

College Course Evaluations

NEHC 10101: Intro To The Middle East

Section 1 - Spring 2019

Instructor(s): Peruccio, Kara; Longworth, Nicholas

Identical Courses: HIST 15801

Number Enrolled: 31

Number of Responses: 17

The Course

What are the most important things that you learned in this course? Please reflect on the knowledge and skills you gained.

- Introductory course in Middle Eastern history, geography, and culture. Learned how to read non-western primary source documents, taking into account translations and historical context. Read a diversity of texts from novels to historical documents to fantasy interpretations and incorporated it all into learning.
- The most important things I learned in this course would be the origins of Middle Eastern civilization, the origins of Islam and insight into the transformation of the political sphere in the Middle East. Particularly interesting was knowledge of preceding religions to Islam found in the Middle East like Zoroastrianism, which can shape our understanding of the relationship between human civilization and religion.
- The most important and in-depth knowledge I gained was an understanding of some of the background of modern Turkey and Iran.
- Learned some general knowledge about the middle east
- I learned about religions that had their birth in the middle east as well as the development of civilization in the region.
- About the cultural complexities of the Middle East and the historical formation of religions and sects.
- The cultural diversity and nuanced history of the Middle East from a non-Orientalist lens.
- In all honesty, this has been a great comprehensive review of the Middle East at large. I have taken Middle Eastern history classes in the past, and this one is easily one of the more in depth yet broad spanning classes I've taken on it so far, and I think Kara does a great job in organizing it and going in depth in certain areas.
- It was quite informative especially with the lectures on the culture and heritage of Egyptians. The choice of books too was quite good given that they were interesting, fun, and also informative and allowed us to ask so many questions syllabus-related
- I learned a lot of new things about the ancient Middle East, which helped contextualize more recent events which I had already learned about.
- context about current middle east climate, learned about the middle east from a historical point of view
- In this course, I learned how to condense thousands of years of history into a comprehensive narrative that makes sense and is accurate.
- I learned how to be a more efficient writer and further develop my critical thinking skills in regards to history
- 1. The diversity and vast culture of the Middle East 2. The history of the Near East region from the Paleolithic area through the 20th century Oslo Accords
- I learned about Middle Eastern culture throughout its history, which was really nice since I'm a strong believer that you must understand the people before you can understand the politics.
- I learned how to learn about a new part of the world and its culture/history from an observational and neutral stand. It reminded me of the importance of absorbing new information without imposing prior assumptions or judgements. Keeping the lecture knowledge ever-present, it also taught me to keep my mind engaged in drawing comparisons between the texts we read and what we had learned.
- I learned a lot about the Middle East--I wish we could've gone more in depth sometimes but I recognize it was a broad course

Describe how aspects of this course (lectures, discussions, labs, assignments, etc.) contributed to your learning.

- Lectures provided good foundation of history and culture in middle east. Discussions allowed us to review texts in a smaller setting, facilitating good conversation.
- Guest speakers were very insightful in providing different perspectives on their experiences in the middle east, showing how our study of the middle east and its political sphere can help open our minds and make us take accountability for actions, thus bringing us closer towards a mutual understanding.
- I really loved the first book we read, but my interest in the reading assignments dropped off at the end. I think the lectures were very broad, I wonder if the course could have been better served by having a series of in-depth case studies rather than sweeping tracts of information.
- The in an antique land reading was by far my favorite and I got a lot out of it
- The discussion sessions were very helpful as questions were answered comprehensively.
- Lectures were very informative, and readings were enjoyable and supplemented the lectures well.
- The lectures were incredibly engaging and instructive, making our 50 minute class feel like 20. The discussions were also great, as Kara was very good at facilitating dialogue and debate so that we could flesh out our readings in more depth.
- Kara does an excellent job organizing the course so that it all makes sense. Her daily handouts, powerpoints, and then review time during discussion sections really made sure that everyone was on the same page and everything was taught in an orderly and comprehensive way.
- discussions mainly were the most interesting
- Kara's lectures were very informative, and it was useful to have discussion sections at the end of the week to dig into specific issues. The readings were always interesting and helpful. The primary sources especially.

