the month—and on which he died, three days later—the 22nd—which are marked by Shiites as a time of mourning. The most important Shiite holy day is of course Ashura, the day of mourning for the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Husayn in the Battle of Karbala', which takes place on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month in the *hijri* calendar. Many rituals are associated with this holiday, including choreographed marching and chanting on the part of groups of young men, often accompanied by self-flagellation with chains or bloodletting with swords tapped against the forehead. Theatrical reenactments of the events leading up to the Battle of Karbala, culminating in the killing of Husayn, are performed over several days. Less violent but just as dramatic are readings of the story of Husayn's martyrdom that cause the audience, often gender-segregated, to sob profusely. Related to `Ashura is *al-Arba`in*, the 40th day after Husayn's martyrdom (the 40th day after death is a traditional day of mourning), on which the main annual pilgrimage to Husayn's tomb in Karbala is performed. The second major Shiite holy day is *`Id al-Ghadir*, the 18th of Dhu al-Hijjah, which commemorates the day when the Prophet gave a speech that Shiites claim explicitly designated `Ali b. Abi Talib as his successor. Other Shiite holy days include the birthday of the Twelfth Imam, who remains the current Imam of the Twelvers but is in hiding.

Popular Rituals and Saints. A major set of rituals in popular religion has to do with saints. The tombs and shrines of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim saints are visited and revered all over the Arab world, and the practices associated with these shrines cut across confessional lines, so that, for example, Muslims may pray at the shrines of Jewish saints in Morocco, and Christians in Egypt may pray at the tombs of Muslim saints. Devotees make prayers and supplications, light candles, leave written requests, provide food for the poor, make vows, seek cures for physical ailments and mental disorders, ask for a husband or wife, or seek a remedy for infertility, or solutions to problems with family or relatives. There are many annual pilgrimages to saints' shrines; perhaps the largest of these is that to the tomb of al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Mursi in Tanta in Northern Egypt. The celebration of the birthday or death dates of saints are also marked in many cases by festivals or fairs, at which there are markets, carnival rides for children, folk performances of various kinds, including the performance of devotional music. Sufi orders in many regions play a major role in community religious life and are intertwined with the saints' shrines and saint worship in general. The topic is vast—anthropologists and scholars of religion and society have only begun to document the tremendous variety of such practices.

Questions:

1. Interview a native of the Arab world about the celebration of weddings or other life events in his or her native region.
2. Interview a native of the Arab world about the celebration of Ramadan, Christmas, or other holidays.
3. What are the similarities among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim saints in the Arab world and the practices associated with devotion to saints? How do they compare with the practices associated with devotion to Catholic saints?
4. What is the social function of rituals, religious or otherwise? What purposes do they serve?
5. Do rituals remain the same over time or can they change? How and why might rituals change?

6. How can religious rituals cross over religious boundaries? How can they affect rituals in other religious traditions? Can you find examples in which Christianity has affected Islamic rituals, or vice-versa, in the Arab world?
7. What are the commonalities in Islamic practice across different regions in the Arab world? What are some of the differences?

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Women.

Status and Rights. The status of women in the Arab world is by most measures worse than in most other regions of the world. Fewer women are educated, fewer are employed, and they have more legal impediments and social restrictions to overcome. Levels of gender segregation vary in the Arab world, but overall they are very high in comparison with what one finds in other regions of the world, and this has many consequences for society. It is easy, however, to exaggerate the difference between the West and the Arab world. It should always be remembered that although women may be equal to men under the law in some Western countries, they are still not equal in terms of employment, pay, or power. Arab women were always been illiterate, deprived of rights, and oppressed in Arab societies before modern reforms. An important factor that is overlooked is class. A woman of elite status was often very powerful in the pre-modern Arab world. Muslim women owned property in their own names both when they were married and after being divorced or widowed. They could dispose of this property independently of their husbands and even against their will; it was not combined with their husbands' assets upon marriage, and the husbands had no right to use it, even to pay for the upkeep of the family. While many women in traditional society could not write, a large percentage were taught to read in order to fulfill their basic religious obligations of prayer. A small but significant percentage gained more substantial education, especially girls who had access to education through their fathers, brothers, or other male relatives. Even in a patriarchal system, women are not utterly powerless. In many ways, women in subordinate positions can exert power in various ways. In addition, mothers-in-law often have significant power in traditional systems, and a grandmother or great-grandmother who survives her husband by many years and has a number of sons may become an extremely powerful figure in a family.

