“Islamic Society and Modernity”
(Seminar on the Nineteenth Century Middle East)
HIST 542-01
Fall semester 2004

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Seminar description
The nineteenth century was the century in which the Arab Middle East first confronted the full force of modernity. The political story of this confrontation is well known, but its social and intellectual aspects are less well known. It is those aspects that are the focus of this seminar.

As well as looking at the dramatic transformations of elite urban society and at the major Islamic revival and reform movements of the era, the seminar will also examine the relationship between social and intellectual change. Ultimately, we will ask how much of contemporary “Fundamentalism” is the product of the nineteenth-century encounter of Islamic society with Western modernity, and to what extent nineteenth-century changes in Islam can be compared with the European reformation of the sixteenth century.

The seminar will be divided into four parts. During the first part, we will spend four weeks establishing our starting point (pre-modern social and intellectual worlds) and looking at two major pre-modern Islamic movements, the Wahhabis and the Sudanese Mahdists. During the second part of the seminar, we will spend three weeks looking at the arrival of modernity, principally in Egypt and Syria, and at ways of understanding modernity in the Arab Middle East. During the third part of the seminar, we will spend four weeks looking at different types of intellectual movement, and one week following the development of these movements forward into the early twentieth century. During the final part of the course, we will spend one week examining possible overall interpretations of the processes we have been considering, and two weeks on presentations of individual research projects.

Assessment
Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- Participation: 15%
- Reading responses: 55%
- Research paper: 30%

Participation means more than just sitting in class: if you have not done the reading, there is little point in coming to class just to sit there. Note, however, that more than three weeks of absence for any reason (including illness etc.) may result in an F.

Reading responses are required for all weeks’ reading. Each reading response must be

- about two-three pages long, and properly typed, documented and proof-read. Do not write ten pages.
- analytical. Mere summary of the readings is not acceptable, and will receive a very
low grade.

• handed in at the start of each class. No late papers will be accepted under any circumstances whatsoever, but your worst response paper will be ignored when calculating the final grade.

The Research paper should deal with a topic related to our readings and be about ten pages long. Before starting your paper, you must discuss your topic with me, and obtain my written agreement to a 300-400 word abstract and proposed bibliography. The latest date for abstracts / bibliographies is Tuesday, November 2. Incomprehensibility or sloppy presentation of the paper will be penalized.

Notes
1. The university policy on cheating and plagiarism applies in this class. I always report cases of either to the Academic Integrity Committee.
2. Changes to assignments, times, dates, etc. will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to make sure that you learn of any such announcement which might have been made during a class you miss.
3. Where URL references are given, it is usually necessary to follow them from the AUC server. Other service providers will not be recognized as authorized. URLs are linked on the on-line version of this outline, at http://www.aucegypt.edu/faculty/sedgwick/aric542a.html.
4. Students are assumed to be familiar with the background to the periods and areas covered. Students wishing to refresh their memories may wish to consult:
   • Ira M Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*
   • William L Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*

Both are in the bookstore.
Sections of the course

Week 1, September 7: Introduction
No reading

I: Pre-modernity

Week 2, September 14: State and society

Week 3, September 21: Religion

Week 4, September 28: The Wahhabis

II: Modernity

Week 5, October 5: Egypt
• Charles Issawi, “Asymmetrical Development and Transport in Egypt, 1800-1914,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East* (above).


**Week 6, October 12: Syria**


**Week 7, October 19: Interpretation**


**III: Consequences**

**Week 8, October 26: Liberalism**

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**Week 9, November 2: Salafism**

- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (as above) Chapters 5 and 6.

**Week 10, November 9: More liberalism**

- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (as above), chapter 7.
Week 12, November 23: Beyond the Middle East

November 16 is a holiday
Timing of November 23 class to be rearranged


Week 13, November 30: Into the new century

- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, chapters 7-9 (as above).

IV: Interpretation and presentations

Week 14, December 7: Overall interpretation


Week 15, December 14: Presentations I

Week 16, December 21: Presentations II