



GESM 130G

Surviving Climate Change in the Middle East

Mon. & Wed., 2:00-3:20pm, SOS B48

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“Sustainability,” Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing writes, “is the dream of passing a livable earth to future generations.” Threatened by our planet’s unfolding climate crisis, that precarious dream is becoming ever more unlikely to be fulfilled even to our future selves. Few have borne the brunt of Earth’s climatic transformations more than those living in the Middle East. While the region has never been separated from the global forces of carbon, capitalism, colonialism, and knowledge production that have shaped the Anthropocene, it has felt them and their environmental expressions in particular ways. Taking that realization as its starting point, this GE Seminar examines how the global forces of climate change are making themselves felt amidst the societies of the Middle East. In doing so we will analyze differing scholarly perspectives on Earth’s present human-dominated age and the divergent strategies for long-term species survival implied by them; we will study how governments, NGOs, and others have begun to address compounding and overlapping climate crises; and we will study how manifestations of climate change have affected Middle Eastern people unequally, and how emergent strategies for mitigation and survival can at times reinforce such disparities.

Climate change is an unfolding disaster, and few people have answers to the challenges it poses, let alone definitive ones. Its crises are at once natural and social, reflecting planetary systems and the choices people make both individually and as members of larger groups. Our course thus ranges across a variety of regions, disciplines, and scales, using the varied approaches of the social sciences to shed light on the challenges it poses in the Middle East. With its diverse readings, this course asks students to undertake a multifaceted analysis of the problems—drought, heat, biodiversity loss—facing the people of the Middle East. Through its assignments, the class invites students to join in the critical work of mitigating them, becoming part of our common effort to adapt and survive a changing climate.