Legal and Social Restrictions. Islamic law accords certain rights to women that appear to be a handicap. A woman may inherit wealth, but generally half as much as her brother would. Men can divorce a wife without cause and at will, but a woman generally cannot if her husband refuses to grant a divorce in return for payment (*khul'*). Men can take additional wives without a first wife's consent. Blood money for a free man is 100 camels, whereas it is only 50 for a free woman. The testimony of one man is equivalent to that of two women. All this suggests that a free Muslim woman is assigned a value of one half of a free Muslim man. The problematic status of women in the Arab world, however, often has to do with the neglect of Islamic law rather than its application. In many Arab societies, particularly in rural areas, when a man dies his brothers confiscate all his property, and the women in the family, including the deceased's wife or sister, get nothing. This obviously puts women in a weak economic position, but it is the result of a blatant violation of Islamic law.

Discrimination. Nawal El Saadawi points out that the current social systems in Egypt and other Arab countries have tremendous negative effects on women. Segregation of the sexes, the value attached to male children, the importance attached to female virginity, and the dependence of a family's honor on women's chastity result in many oppressive measures, including the seclusion of women, the favoring of brothers over sisters in medical treatment and education, honor killings, and clitorrectomy, which is called "circumcision" and practiced widely in Egypt and the Sudan. The taboos of dating, premarital sex, and masturbation create tremendous

sexual frustration, which results in a high incidence of sexual abuse of young girls by family members. Girls are controlled not only by their parents but also by their brothers, including their younger brothers. Girls' and women's movements outside the house are often severely restricted, and women must often be accompanied by a brother or other close relative to go out of the house. Many husbands do not allow their wives to work outside the home. Families and societal circumstances thus stunt the educations, careers, and aspirations of many Arab women. El-Saadawi's portrayal is shocking and bleak, but is nevertheless based on important facts. However, a wide variety exists in the Arab World with regard to the social restrictions on women. Holmes-Ebers' work provides many real-life examples of Arab women in a particular setting—the city of Tunis, Tunisia's capital—that illustrate the restrictions they must negotiate in their daily lives. While not all Arab societies and circles are the same as the ones she investigated, her examples represent fairly well the norms that govern a large percentage of women in many Arab nations. In particular, her book describes many rural families that have migrated to the capital, something that is representative of large segments of the population in many Arab countries.

Arab Feminism. Feminism, the political struggle to attain more rights for women, began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Arab World. Qasim Amin (1868-1908), a student of Muhammad Abduh, perhaps at his teacher's urging, wrote a number of influential books regarding the emancipation of women, especially *The Liberation of Women* (1899), arguing that the emancipation of women was necessary for the advancement of society. He wrote in impassioned and blunt terms, "A good mother is more useful to her species than a good man, while a corrupt mother is more harmful than a corrupt man"; "It is impossible for there to be successful men if they do not have mothers capable of raising them to be successful"; "The number of children killed by ignorant women every year exceeds the number of people who die in the most brutal wars"; and "There is no doubt that the man's decision to imprison his wife contradicts the freedom which is the woman's natural right." He and others argued against the practice of veiling and the seclusion of women. The nationalist parties that were active before and after the independence of Arab nations were generally secular and modernist, and worked toward universal education and employment in order to strengthen the nation. Women entered the professional workforce in larger numbers, they were educated for more years, the average age at marriage for women increased, and the total number of babies per woman decreased. Now many of the same forces affecting the West are affecting the East, and the nuclear family is replacing the extended family as the dominant living arrangement, though the extended family is still very important in the Arab world. It is typical to find, for example, that a father has built an apartment building and expects all of his children to live there when they get married, one or two nuclear families on each floor (a very convenient arrangement for babysitting).

Questions:

1. Describe the prevalence and effects of endogamy as evident from Holmes-Eber's research in Tunisia.
2. What percentage of marriages in the Arab world involves polygamy?
3. What are the factors that determine one's class or status in Tunisian society?
4. What are the important networks for women in Tunisia, how do they function, and what benefits do they bring?
5. Do males have such networks? How are they similar or different?

