

PROGRAM IN MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN (MENA) STUDIES
MENA 301 Seminar in Middle East and North African Studies Sequence

Fall 2017

MENA 301-1/ANTHRO 390

Shady Business: Informal Economies in Contemporary Capitalism

Professor Emrah Yildiz

What business ventures are considered shady? Is it only the so-called informal economic practices that are deemed shady? What is the relationship between informal economies and contemporary capitalism? This course seeks answers to these and other questions by revisiting the study of informal economies—defined as licit economic activities that are not formally regulated by states. We will start our exploration with a critical survey of the debates on informal economy in the last quarter of the 20th century and work. Taking stock of world economic changes such as the collapse of socialism, the advent of globalization as well as the intensification of transnational labor migration, in this course we aim to reveal the categorical distinctions drawn between formal and informal economies in contemporary capitalism as historically situated and politically charged constructs.

Winter 2018

MENA 301-2-20/PERF ST

Syria: History, Society, Culture

Professor Shayna Silverstein

Since 2011, the Syrian war and humanitarian crisis has deeply impacted the global community. Yet the social, political, and economic factors shaping the conflict, as well as the complex dynamics of Syrian lifeworlds, continue to mystify many. This course approaches the complicated relations of contemporary Syrian state and society from historical, anthropological, and cultural perspectives. In addition to scholarly articles and essays, we will draw heavily on Syrian cultural output, including performance, dance, theater, music, films and documentaries, prison literature, and memoirs. Close engagement with key cultural works will help students to not only situate the critical issues that shape Syrian society today, from the social relations of gender, class, and religion, to the formation of nationalism, sectarianism, Islamism, and authoritarianism, but better understand how Syrians negotiate these issues through the makings and doings of culture.

Spring 2018

MENA 301-3/ REL ST

Islamic Law

Professor Brannon Ingram

Islamic law – the sacred law of Islam grounded in the Qur'an, the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, and the writings of Muslim scholars and jurists – stretches back nearly 1400 years. This course offers, first, an overview of the origins and evolution of Islamic law from the life of Muhammad to end of the classical era. We then seek, secondly, to understand how colonialism and the modern nation-state affected the conceptualization and implementation of Islamic law in the modern period. To this end, we look in-depth at one specific area of law – marriage and divorce – in the contexts of the Ottoman Empire and contemporary Iran.