Georgia Institute of Technology

Understand Arab Culture

ARBC 1501

I. General Information

Instructor: Natalie Khazaal

Email: nkhazaal3@gatech.edu

Office Hours:

Tue 1-3pm (Zoom link on Canvas)

or by appointment (via Teams)

Course Mode:

This course will be conducted in a remote asynchronous mode.

Course description:

This course introduces students to the foundations of modern Arab culture. Students will **remember** and **identify** key cultural elements such as values, gender roles, religion, and language. They will **explain** how these elements shape everyday life in Arab societies and **compare** them to their own cultural experiences.

Through guided discussions and reflective assignments, students will learn to **analyze** cultural practices without imposing their own cultural assumptions. This approach will help them **interpret** traditions and perspectives that may at first appear unfamiliar. Students will also be asked to **evaluate** differing viewpoints on complex or controversial issues with respect and openness.

The ultimate goal is for students to **apply** their understanding to real-world intercultural contexts and begin to **create** thoughtful connections between Arab culture, their own experiences, and broader global perspectives.

This course serves as an entry point (bridge) for further study in the MENAS Minor and Arabic language programs at Georgia Tech.

Core IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Arts, Humanities & Ethics area. Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals. This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: *"How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?"* Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome: *"Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts in English or other languages, or of works in the visual/performing arts."*

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Recognize and describe** basic facts about the Arab world, including countries, ethnic and religious diversity, and key cultural traditions.
2. **Explain and interpret** the historical and cultural significance of Islam, classical Arabic, and the Qur'an in shaping Arab societies.
3. **Analyze and appreciate** examples of Arab arts and literature—such as poetry, music, and contemporary cultural works—as expressions of human experience and values.
4. **Interpret and evaluate** major moments in modern Arab history, including the Arab Spring and its aftermath, with attention to cultural and ethical implications.
5. **Assess and discuss** current issues facing Arab societies, such as development, political change, and human rights, in ways that highlight cultural perspectives.
6. **Develop intercultural competence** by reflecting on one's own cultural assumptions and **comparing perspectives** to foster ethical reasoning and cross-cultural understanding.

Required Textbook:

An Introduction to Arab Culture by Bassam Frangieh (Cognella Inc, San Diego, CA)
https://titles.cognella.com/an-introduction-to-modern-arab-culture-9781516526291#
When you order the book from Cognella, you will immediately receive access to a PDF of the first 30% of the book.

All videos and other readings are available in the modules on Canvas.

II. Coursework guidelines

Grades:

Discussion Posts/Videos	40%
Quizzes	40%
Final Project	20%

Grading Scale:

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Discussion Posts/Videos: (40%)

After you do the assigned chapter readings and take the quiz on that chapter, watch the movie/read the text assigned for your Homework discussion, then you are required to either write a discussion on Canvas or post a discussion video with a partner depending on the specific assignment instructions. Your post should cover the main ideas in the film/readings. It must be your own reflection on the topic. You may include examples from

your own experience or refer to other sources. Your response should be no less than 200-300 words. You will not be able to see other classmates' responses before you post yours. After you post your response, make sure you reply to at least one post from your classmates. You may answer somebody's question or ask a question about something you need more clarification on. This is your chance to have a good discussion about the topics. I will read all the posts and replies but will not respond to every post. I will comment where you might need clarification. The goal is to have an engaging and rich discussion about the topics you read about.

The video should NOT be edited. It should be a video-recorded conversation with a partner or two on the week's discussion topic (text or film). The recording can be done in person or as a Zoom/Team meeting. You should NOT read from a written text but discuss your ideas and impressions around the topic of the week's reading or film.

There will be one discussion per week, except in week 14.

Quizzes: (40%)

You will have quizzes on specific topics during the course. All the quizzes will be multiple-choice and timed. You will have enough time to complete them. If you do the readings before the quiz, you will be able to answer the questions easily and quickly.

There will be one quiz per week, except in week 14.

Final Project: (20%)

For the final project, you will create a video discussing one or more related topics covered during the course. Imagine you are invited to give a speech or a conference presentation on that topic. You are encouraged to use visuals in your video. The video should be approximately ten minutes long. If you have a different idea for the final project that works well for you, I am open to exploring other options, provided we discuss them in advance and I approve of the idea.

III. Schedule of weekly work

Please check the Canvas Modules for all required assignments and deadlines.

IV. School policies

Use of AI for Assignments

This course is about growing your ability to write, communicate, and think critically. Generative AI agents such as ChatGPT and others present great opportunities for learning and communicating. However, AI cannot learn for you and so cannot meet the course requirements for you. In this course, using generative AI tools in the course assignments is not allowed unless specified by the instructor. You are responsible for the work you submit. If you submit a discussion post with a 20% (or more) probability of being generated by AI, you will receive a zero for this assignment. If the issue is repeated, you will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Modified Operations and Digital Learning Days

In the event of a weather-related event on campus or other emergency situation that requires modified operations, it is possible that the instructor and/or student(s) may not be able to connect due to power outages or loss of internet. That's why I will contact all students via email/Canvas, about cancelling the in-person class and our plans for an asynchronous digital learning day.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See this catalog page for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information

on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.