WMNS2500
Women and Social Change in the Middle East
Dr. Daphne Tsimhoni

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:50-4:30
Class: Ryder Hall 124
Office: 214A Lake Hall
Office hour: Wednesday 13:00-14:00 and by appointment
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Description and aims:
The course’s aim is to introduce the students to the complex position and the changing role of women in the Middle East. For the last 200 years, the Middle East has been going through a tremendous socio-economic and political transition. The changing position of women has been the touchstone of this process.

The course will discuss the traditional position of women among the various religions, ethnic and social groups in the Middle East, their role in modernization and other socio-political processes, economy and public life. It will further discuss the main issues and challenges that women share in the Middle East; women’s organizations, their struggle for the improvement of women’s position, their achievements and failures. The course will further discuss women’s role in the nation building and struggle for independence. Did their struggle improve their position in the independent states of the Middle East? The course will discuss the position of women the various states of the Middle East including Israel where East meets West. How far does women’s position in Israel reflect the position of women in the Middle East? What achievements and problems do women of the Middle East share with women in the west?

Course Requirements:
You are required to attend at least 80 per cent of classes, come to class in time and read the assignments prior to class. If you are unable to attend a class due to illness or family emergency please contact me as soon a possible. Both full attendance and contribution to class discussions as based on the class readings are essential in order to earn an A.

Breakdown of final grade:
Map Quiz (in class Monday, Feb. 8) 10 per cent
Two midterm papers (due Feb. 22 and Mar. 22) 20 per cent each
Final essay (due April 22) 40 per cent
Active participation in class 10 per cent
Required books available at the Northeastern University Bookstore and at the Snell Library on reserve:


Course Outline and Reading:

Note: This syllabus is subject to change as needed. Adequate notice will always be given for any change in the schedule.

I. Introduction:
   M Jan. 11
   The traditional position of Middle Eastern women in Islam, Judaism and Christianity
   W Jan. 13: Reading: Keddie, pp. 13-47
   M Jan. 18: Martin Luther – No class

II. The traditional position of women under Islamic Caliphates
   W Jan. 20: Keddie, pp. 48-59

III. The position of women under the Ottomans and Safavids;
    The beginnings of change in the 19th century
    The impact of the West and modernization under colonial rule
   M Jan. 25: Keddie, pp. 60-74

IV. Early calls for the improvement of the position of women:
    Muhammad Abduh and Qasim Amin
   W Jan. 27: Saadawi, pp. 251-258; Qasim Amin (on Blackboard)

V. Nationalism and Women’s movements 1914-1945
   Turkey and Iran
   M Feb. 1: Keddie, pp. 75-88; Moghadam, pp. 90-93
   Arab States
   W Feb. 3: Keddie, pp. 89-101; Saadawi, pp. 258-273

VI. Women’s struggle for liberation and their changing position in Middle Eastern states since 1945
    Turkey and Iran
   M Feb. 8: Keddie, pp. 102-121; Moghadam, pp. 98-101
   The Arab States
   W Feb. 10: Keddie, pp. 121-140, 149-165; Moghadam, pp. 95-98
   M Feb. 15: Presidents Day – no class
VII. Issues of women in the family
   Polygamy
   W Feb. 17: Moghadam, pp.124-130; Keddie, pp. 203-221;
   Saadawi, pp.171-184
   Divorce
   M Feb. 22: Saadawi, pp. 288-311
   Women’s circumcision
   W Feb. 24: Saadawi, pp. 13-19, 50-65; Cohen-Almagor (on Blackboard)
   M Mar. 1: Spring break – no class
   W Mar. 3: Spring break – no class
   Prostitution, Rape and sexual assault:
   M Mar. 8: Saadawi, pp. 7, 20-37, 76-93
   Murder for the honor of the family
   W Mar. 10: Saadawi, pp. 38-49

VIII. Israel: Where East Meets West
   Women’s quest for equality
   M Mar. 15: Kadari, pp. 43-65
   Issues of women’s legal position
   W Mar. 17: Kadari, pp. 227-262
   Women and Politics
   M Mar. 22: Yishai in Fuchs, pp. 190-207
   Women in the quest for peace
   W Mar. 24: Svirsky, Peace Movements, pp. 113-132
   Mizrahi women
   M Mar 29: Dahan-Kalev in Misra-Rich, pp. 96-112
   Palestinian Arab women in Israel
   Hasan, Honor, in Naveh, pp. 1-37

IX. The role of education
   W Mar. 31: Moghadam, pp. 135-144

X. Women in the economy
   M Apr. 5: Moghadam, pp. 33-71; Saadawi, pp. 274-287

XI. Women in public life and in politics
   W Apr. 7: Moghadam, pp. 6-28

XII. Women and the war in Iraq
   M Apr. 12: Al Ali, 2005, Iraqi women pp. 739-758 (on Blackboard);
   Al Ali, 2007, Iraqi women in Iraq war (on Blackboard)

XIII. Islamist movements and women’s response
W Apr. 14: Moghadam pp. 151-186
M Apr 19: Patriots Day – no class

XIV. Iran and Islamic feminism
W Apr. 21: Moghadam pp.193-222