



# NEHC 20603 2, HIST 25616 2, RLST 20403 2, SOSOC 22200 2 - Islamic Thought and Literature III - Instructor(s) - Tobias Scheunchen

Project Title: **College Course Feedback - Spring 2024**

Number Enrolled: **13**

Number of Responses: **11**

## Report Comments

Opinions expressed in these evaluations are those of students enrolled in the specific course and do not represent the University.

Creation Date: **Thursday, July 11, 2024**

**What are the most important things that you learned in this course? Please reflect on the knowledge and skills you gained.**

Comments
We learned about the modern Middle East, especially after the 18th century with a strong emphasis on the intellectual, political, economic, and social transformation of the Islamic World. We also talked about the history of the Israel–Palestine conflict and some broader theoretical approaches to history.
History of the middle east, 1750 onwards. Critically reading media sources & seeing multiple perspectives of the same event.
I learned how to properly write a counter–argument in your essay. I also learned a lot about how to evaluate other cultures without a western lens.
Learning about different methods of analyzing historical events within the frame of Islam through various frameworks, I loved getting a better sense of why the Israeli Palestine conflict started and I enjoyed learning how the past influences the present.
History of political development within and about the Modern Middle East. Discussion of Orientalism, nationalist movements within the Middle East. Development of student's ability to write argumentatively and analytically about historical events and processes.
the modern middle east – nasserism, history of the most recent part of the ottoman empire (and its falling), World wars and islamic relevance, women and the hijab, ISRAEL PALESTINE
the recent history of the Middle East and the factors that lead to its state today
Tobias was very, very knowledgeable about the course, reflecting his excitement in his attachment and discussion. One day, he even laid out an entire timeline of Israel–Palestine for our discussion day. He taught us about Orientalism, the Ottoman Empire, Nationalism, WWI, Nasserism, and Palestine. I also learned about strong biases in the media and how they often portray the police of the county or region that they originate in. He also taught us how to write better papers. Overall, amazing instructor and amazing course.
Reading sources critically/"against the grain", different approaches to history, appreciation/understanding of how complex and multidimensional Islamic history is
how to approach islamic history, recognizing its nuances, and writing! how to effectively make an argumentative and analytical response paper

**Describe how aspects of this course (lectures, discussions, labs, assignments, etc.) contributed to your learning.**

Comments
The readings, especially the primary sources, were illuminating and diverse. The lectures helped foreground the material and alert us to the key themes in the week's readings. The discussions were dynamic, well-organized, respectful, and interactive. It was nice to replace seminar-style discussions with workshop-style exercises from time to time. I think it helps with engagement as the quarter goes on.
Lectures & discussions were most helpful. Writing assignments had thoughtful prompts and Prof. Scheunschén gave very useful and comprehensive feedback on each assignment.
The secondary sources definitely helped me contextualize what I was reading in the primary sources. Also the lectures were important in this regard.
Lectures were super helpful, the assignments were great and he gave us a lot of feedback. I went to him for office hours a couple times and he was always very enjoyable to spend time with.
This class consisted of three classes a week, two lectures and a discussion at the end of the week on the readings and lectures. Overall I found lectures more helpful than discussion, although I understand the use of lecture for engaging with primary sources. Students submitted 4 2–3 page response papers throughout the quarter, which gave an opportunity to synthesize thoughts and argument about course content. Further, there was a 15 (truncated to 12) page term paper assigned on a Middle Eastern novel of the student's choice, as well as a media analysis project and chart for the contemporary conflict in Gaza.
we had lectures twice a week and discussions once a week. there were readings assigned for each lecture (mon and wed), and then we would discuss readings and lecture content on Friday. The assignments were open-ended questions related to the readings. we could choose any one prompt and answer– left freedom for us to answer how we interpreted the readings ourselves (made the course more interactive).
the lectures, readings, and assignments were all very helpful. Sometimes the discussions felt useful, and other times it felt that it might have been better to have another lecture of something instead. I did appreciate the unique structure of the discussion sections. It made them more engaging and less intimidating in comparison to a typical discussion section.
Tobias's strong enthusiasm for the content was reflected greatly in his beautiful slides which I greatly appreciated. Also, his assignment feedback was both very kind and very helpful and insightful for bettering my writing and formulation of ideas. Our discussion sections were also good in synthesizing the content we had been learning that week.
Lectures were good but hard to pay attention to, and I didn't feel the need to pay attention because 1) there was no significant expectation of participation; 2) most other people were doing other work on their computers; 3) all the slides were posted, so I didn't feel like I would miss anything critical.
The readings were good, but often dense or too much quantitatively. The response papers were fine and the feedback was helpful. For myself at least I would have much preferred having a ~250 word discussion post answering any of the week's prompts for every week, throughout the quarter, so that it would have been more spread out, a bit lower stakes, and also so that I would gain more insight to the readings/material for every week rather than just the weeks I wrote response papers for.
I would have much preferred class being structured as half lecture/discussion every day, or even 35 min lecture and then 15 min discussion. Friday discussions were good because it kept me accountable to have the readings done by Friday, but I feel like some discussion every day would have a) helped me stay on top of the readings, b) helped contextualize the readings with the corresponding lecture/historical context, c) made lecture more engaging/valuable during class time.