6. It is often claimed that modernization involves a shift from the extended family to the nuclear family. Is this true in Tunisia or elsewhere in the Arab world? How might such a claim be missing important information?
7. What are women's roles in popular religious celebrations, and what does this tell us?

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Men

Rural Life. Until recent times, the arm of the central government rarely reached directly to rural areas except those quite close to the major cities. Control was maintained indirectly through local chieftains, village headmen, tax collectors, landholders, governors, or minor rulers. In the medieval Middle East, regimes such as that of the Mamluks farmed out control of rural regions to military commanders as fiefs termed *iqta`*. These worked in ways similar to a feudal system, but they were temporary holdings rather than inheritable lands. In Morocco in the nineteenth century, the territory was divided into two parts, *bilad al-makhzan*, essentially crown territory, the coastal plains and the regions of Fez, Miknas, and Oujda, which were under the direct control of the king, and *bilad al-siba* uncontrolled territory, which consisted of mountainous interior regions that the king did not control directly, and this system was inherited and perpetuated under French colonial rule. In many regions, peasants often did not have recourse to the central government to redress corruption, abuses, or oppressive practices such as forced labor on the part of local landholders, who maintained control through henchmen and threats of violence. In the twentieth century, the independent Arab nations worked to dismantle such systems by breaking up large holdings of land and distributing it among the peasants or other owners, improving infrastructure for communication and transportation, and establishing a stronger institutional presence in rural areas. Despite such efforts, elements of the old pseudo-feudal systems continue to exist in some rural areas.

Lebanon. Beginning shortly after the Crusades in the early 12th century, the Catholic church established ties with Christians in the region and the Maronite church was formed. A faction of the Syrian Orthodox Church that broke off and affiliated with the Catholics, while retaining their distinct traditions and Syriac liturgy, becoming a Uniate Church. The relationship continued even after Acre (Akka), the last Crusader outpost was conquered by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars in 1291. In the sixteenth century, a college for Syrian Christians was established in Rome. The French king assumed the mantle of the protector of Catholics in the Middle East, and also maintained contact with the Maronites. During the First World War, Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot agreement, according to which the Arab territories that the Ottoman Empire was destined to forfeit after the war would be split up as follows: Syria would go to France, and Palestine, Iraq, and Arabia would go to Britain. These territories were not called colonies but mandates after the Peace Conference at San Remo, on the grounds that they were temporary colonies being prepared for independent rule. France divided Syria into two parts, Lebanon and what is now Syria, expressly in order to create a nation in which the Christians were a majority. A confessional system of government was created in which power was divided among Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shiite Muslims, and the Christians clearly had the upper hand, for the president had to be a Maronite, while the Sunni Muslims chose the Prime Minister, and Shiite Muslims, the Speaker of the Parliament. Despite many problems and a long civil war (1975-1990), this system is still in place.

Lords of the Marches. Michale Gilsenan's excellent ethnography sheds light on village life in an agricultural region of northern Lebanon, revealing patterns that are typical of economic, social, and political life in rural regions in many parts of the Arab world, whether in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, or Morocco. The particular setting is `Akkar, a district at the northwest corner of Lebanon, bordering Syria and the Mediterranean coastline. `Akkar is inhabited primarily by Sunni Muslims and Greek Orthodox Christians; Gilsenan completed his fieldwork in 1971-72 among the

Sunni Muslims. Local society is divided into three main groups: peasants, *aghawat* or the overseer class, and beys or the landholding class. The power of the central government seems quite removed from this society, intervening only occasionally, but the *beys*, by virtue of their ability to coerce or muster the locals into voting for them, often held important offices in the national government. Gilsenan describes the complex relations between men in this society and their everyday performances of masculine roles in the course of hierarchical, factional, and familial contests for power. Violence, threats, the use of weapons, boasting, joking, taunts, debates, formal exchanges of politeness formulae, flattery, shows of deference, and vendetta are all involved in the negotiation of reputation, influence, relationships, and politics. The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and subsequent events have significantly changed the organization of society in `Akkar, but Gilsenan's work remains important both for its explanation of the workings of this agricultural community and for its insightful description of everyday interactions between males in an Arab culture.

