



CM/PO 250 – ARAB MEDIA AND ISSUES OF POLITICS AND CULTURE
IES Abroad Rabat

DESCRIPTION:

The course aims to provide students with a thorough inside view of Arab media; a particularly useful exercise, as the latter has undergone profound transformations starting in the last decade of the last century. Aided by advances in communication technologies, especially communication satellites and the internet, Arab media have developed significantly in scope, reach, and maturity to a degree that they can now offer the inside and outside observer a most privileged way to make sense of the Middle East, replacing thus the historical and religious perspectives traditionally applied to the region by scholars and region watchers. This privileged position Arab media owes it to the fact that it is the best available reflector of the myriad transformations affecting the political, social, and cultural realms in the Arab region and beyond, notably among Arab diasporas in Europe and the United States. Not only did Arab media, both traditional and new, reflect some spectacular regional and international events and changes, from the first and second Gulf Wars, through the 9/11 cataclysm, to the Arab uprisings of 2011 and their still ongoing aftershocks; but, for good or ill, they played a crucial role in precipitating them; not without creating a new set of implications for media, politics, and culture in the region.

Another reason for all to heed the development of Arab media is its attempt and relative success to unseat the Western media perspective from its historical position as the sole purveyor of news and “common sense”; a challenge that both enriches and problematizes the global media space.

In addition to the above, students will be exposed to a variety of related topics, most notably the issue of Arab media as a locus of power and contestation; in particular, as they enter the digital phase and the explosion of social media platforms and practices, boosting access and democratic participation on the one hand, and inviting new forms of state and corporate control on the other.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

The course structure includes lectures, discussions, film screenings, readings, and critical analyses during which the professor will explain key aspects of the social, political, and cultural contexts in the Arab region in relation to Media. Students are encouraged to be involved and engaged through timely preparation, involving doing the required readings before every session, and taking notes.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation - 10%
- Mid-term exam - 25%
- In-class presentations - 10%
- Field study and report (500-600 words) - 10%
- Documented essay (2000-2500 words) - 20%
- Final exam - 25%

Class Participation

You are expected to attend every class session. If you miss a class with no valid and documented excuse, you will see your participation grade negatively affected. You are expected to come to class fully prepared (homework and reading done), and ready to participate in discussions and other group activities. The professor will also value students' positive attitude in class. Therefore, students' participation in discussions, forums, tasks, and any other class activities will be assessed.



Mid-term Exam

The mid-term exam will involve answering multiple questions covering the material covered up to the mid-term. In addition to the readings, students are required to integrate the notes and insights garnered from in-class discussions.

In-Class Presentation

Each student is required to make an in-class presentation on one of the assigned readings or a related research topic. Presenters will be informed when to use PowerPoint for their presentations, which could range in length between 15 to 20 minutes. The presenters' role is not limited to reading (the slides) to the class; rather he or she should attempt to be spontaneous and offer insightful interpretations and appropriate linkages to the overall course's themes and/or the week's material. Presentations will be assigned on Week 2.

Field Study and Report

One session will take place outside the classroom, in a media organization, NGO, or specialized institution (dates and venues to be determined). After this session, the students must write a short essay (500-600 words) exploring the connection between the field study activity and course content studied in class.

Documented Essay

- Written paper (2500 words)
- Date of submission: week 12

Students must submit a paper in which they critically analyze a theme or issue of sufficient complexity, linking media issues to political, social, technological, and strategic developments and transformations in the Arab region and transnationally. Students should use the material from their required reading as well as the extended list of additional reading mentioned in the syllabus. The paper should be about 2500 words long and properly formatted.

Final Exam

Students will be asked to answer theoretical questions and related media cases and phenomena on the ground from comparative, diachronic, and synchronic perspectives. The aim is to demonstrate their acquisition of content elements and methodological approaches meeting the course outcomes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Possess a thorough picture of the complexity of the Arab media system in action, allowing them to investigate and communicate about issues related to the Middle East and North Africa's geopolitical, social, and cultural concerns;
- Critically read, analyze, and evaluate the Arab media space, past and present;
- Gain an understanding of the important role played by the media in Middle Eastern politics and culture, as well as be able to map this relationship;
- Enable the students to situate the Arab media system vis-à-vis other media systems, in particular the Western media tradition that is now more and more challenged by non-Western perspectives;
- Appreciate the preponderate role played by the media in the tussle for political power by various actors in the region;
- Demonstrate awareness of the detailed features of Arab media that will enable the student to debate key issues in media today;
- Learn to integrate multiple viewpoints to better understand and interact with the global media environment;
- Gain a comparative perspective through the relevance of Arab media interpretations and reactions to the US and European diplomatic drives in the region, thus allowing a greater global awareness;
- Engage the students in focused and methodological dialogue of media relayed issues, such as islamophobia, radical transnational ideologies, and cultural dialogue and cooperation;
- Gain the tools to understand some of the most central geopolitical and intercultural conflicts of our times, through detailed analyses of the media treatment of these conflicts and disputes;
- Discover firsthand the "artificial" nature of media constructions, and at the same time, measure the potential for the media and institutions to influence some of the dynamics of these conflicts.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Class attendance is compulsory. Each student will be allowed only two unexcused absences throughout the whole course. For each unexcused absence beyond this there will be a reduction in the final grade.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 1	Introducing the course	
Session 2	Overview of the print and broadcast media in the Middle East and North Africa	Said Essoulami, "The Press in the Arab World: 100 Years of Suppressed Freedom" 7 January 2006. www.abab.com/media/introduction.htm
Session 3	Pre-satellite era media issues in the Arab world: Ownership, pan-Arabism, censorship, diversity, access, etc.	El Mustapha Lahlali, <i>Contemporary Arab Broadcast Media</i>. Edinburgh University Press, 2011; pp. 9-50
Session 4	Focus on a national case: the broadcast, print, and social media scene in Morocco (typology of the print and broadcast media, regulation, state and corporate pressures, etc.	Aziz Douai, "In Democracy's Shadow: The 'New' Independent Press and the Limits of Media Reform in Morocco," Institute of Technology University of Ontario, Oshawa, Canada https://www.westminsterpapers.org/articles/10.16997/.../download/
Session 5	The rise of the satellite television broadcast in the Middle East and North Africa	Mohamed Zayani, <i>The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media</i>. Pluto Press, 2005. In particular pp. 1-46
Session 6	The Arab mediascape after 1990: free flow of information and the effect of trans-border flows on the Arab public sphere	
Session 7	Al-Jazeera satellite channel: the network that rattled the Middle East and became a media trendsetter	Naomi Sakr, "Maverick or Model? Al-Jazeera's Impact on Arab Satellite Television," pp. 66-95; in <i>Transnational Television Worldwide: Towards a New Media Order</i>. Edited by Jean K. Chalaby. I.B.Tauris, 2005

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 8	The Al-Jazeera effect, and Al-Jazeera as counter-flow media content	Assignment(s) and/or Reading(s)
Session 9	Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Second Gulf War and the U.S.'s "War on Terror" doctrine	- Andreas Musolff and Abdel-mutaleb al-Zuweiri, "The Milestone Metaphor: CNN and Al-Jazeera Discourse on the Iraq War," pp. 31-46; <i>in The New Arab Media: Technology, Image and Perception</i>. Ed. Mahjoub Zweiri and Emma C. Murphy
Session 10	A discussion of the documentary <i>Control Room</i> (Noujaim, 2004). Main issues to be discussed are: Al-Jazeera vs. Western media coverage of the Gulf War, bias, Arab and the Western audience sensibilities, and media control of the military.	Joshua Rushing, <i>Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World</i>. Palgrave MacMillan, 2007; Chapters 3 & 7
Session 11	Field study of a media organization	
Session 12	Review & Midterm Exam	
Session 13	MIDTERM BREAK	
Session 14	Different media, same reality: an in-depth look at three regional television channels: Saudi-owned <i>Al Arabiya</i>, Hezbollah's <i>Al Manar</i>, and Iran's <i>Al Aalam</i> Field study report due	Visit websites of TV channels for mission statements, types of programs, funding sources, and audience/viewership numbers.

