



Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Jordan

Course Code / Title: (AM/GENS 360) Creating and Becoming: Arab Women, Authority, and Leadership

Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Gender Studies / Sociology, Religious Studies, Middle Eastern Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

Beginning in the “Arab Renaissance” or *al Nahda*, Arab women fought for equal rights, however; there remains a paradoxical societal mindset about women and their roles, starting from the family and extending to highest level of power. This course explores women’s roles as mothers, teachers, doctors, police officers, writers, artists, professors, ministers, or parliamentarians, and examines the point at which leadership opportunities are capped, often at the very top of the pyramid. Analyzing the contributing factors to and implications of these limitations, the course reflects upon women’s roles as *creators* of leaders while being systematically denied the opportunity of *becoming* leaders themselves.

This course poses critical questions about the pivotal role of Arab women in shaping society across the Arab world, from early life stages to various professional fields. It explores the paradoxes stemming from the shifting roles of women between the domestic sphere and public life. The syllabus emphasizes the themes of authority and leadership in the lives of Arab women, examining the degrees of freedom they experience—whether seized or bestowed. While it presents complex and conflicting contexts, the course converges on the undeniable competence of women in leadership. Drawing on examples from different Arab countries, it offers insights into the prevailing notion that women are less qualified for leadership than men and compares feminist movements throughout the Arab world and the West. The course tackles the creation and practice of leadership across political, religious, cultural, and economic arenas, highlighting the boundaries—both restricted and permitted—that women navigate. It also examines the strategies women employ to overcome these contradictions.

Content warning:

At times, this course intentionally invites students to engage with readings and content that is controversial and potentially sensitive. The intention is not to endorse perspectives, but to rigorously engage with them. If certain material is emotionally challenging, students can discuss with the professor before or after class. Students may also leave the classroom without an academic penalty, if the discussion becomes too emotionally challenging. Students are, however, responsible for all missed material, and so should arrange to get notes from another student or see the professor individually.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students:

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- Understand the historical development of women's struggle within religious, nationalist and leftist movements.
- Analyze the connections between feminist movements and reflect on their goals, approaches, and factors contributing to or prohibiting success
- Understand cultural, religious, and economic contexts in which women are raised and which decide their roles in leadership and their strategies for resisting.
- Deconstruct cultural, religious and economic power dynamics that define and determine women's roles in leading society and politics.
- Explore women's strategies for resisting limitations and wresting their rights and entitlements.
- Become familiar with successful stories of Arab women's achievements throughout history.

Course Requirements

Class attendance, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy, is critical for success in the course. Students are expected to actively participate in classroom discussions and lectures. Field study excursions could include visits to Center for Women's Studies, SIGI institute, guest speakers, or visit to The Jordanian National Commission for Women, meeting with local students specializing in Women's Studies, or meeting with a journalist.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** Successful participation in class requires coming prepared having engaged with assigned material in advance. Student participation can be achieved effectively in three ways; student-student, student-professor, and student-themselves. In-class discussions should be critical and deep. See *Participation Grading Rubric* below.
- **Homework:** readings (5-15 pages each), soliciting the perspectives of local peers on topics discussed in class. The student must reflect on the readings and provide criticism including their understanding of power dynamics. There are **weekly** presentations in which students research a course topic and present it to the class while leading a discussion on their assigned subject.
- **Reflection Papers:** Instead of traditional quizzes, students chose a course theme and conduct opinion polls / questionnaires in Amman including 15 – 20 questions exploring the topic culturally, including related power dynamics, soliciting opinions about the theme to draw connections between readings and the reality in Jordan. Then, the students ask their questions to Jordanians and record their answers. Students write a reflection paper of 750 words on the results of their polls.
- **Presentation:** Students present to their class 4 times a term for approximately 15 minutes, including Q&A. All students provide a written summary of their presentation to the instructor for each presentation. Topics include critical reflection on field study course components, power dynamics and themes agreed upon with the instructor. PPT should be 7 – 9 slides.
- **Final Exam:** The final exam includes reflective questions in which the students show their understanding, analysis, and criticism of the themes studied in class. Students should be able to elaborate power dynamics and its effects on the provided topics through written answers.