- lectures were great, discussions were insightful
- I really enjoyed the discussion sections in this course. Kara led the discussion section that I was in, and I always felt comfortable speaking up in discussion. Kara fostered a great environment where every student felt comfortable contributing to discussion, which honestly improved the quality of the session by so much. Kara also asked great discussion questions that kickstarted discussion.
- The discussion sections were a good supplement to the lectures. The Lectures were very engaging and informative of both the culture and the geography of givens regions and how they exerted an influence on that region's history.
- The lectures were extremely helpful and formed the basis of my knowledge in this class. They were really well organized into an outline that we received with key terms to help us see what the teacher was emphasizing. The notes were also on the powerpoint, making it easier to copy them down. Discussions were helpful in asking questions and reinforcing important ideas, and the books we read were picked very well and added an extra resource! I really enjoyed the event write-ups. They made me more excited about the class and learning about the Middle East in general. It was cool to see how many opportunities there are to continue learning on campus outside the classroom.
- The readings were really well ranged! I appreciated how there was the typical informative readings to first hand accounts and even fantasy books.
- Lectures (PP Presentations and overview sheets, uploaded to canvas for future consultation), discussion sections, reading assignments and events (interesting way to expose us to the Middle East. The write-ups also helped you think about how to present an unbiased report but still providing a justified opinion engaging knowledge from class)
- The mix of interactive lectures, interesting discussions, and how the event write ups all helped me learn a lot

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	0%	6%	12%	12%	47%	24%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	0%	0%	6%	0%	12%	82%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	0%	0%	6%	6%	6%	82%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve subsequent work.	0%	0%	6%	0%	18%	77%
My work was evaluated fairly.	0%	0%	0%	6%	12%	82%
I felt respected in this class.	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	94%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	0%	0%	6%	6%	6%	82%

Additional Comments about this course:

- I felt like it was too general to be useful. A much better way to structure the class, in my opinion, would be a deep dive into a particular topic every lecture. For example, a lecture about the White Revolution in Iran, or a lecture about Zoroastrianism.
- Any institution of higher learning would be greatly honored to have Prof. Peruccio as an instructor.

I would recommend this course to:

highly motivated and well-prepared students

Yes	14 / 82%
No	3 / 18%

anyone interested in the topic

Yes	16 / 94%
No	1 / 6%

The Instructor

Thinking about your time in class, what aspect of the instructor's teaching contributed most to your learning?

- Very coherent lectures. Clear outline of what we needed to cover during the lectures and provided good outlines for notes. Did her best to answer questions and provided resources for stuff she couldn't cover or answer in class.
- Instructor's flow in presenting class materials was very helpful for learning, and made it easy to follow the timelines and sequence of historical periods.
- Kara did a good job during lectures of presenting information systematically and answering questions. I think she responded well to the mid-quarter feedback we gave, I think that the lectures were even better during the second half.
- She was very friendly and approachable, she prepared good presentations albeit extremely general ones.
- The lectures were very fast but she lingered on interesting facts.
- Her ability to make lectures story-like, tell multiple narratives, and acknowledge biases.
- She was an incredibly engaging lecturer that presented information in large quantities in a way that did not feel like an info dump and more like a story.
- The powerpoints, her lectures in general (more specifically, how she can go into depth on certain topics when asked), and the discussion sections.
- Asking questions, the small group discussions that she formed, and the books she chose
- Kara gave very good lectures, but what was especially helpful was her willingness to answer questions and provide more details when we needed them.
- lectures
- Kara was one of the best instructors I have ever had! She was extremely organized, lectures were always engaging, discussion was always engaging, and she really fostered a classroom environment where each student felt comfortable and felt motivated to learn more.
- The lectures were all interesting and in-depth regarding the topics that were discussed that day. The supplementary readings also added dimension to the topics as well.
- Kara was super organized and helped us be organized too by providing handouts with the notes outline and key terms (words we needed to focus on). She also always did a very good job of covering everything on the slides, and she worked through them at a good pace. She answered every question and admitted when she didn't know the answer, which is better than making something up. I really really liked how she made us do event write-ups, because this was very unique and got me more interested in the topic. I also liked the documents she assigned us to read (women in the Middle East) and all of the novels (City of Brass, In an Antique Land, etc.) because these enhanced my learning and were very relevant to what we were studying in class- she picked them very thoughtfully and everything tied together nicely. She came to discussions very well prepared with insightful questions, and she ALWAYS respected our opinions. Additionally on her slides, she provided interactive maps, photographs, and more that helped give more context and exemplify her points. Kara is an excellent teacher and I could tell she really wanted to be good for us and improve.
- She had a few guest lecturers who came to talk about things that wouldn't be tested, but were extremely interesting and I'm very glad we were able to have such experiences. I loved the fact that she gave out handouts with the lecture outline and key words at the beginning of class, especially since I have trouble with my hearing-comprehension.
- 1. Always engaged with both her lectures and the class, pausing at the end of slides to ask if anybody had any questions. 2. Very respectful of students and always asking for thoughts and opinions if we happened to have visited a particular place in question or new more about the topic. It is always interesting to learn both from your professor and your peers. 3. Incredibly organized and well prepared, always presenting a clear lecture plan. 4. Lectures were never boring, since it was evident that Prof. Kara enjoyed what she teaches (the first-hand photos from Turkey were beautiful!)
- Everything! she engaged her students well and I felt respected, as well as she did an amazing job of answering questions and pointing students in the right direction.