Questions:

1. Define six of the following terms:
 - A. Bey.
 - B. Agha.
 - C. Fellah.
 - D. Jaqmarah.
 - E. Kizb.
 - F. Daght.
 - G. Fashr.
 - H. Hamasa.
 - I. Karama.
 - J. Mistilim.
 - K. Manzul.
 - L. Murafiq.
 - M. Qabaday.
 - N. Sheikh ash-shebab.
 - O. Tafnis.
 - P. Tamthiliyya.
2. How do the great landholders maintain control over the peasants?
3. What are the rules that govern revenge or vendetta?
4. What other methods besides violence can be used to coerce others or establish domination over others?
5. How are boys trained to be men in this society?
6. What role do weapons play in this society?
7. How is reputation established? How is it lost?
8. What role does lying play in social relations?

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MASS MEDIA AND NATIONAL CULTURE

Nationalism, Modernism, and Mass Media

Government control. The press, radio, theater, the cinema, and television are all closely interconnected, and all have been tightly controlled for most of their history in most Arab nations by the national government. For the most part oppressive and authoritarian, these governments have used the media for propaganda purposes, adopting a patronizing and didactic stance toward the audience or populace. Egypt was the pioneer in most of these fields of technology, and Egypt's prolific output of movies and serials made Egyptian language and culture available throughout the Arab world. This was built on the earlier domination of the radio waves by Nasser's "the Voice of the Arabs", his Arab nationalist answer to the BBC. Extensive coverage of the president or monarch and his official visits and meetings with foreign dignitaries are standard fare in the Arab press, both newspapers and television. News is presented from the point of view of the government and is presented in such a way as to justify government policies. The foreign films that are shown usually avoid controversial themes and support family and patriotic values while conforming to conservative conceptions of modesty. Many television serials portray contemporary and historical topics, usually focusing on social life against a background nationalist narrative, with characters representing various social types, stressing the contrasts between the old elite and the nouveau riche, and so on. One striking contrast between Hollywood films and Arab cinema until recent decades may be seen in the treatment of love and romance. Whereas differences in class and background are obstacles to be overcome in Hollywood movies—love conquers all—a love interest in most Arab films between members of different classes in classical Arab cinema nearly always ends in disaster—death, madness, prison, and so on.

Modernism. Most cultural production in the media until the 1980s—and quite a lot of it afterwards—is based on modernism, the belief in cultural progress through modernization. This involves the critique of the old aristocracy as corrupt, lazy, effete, and over-influenced by European culture and mores. It also involves the critique of the ignorance and backwardness of the lower classes. The nearly magical tool for making progress possible is modern education, which will allow the new Arab citizens—the middle class—to gain the benefits of modern technology while sloughing off the negative aspects of local culture yet at the same time retaining the positive aspects that make them "authentic" Egyptians, Lebanese, and so on. Cinema and television since the 1980s have produced works that call this hegemonic formula into question, presenting alternative visions of contemporary culture in which the belief in progress is questioned, the gauche or embarrassing aspects of popular and nouveau-rich culture are accepted or even celebrated instead of decried, and the value of education shown to be unreliable.

Roots in the Theater. The historical roots of these media lies primarily in the theater that developed beginning in the mid-19th century in Lebanon and then flourished in Egypt from the next generation on. Lebanese and Syrian immigrants to Egypt played an important role in the development of theater, presenting acts in nightclubs and establishing local theaters. Many of the same troupes and individuals who were active in the theater such as Naguib al-Rihani became key figures in radio, cinema, and television. Many of the fads and fashions of the media followed those of the West closely. Not only the technology of film production—types of film, cameras, technology, etc.—but also style, types of music, dance numbers, and other fads of

Hollywood movies appeared in Egyptian cinema after a delay of only a few years. In addition, many films were adaptations of American movies, some more or less than others. The results are sometimes jarring, as they do not seem to fit well, either with local cultural themes and mores, or with the history of Arab cinema.

Questions:

1. Explain what modernism is. How is it related to colonial and post-colonial experience?
2. What are some representations of the old, landed aristocracy?
3. What elements of popular, local culture are considered backward and undesirable?
4. Which aspects of Western culture are considered desirable, and which ought to be rejected? How can modern Arab citizens retain cultural authenticity?
5. Why is the modernist view unsatisfactory for many thinkers and artists in the Arab world? To what degree has the modernist project succeeded or failed?
6. Analyze any Arab film and decide to what degree it conforms to modernist ideology.

