THE GRADUATE CENTER
Ph.D. PROGRAM IN HISTORY

LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MIDDLE EAST

History 77950
Samira Haj
Hajsamira48@gmail.com

Course Description
The object of this course is to familiarize students with the main themes and approaches in the history and historiography of the nineteenth-century Middle East. Temporally, the course moves from the late 1700s to World War I. Geographically, the area includes the region from Egypt to Iran, the Balkans to Arabia, in short, those regions under the dominion of the Ottoman and Qajar Empires. We will look at recent works on military history; monarchy and governance; religious reform and mission; sectarianism and tolerance; empire, nation, and revolution; family law; narratives of slavery; economic and labor histories; and the circulation of peoples and goods.

Assignments
The heart of this seminar is class discussion. The success of the discussion depends on careful readings by students of all books assigned. Students will be charged with leading class discussions and writing up the historiographical debates covered in their weeks in a 6-8 page essay. (These essays should be similar to IJMES review articles.) Those taking the course for five credits will be responsible for leading two class sessions and two essays; those taking the course for three credits will be responsible for leading one session and writing one essay.

In addition, each student must write four book reviews (2-4 pages), four short essays (4 pages in response to prompts), as well as prepare a final text/source assignment. For a guide to writing book reviews, see the instructions on the IJMES website. A book review should do more than describe the material included in the book; it should engage the book’s arguments and set it within the historical literature. When reading, writing, and leading discussions on the books, consider the following:

- Author’s main questions/interests and the geographical and temporal focus of the study
- Author’s theoretical and methodological approach
- Types of primary and secondary literature that the author has used
- Author’s main thesis and arguments and evidence used in support

Students are expected to participate in the monthly seminar “Dissections,” where attendance is mandatory, as well as other relevant MEMEAC events.

Learning Objectives
The main goal of this class is to familiarize students with the history of the nineteenth century Middle East as well as trends in the historical literature. Students should master
individual books as well as broader debates. Students will learn to read critically, with attention to questions, methodologies, sources, and arguments. This class will prepare doctoral students in history who are Middle East majors for their first written exam, and prepare majors and minors for the oral examination. It will also lay the groundwork for teaching courses on the modern Middle East. MA students will gain a firm grounding in nineteenth century history. Students will practice writing book reviews and short essays as well as making presentations.

A final point: Consider this syllabus a work in progress. The instructor retains the right to make alterations, and anticipates that students will help to refine it throughout the semester with their own additions.