

## MES 342: CULTURES OF REVOLUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### Course Description:

Cultures of Revolution invites students to examine the cultural production that surrounds key moments of political and social change in the Middle East. This version of the course incorporates a long-term engagement with archival research, including a session at UT Austin's Harry Ransom Center archive, as part of the **Independent Inquiry Flag**. After learning about archives and the politics of archives with our course materials and readings, students will undertake their own research projects at the Ransom Center during the second half of the semester, defining their own research questions, completing research in the archive, and writing progress reports and a final analysis of their projects.



At the outset, this course addresses the cultural production that developed out of and alongside the Arab Spring of the early 2010s. Students read translations of excerpts from revolutionary newspapers published in Egypt and handed out in Tahrir Square and examples of Arabic poetry (also in English translation) that inspired people to revolt across the Arab world. We will likewise address materials from the Tahrir Documents digital archive and consider the role archives play in modern statecraft and politics alongside our reading of a novel by the Egyptian author Sonallah Ibrahim.

Throughout the semester, we will focus on Egypt's place in the "cultural Cold War" during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s by investigating an archive of the Franklin Book Publication Program—held at UT's Ransom Center—and reading related scholarship. Students will develop their own research plans for working with this understudied archive housed right here in Austin. *Readings for the second half of the semester will be guided by students' own input and needs for their research projects!*

\*\*No knowledge of Arabic or another Middle Eastern language is required for this course, and all texts will be given in English translation.\*\*

### By the end of the course, you will:

- Recognize some key people, texts, and moments in the history of revolutionary movements in Egypt and the broader Middle East
- Understand the political role archives play in modern statecraft in the Middle East
- Confidently navigate a real archive with a solid foundation of ethical and practical knowledge about how archives work and how to interact with them

- Independently devise and undertake a long-term research project by developing a research question, investigating it, and presenting results in spoken and written form

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALE:

Attendance (see note)

Participation (10%)

In-Class Reading Quizzes (10%; 5 or 6 quizzes—most will be announced beforehand)

Research progress posts (35%; 5 total posts: 1- archive report; 2- research question; 3-work plan; 4- review of outside research and sources; 5- preliminary results)

Peer-review of research progress posts (5%)

Presentation of Independent Inquiry research results (10%)

Final report on Independent Inquiry research project (30%)

## REGARDING RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND ATTENDANCE:

If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, please let me know at least two weeks in advance. You will not be penalized for this absence, although you will still be responsible for any work you will miss on that day, if applicable. (Two weeks is university policy. I'm a reasonable person, so if you inform me closer to the absence than that, we should be able to work things out.)

## EXPLANATIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS

**ATTENDANCE:** You can miss class three times without it affecting your grade. If you have four unexcused absences, the *maximum grade* you can earn for the course is a “B”; five absences, the *maximum grade* you can earn for the course is a “C”; six absences, the *maximum grade* you can earn is a “D”; at seven absences, you will no longer be able to pass the class. If you have extenuating circumstances, please speak with me as soon as possible, because your presence in class is essential for your success. (*Excused absences* include illness [do not come to class with Covid!]; travel for University-sponsored events; and certain personal matters—you must talk to me *in office hours* or during an alternative pre-scheduled appointment to have an absence excused.)

**PARTICIPATION:** A course’s success also depends on the preparation and involvement of all its participants. At a minimum, you should have done the assigned readings for the day. Students who are ready to participate will have taken notes about questions and ideas they have while reading. Your participation is not only welcome but necessary! Here’s a general idea of what types of participation get what grade (of 10 total points): you say something in class or in group discussion *almost every class* = 10; you *sometimes* say something in class or group discussion = 9-8; you *rarely* say anything in class = 7-6; you clearly are not prepared for class or group discussion, but you *are in class* = 5. (Sometimes, just showing up counts for something.)

