Introductory material in week 1 is for general reference. Subsequently (starting in week 1 with "Men, Women, and Family" after the general readings) readings marked "undergrads" are to be read by undergraduates; readings marked "grads" are to be read by graduate students in addition to the undergraduate readings; readings marked "corollary" are optional for everyone.

1. Introduction: Social Anthropology in the Middle East: Reproducing Patterns of Family and Kinship (2-part lecture).

Introducing Soc. Anthro (optional background reading):

**ME Anthro:**

**Anthro of Islam:**

**Mediterranean:**

**General Anthro:**
- Annual Review of Anthropology ("State of the art" bibliographic articles on issues in anthropology.

**Fieldwork/ethnography:**


Men, Women, and Family


Further Reading:


**Essay:** Is there such a thing as an “Arab family,” and if so, what is its purpose?

2. Moral Rhetorics of Honor, Shame, and Modesty


**Films (optional):** Love is Forbidden. 1942. Muhammad Karim.

**Further Reading:** Afsaruddin, Asma ed. 1999. Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female 'Public' Space in Islamic/ate Societies. Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University.

Essay: How are independence and modesty linked to one another in Middle Eastern societies?

Alternative Essay: It goes without saying that urban Middle Eastern societies are very different from Bedouin or rural societies in the region. Is it therefore impossible to identify a common logic to modesty as practiced in Cairo on one hand, and either (or both) the Western Desert and Kabylia?

Alternative Essay: Eighty to ninety percent of all Egyptian women now wear the "Islamic headscarf." And yet one could also argue that large numbers of Egyptian women have quietly stopped wearing the hijab. How can this be? Discuss the social and political dynamics of veiling in Egypt.


Essay: "Neopatriarchal society, as 'modernized,' is essentially schizophrenic, for beneath the immediately encountered modern appearance there exists another latent reality. Between these two there is opposition, tension, contradiction ... Patriarchal societies, regardless of their variety on the manifest level, all share in the same deep structures" (Hisham Sharabi, Neopatriarchy p. 23). Are Sharabi's claims of "latent realities" and "deep structures" too sweeping? Argue for or against "neopatriarchy" on the basis of one or more case studies (ethnographic and/or artistic) that analyze women and marriage in the contemporary urban Middle East.

3. Islam: Particularism and Universalism


*Ethnographies*: One or more of the following:


*Basic Islam (one or more as necessary)*:


*Essay*: Westerners are often accused of essentializing Islam. Their essentialization depends crucially on the assumption of a monolithic
community of believers. Anthropologists and others countered such essentialisms by thinking of Islam in the plural: "Islams" rather than a single monolithic "Islam." Not everyone is satisfied with this solution to the problem of essentialism. Discuss the potential virtues and problems with understanding Islam as a "plural entity."

Essay: The tension between particularism and universalism is a classic issue scholarship on Islam. It would seem that both states and "outliers" (i.e. Islamists) both emphasize a more rationalized universalist approach to Islam. Is there any place left for particularism? Discuss with reference to one or more anthropological analyses of Islamic practice.

4. Islam and Modernity

Readings:

Further Reading:
"The ethnocentric predicament [of modernity] is confounded by failure to realize that modernization appears as Westernization by historical coincidence. Modernity is primarily a state of mind—expectation of progress, propensity to growth, readiness to adapt oneself to change. The nations of the North Atlantic first developed the social processes—secularization, urbanization, industrialization, popular participation—by which this state of mind came to prevail. The 'Western Model' is only historically Western; sociological it is global."

If modernity isn't Western, would it follow that it also isn't Islamic?

"Whether from East or West, modernization poses the same basic challenge—the infusion of 'a rationalist and positivist spirit' against which, scholars seem agreed, 'Islam is absolutely defenseless.'"

Would scholars still seem to agree that Islam is absolutely defenseless against the onslaught of modernization?

5. *Islamism*


"The tremendous appeal which the [Muslim Brotherhood] movement exercised served to show the extent to which Islam could still move the masses of the people. But it came too late to stem the tide of secularism, and its fate was sealed with the triumph of Abdul Nasser’s secular revolution. The Muslim Brothers may well be the last serious effort of traditional Islam to regain its position in Arab society" (Hisham Sharabi, "Islam and Modernization in the Arab World." In Modernization of the Arab World, ed. Jack H. Thompson and Robert D. Reischauer, Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1966, p. 31).

One almost feels compelled to ask what Hisham Sharabi might have been smoking when he wrote the above quote. On the other hand, while it may be painfully obvious that Sharabi’s prediction of the demise of political Islam was dead wrong, we might still have many questions about how Islamist ideology attracts a following. What insights do anthropologists offer on the mechanics of Islamist indoctrination, particularly in a world where the eventual replacement of religion by secularism once seemed a foregone conclusion?

6. Writing and Recitation


Comparative:

Essay: Walter Ong: "Writing ... is a particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself. Though words are grounded in oral speech, writing tyrannically locks them into a visual field forever. A literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people. In view of this pre-emptiveness of literacy, it appears quite impossible to use the term 'literature' to include oral tradition and performance without subtly but irremediably reducing these somehow to variants of writing. "Does Ong's statement imply that Arab-Islamic culture is not fully literate, and therefore less developed than European culture?

7. Language and Agendas of Standardization
Readings:


Essay: Literate Arabs speak differently than illiterate Arabs. This is true of English speakers as well. If this is the case, then what is distinctive about the social deployment of language levels in Arab societies?

8. National Identity

Readings:

Films (optional):

Further Reading:


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**Essay:** Discuss national identity as a cultural phenomenon in Egypt or Jordan. Are these national communities "imagined" in ways that are distinctive from their counterparts elsewhere?

### 9. **Ethnicity, and the Nation-State**

**Readings:**


10. "Globalization," the State and Neo-Liberalism


**Essay:** “Neoliberalism” is a term increasingly employed by anthropologists who seek to understand the various ways in which Middle Eastern societies have been transformed in recent decades. These anthropologists are attentive to both externally imposed economic conditions (e.g. “structural adjustment” programs that aim to open Middle Eastern economies and cultures to globalization; or transnational media that cannot be contained by the boundaries of nation-states), and to local practices of consumption that both respond to and shape these larger economic and social forces.

“Neoliberalism” is also a term that academics often employ critically—as shorthand for a set of destructive forces that they wish to oppose.

Discuss the pros and cons of using “neoliberalism” as a principle for organizing ethnographic analysis of Middle Eastern societies.