## Please respond to the following:

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
This course challenged me intellectually.	4.45	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	18.18%	63.64%
I understood the purpose of this course and what I was expected to gain from it.	4.27	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	54.55%	36.36%
I understood the standards for success on assignments.	3.82	4.00	0.00%	9.09%	27.27%	36.36%	27.27%
Class time enhanced my ability to succeed in graded assignments.	4.36	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	45.45%	45.45%
I received feedback on my performance that helped me improve my subsequent work.	4.45	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	54.55%	45.45%
My work was evaluated fairly.	4.45	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	54.55%	45.45%
I felt respected in this class.	4.64	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%	63.64%
Overall, this was an excellent course.	4.18	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	45.45%	36.36%

## Additional comments about the course:

Comments
I think I expected more discussions about Islamic thought and literature, but this course felt a lot more like Modern Middle Eastern history. There were times in the curriculum where it felt like we were going a bit off-topic and almost trying to promote a certain agenda/narrative. There was also wayyyy more work than necessary in this class – we had four short 3 page essays and one 12 page one, plus a group project and all the readings for each week. If there was less work in this class, I definitely would've liked it more.
I think some of the course content felt disjointed. There seems to be a lot packed into the quarter, and covering the whole region leads to a lot of jumping around. It was hard to follow overall through lines of political and philosophical development throughout the region or even within certain countries aside from a broad narrative of westernization and nationalism.
I personally am not well-versed in the content for this course. I took CIV I but struggled to do well in discussion because my comments / logic were not complex. I understood everything at a more simplistic level whereas other people in the class understood the material better.
I felt the assignments were graded relatively harshly. I would be given feedback, told it was an overall good paper, and it would correspond to a B.
Tobias is a very amicable, approachable, accommodating, and understanding instructor. His personality and enthusiasm for the content made for amazing lectures and an amazing learning environment. Him being very nice and accommodate also reduced the stress of the course on me and allowed me to learn more.
Professor Scheunchen is really knowledgeable about Islamic history and clearly passionate about the course material. He was also very kind and flexible throughout the quarter when things on campus got a bit stressful, and it was clear that he wants everyone in the class to succeed. I've never had a professor who's emphasized this more—Prof Scheunchen made such an effort to grade fairly (with a transparent and impressively overcomplicated grading rubric), and devoted a lot of class time to communicating the standards for success on assignments and going over how to write a good paper/argument.
The class definitely had more reading and assignments than I expected from CIV core, which was a bit frustrating to get used to at the beginning of the quarter, but if you're able to stay relatively on top of readings then it's very doable.
Overall it was a solid class. I learned more than I expect to from my core classes, which was really nice and also helpful for understanding some of the current political landscape in the Middle East. Professor Scheunchen was a great professor and I'd definitely recommend taking a class with him if you're interested in the material.