### *Prof. Thompson’s general position on the above grade items:*

*I’m not here to police you. You’re all adults and your attendance and participation are up to you. Grades are not assigned, they are earned!*

**SHORT IN-CLASS READING QUIZZES:** Quizzes will usually be announced beforehand but sometimes they may not be. Quizzes will be cumulative, but they will focus on the reading we have done for class that day. The quizzes are meant to encourage you to keep up with the readings as we move through the semester. There will probably be 5 or 6 short quizzes. Quizzes will be brief: a few multiple choice, true-false, and/or short answer questions each. We will do quizzes at the beginning of class, so make sure to arrive on time. **I will not give make-up reading quizzes.** Don’t expect to make up a reading quiz. If you have an excused absence, see me in office hours to discuss what to do about a missed quiz.

**RESEARCH PROGRESS POSTS:** You will have five opportunities to write posts addressing your long-term research project. These posts are essential for your progress, and you must complete each of them before moving ahead with your Independent Inquiries. We will discuss your posts in class.

**PEER REVIEW OF RESEARCH PROGRESS POSTS:** You will write ~200 word peer reviews of *at least* two of your colleagues' research progress posts each time we write one. Your reviews must be relevant and constructive *as well as* critical. They are due the *class session following* when the initial posts are due.

**IN-CLASS PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS:** Once you have completed the bulk of your independent inquiry project by the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to share your preliminary results with your colleagues. You make work individually or in a group for your overall research project and for this presentation. *You may even work with a partner/s on this presentation if you are not working together on your projects, but your results are somehow in conversation with one another.* I am happy to meet with you as you plan your in-class presentation. You will be evaluated on: your fair treatment of the material; your teamwork (if working in a team); and the quality of your materials and planning—i.e., how well you present the results of your research; and any other items relevant to your preparation and performance. Because of the number of students enrolled in class this semester, the format of this assignment will be: a *2-minute synopsis* of your research project, presented to the whole class (on a timer!) *as well as* a “booth” that you set up however you like to present some of your research to your classmates as they circulate in the room (like a high school science fair). You might use a poster board presentation for this portion of the assignment, a laptop with slides, or something out of the ordinary that you can display in 2D or 3D.

**FINAL REPORT:** at the end of the semester, you will compile a report of your research results in written form to turn in. Your report will likely be between 1,500-4,000 words, depending on the content in your Inquiry. Some students may include images, graphs, or tables in their reports, which may or may not require fewer actual written words in the end. We will discuss the details of this report and all the items that should be included in it in class and individually.

**ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** You are welcome to turn in assignments late, as long as you realize that you will lose 10% of the overall grade for every 24-hour period past the due date. For example, if you turn in a Research Progress post at 10:01AM that was due at 10:00AM, the *maximum grade* you can earn on that assignment is a 90/100—as long as everything else is perfect; your grade might be lower than this maximum. If you turn in the post at 10:01AM the *day after* it was due, the *maximum grade* you can earn on that assignment is a 80/100, and so on. After ten days, you cannot earn any points for a late assignment.

**GRADING SCALE:**

93-100 – A	74-76.9 – C
90-92.9 – A-	70-73.9 – C-
87-89.9 – B+	67-69.9 – D+
84-86.9 – B	64-66.9 – D
80-83.9 – B-	60-63.9 – D-
77-79.9 – C+	</=59.9 – F

**\*\*\*\*NOTE ON GRADE-GRUBBING\*\*\*\***

**Please do not debase yourself by grade-grubbing over e-mail. I will ignore e-mails/Canvas messages with grade-grubs, following an initial warning. If a student persists in electronic grade-grubbing, I will lower their overall final grade by 1% point for each additional grub following my first warning. If you have a legitimate concern about a grade, come see me in office hours or schedule an appointment at an alternative time.**

**The following University-wide syllabus statements change frequently. I abide by all required syllabus content as listed here by UT. These statements are standard across your classes, and some items you might note are:**

**Services for Students with Disabilities:**

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with

you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

**Personal Pronouns:**

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "preferred name" with the Gender and Sexuality Center, which you can do so here:

<http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/>. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by your gender pronouns (she/he/they/ze, etc.). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records.