What could she/he modify to help you learn more?

- -
- I would have loved if she had included some specific details that she found interesting in each topic we covered in addition to the background material.
- Make things much more specific.
- I could not understand the powerpoint slides apart from the presentation. Notes didn't help.
- Nothing! Kara was an amazing teacher and made everyone more interested in the content.
- Clearer standards of success for the course.
- n/a
- Slower pace, more informative slides
- The lectures were sometimes very fast and the most important concepts could have been more closely highlighted
- relate the discussion more to the assessments
- Very enthusiastic about what she teaches, but also translates to talking fast in lecture.
- I wish she would post the grades on Canvas as we went along so I could see overall how I was doing.
- Maybe make it clearer in the beginning that the powerpoints posted online have her lecture notes? I didn't look at them for weeks until she mentioned that fact to me during office hours. Other than that, she is an amazing teacher who very visibly cares about her students and their learning.
- Perhaps make it extra clear how some of the terms/sub-topics relate to the main theme for the day. It felt as though a few things were mentioned once but never again, making them seem slightly random. Also it would have been helpful to spend one lecture going over how to write like a historian to better prepare us for the first assignment.
- I don't know what I would change I honestly believe she's one of the best teachers I've had

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Organized the course clearly.	0%	0%	0%	0%	35%	65%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	0%	0%	6%	0%	12%	77%
Facilitated discussions that were	6%	0%	0%	0%	12%	

engaging and useful.						82%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	0%	0%	0%	0%	24%	77%
Challenged you to learn.	0%	0%	6%	24%	12%	59%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	0%	0%	6%	0%	29%	65%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%
Motivated you to think independently.	0%	0%	0%	18%	18%	65%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	0%	0%	0%	6%	24%	71%

The Teaching Assistant, Course Assistant, Intern

Did this class include instruction by a TA, CA or Intern?

Yes	17 / 100%
No	0 / 0%

What aspects of the TA's teaching contributed most to your learning?

- Always contributed good information during lectures regarding his area of expertise, as well as offering another perspective
- Very well-informed and knowledgeable about the subject and was able to explain and answer questions from students off-hand.
- I never interacted with Kyle
- He was super approachable.
- The answering of questions.
- His expertise and ability to answer very specific questions was really helpful.
- Kyle was very insightful and was great at both asking interesting questions as well as providing nuanced answers to questions he received. His review sessions for the exam were AMAZING, and the fact that he had three of them to accommodate for religious holidays (in this case Ramadan) was very considerate and reflected the commitment he had to our success.
- He lead great discussion sections.
- He was amazing! The questions he posed before the sections helped us through the readings
- He provided tons of helpful feedback on assignments and talked through the week's concepts as much as we wanted in discussion
- review sessions
- During discussions, he would make sure we knew how and why events happened as well as how concepts tie into one another.
- I was not able to attend his review sessions, but he held at least 4 of them which was super generous of him, and I could tell he cared about our personal learning and growth and interest in the subject. He would also pipe in with Kara if she did not know something.
- He was really good at managing discussions and allowing us to talk but also leading us to major points that would be tested.
- Always available to help outside of class, made interesting side notes and historical notes during lectures, held helpful exam review sessions.
- His amount of knowledge, availability, and review sessions

What could she/he modify to help you learn more?

- -
- I wish I could tell you.
- N/A
- Nothing.
- Clearer feedback after grading
- n/a

- The summary he provided of the week lectures before he started were pretty helpful
- more review sessions
- Nothing.
- Nothing
- Nothing really - he literally held four extra review sessions within the week before our exam to make sure we were prepared.
- Maybe more involved in lecture? not sure

The TA/CA or Intern...

