This essay-based teaching seminar is designed to provide a common grounding in the history, politics, and society of the Middle East. The focus is two-fold. It is to serve as an introduction to the different countries of the Middle East, with readings in the history and politics of North Africa, Iran, Israel, and Turkey in the twentieth century. You will also be exploring the methodological approaches of the different scholarly disciplines as applied to the study of the contemporary Middle East.

Meetings are led by different members of faculty, providing students the opportunity to meet the modern Middle Eastern studies community. Each student will be expected to write an essay every other week (a total of 4 over the course of the term). Students will be assigned essays to assure equal coverage of all topics. The essays and the feedback from instructors provide training in the analytical writing style particular to the Oxford system. The seminar and reading list serve as the preparation for one exam paper in the Qualifying Examination at the end of Hilary Term, 2010. As such, students are required to attend all sessions and to come prepared with their essays written in advance in their assigned weeks. Essays should be six-eight double-spaced typed pages in length (12 point font). Each week, two students will be called on at random to lead discussion. Essays will be collected for marking at the end of the class, providing students regular assessment of their work.

Required seminar readings are kept on reserve in the Middle East Centre Library. The MEC librarian has created a web site for the seminar with links to all Oxford University Library System locations (see http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/mec-readinglist.shtml).

Multiple copies of the following books have been ordered and are on reserve at Blackwell’s Bookstore on Broad Street (for full references see below):

Lockman, Zachary. Contending Visions of the Middle East.
Winegar, Jessica. Creative Reckonings.
Chalcraft, John. The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories.
Katouzian, Homa. The Persians
Shlaim, Avi. War and Peace in the Middle East.
Fawcett, Louise. International Relations of the Middle East.
Esposito & Burgat. Modernizing Islam
Crystal, Jill. Oil and Politics in the Gulf.
Week 1: Area Studies and the Middle East (Eugene Rogan)


Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK, Area Studies Benchmark Statement http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/areastudies08.asp


Further Reading (not required):


Supplementary Readings: http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant114/MPhilArea.pdf

Essay: In the 1980s and 1990s one reading of Said’s *Orientalism* was (and in some quarters still is) that Orientalism was incapable of producing true knowledge, and should be seen instead as a discursive means for constructing European domination of societies defined as outside itself. In this view, Area Studies was seen as a child of Orientalism, and as the inheritor of all its flaws. How persuasive are arguments for the continuing vitality of Area Studies?
Week 2: Anthropology: The Field and Fieldwork (Walter Armbrust)


The Field and Fieldwork

Required:

Recommended but not required:
Rosaldo, Renato. 1986. “From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor.” In James Clifford and George E. Marcus eds.,

Further Readings on the Field and Fieldwork (not required):


Additional Ethnographies (not required, but perhaps desirable if you’re interested in other parts or aspects of the Middle East than those covered in Winegar):


Cheater’s guides to anthropology (useful if you feel you need a formal introduction to the discipline):


Supplementary Readings on the Field and Fieldwork:
http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/MPhilField.pdf

Reading List for M.Phil. Option on Social Anthropology of the Middle East:
http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/MPhilSocAnth.pdf

Essay: Evaluate one or more ethnographies (Jessica Winegar’s Creative Reckonings and others if you wish) in terms of the author’s approach to fieldwork. How is the content of the book (or books) facilitated or limited by the author’s approach to fieldwork?

Note: Everyone should read and discuss Creative Reckonings in their essays so that we have a common yardstick for discussion in the seminar. You are not required to read additional ethnographies for the seminar or for the essay, but it is helpful to do so. An anthropology graduate course would assign the sort of conceptual/theoretical readings of which I have given you a sample here. But these are inevitably taught in conjunction with as many ethnographic case studies as possible—that is how anthropologists learn fieldwork methodology rather than through "how to" manuals. I have therefore suggested some additional ethnographies of Middle Eastern societies for those who wish to read further—or wish to read an ethnography focused on a non-Egyptian field site in addition to Winegar’s book.

Week 3: In and Out of the Archive: approaches to Middle East history (Lucie Ryzova)


Additional Required Reading:

**Further reading (not required, but useful)**


**Extended further reading:**


**Essay:** What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of archival research? Discuss in reference to Chalcraft’s book, using the other readings as food for thought on how archives are used in the Middle East and elsewhere.

**Week 4: Israel: State, Society, Identity (Raffaella A. Del Sarto)**

**Readings:**


**Further readings:**


Readings for the MPhil Option “Israel: State, Society, Identity”:
http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/MPhilIsrael.pdf

Essay: Does Israel really represent a unique case of state- and nation-building, as has often been claimed, or is it comparable to other states?

Week 5: International Relations (Avi Shlaim)


Readings for the M.Phil. Option on International Relations of the Middle East:
http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/MPhilIR.pdf

Essay: “The dominant feature of the postwar international politics of the Middle East was the manipulation of the external powers by the regional powers.” Discuss.

Week 6: Modern Islamic Thought (Tariq Ramadan)


Further background reading:

Further Reading (not required):
http://www.usip.org/resources/ijtihad-reinterpreting-islamic-principles-twenty-first-century

Essay: What are the main areas and the main topics discussed in modern Islamic thought? Expose what are the main arguments and explain why these fields are so critical.

Week 7: Business-State Relationship in the Middle East and North Africa (Bassam Fattouh)
Primary Reading: Crystal, J. 1995. Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar. Cambridge University Press.

Additional Required Readings:
Hvidt, M. 2006. Governance in Dubai: The Emergence of Political and Economic Ties between the Public and the Private Sector. Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies University of Southern Denmark.

Further Readings:

**Essay:** How has the ruler-merchant relationship evolved over time and how has the concentration of oil wealth in the hands of rulers changed the balance of power? To what extent can the patrimonial framework depict the anatomy of business-government relationship in oil rich countries?

**Week 8: The Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Homa Katouzian)**


*Recommended:*

**Essay:** 'The ideologies most represented in the Iranian revolution of 1979 were Islamism and Marxist-Leninism. Yet the revolution was neither Islamist nor Marxist-Leninist'. Discuss