

Form E-1-A for Boston College Departments/Programs

Department/Program: Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies,
Program in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

NELC2062/SOCY1150: States and Minorities in the Middle East (Salameh)
Spring2022 and Fall2022

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

Satisfying the cultural diversity core, this course addresses enduring questions made especially significant in our time:

--What are the Near and Middle East? Where are they situated geographically, historically, culturally, linguistically, emotively, and religiously? Who are the peoples of the Near and Middle East, how do we approach their varied histories, languages, traditions, and religious accretions, and how do their cultural, political, linguistic, and national rituals compare to and differ from those of the “cultural west”?

--What are the normative models of “States” and “Minorities” in the “Middle East” that dominate prevalent “Western” perceptions of the region (eg, “Arab world,” “Muslim world,” “Arab-Israeli conflict”) and how do those clichés affect Near Eastern minorities vs. States dynamics;

--How does our understanding of minorities in the West differ from Near Eastern minorities; who are those minorities (ethnically, linguistically, culturally, religiously) and what is the nature of their relationship with homogenizing centralizing “home states” with which they may or may not share a common culture;

--What are some of the Middle East’s political and intellectual currents, identity narratives, and local loyalties that affect minorities and their interaction with the modern state.

In surveying minorities, the course also tries to shed light on alternative and revisionist views of the Middle East, challenging prevalent conceptions/assumptions about it as a monolith. In various contexts, and relying on a variety of texts (literary, journalistic, political, legal, religious, and historiographical) we consider how minorities, at least since the 2011 events known as “The Arab Spring,” have been questioning and rethinking their assumptions about themselves, their region, their identities, and the world outside of their immediate “neighborhoods.” In sum, the courses help us navigate our own “rethinking” of our own paradigms, stereotypes, and *idées reçues* about the Near and Middle East, which, shattered as

they may be, remain “mosaics” *not* “monoliths,” and in that sense closer to—and in some cases a “progenitor” of—the “cultural west” than conventional knowledge might suggest.

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department’s learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your dept major handouts?)

Learning outcomes are spelled out in the course syllabi, made available to students at the beginning of the semester through Canvas and hard-copies, and currently being worked into the department website.

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?)

Students write weekly (500-word) “reactions” which they post on Canvas, reflecting on the week’s readings, and constituting the bases of our online and in-class conversations. Students also write a 2000-word mid-term assignment, initially on a minority within a state of their own choosing (eg, Kurds, Jews, Copts, Maronites, Assyrians, Druze, Armenians etc..) but in consultation with the instructor, synthesizing, analyzing, and responding to various questions generated in assigned readings and in-class discussions. In preparation for a 5000-word Final Paper developing themes touched upon in the mid-term paper, students also give a short oral presentation, and begin a class conversation on their research topic in an attempt to frame, question, challenge, and augment “self” and “other” understanding.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The instructor.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence?** (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? Why were they made?)

Students’ written work (weekly responses, as well as mid-term and final paper) is commented extensively, usually using the “comments” function in Word, and subsequently discussed in person (students are expected to attend three mandatory office visits per semester,) and by way of class conversations. This is done for the purpose of future improvement in student performance and achievement, and further course development.

- 6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

2012

Completed by Franck Salameh, June 15, 2023.

Form E-1-A for Boston College Departments/Programs

Department/Program: Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies,
Program in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

**NELC 2161/RLRL2292/ENGL2348: Modern Middle Eastern and Arabic Literature
(Salameh)
Spring 2023**

- 4) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

By the conclusion of this course students will be expected to have developed the ability to:

--Read and critically evaluate Hebrew, Arabic, and French texts (in English translation) by literati and political thinkers from the Near East; i.e. Israeli, Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, and Jordanian authors;

--Understand the differences between Near Eastern and Levantine literary genres, and compare a millennial formalist tradition of poetry (especially in classical Arabic literature) vs. products of modernity such as theatre, short stories, novels, and prose poetry;

--Recognize the major “canonical authors” and their main works, their literary, cultural, and political significance, and compare them to modern Near Eastern literary figures and some of their Western counterparts.

- 5) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department’s learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your dept major handouts?)

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- 6) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?)

Students write weekly (500-word) “reactions” which they post on Canvas, reflecting on the week’s readings, and constituting the bases of our online and in-class conversations. Students also write a 2000-word mid-term book-review assignment, and a final 5000-word review essay. Students are also required to give a final presentation dealing with their review essay, discussing with the class as a whole their findings relative to the authors/texts analyzed in their review essays.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The instructor in collaboration with NELC colleagues interpret the evidence. Additionally, course evaluations are studied closely, including the qualitative narrative responses, and course adjustments are made accordingly.

- 7) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence?** (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? Why were they made?)

Students' written work (weekly responses, as well as mid-term and final paper) is commented extensively, usually using the "comments" function in Word, and subsequently discussed in person (students are expected to attend three office visits per semester) and by way of class conversations. This is done for the purpose of future improvement in student performance and achievement, and further course development.

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