## I would recommend this course to:

	No	Yes
Highly-motivated and well-prepared students	9.09%	90.91%
Anyone interested in the topic	9.09%	90.91%

## Thinking about your time in the class, what aspect of the instructor's teaching contributed most to your learning?

Comments
Prof. Scheunchen is absolutely amazing, and I would highly recommend his courses. He is clearly passionate about the material, and his lectures are well-organized, concise, and interactive. Most importantly, he is thoughtful and amiable. He did a particularly great job of teaching the Israel-Palestine history by integrating diverse primary sources and presenting a coherent historical timeline of events. This issue is as complicated as it is controversial, so I appreciate him presenting the nuances rather than enforcing any "right" narrative. He was also very accommodating and welcoming when the campus protests were causing upheaval across our community. Overall, he is the goat and a brilliant instructor.
Prof. Scheunschén put a lot of effort into Friday discussion sessions and facilitated activities that brought out the most in our readings and helped us learn the most. Lectures were very informative and assignments were targeted at specific learning objectives.
Definitely the lectures and the secondary sources. His instructions on how to make our essays better was also very helpful, more than other classes.
He talked a lot. That may be a good thing sometimes and may be a bad thing sometimes. Things got a little boring but his lectures were good in terms of material.
Tobias was very knowledgeable and engaged with the course. It was clear over the course of the quarter that he put an exceptional amount of effort into structuring and teaching the class, which I believe helped to bring about a similar level of engagement in some students. I think the lectures were overall well organized and the selection in readings was very obviously deliberate and helped ground understanding of course content. Tobias was widely available outside of class and very willing to engage in discussion of course ideas.
he tried to make discussions engaging with prompts and activities. He also left everything neutral/apolitical when talking about the israel/palestine conflict.
The lectures were very clear, and in conjunction with the readings, were very enlightening about the history of the region. I appreciated that he would also involve pop culture from the region, such as songs or movie clips, that connected with the themes and helped make lectures more engaging.
Tobias's enthusiasm for the course content, respect and care for his students, and his great teaching ability all combined created for great lectures and a great learning experience. I really do appreciate Tobias and glad he was my Instructor. I'm sure that he'll be a great Professor one day and am jealous of the students that he will mentor. Thank you for being amazing Tobias!
Lecture, office hours
prof gave feedback on our papers and lots and lots of reading, time, and effort clearly went into the presentations and discussions which was great

## What could the instructor modify to help you learn more?

Comments
N/A
The scope of the course did not encompass certain parts of history that I wish were paid more attention to. For example, some of the content we covered about WWI and WWII (even the middle eastern involvement in the conflict) was something that I have learned previously in history courses focused on Europe or the World. Since this is virtually the only class in which Islamic civilizations are focused on, I was hoping to learn much more about North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, etc. but the focus was mostly on the Levant, Turkey, and Egypt.
Have less total work in the class. The class felt like an extreme burden and because I had to take this for my completion of my civ sequence, there was no way out of it.
Perhaps be more interesting? The class wasn't bad, just a little slow.
I think that replacing the Friday discussion with lecture would be beneficial. Given the response paper requirement is already a strong measure of student's engagement with the content essentially every other week, I think that another hour of lecture would be a more effective use of student's time. I also felt that the requirement of the response papers to reference the sources in the reading made writing these papers unnecessarily awkward.
the assignments were a little difficult. maybe more bonus assignments to offset the actual written ones.
I think it's best to treat the secondary readings as more supplementary to the lecture instead of generally required readings. Also, with the media outlet project, I think it would've been better to provide feedback after the first week rather than give feedback four weeks in that some of the responses were too short. I also think with how critically the assignments are graded, it would be more beneficial and less stress-inducing to have more assignments or more opportunities for bonus, especially later in the quarter.
Maybe have less assignments or replace the 700–800 word response papers with discussion posts as the papers were a bit stressful.
See previous responses—
More frequent but smaller assignments, more class discussion, more engaging lecture
feedback on papers— i think it was mostly clear but sometimes left out, as in, we would received feedback but only some of it and the rest would be revealed in a later paper instead of previously, but only sometimes. overall feedback was clear