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Television

Television. Like the other media in the Arab world, television was until recent decades largely the province of the state apparatus and served a crucial role as a propaganda outfit for the government and the current king or president and his regime or ruling party. Like the newspapers, television promoted the policies of the state, glorified the ruler and the ruling party, and promoted patriotic nationalism in its reporting of the news and in saturating the airwaves with accounts of the official visits and benevolent acts of the president or monarch. This sometimes involved directing the populace's anger at foreign powers, such as Israel, neighboring Arab states, and powers outside the region such as Britain, France, and the United States. Television also served a didactic role, with programs designed to teach children proper behavior, public service announcements about conserving water or picking up litter, programs on home economics, and so on.

Satellite Television. In the 1990s, satellite television started spreading in the Arab world. This weakened the state's iron grip on the media in a much more blatant way than access to videotapes or the BBC's Arabic broadcasts had in earlier decades. Satellite stations provided access to western films that had racy content or controversial themes. The most important development, though, was access to news and political programs from Al-Jazeera and other channels, where topics that were suppressed in the national media could be discussed in a more frank manner. Several talk shows on Al-Jazeera were purposely designed to provoke heated debates on controversial issues.

Competition and Consumerism. For the first time, the national broadcasting systems had real competition, and after satellite television had been acquired by a significant percentage of the population they were forced to react. In addition, television professionals were enticed by the prospect of lucrative profits to work on projects for the Gulf and other oil-rich Arab countries. This coincided with the policy followed in the 1990s of privatizing some of the institutions of the public sector. The net result was that Egyptian national television changed and became more like private-sector television stations. It became more dependent on advertising revenue and was forced to produce news programs that appeared more frank and open to conflicting points of view.

The Press and Consumer Culture. The press has played a tremendous role in creating a sense of unity among Arabs—particularly through Arab nationalism, the ideological commitment to the idea that Arabs naturally or ideally form one large nation. If united, it is upheld, this nation would become very powerful against encroachments by the former colonial powers and other external threats. These ideas remain strong despite the somewhat contradictory and heavily promoted commitment to the individual nationalisms of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, and so on. At the same time, the Arab world has been exposed to a flood of modern Western technology, consumer products, and cultural items. Conspicuous consumption and ostentation of wealth are rampant in many parts of the Arab world, with Dubai boasting "The Tower of the Arabs," a 7(?) -star hotel on its own island with several floors underwater, and shopping malls where one can buy \$15,000 gold bars from vending machines or purchase 20-gallon bottles of Chanel No. 5. Like Christmas, Ramadan has been commercialized—advertisers spend most of their annual budgets during the holy month of fasting, and so many sweets and special dishes are prepared that grocery stores run out of sugar, flour, nuts, raisins, and so on.

The Decline of Modernism. Abu-Lughod shows that the Egyptian national media have toned down or stepped back from some of their didactic and patronizing modernist productions in favor of a celebration of capitalism found in glitzy ads for consumer products and Arab serials about the nouveau riche. Even when the intended message may have been that the nouveau riche are corrupt, gauche, and unsophisticated, the audience receives the message that education, upbringing, and sophistication do not matter any more and that success belongs to the opportunists. The promises of modernism have been losing their resonance with the populace, whose experience has shown that education is not equally available to Egyptian's citizens as a helping hand out of poverty and drudgery to a comfortable and enlightened existence. Even when education is attained, at great expense and sacrifice, it is not enough to guarantee economic success and participation in the progress of the nation.

Questions:

1. One of the essential components of modernism is the belief that education is the answer to the problems of developing countries. How is this idea promoted in Egyptian television? What does Abu-Lughod mean by "development realism"?
2. How is Egyptian feminism related to modernism and "development realism"?
3. What are the signs that this message is not entirely convincing to the audience, and why does it falter?
4. How are the Sa`id (Upper Egypt) and Sa`idis represented in Egyptian serials? What are their specific characteristics? Are real Sa`idis used as actors? Are they always associated with rural backwardness?
5. Describe the state's attempts to battle Islamists and terrorism through the media. What were some of the most important films and television serials created as part of this effort? How did they convey their messages? What were the results?
6. How do the media portray relations between Muslims and Coptic Christians? How are these portrayals contested?
7. Do the stars of television and the cinema represent the nation? How so? How different is the situation in Egypt from that which obtains in other nations such as France, Italy, or the United States?

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