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- **Final Paper:** Students write a final paper of 10-15 pages (A4 paper, 14 pt font, Times New Roman, 1.5 spacing) using examples from the course material to support their arguments. Students submit an outline of 500 words, followed by a first draft of 1,000 words. After editing corrections on content and style, students submit a final draft of 1,000 words, followed by a meeting with the instructor for feedback. Students present their paper orally in front of the class.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

- Participation 20%
- Homework: 20%
 - Readings (24 at 0.5% each)
 - Interview assignments (4 at 2% each)
- Reflection papers (2 at 10% each) 20%
- Presentation 15%
 - Summaries (4 at 1.25% each)
 - Oral presentation (4 at 2.5% each)
- Final Exam 10%
- Final Paper: 15%
 - Paper 10%
 - Presentation of Paper 5%

Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	B – 80-89% Proficient	C – 70-79% Developing	D – 60-69% Unacceptable	F – 0-59% Missing
Frequency of class participation	Always actively participate in all activities in class.	Mostly actively participate in all activities in class.	Somewhat actively participate in all activities in class.	Rarely actively participate in all activities in class.	Always passively participate in activities in class.
Quality of class participation	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers
Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared

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					and not on task
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Readings

Abbott, P. (2017). Understanding Gender Inequality in the MENA Region. In Gender Equality and Mena Women's Empowerment in the Aftermath of the 2011 Arab Uprisings (pp. 11–13). Arab Transformations Project. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14099.6>

Abu -Ghaida, Dina. "Secular Feminism vs. Islamist Feminism in Palestine." *The Arab Studies Journal* 1, no. 2 (1993): 18–56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23079072>.

Ajami, Fouad. "The Arab Inheritance." *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 5 (1997): 133–48. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20048204>.

Al Rawaf, Haya Saad, and Cyril Simmons. "The Education of Women in Saudi Arabia." *Comparative Education* 27, no. 3 (1991): 287–95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099298>.

Andersen, K. (1975). Working Women and Political Participation, 1952-1972. *American Journal of Political Science*, 19(3), 439–453. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2110538>

Arostegui, Julie L. "Gender and the Security Sector: Towards a More Secure Future." *Connections* 14, no. 3 (2015): 7–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326406>.

Bint al-Shati', 'Aishah, بنت الشاطىء عائشة, Calderbank, A., & .(1999). Islam and the New Woman / المرأة الجديدة. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 19, 194–202. <https://doi.org/10.2307/521919>

Boulding, E. (1976). Familial Constraints on Women's Work Roles. *Signs*, 1(3), 95–117. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3172999>

Brandt, Michele, and Jeffrey A. Kaplan. "The Tension between Women's Rights and Religious Rights: Reservations to Cedaw by Egypt, Bangladesh and Tunisia." *Journal of Law and Religion* 12, no. 1 (1995): 105–42. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1051612>.

Cervenak, Christine M. "Promoting Inequality: Gender-Based Discrimination in UNRWA's Approach to Palestine Refugee Status." *Human Rights Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1994): 300–374. <https://doi.org/10.2307/762449>.

Cooke, Miriam. "Arab Women Arab Wars." *Cultural Critique*, no. 29 (1994): 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1354420>.

Farel, A. M., & Dobelstein, A. W. (1982). Supports and Deterrents for Mothers Working outside the Home. *Family Relations*, 31(2), 281–286. <https://doi.org/10.2307/584407>

