Centre for West Asian Studies
School of International Studies
Course for Ph.D.

Course No.   : WA629N
Course Title   : Intellectual Traditions in the Arab World
Course Teacher   : Md. Muddassir Quamar
Credits   : 02
Instruction Method   : Lectures, Seminars and Tutorials
Evaluation Method   : Class Participation, Semester Assignment & Semester Examination
Course Duration   : One Semester (Winter)
Contact Hours   : Two hours per week

Objective: The Arab world has a rich history of debates on philosophical, socio-cultural and political issues. Dating back to the classical poetry in the pre-Islamic era to the scholarly contribution to advancement of ideas during the "Golden Age of Islam" and the renaissance after the encounter with modernity, Arab intellectuals have engaged topical issues from different dimensions. The course aims to provide students with ideas and tools to have a creative and critical engagement with the contemporary Arab world. In order for a student to grasp the nuances of the ideological, political and cultural transformations in the Arab world, an understanding of the intellectual traditions in the region is of utmost necessity.

Learning Outcomes: The course seeks to enable the students to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Engage critically with intellectual debates in the Arab world
2. Appreciate the history of ideas in the Arab world
3. Develop an understanding of contemporary Arab intellectual thought
4. Critically evaluate the creative expressions through popular culture

Course Structure

Module I: Intellectual Traditions and Ideas: This module will attempt to trace the history of ideas in the Arab world from the pre-Islamic to contemporary times. It will focus on select reading of themes in classical poetry through the work of Taha Hussain, social and philosophical debates in the works of early Muslim scholars, and the debates on Arab intellectual tradition within and from the outside including the European, Persian and Turkish views on Arabs.

Module II: Islam and Modernity: Islamic and Arab encounters with modernity produced varied responses generating a rich history of intellectual discourse with three major streams of Islamism, Islamic modernism and jihadism. These debates encompass various dimensions from theology to politics, class, gender and economics. This module will focus on understanding these dimensions through the works of Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Hassan al-Banna, Syed Qutb and Abdullah Azzam.

Module III: Contemporary Arab Political Thought: The Arab encounter with the concept of nationalism has produced serious intellectual and political debates with extraordinary impacts on the regional politics. Two broad streams – Arab nationalism (*al-qawmīya al-ʿarabīya*) and country-specific

nationalisms (*al-waṭanīya*) – will be discussed through the works of Ibrahim al-Yaziji, Jurji Zaydan, Sati al-Husri, Michel Aflaq, Saad Zaglul, Gamal Abd al-Nasser, Mahmoud Darwish, and others.

Module IV: Popular Culture in the Arab world: A slew of ideas are debated in popular culture reflecting the changing values and norms in the vast geographic span of the Arab world. Different manifestations of feminism, identity, representation, human rights, displacement, and globalisation are discussed in physical and digital Arab public sphere through art, culture and cinema. Tracing these debates through the writings of established and lesser-known authors, this module will encourage creative engagements with contemporary art and cultural expressions in the Arab world.

Readings

Module I:

Abdel-Malek, Anouar (1963), "Orientalism in Crisis", *Diogenes*, 11 (44): 103–40.

Ahmed, Akbar (2021), *The Flying Man, Aristotle, and the Philosophers of the Golden Age of Islam: Their Relevance Today*, Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications.

Al-Azm, Sadik Jalal (1981), "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," *Khamsin*, 8: 5–26.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz (1990), *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Reinterpretation*, London: Routledge.

Al-Jabiri, Muhammad Abid (1999), *Arab-Islamic Philosophy: A Contemporary Critique*, Austin: University of Texas Institute of Middle Eastern Studies.

Hanafi, Hasan (2004), "From Orientalism to Occidentalism", *Studia Philosophiae Christianae*, 40 (1): 227–37.

Hitti, Philip K. (1970), *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hussain, Taha (2017), *On Pre-Islamic Poetry*, Windsor, UK: Hindawi Foundation [Arabic], 1st edition published in 1927.

