**Introduction to the Field of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures**

**NELC 5101**

**1 credit hour**

Every other Monday, 9:00-10:50 am

Instructor: Kevin van Bladel

Contact: vanbladel.2@osu.edu, Hagerty Hall 300G

Office Hours: T1-2 or by appt.

**Prerequistes**

Arabic, Hebrew, or Islamic Studies major with junior or senior status, or graduate standing in NELC.

**Course Description**

This one-credit hour lecture/discussion course is intended for first-year graduate students in NELC as well as advanced undergraduates (seniors or juniors) majoring in the NELC department.

It offers a concise introduction to the field of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and its close cognates (Middle Eastern Studies, etc.), focusing on the history and constitution of institutional bases for the study of the Near East, the major debates about how the field is constructed, the development of the terms by which it is defined (“Near” vs “Middle” East, “civilizations,” etc.), the debate over Orientalism and its aftermath, the conflation of the Near East with religions and nations, the background to Area Studies, the place of NELC knowledge in higher education/scholarship generally and in various publics, and how careers in NELC are made.

The course meets for a session of two hours every other week.

**Course Materials**

Book available at SBX, 1806 North High St.: Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945*, Routledge 2009.

Book available online through library portal: Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge 2004. (Recommended for purchase.)

The other required readings may be found on *Carmen* unless otherwise indicated.

**Attendance Policy**

Your progress in this course depends upon your active engagement in class discussions, and we have only eight sessions for this 1-credit course. You cannot afford to miss any session. Please discuss excused absences with me as early as possible. More than one absence may be grounds for reduction of your final grade by one-third of a letter (for example, B to B-). More than two absences will result in a grade of “E” for the course.

**Grading Scale and Assignments**

A = 93-107, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 60-66, E = 0-59

Active participation in the discussion of course materials is a basic requirement and is assumed. Non-participation will be treated as an absence (see above).

1. Write **four responses to the readings**, each of 200-300 words (40% = 10% each).
   1. *Due weekly on the Friday before any Monday meeting (choose four different weeks).*
   2. The purpose of these written responses is to demonstrate your analysis and critical thinking about the readings and to prepare you to participate fruitfully in discussion during the class sessions.
2. **Journal Summaries**. Pick three journals in the field from the list provided by the instructor. Skim all of the volumes of these journals, either online or in the university library. Note the subjects covered, the locales from which the contributors come, and the changes in these two respects over time. Deliver a 10-minute presentation on the careers of these three selected journals (10%).
   1. *Presented in Week 5.*
3. Write a 5-to-6-page **review of a book** relevant to a public debate in or about the field, chosen from the list at the end of this syllabus (40%).
   1. *Due at meeting in Week 15.*
4. **15-minute oral presentation** of the issues dealt with in the book reviewed (10%)
   1. *Presented at session in Week 15*.

**Learning Objectives**

Students finishing this course will understand the history of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures as a field of knowledge and research, the historical processes that generated it, and what scholars do in this field and why. They will be better prepared to navigate the political pitfalls that circumstances have created for scholarship about the Near East and Middle East and will be better able to pursue a career in this area of study.

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/)>.”

**Disability policy**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

FOR YOUR SAFETY, the OSU Student Safety/Escort Service is available after 7 p.m. by dialing 292-3322.

*Readings listed below are to be read in preparation for the session in which they are listed.*

**Week 1. Aug 31. Orientation.**

* The history of NELC at OSU, what it offers, and its mission.
* Where is NELC/NES in North America? Comparing department profiles.

**Week 3. Sept 14. Europeans Studying the East.** (86 pages)

* Lockman, pp. 38-98.
* Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism*, pp. 39-64.

**Week 5. Sept 28. The Societies and the Journals**. (110 pages).

* Wokoeck, pp. 86-184.
* Lockman, pp. 99-111.
* Journal review exercise, brief presentations.

**Week 7. Oct 12. The Rise and Fall of Civilizations, and the “Islamicate” World: The Near East in General Education.** (50 pages)

* Silvia Federici, “The God That Never Failed: The Origins and Crises of Western Civilization,” in Silvia Federici (ed.), *Enduring Western Civilization : the construction of the concept of Western civilization and its “others*,*”* Praeger 1995, pp. 63-89.
* Milton Singer, “Chicago’s Non-Western Civilizations Program,” *The Journal of General Education* 12.1 (1959): 22-23.
* Marshall Hodgson, “A Non-Western Civilization Course in a Liberal Education with Special Attention to Islâm,” *The Journal of General Education* 12.1 (1959): 39-49.
* Marhsall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1, pp. 30-45 from his “Introduction to the Study of Islamic Civilization.”

**Week 9. Oct 26. “Near East” vs “Middle East”: Political Contexts** (44 pages.)

* Roger Adelson, “British and U.S. Use and Misuse of the Term ‘Middle East,’” in Michael Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Gasper (eds.), *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 36-55. Available freely through OSU’s library online, via the “ProQuest ebrary.” Link [here](http://library.ohio-state.edu/search~S7?/Xis+there+a+middle+east+amanat&SORT=D&searchscope=7/Xis+there+a+middle+east+amanat&SORT=D&searchscope=7&SUBKEY=is+there+a+middle+east+amanat/1%2C3%2C3%2CB/frameset&FF=Xis+there+a+middle+east+amanat&SORT=D&searchscope=7&1%2C1%2C).
* Lockman, pp. 112-147.

**Week 11. Nov 9. Orientalism.** (66 pages pages)

* Lockman, pp. 148-214.

**Week 13. Nov 23. Scholars contributing to Public Debates.** (73 pages)

* Wokoeck, pp. 210-221.
* Lockman, pp. 215-267.

**Week 15. Dec 7. Careers in NELC. Careers *with* NELC.** (49 pages)

* Deliver your oral presentation on the book you read to review.
* Discussion of the “job market” for NELC degree-holders.