Course Description

The Middle East has a long urban tradition, including some of the world’s oldest cities such as Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul, and Baghdad. The making of these Middle Eastern cities reflects diverse histories of colonialism, imperialism, and nation-state building. In the last few decades, urbanization in the region has continued at an accelerated rate resulting in varied socio-political transformations. Cities are therefore dynamic landscapes, subject to constant change and remaking. For instance, contemporary processes of migration, neoliberalization, and globalization reshape the social, economic, and cultural urban landscapes in the region. On the backdrop of a conceptual approach to cities as spaces formed by and formative of social, political, technoscientific and economic practices as well as non-human forces, this course examines how urban life has been constructed, governed, experienced, contested, and transformed in the Middle East. We will explore concepts such as colonialism, modernization, marginality, space, (im)mobility, segregation, and greening as they inform our understanding of the complexities of city life in an array of empirical cases. The course will also invite students to approach cities as multispecies landscapes co-developed and co-inhabited by human and non-human agents. The course readings encompass journal articles, book chapters, and books in history, anthropology, sociology, and human geography.

Learning Goals

- To think about the Middle East as a region with a longstanding and dynamic urban life.
- To consider the transnational and transregional connections as they play out in the making of cities in the Middle East.
- To familiarize with approaches and concepts in social sciences and humanities for studying the cities.
- To be able to apply main concepts of urban history, anthropology, and human geography to the study of the Middle East.
- To learn how to critically engage with scholarly works on urban life and space in the region.
Course Materials

All of the textual resources will be posted on the course website. Please download and/or print readings and bring them to class. You will need to have them and your notes with you in order to participate in class discussion.

Requirements and Grading

Class Participation (10%) You are required to regularly and actively attend every class meeting, which will be composed of a lecture followed by a collective discussion (see details under Course Policies).

Weekly Posts/Reading Responses (20%) As of the third week of the classes, you are required to post a reading response on the course website each week (approximately 200-250 words). The posts need to summarize the main points of the weekly readings and closely engage with them by raising original questions and/or critiques. In your posts, you are also encouraged to connect the weekly readings to the readings and lectures of the previous weeks. The posts will be visible to all students taking the course. You are also required to read other students’ posts and bring your reflections into the class discussion. Weekly posts/responses are due every Tuesday by 5pm.

Book Review (30%) You are required to read an entire monograph and write a book review (approximately 5 double-spaced pages). You will choose the book according to your own thematic and empirical interest among the options listed under “Further Reading(s).” Instructions on how to write a book review will be provided by the instructor ahead of time. The book review is due on Wednesday, October 23rd.

Final Research Paper (40%) You are required to write a research paper (approximately 15 pages, double-spaced). The research paper will focus on a specific city and topic, which you develop an interest about over the course of the semester. You will submit a brief research proposal (2 pages, double-spaced) and meet the instructor in office hours to discuss it. The proposal and meeting will count for 5% of the grade. The proposal is due on Wednesday, November 6th. You are required to briefly present your research topic in the final class meeting. The final paper is due on Saturday, December 14th.

Course Policies

Class Participation: This is a lecture and discussion based course. You are required to regularly and actively attend every class meeting. You are expected to have carefully read all the textual material and have critically engaged them. Each session will be composed of one hour of lecture followed by a 20 minutes long collective discussion moderated by the instructor. Class discussions will be based on the content of the required readings and lectures and will take place in an inclusive environment supported by principles of equal participation, collective learning, and mutual respect.

Lateness Policy: Late submissions are not accepted except with the prior permission of the
instructor or with a doctor’s note. An assignment handed in late without instructor’s permission or doctor’s note will be marked down one half-grade for each day it is late.

**Academic Integrity and Codes of Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100- behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems and Accommodations**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 Introduction**

**August 26 – Introduction and Course Overview**

**August 28 – The Islamic City**


**Week 2  New Directions in Urban Studies in the Middle East**

**September 2 – No Class: Labor Day**

**September 4 – New Perspectives on Cities of the Middle East**


**Week 3  Colonial Urbanism**

**September 9 – Colonizing Egypt**


**September 11 – French Urbanism in Morocco**


**Week 4  Modernization and Development**

**September 16 – Infrastructures of Modernization**


**September 18 – The Making of a “Modern” Capital City**

Further Readings:


Week 5 The City and the Past

September 23 – Remembering a multi-cultural city


September 25 – Reconstruction, memory, and heritage


Further Reading:

Week 6 (Im)Mobility

September 30 - Mobility


October 2 - Immobility


Further Reading:
**Week 7  Cities as Spaces of Migration**

**October 7 – Migration**


**October 9 – Refugees and Urban Life**


*Further Readings:*


**Week 8  Divided Cities**

**October 14 – Partitioned Cities**


**October 16 – Jerusalem**


**Week 9  Urban Life in the “Margins”**

**October 21 – “Informal” and Squatter Communities**


**October 23 – Queer City**


*Further Reading:*

* * Book review is due on Thursday, October 23rd *

**Week 10  Neoliberal Urban Transformation**

**October 28 – Gated Communities**


**October 30 – Neoliberal Subjectivity**


*Further Reading:*

**Week 11  Globalization**

**November 4 – Globalizing Cities**


November 6 – Complicating Globalization, Multiplying Flows


Further Readings:


* Research proposal is due on November 6th *

Week 12 Contested Urban Spaces

November 11 – The City as a Battleground

November 13 – Arab Spring and Gezi Resistance


Week 13 Urban Environments

November 18 – Waste and Water in the City


November 20 – Risk and disaster

**Week 14 “Greening” the City**

**November 25 – Urban Sustainability in the Gulf**


**November 27 – No Class: Thanksgiving Break**

Further Reading:

**Week 15 Multispecies Cities**

**December 2 – The City as a Multispecies Space**


Hart, K., 2019. Istanbul’s intangible cultural heritage as embodied by street animals. *History and Anthropology*, pp.1-12.


Suggested Film: *Kedi (Cats)* directed by Ceyda Torun (2016, 1h 20min)

**December 4 – Student Presentations**

* Final research paper is due on Saturday, December 14th *