Ramakrishnan, A. K. (2017), "Cultures and Ideas: Reflections on Arab Cultural Studies," in Bansidhar Pradhan (ed.), *West Asia in a Changing World: The Emerging Regional Architecture and India,* New Delhi: Academic Foundation, pp. 1–18.

Said, Edward W. (1978), *Orientalism*, London: RKP.

Sharabi, Hisham (1992), *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Module II:

Abduh, Muhammad (1966), *The Theology of Unity*, London: George Allen & Unwin.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz (1993), *Islams and Modernities*, London: Verso.

Al-Banna, Hasan (1978), *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Algar, Hamid (2002), *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*, New York: Islamic Publication International.

Ayubi, Nazih N. M. (1982), "The Politics of Militant Islamic Movements in the Middle East," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 271-283.

Delong-Bas, Natana J. (2004), *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Haj, Samira (2009), *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hamid, Shadi (2016), *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle Over Islam is Reshaping the World*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kedourie, Elie (1997), *Afghani and Abduh*, London: Routledge.

Kepel, Gilles (2002), *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam,* trans. Anthony F. Roberts (1st ed.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lav, Daniel (2012), *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Moaddel, Mansoor (2005), Islamic Modernism, Nationalism and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pierre-Filiu, Jean (2015), *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and its Jihadi Legacy*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Rahman, Fazlur (1982), *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Roy, Olivier (1994), *The Failure of Political Islam*, Translated by Carol Volk, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Soroush, Abdolkarim (2000), *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam*, translated, edited and introduced by Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zakariyya, Fouad (2005), *Myth and Reality in the Contemporary Islamist Movement*, London: Pluto Press.

Unit III:

Ahmed, Jamal Mohammed (1968), *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ajami, Fouad (1992), *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amin, Samir (1978), *The Arab Nation: Nationalism and Class Struggle*, London: Zed Books.

Antonius, George (2001), *The Arab Awakening*, London: Routledge. Originally published in 1938.

Boullata, Issa J. (1990), *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought*, Albany: New York University Press.

Darwish, Mahmoud (1995), *Memory for Forgetfulness*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dawisha, Adeed (2003), *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

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

Kedourie, Sylvia (1962), *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Khalidi, Rashid et al. (eds.) (1991), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Nasser, Gamal Abdel (1959), *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, New York: Smith, Keyenes & Marshall.

Philipp, Thomas (2014), *Jurji Zaidan and the Foundations of Arab Nationalism*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Said, Edward (1980) *The Question of Palestine*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Tibi, Bassam (1997), *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State*, London: Macmillan Press.

Unit IV:

Ahmad, Leila (1992), *Women and Gender in Islam*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Alsharekh, Alanoud and Robert Springborg (eds.) (2008), *Popular Culture and Political Identity in the Arab Gulf States*, London: Saqi Books.

Amin, Qasim (2000), *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman: Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press. Originally published in 1899/1900.

Badran, Margot (1995), *Feminists, Islam and the Nation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dwyer, Kevin (1991), *Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East*, London: Routledge.

El Fadl, Khaled Abou (2001), *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*, Oxford: One World Publications.

Foley, Sean (2019), *Changing Saudi Arabia: Art, Culture, and Society in the Kingdom*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Frishkopf, Michael (2010), *Music and Media in the Arab World*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Hammond, Andrew (2007), *Popular Culture in the Arab World: Arts, Politics, and the Media*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Ibrahim, Saad Eddin and Nicholas Hopkins, eds. (1986), Arab Society: Social Science Pespectives, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Massad, Joseph Andoni (2008), Desiring Arabs, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mernissi, Fatima (1991), *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland, New York: Basic Books.

Saadawi, Nawal (1980), *The Hidden Face of Eve*, London: Zed Books.

Sabri, Tarik (2010), *Cultural Encounters in the Arab World*, London: I. B. Tauris.

Sadiki, Larbi (2004), *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Shaarawi, Huda (1986), *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist, 1879- 1924*, New York: The Feminist Press.

Zubaida, Sami (2011), *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris.