ARST 240: Special Topics in Arabic Studies:
The Arab World through Music & Song

Summer II, 2019

Instructor:

- Professor: Ghassan Nasr
- Email: nasrg@cofc.edu
- Office hours: By appointment, mainly through audio or video conferencing.
- Contacting Me: For questions about the assignments or course content, please post them in the “Course Assignments and Content Questions” Discussion Board. For personal questions, please e-mail me. In both cases, allow 1-4 hours for a response.

Course Description:

In this course we will sample Arab popular songs and musicians from a variety of musical genres and styles, with emphasis on the modern, cosmopolitan, mass-mediated song from its early 20th century beginnings in Egypt. We will approach Arab popular culture as a site of cross-culturalism, blending local traditions and aesthetics with global musical and cultural influences. The regions covered range from North Africa, to Egypt and East Africa, all the way east to the Levant (Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Iraq) and the Arabian Gulf. Larger themes will be discussed in the context of the sampled songs and artists. Among the genres covered are Algerian Rai, Egyptian and Levantine pop, Khaleeji (Gulf Arab), and even Arab jazz, heavy metal, rap / hip hop, and rock. Some musical concepts such as instrumental timbre, melody, harmony and the quarter tone systems will be discussed as important factors in the negotiation of local practice with foreign influences in the evolution of modern Arabic music, but technical musical knowledge is neither expected nor required. Song lyrics will be provided in English translation where necessary.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of mass-mediated popular culture and music as a serious area of interdisciplinary study and scholarship.
- Students will demonstrate cultural literacy, engagement and proficiency in Arab and non-Western musical traditions and settings.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of music as social life, against the “music as autonomous art object” approach.
Students will demonstrate knowledge of Arab musical themes, including a basic but essential knowledge of non-Western and Arab/Eastern melodic modes (maqams), rhythms, instrumental timbres, and musical transmission.

Course Structure:

Overview:

This course contains EIGHT modules: ONE course orientation module and SEVEN course content modules. Please note that this level of content and assignments is normally covered over a period of FOURTEEN weeks during a regular semester. You will complete all of this session’s modules in FOUR weeks. This means that we will be covering two modules per week. All modules are located in the Content section of our course in OAKS. Everything you need for each module is contained or linked to inside the module. A textbook is not required for this course.

Timeline:

The course will be conducted asynchronously via OAKS.

Modules will be opened and available one at a time, as the course progresses. We will cover two modules per week. The first (orientation) module will open on Monday, July 8 and close the same day at 11:55 PM. From there onward, each new content module will be open for three days. A Saturday-Sunday weekend counts as one day (to allow you a day off if you choose). On most weeks, the first module of the week will open the Friday prior at 12:05 AM and close the following Monday at 11:55 PM. The second module of the week will open at 12:05 AM on Tuesday and close at 11:55 PM on Thursday. Since the course begins on a Monday, you will only have one day to complete your orientation Monday, but that’s okay because the orientation module consists of a light introduction to the course and practice with the necessary technologies and online format. The course schedule is subject to change due to the possibility of unforeseeable circumstances. I will notify you if changes to the course schedule are necessary.

Grading

Your course grade will be determined according to the following breakdown:

Evaluation:

15% Reading, Music & Film Responses
35% Module Discussion Board Posts & Participation
30% Module Quizzes/Assignments
20% Soundscape Study/Journal

Reading and Music/Film Responses (15%): Each module will be based on a combination of course readings and/or viewing or listening to music/film videos and/or audio files, including “mini” presentations by your instructor (me). For each set of readings/video/film/music, each of you will
submit an initial response based on a prompt provided by me. The format of the response could be an OAKS quiz (in the form of any number of questions to direct your thinking). Your responses will initially be only viewable to the instructor, and might later be made available to your classmates as well. Prior to the official start of online discussions in a module, I will read your initial responses and based on them will come up with a discussion prompt or set of prompts that we will all discuss as a group in one or more OAKS Discussion boards. Your responses are NOT “formal” writing; they are intended as free writing exercises to begin engaging with themes and concepts that relate to the topic and material at hand.

**Module Discussion Board Posts & Participation (35%):** Module discussions using OAKS Discussion boards are the heart of this course. Depending on the particular OAKS Discussion Board, each of you will be expected to make an “intelligent” contribution to the discussion of anywhere between two and five individual posts in response to me or your peers. I will note your levels of interest, preparation and participation during Discussion board discussions. Specific instructions will be provided for each Discussion board prompt.

**Module Quizzes/Assignments (30%):** Quizzes will be taken using the OAKS quiz tool or some other similar tool such as Google Forms. Some of these quizzes will be graded in order to assess your level of preparation during the reading/viewing phase (following your responses to initial reading/viewing/listening assignments), and other quizzes will serve more as graded assignments to reinforce and assess your understanding of course themes and concepts.

**Soundscape Study/Journal (20%):** This assignment will consist of a written final report based on a soundscape study that you will begin thinking and writing about early in the session. In essence, the assignment will reinforce your own personal engagement with Arab musical soundscapes in relation to your own personal soundscapes. The notion of a “soundscape” will be discussed early in the session. The final report could include a video presentation produced with a video tool of your choice and that will be attached to your project submission and shared with the class.

**Prerequisites**

Students must have basic OAKS proficiency. Prior to delving into the course content modules, students will complete an OAKS orientation module that requires the completion of basic OAKS-related tasks and a syllabus quiz.

**Access the Course in OAKS**

You will be able to access the course modules inside OAKS starting on Saturday, July 6 at 5 pm (two days before the official start of the summer session). On this date, you will be able to explore the Orientation Module to start getting acclimated to the course online environment. The course officially opens on Monday, July 8.
To locate the course, log into OAKS and locate the *My Courses* area on the homepage. Scroll down the page and then click on *View All Courses*. If you cannot find the course, in the Search box type “Special Topics in Arabic Studies”. Once you have located the course, you may “pin” it by clicking the “pin” icon or right-clicking on the course image/title entry and selecting “pin”.

If you have any trouble accessing the course starting on July 6 or later, please email nasrg@cofc.edu immediately.

**Communication**

Communication with me can occur via multiple platforms, including email, Google Hangouts, Zoom, OAKS Virtual Classroom and the OAKS discussion board. A few procedures to keep in mind:

**EMAIL:**
- Before e-mailing me, make sure your question can’t be easily answered by reading the syllabus or asking a classmate. Thus, before emailing me, please follow these steps:
  - Consult the class schedule and syllabus.
  - Check OAKS for announcements and instructions, including the Course Lounge Discussion board.
  - Confer with one or more classmates.
- If you still don’t know the answer to your question, you may email me using nasrg@cofc.edu.
- Typically, I will respond to your email within 1-4 hours, although my response might be slower on weekends or if your e-mail is late in the evening.
- If you do not receive a reply within 5 hours, please re-send your message (unless, of course, you haven’t followed the instructions above).

**SYNCHRONOUS MEETINGS:**

- If an e-mail will not suffice, we can chat via OAKS Virtual Classroom or some other video/audio conferencing platform such as Google Hangouts, Skype, Zoom, etc.. If you don’t have a webcam, we can use the chat feature inside OAKS. Just because this is an online course does not mean I am unavailable to help you. But it also means you should not COUNT on being able to meet with me in person, since it is officially an online course. Having said that, if you are on campus and if I am available, we could potentially arrange for a face-to-face meeting if necessary.

**Response Times**

You can expect responses as follows (response times on weekends or holidays may vary):
- **Discussion posts**: within 1-4 hours.
- **Email** (see above)
- **Assignment/Quiz feedback**: approximately 24 hours after submission date.
Academic Rigor (Online Does Not Mean Easy!)

- Much of the class will be run like a traditional course, except that the online format should encourage more exchanges between students than you might be accustomed to in a physical classroom. You will be expected to do the same sorts of activities that you do in a regular class such as reading and writing, guided by feedback from me, and frequent discussions, facilitated by the OAKS Discussion board.
- It is essential that you stay on top of the course assignments. I will post due dates and reminders, but it is your responsibility to make sure you don't get behind, especially in a class this short. Do not make the mistake of thinking this is an easy class because we're meeting online, or an easy class because it's meeting over the summer! While much of the material is from Arab popular culture (music videos, etc.), the engagement with such material will be according to serious and thoughtful academic study.
- Because discussions in an online class are asynchronous, they will necessarily move at a slower pace than conversations in a physical classroom. I expect that many of our conversations around certain subjects will extend beyond the days I've allocated to them in the schedule.

Time Commitment:

A typical 4-week Summer II class that meets face-to-face normally entails one hour of classroom attendance per day, five days per week, and one to two hours of at home for each hour in the classroom. This amounts to 10-15 hours per week. In a 4-week course such as ours, this translates into a minimum of 20 hours per week spent on the course. Realistically, you should plan on spending at least 3 hours a day, 6 days a week, on the course. If you are unfamiliar with the technology used (e.g. OAKS, Google Drive, Voicethread), this might add to your time commitment.

Because we don't meet face-to-face, it's essential that you maintain an active presence in the class, including posting to and reading discussion board threads. You should log into the course at least three times a day (and at least six days a week) at a minimum in order to be successful. Remember that I can see when you log into OAKS and can monitor your progress.

Netiquette:

Netiquette is a combination of the words “network” and “etiquette” and refers to codes of online conduct. Because online communication generally lacks visual cues present in face-to-face interactions, misunderstandings and conflict can easily arise. Thus, please abide by the following netiquette rules when communicating with your course facilitator, mentors, and colleagues during this class:
○ Tend to your threads. If you post a question or comment to the discussion boards, reply to everyone who has contributed to the conversation you started.

○ Use appropriate capitalization. Using all capital letters is the equivalent of yelling.

○ Be mindful of “flames”-- These are outbursts of extreme emotion or opinion.

○ Think before you hit the post (enter/reply) button. Once posted, you can’t take it back!

○ Use clear subject lines in e-mails and discussion board posts.

○ Please include “Arab Music Course” in the subject line for all correspondence with your instructor to help with response time.

○ Use abbreviations or acronyms only if the entire class knows them. If not, define them.

○ Be forgiving. Anyone can make a mistake. We’re all learning together.

○ Keep the dialog collegial and professional. We all come to an online course with different attitudes and opinions about online education. We do not have to agree to learn from one another or engage in discussion.

Accessibility and Accommodations:

Participants requesting accommodations for religious practices or in accordance with a documented disability must contact me at nasrg@cofc.edu for an access plan prior to the official course start date.

Required Technology:

Hardware:

Computer with consistent high speed Internet, sound card, microphone, and external speakers or headphones. Webcam is optional but useful.

Software:

Please ensure the following applications are up-to-date. Please call the Helpdesk (843-953-3375) if you need assistance with this process.

● Adobe Acrobat Reader
● Adobe Flash Player
● Java
● Any Web browser other than Internet Explorer. Please use updated versions of Chrome, Firefox, or Safari as your browser.
If you have not activated your College of Charleston Google Apps account, do so by following these instructions: https://youtu.be/QyHE95vJK0

Technical Difficulties:

- If you have technical difficulties regarding hardware/software or network problems, please contact the Helpdesk (843-953-3375).
- If you are having trouble accessing course content in OAKS, please post to the OAKS Course Lounge Discussion board.
- If you experience recurrent technical problems that prohibit you from completing multiple assignments, you may be asked to re-enroll in the course at a future date.
- Please Note: Computer failure/unavailability and Internet inconsistency/unavailability do not constitute an excuse for not completing assignments by the due dates.

Late Assignments:

Due dates listed in the course modules are solid. If an unavoidable situation arises, and you must submit work late, please communicate with the instructor prior to missing the date. Keep in mind, any late assignments may not be reviewed by your instructor and you will be negatively affecting your grade.

Good luck!!