	N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Facilitated discussions that supported your learning.	6%	0%	0%	6%	6%	82%
Gave you useful feedback on your work.	6%	0%	6%	0%	6%	82%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	6%	0%	0%	12%	0%	82%
Challenged you to learn.	6%	0%	6%	6%	0%	82%
Helped you succeed in the class.	6%	0%	0%	0%	12%	82%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	6%	0%	0%	0%	12%	82%
Overall, the TA/CA made a significant contribution to your learning.	6%	0%	0%	12%	0%	82%

Additional feedback to the TA/CA/Intern:

- Excellent TA I have had so far in my undergrad.

Additional Course Elements

Did this course include special design elements (labs, field trips, extra sessions, writing seminars)?

Yes	10 / 59%
No	6 / 35%

How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	NA	No Gains	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain
Laboratory Experience	35%	0%	0%	0%	6%	12%
Field Trips	29%	0%	0%	0%	6%	41%
Library Sessions	35%	0%	0%	0%	6%	12%
Review sessions	18%	0%	0%	0%	12%	29%
Writing Seminars	35%	0%	0%	0%	6%	12%

Other course elements not mentioned above:

- We had two guest lecturers come and they were fantastic. They were journalists who worked with the war in Yemen and they gave invaluable insight into the conflict.
- Having the event write up assignments was really cool, and I got a lot out of going to the events!

- We had to go to 3 events and do write-ups on them. I thought this was a great way to get us more involved and interested in the Middle Eastern community on and around campus. The 3 events I did attend were super interesting and related to class.

Student Information

Is this class a requirement of some sort?

Yes	0 / 0%
No	16 / 94%

Prior to starting the class, my interest level was?

Very Low	0 / 0%
Low	0 / 0%
Neutral	2 / 12%
High	11 / 65%
Very High	3 / 18%

Now that the course is over, my interest is?

Diminished	0 / 0%
Satisfied	1 / 6%
Heightened	15 / 88%

Why, primarily, did you take this course over others?

It fulfills a requirement	1 / 6%
There were no other choices	0 / 0%
Meets at a convenient time	5 / 29%
The topic interests me	16 / 94%
Reputation of the faculty member	0 / 0%

How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?

< 5 Hours	8 / 47%
5-10 Hours	6 / 35%
10-15	1 / 6%
15-20	1 / 6%
20-25	0 / 0%
25-30	0 / 0%
> 30	0 / 0%

What proportion of classes did you attend?

None	0 / 0%
25%	0 / 0%
50%	0 / 0%
75%	2 / 12%
All	14 / 82%

Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.

- I discovered while taking this course that I have a fairly strong background in Middle Eastern History and politics, so it was very easy.
- Reasonable workload for students of all levels of expertise in Middle Eastern history
- My prior study helped me greatly but the assignments still pushed me to consider new ideas and concepts of the Middle East and its history
- It was inherently a difficult course due to the nature of modern middle eastern history and my lack of knowledge in that area, but the course made the information accessible and easy to follow while still retaining the complexity that these topics are characterized by.
- This course was advertised as it actually is- an introductory level course with no prior knowledge needed (I have been in other intro courses where this was not the case)

What readings did you find helpful?

- Rakim Efendi and Felatun Bey, In an Antique Land, City of Brass
- The City of Brass
- The Amitav Ghosh reading was first rate.
- In an Antique Land, Rakim Efendi and felatun Bey.
- The Quran.
- My favorite reading / the most helpful was Rakim Efendi and Felatun Bey.
- The readings like In an Antique Land and Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi helped to understand the cultures we were learning about in a more nuanced way, much better than they could have been taught in a lecture.
- The City of Brass and Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi
- Felatun Bey, The Diary of that sad WWI dude
- All of them.
- All of them! We read many primary sources (surahs from the Qur'an, documents from the Life of Muhammad, newspaper clippings from the era of the press and the women's rights movement, etc.) and novels (In an Antique Land, Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi, The Year of the Locusts, and the City of Brass). All of these were relevant to our studies and also very informative, adding to our understanding of the material.
- An Ancient Land and City of Brass
- In an Antique Land, Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi, The City of Brass. Not so much the textbook (The Contemporary Middle East)... it was incredibly dense and the lectures were already very informative. Perhaps it would be better for a more specific class, not so much an intro one.