For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit  
<https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns>.

**Title IX Reporting:**

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email [advocate@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu). For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu>, contact the Title IX Office via email at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419. Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, including the types of conduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

**Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT. Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise, you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address:  
<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php>

**LIST OF TEXTS:**

**To buy:**

[Committee, The, Sonallah Ibrahim](#) – BUY IT NOW! DON'T WAIT UNTIL WE ARE READING IT!

## **On Canvas:**

*Archive Wars: The Politics of History in Saudi Arabia*, Rosie Bsheer  
*Conspiracy in Modern Egyptian Literature*, Benjamin Koerber  
*Education and the Cultural Cold War in the Middle East: The Franklin Book Programs in Iran*, Mahdi Ganjavi  
*Media of the Masses*, Andrew Simon  
*Revolution is My Name* Mona Prince  
*Routledge Handbook of Arabic Translation*  
[Tahrir Documents, Tahrir Documents Collective](#)  
*Taking Books to the World: American Publishers and the Cultural Cold War*, Amanda Laugesen  
+ other articles and book chapters in PDF on Canvas

## **Weekly Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

### **Week 1: Aug. 21 – Aug. 25 – Introduction to the Class**

Aug. 21 - Introductions: what is the Independent Inquiry Flag all about? How does it fit into the course?  
What is the goal of this course?

Homework (for Aug. 23 – HW will always appear *just before* the class session it is due during): read  
*Revolutionary Egypt Vol. 1*: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/6195/20140109201453/><http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/2011/03/beware-of-the-counter-revolution/>

Aug. 23 - What do we already know about the Middle East? About the concept of revolution?

HW (for Aug. 25, and so on...): read “Translating Tahrir: from Praxis to Theory with Tahrir Documents” (Reading 01) + pick *one item* from the *Tahrir Documents* archive to read: be ready to tell us about the contents of what you read and how it “fits” in the archive. What *else* do we know about the item you chose, other than the text?

Aug. 25 – What do we already know about archives? What is an archive? How do archives work?

HW: read “Tuesday, January 25, 2011” (Reading 02) from *Revolution is My Name* by Mona Prince

### **Week 2: Aug. 28- Sept. 1 - The 2011 Egyptian Revolution**

Aug 28 – *Revolution Is My Name* and examples of revolutionary culture from Tahrir Square:  
<https://wayback.archive-it.org/6195/20140109192231/><http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/category/culture-2/poetry-culture-2/>

HW: Read “Friday, January 28, 2011” (Reading 03) from *Revolution is My Name* by Mona Prince

Aug. 30 – Logistics (I)

HW: watch Ramy Essam’s “[Bread, Freedom, Social Justice](#)” and read the pamphlet “[How to Revolt Smart](#)” from *Tahrir Documents*

Sept. 1 – Logistics (II)

HW: read “The People and the Army Are One Hand: Myths and Their Translations” (Reading 04) from *Translating Egypt’s Revolution: The Language of Tahrir*

### **Week 3: Sept. 4- Sept. 8 – The Politics of Archives**

Sept. 4 – Labor Day! No Class!

Sept. 6 – Revolution and Mythmaking

HW: read Rosie Bsheer, “Introduction: The Archive Question,” (Reading 05) from *Archive Wars*

Sept. 8 – Archives and Archiving (I)

HW: read Rosie Bsheer, Chapter 3, “Assembling History” (Reading 06) from *Archive Wars*

### **Week 4: Sept. 11- Sept. 15 - The Politics of Archives**

Sept. 11 – Archives and Archiving (II)

HW: we are spending the next two class days doing a hands-on activity at the LBJ Library – use these days to also get familiar with the Franklin Book Program and the Harry Ransom Center, where we will be working beginning next week. By Monday, Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, you should [listen to this podcast episode](#) on Franklin Books and watch this [orientation video from the Ransom Center](#). Also, start getting familiar with the work previous students have done in this course (more on this in class).