## The Instructor . . .

	Mean	Median	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Organized the course clearly.	4.73	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.27%	72.73%	0.00%
Presented lectures that enhanced your understanding.	4.82	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions that were engaging and useful.	4.27	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	36.36%	45.45%	0.00%
Stimulated your interest in the core ideas of the course.	4.36	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	45.45%	45.45%	0.00%
Challenged you to learn.	4.27	4.00	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	45.45%	45.45%	0.00%
Helped you gain significant learning from the course content.	4.36	5.00	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	36.36%	54.55%	0.00%
Was available and helpful outside of class.	4.91	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%	0.00%
Motivated you to think independently.	4.36	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	45.45%	45.45%	0.00%
Worked to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.	4.55	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	27.27%	63.64%	0.00%
Overall, this instructor made a significant contribution to your learning.	4.55	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	27.27%	63.64%	0.00%

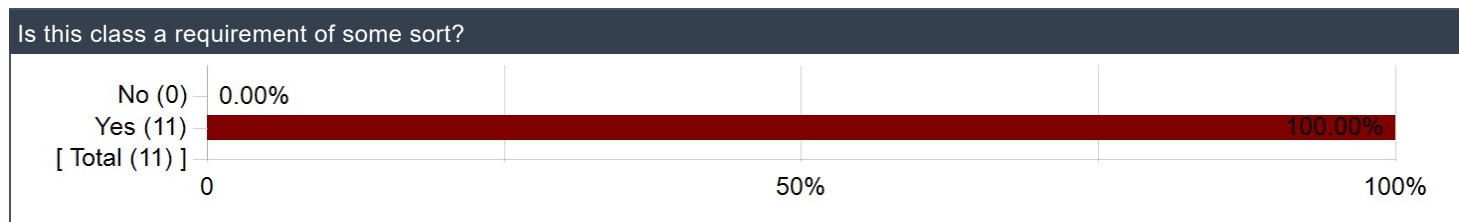
## How much did the following elements of the course contribute to your learning gains?

	Mean	Median	No Gain	A Little Gain	Moderate Gain	Good Gain	Great Gain	N/A
Laboratory Experience	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Field Trips	3.67	4.00	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%
Library Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Review Sessions	N/A	N/A	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Writing Seminars	4.33	5.00	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%

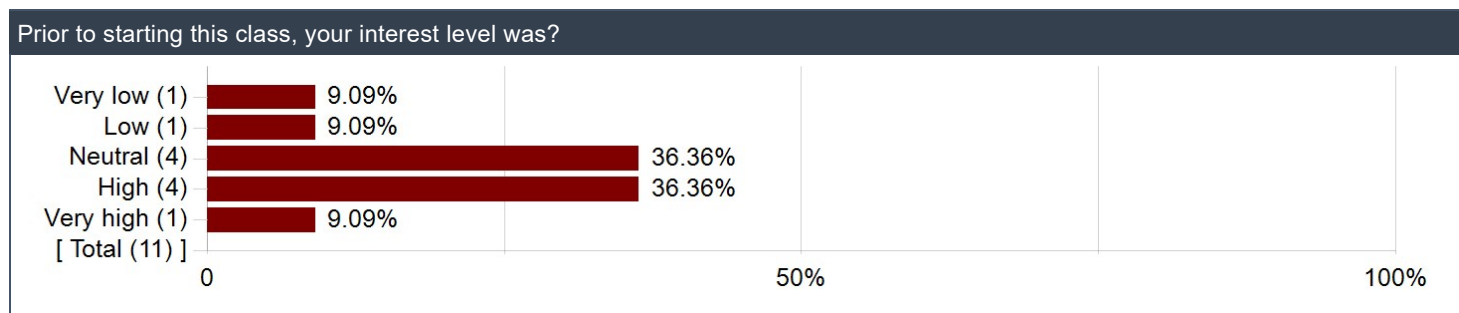
## Other course elements not mentioned above:

Comments
There were I believe one or two writing seminars that I was unable to attend. Additionally, the class took a field trip to the ISAC Museum which provided an interesting grounding for our discussion of archeology, middle eastern nationalism, and Orientalism.
I believe they went to the OI for a field but I missed it due to my later joining of the class. I'm sure it was great though!

