

**Middle East Studies: Research Seminar (MEST 495)**  
**World Islamic and Middle East Studies Research Seminar (ISLA 495)**

**Winter 2015**

**Thursday 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm Morrice Hall 328**

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**office hours Thurs 1:30 - 2:30 pm**

The Middle East Studies Research Seminar is an interdisciplinary research seminar intended for students in their final year of the Middle East Studies Program (major and honors) and for honors students in the World Islamic and Middle East Studies Program. Students will be expected to produce a 25-page research paper grounded in a discipline of their choice (History, Anthropology, Political Science, Literature etc.) that takes up an issue that is relevant to the Middle East and Islam. Research paper topics should be conceived in close consultation with the course instructor and if necessary with an appropriate faculty member from one of the disciplines.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE**

The course will meet for introductory sessions at the beginning of the semester (January 8, 15, 22, 29) to discuss some preliminary readings and guidelines for paper writing. By the end of January, students should have discussed their topic of research with the instructor and submitted an abstract (deadline February 4). February will be devoted to research and composition. There will be four class sessions (March 12, 19, 26, April 2) in which students will give ten minutes presentations about their papers and discuss them with other participants.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **PARTICIPATION (10%)**

Participation is composed of

1) class attendance, **mandatory** for all course sessions (If you miss any session--without a doctor's note--your grade will be affected).

2) **Choose three books** which you think have been particularly significant for you in relation to your knowledge of Middle East and/or Islam, and write a max of 200 words about one of them to explain your choice (**due Jan. 14, 8PM in discussion on mycourses**). **2%**

3) **Write 200/300 words to describe how learning a language has impacted your knowledge** of Middle East/Islam. Think also of the ways in which you have learned a language (you can make references to Pollock's article if you like) (**due Jan 21, 8PM in discussion on my courses**). **2%**

### **RESEARCH PAPER (abstract 5%, paper 75%)**

Students are responsible for designing and writing a research paper on a topic of their choice. The paper should be about 8000 words (font 12 points). The first sessions of the seminar will guide you in selecting the research topic, which you should choose as early as possible. You should consult with the instructor whenever you feel the need to, especially early in the semester. If you decide to focus on an area outside of my expertise, other faculty will help you develop a good topic. I have discussed this with the Middle East Studies faculty and they are willing to help. In this case it will be your responsibility to contact them as soon as possible.

**Abstract.** (due Feb 4 8pm) write a paragraph (200/300 words) describing your project. The abstract should clearly state: 1) the topic/question your research addresses 2) how you intend to approach it 3) the materials relevant to the research. The final project might significantly diverge from this initial abstract, but it is important that you design a project that is clear and feasible.

**Presentation** (March and April). Each of you will give 10 minutes presentation on your paper. You will receive more detailed instructions on how to prepare the presentation and we will decide the calendar of presentations in the first sessions of the course. **One week before** the class in which you are presenting your work, **you will email a draft of the paper to the instructor and to three other students** (THs by 6 pm). You will receive written comments (see below) by the three students, and feedback on your oral presentations by the rest of the class.

Final Research papers are due **April 14 6pm on my courses**

The librarians at the Islamic Studies library, Head Librarian Anaïs Salomon and Liason Librarian Sean Swanick will be available for consultation on your projects.

### **COMMENT (10%)**

Students are responsible to write a **one-page commentary** on three papers by other students and email it to both to the presenter and the instructor **prior** to the session in which the draft is discussed. The comment should not be judgmental. It should provide suggestions for editing and improving the argumentation. If you have a critique of the approach you should argue it and invite the writer to consider your approach.

We will decide who will read which papers in the first sessions of the course (see scheme in the calendar).

### **University Policies**

- McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).(approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).

- In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded." (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change

## CALENDAR

### **January 8**

Introduction to the course

### **January 14, 8 pm Book/essay list due**

## **POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE**

### **January 15**

Timothy Mitchell 2004. "The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science," in D. Szanton, ed., *the Politics of Knowledge*, Berkley, University of California Press.

You can find this text on the site escholarship (University of California) at this link

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/59n2d2n1?query=politics%20of%20knowledge#page-1>

Mitchell's chapter is pp. 51-82 (of the pdf).

### **January 21, 8pm paragraph on language due**

## **Philology, the means and ends of language**

### **January 22**

Sheldon Pollock 2009. "Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World

*Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 4, , pp. 931-961.

Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/599594>

### **January 29**

**Library Session with Anaïs Salamon** (Head Librarian, McGill Islamic Studies Library)

Location: David C. Edwards Cyberthèque Classroom (redpath Building Basement)

### **February 4, 8 pm ABSTRACTS DUE**

## **TRAJECTORIES OF ISLAM**

### **February 5**

Armando Salvatore. 2013 "The Sociology of Islam: Precedents and Perspectives" in *The Sociology of Islam* Vol. 1, Issue 1-2 pp. 7-13.

## **MES 495. 2015 PRESENTATIONS**

### **MARCH 12**

**Student 1**

**Student 2**

**Student 3**

**Student 4**

Students 5, 6, 7 written comments on student 1 paper.

Students 8, 9, 10 written comments on student 2 paper.

Students 11, 12, 13 written comments on student 3 paper

Students 14, 15, 16 written comments on student 4 paper

### **MARCH 19**

**Student 5**

**Student 6**

**Student 7**

**Student 8**

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### **MARCH 26**

**Student 9**

**Student 10**

**Student 11**

**Student 12**

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### **APRIL 2**

**Student 13**

**Student 14**

**Student 15**

**Student 16**

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**April 9**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**April 14, RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**