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 15	Propaganda or soft power? A look at three television channels destined to the Arab region from outside of it: American-funded <i>Al Hurra</i>, Russian RT Arabic (formerly, <i>Russia Al Yaoum</i>), and France's <i>France 24</i>	Visit websites of TV channels for mission statements, types of programs, funding sources, and audience/viewership numbers.
Session 16	Entertainment, culture, and political contestation: Focus 1: Arab music channels and Arab youth sub-culture	- Christian Pond, "The Appeal of Sami Yusuf and the Search for Islamic Authenticity," in TBS 16, 2006 https://www.arabmediasociety.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/20070312084945_TBS16_Christian_Pond.pdf
Session 17	Focus 2: Arab media and gender: empowerment or exploitation of Arab women?	Fatema Mernissi, "The Satellite, the Prince, and Scheherazade: The Rise of Women as Communicators in Digital Islam," TBS 12, Spring-Summer 2004
Session 18	Arab media and the challenges of moderate/radical Islam and the Sunni/Shia divide	Mohamed El-Sayed, "Religious Islamic Satellite Channels: A Screen That Leads You to Heaven," Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford, 2009 https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Religious%20Islamic%20Satellite%20Channels%20-%20A%20Screen%20That%20Leads%20You%20To%20Heaven.pdf
Session 19	Arab religious channels: enlightening the citizenry and the political and ideological influence game in the Arab and Muslim world	Viewing and Discussion of BBC documentary, Freedom to Broadcast Hate, September 2014
Session 20	Field study of a media organization	

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 21	Arab and Western media coverage of geopolitical and cultural conflicts Case 1: Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Danish cartoon incident by Arab and Western media Field study report due	- Laura Aguiar, "Framing a Global Crisis: An Analysis of the Coverage of the Latest Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Al-Jazeera and CNN" University of Stockholm. www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/06/pdf/laura-aguiar-framing.pdf - Bent NØRBY Bonde, "How 12 Cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed were Brought to Trigger an International Conflict," Nordicom Review 28 (2007) 1, pp. 33-48 http://www.media-progress.net/downloads/247_bonde.pdf
Session 22	The role of traditional, new, and social media in the unfolding of the Arab Spring events Essay due	- Hal Marcovitz, The Arab Spring Uprisings. ReferencePoint Press, 20014; pp. 14-52 - Khaled Hroub, (Social) Media and Politics and the Arab Spring Moment. Northwestern University, Qatar
Session 23	The spectacular rise of social media platforms and its cultural and social implications	Social Media in the Middle East: 2019 in Review Key Developments, Stories and Research Findings from the past twelve Months https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3517916
Session 24	The weakening of television broadcast and the rise of online and OTT content	MENA Entertainment & Media Outlook 2020-2024 https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/publications/documents/mena-entertainment-media-outlook-2020-2024.pdf
Session 25	Review	
Session 26	Final Exam	

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

At least one session will take place outside the classroom, in a media organization, NGO, or specialized institution (dates and venues to be determined).

REQUIRED READINGS:

In addition to the articles and book excerpts indicated in the course content section, the following books are essential readings:

- Seib, Philip. Ed. New Media and the New Middle East. Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- Zweiri, M and Murphy, Emma C. Eds. The New Arab Media: Technology, Image and Perception. Ithaca Press, 2011.
- Fandy, Mamoun. (Un)Civil war of words: Media and Politics in the Arab World. London, Praeger 2007
- Lahlali, El Mustapha. Contemporary Arab Broadcast Media. Edinburgh University Press, 2011.



- Sakr, Naomi. Arab Television Today. I. B. Taurus, 2007.
- Mohamed Zayani. The Al Jazeera Phenomenon Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media. Pluto Press, 2005