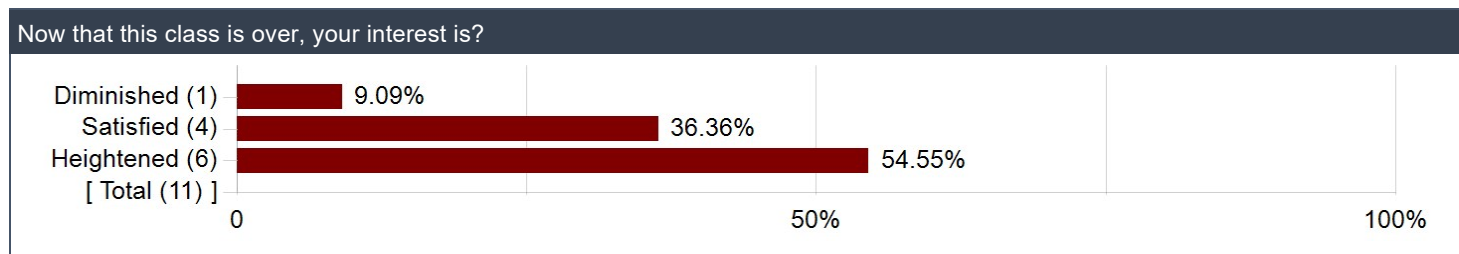
## Is this class a requirement of some sort?



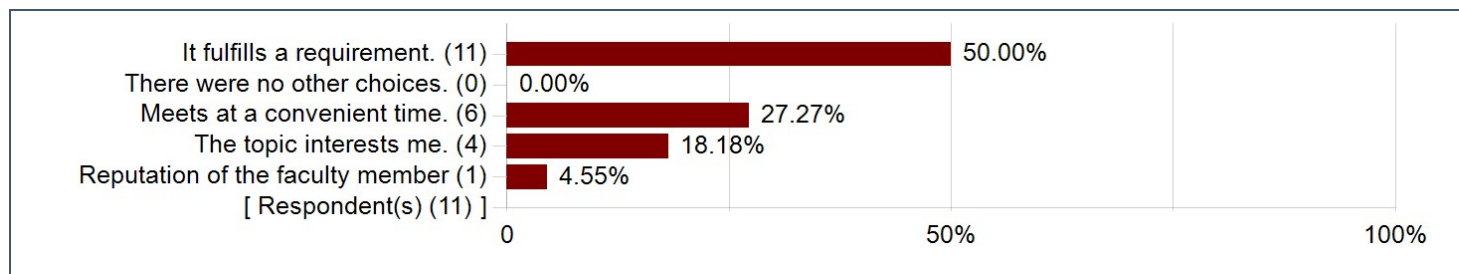
## Prior to starting this class, your interest level was?



