

Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

General Education Curriculum (GEC) Request for Course Approval: NELC 358

This course is intended to satisfy the GEC requirement for Category 2. Breadth: Section C. Arts and Humanities (3) Cultures and Ideas

Goals:

Students evaluate significant writing and works of art. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students develop abilities to be informed observers of, or active participants in, the visual, spatial, performing, spoken, or literary arts.
2. Students describe and interpret creative work, and/or movements in the arts and literature.
3. Students explain how works of art and writings explore the human condition.

(3) Cultures and Ideas Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret major forms of human thought and expression.
2. Students develop abilities to understand how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

Expected Learning Outcomes for NELC 358:

Students who complete this course will come to understand Sufism as a major, and a distinctively Islamic, mystical tradition within Islam, thereby developing abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret a major form of human thought and expression. By reading interpretative scholarly works with texts written by Sufi authors, this course seeks to portray a religion-specific study of Sufism, enabling students to understand how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

Rationale:

“Mysticism” and “spirituality” have been highly popular categories in the academic studies of religion, and they have been used as self-evident, uncontested, and universally applicable categories. In studying Sufism the use of these two analytical categories resulted in an essentialist approach which described Sufism or *tasawwuf* as the major Islamic mystical tradition within Islam. Instead of focusing on the universality and spirituality of mysticism this course will approach Sufism as an inner, esoteric Islam, which means that its purpose is to offer a religion-specific study of Sufism. The focus will be on the distinctively Islamic mystical and spiritual features of Sufism as well as on the relevance of its historical and cultural context.

We shall study Sufism by focusing on four major themes: Sufi cosmology, knowledge (gnosis), literature and culture. The readings for this course combine a number of interpretative scholarly works with texts written by Sufi authors. Additionally, student groups will be formed to examine and prepare presentations on the new, contemporary way of disseminating Sufi knowledge, and establishing and maintaining Sufi networks: the Sufi brotherhoods' web pages online.

Course Assessment Plan for NELC 358:

NELC 358 will be critically assessed by NELC faculty in order to determine how well it is meeting the general principles and specific General Learning Objectives of the Arts and Humanities category of the General Education Curriculum. Assessment will take place after the first quarter in which the course is taught and thereafter biennially.

The following procedures and indicators will be used in assessing the course:

- 1) Student evaluations, both the quantitative SEI and the narrative departmental SRT
- 2) Written report of class visit by peer evaluator
- 3) Review of current exams and paper topics
- 4) Review of course syllabi for each offering of the course by NELC's Undergraduate Studies Committee.
- 5) Biennial assessment report to be submitted to ASC summarizing the results of the course assessment.

Items 3-5 will be maintained on file in the Department so that the progress of the course can be monitored and evaluated across time as the course evolves and to enable the department to address any major concerns or drift from the established goals and standards.