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- Fathi, Schirin. "The Move towards Gender Equality and Political Participation in Jordan." *Oriente Moderno* 98, no. 2 (2018): 203–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45212333>.
- Fernea, E. (2000). The Challenges for Middle Eastern Women in the 21st Century. *Middle East Journal*, 54(2), 185–193. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4329468>
- Ghanea, Nazila. "Human Rights of Religious Minorities and of Women in the Middle East." *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2004): 705–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20069749>.
- Gheytanchi, E., & Moghadam, V. N. (2014). WOMEN, SOCIAL PROTESTS, AND THE NEW MEDIA ACTIVISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 40(1), 1–26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43496487>
- Golley, Nawar Al-Hassan. "Is Feminism Relevant to Arab Women?" *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2004): 521–36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993823>.
- Hock, E., Gnezda, M. T., & McBride, S. L. (1984). Mothers of Infants: Attitudes toward Employment and Motherhood following Birth of the First Child. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 46(2), 425–431. <https://doi.org/10.2307/352474>
- Ismael, Jacqueline S., and Shereen T. Ismael. "SOCIAL POLICY IN THE ARAB WORLD: THE SEARCH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2008): 23–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41858542>.
- Johansson-Nogués, Elisabeth. "Gendering the Arab Spring? Rights and (in)Security of Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan Women." *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 5/6 (2013): 393–409. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26302353>.
- Keddie, Nikki R. "The Past and Present of Women in the Muslim World." *Journal of World History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 77–108. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078457>.
- Lina Abou-Habib. "Gender, Citizenship, and Nationality in the Arab Region." *Gender and Development* 11, no. 3 (2003): 66–75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030562>.
- Makar, R. N. (1997). NEW VOICES FOR WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST. *MELA Notes*, 65/66, 14–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29785672>
- Makar, Ragai N. "NEW VOICES FOR WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST." *MELA Notes*, no. 65/66 (1997): 14–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29785672>.
- Olmsted, Jennifer C. "Is Paid Work the (Only) Answer? Neoliberalism, Arab Women's Well-Being, and the Social Contract." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 1, no. 2 (2005): 112–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40326859>.
- Patel, S. (2017). ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE ISLAMIC STATE. In *The Sultanate of Women: Exploring female roles in perpetrating and preventing violent extremism* (pp. 15–18). Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04246.7>

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Saleh, Saneya. "WOMEN IN ISLAM: THEIR ROLE IN RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL CULTURE." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 2, no. 2 (1972): 193–201. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23027065>.

SKALLI, L. H. (2011). CONSTRUCTING ARAB FEMALE LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE MOROCCAN MEDIA. *Gender and Society*, 25(4), 473–495. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23044207>

Snyder-Hall, R. Claire. "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of 'Choice.'" *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (2010): 255–61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25698533>.

Tucker, J. E. (1983). Problems in the Historiography of Women in the Middle East: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Egypt. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 15(3), 321–336. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/163522>

Velayudhan, M. (1994). Changing Roles and Women's Narratives. *Social Scientist*, 22(1/2), 64–79. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3517852>

Outline of Course Content

Topic 1: Historical view of women's roles in Islam: the beginning of *Da'wa* until today

- Women's role in Islamic *Da'wa*
- Women's status during and after the time of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH)
- Muslim women leaders: models and success stories
- Women advocacy for their liberation
- Non-Muslim women's roles throughout history

Topic 2: Arab women's struggles claim their rights and their achievements

- Historical view of the feminist movement in many Arab countries
- Pioneering women in the feminist movement to achieve equality with men
- Obstacles and limitations in Arab women's paths
- Internalized misogyny and women as perpetuators of patriarchy
- Arab women struggle against their counter part
- Arab women as makers of Arab history

Topic 3: Women's leadership roles in the family: mother, daughters, sisters, wives

- Women's roles in child raising
- Sex and gender stereotyping in familial roles
- Equality in rights and duties in the family structure
- The future of the family; determined by sons or daughters?
- Inheriting citizenship while not being able to pass it to children

Topic 4: Limitations on leadership in the professional sphere

- Women, education, and raising the next generation
- Women and revolution

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- Women and politics
- Women and medicine

Topic 5: Achievements of female Arab leaders in varying fields

- Culture
- Religion
- Science
- Art
- Media

Topic 6: Challenges that face women in the leadership roles

- Masculine perspectives dominating all areas of life
- All types of harassment
- Stereotypes in dress, hobbies, and educational background
- Extremism in interpreting religious concepts related to women's lives
- Women's social status (single, divorced, widowed, married)

Topic 7: Religion, leadership, and resistance

- Interpreting Islamic guardianship, *al qawama*, as a religious term
- Women's understandings *al qawama*
- Paths for resisting implications of guardianship on marriage, access to money, dowry, and other freedoms.
- Obedience and submission to husbands in the Bible
- Case studies: ethnic minorities: Armenian diaspora, Kurds

Topic 8: Paths to empowerment – examples and elements of success

- Feminist successes in Tunisia and government policy
- Queen Rania's role in empowering Jordanian women and promoting equity
- Attempts at empowerment in government and culture in the Gulf countries
- The pioneering role of Egyptian literature in empowering women