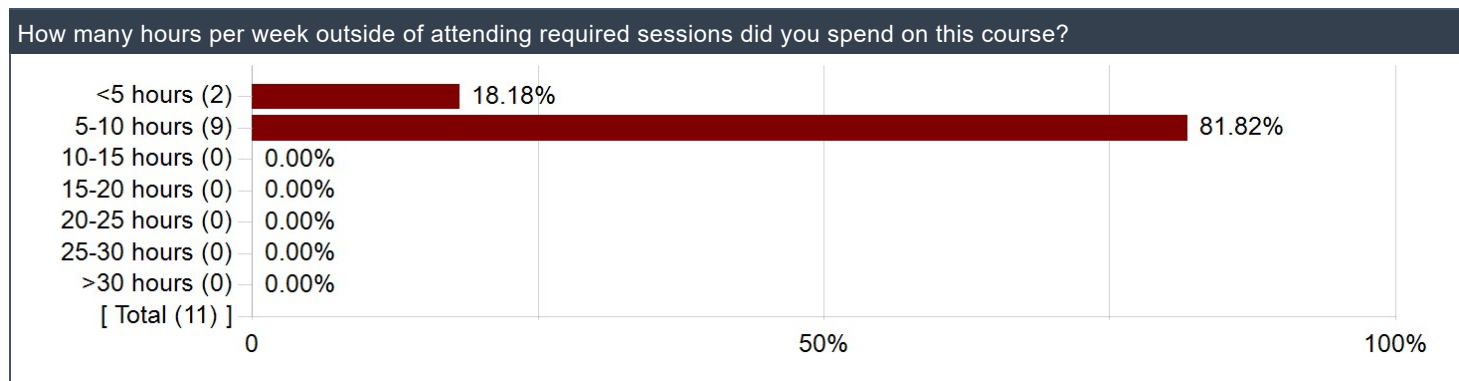
## Now that this class is over, your interest is?



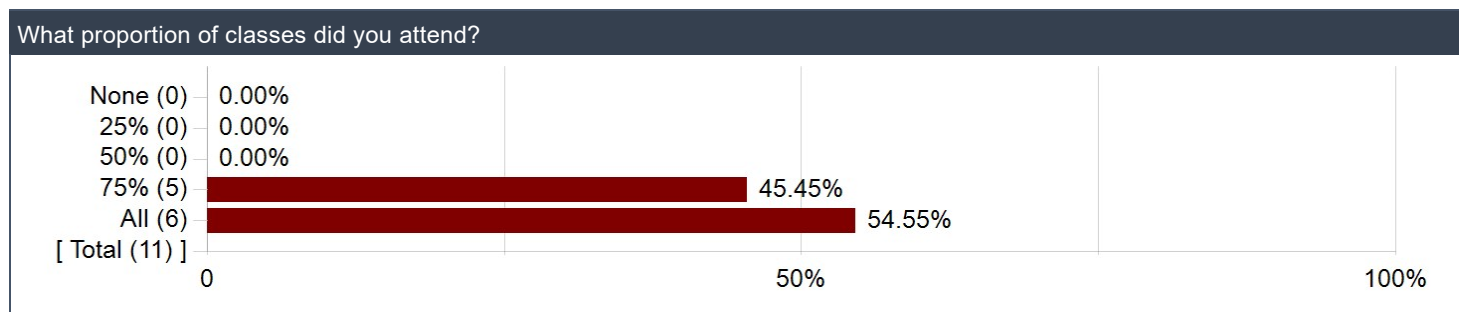
### Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)



### How many hours per week outside of attending required sessions did you spend on this course?



### What proportion of classes did you attend?





**Please comment on the level of difficulty of the course relative to your background and experience.**

Comments
I had taken only Islamic Civ II before the course and it was not difficult— keeping up with the readings and attending class was sufficient to completing assignments and doing well in the course.
You didn't need too much background, but that being said I did take Islamic Thought and Literature 1 which I would recommend taking just so you have some sense of terminology. There is a TON of writing in this class so be prepared.
Harder than Islam I.
I don't think this class was exceptionally difficult, coming in with experience writing in college but it was a lot of work. Overall the professor probably expected 25+ pages of writing from students over the course of the quarter, which is substantially greater than the expected course load for other core classes. While I do think that this level of work made the course more engaging, it was a substantial increase in workload in comparison to the previous two quarters in the sequence.
I thought the content was a little difficult. I'm not great with humanities subjects. BUT the professor was very available for questions and help, which made the course super manageable.
The essay grading was much harsher than I have experienced previously in my years at this university.
Appropriate level of difficulty!
Not challenging qualitatively, but the quantity of work sometimes felt a bit challenging. As a Philosophy major writing papers and making arguments about readings wasn't so challenging
difficult in the sense that it was more challenging than previous sequences in terms of crafting response papers for the readings, prep for discussions, but that was only if you were interested in the topic and wanted to put that time in, and it didn't feel overwhelming or too difficult because i was actually interested in the material