Sept. 13 – **Field Trip to the LBJ Library!** Meet at the flagpole outside the LBJ by 10:55AM! (I)

Sept. 15 – **Field Trip to the LBJ Library!** Meet at the flagpole outside the LBJ by 10:55AM! (II)

### **Week 5: Sept. 18 – Sept 22 – Archives, Knowledge, and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Egypt**

Sept 18 – In-class discussion of LBJ Library Experience + Introduction to the Franklin Book Program

HW: \*\*we are now preparing for our Independent Inquiry projects!\*\*: read Amanda Laugesen, Chapter 2, “Book Diplomacy in the Middle East,” (Reading 07) from *Taking Books to the World*

Sept. 20 – The FBP in Egypt

Explore the Ransom Center website: <https://www.hrc.utexas.edu/>, and make sure you have watched the [orientation video from the Ransom Center](#).

Sept. 22 – **Introductory session at the Ransom Center!** – *meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor reception area of the HRC – we will proceed to the Denius Seminar Room, which is our assigned space at the HRC for the rest of the semester.*

HW: complete 1<sup>st</sup> Research Progress Post: choose an archive discussed @ <https://hazine.info/category/archives-en/> and write a ~300-word report on what you learned about it. We will discuss our results on Monday

### **Week 6: Sept. 25 – Sept. 29 – Approaching Archives**

Sept. 25 – Discussion of Post #1

HW: read Esmaeil Haddadian-Moghaddam, “The Cultural Cold War and the Circulation of World Literature: Insights from Franklin Book Programs” (Reading 08); **write Peer Reviews of Post #1**

Sept. 27 – The FBP and the “Cultural Cold War”

HW: think of some questions you might have about archives for the Ransom Center staff and read the Ransom Center’s [Franklin Book Programs Finding Aid](#)

Sept. 29 - Second session at the Ransom Center! *Meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor reception area of the HRC.*

HW: read Sonallah Ibrahim, *The Committee*, Chapters One and Two (you must buy a paper copy of this book; there is no PDF!)

### **Week 7: Oct. 2 – Oct. 6 – Approaching Archives**

Oct. 2 – Conspiracy in the Archive (I): reading Sonallah Ibrahim’s *The Committee*

HW: read Sonallah Ibrahim, *The Committee*, Chapters 3 and 4

Oct. 4 – Conspiracy in the Archive (II): reading Sonallah Ibrahim’s *The Committee*

HW: read Sonallah Ibrahim, *The Committee*, Chapters 5 and 6 plus Afterword

Oct. 6 - Conspiracy in the Archive (III): reading Sonallah Ibrahim’s *The Committee*

HW: read Benjamin Koerber, Chapter 3, “Sonallah Ibrahim’s *al-Lajna*: Between Critical Theory and Conspiracy Theory,” (Reading 09) from *Conspiracy in Modern Egyptian Literature*

### **Week 8: Oct. 9 – Oct. 13 – Critique and the Archive**

Oct. 9 – Scholarly Approaches (I)

HW: read Emily Drumsta, “Epic Fails: Sonallah Ibrahim’s Modern Myths of Seeking” (Reading 10) on Sonallah Ibrahim’s *The Committee*

Oct. 11 – Scholarly Approaches (II) (w/ Emily Drumsta, in class)

HW: read Amanda Laugesen, Chapter 6, “The Decline and End of Franklin Book Programs,” (Reading 11) from *Taking Books to the World*

Oct. 13 – Scholarly Approaches (III)

HW: read Mahdi Ganjavi, Chapter 2, “Cultural Imperialism: Why Franklin Book Programs Matters,” (Reading 12) from *Education and the Cultural Cold War in the Middle East*

### **Week 9: Oct. 16 – Oct 20 – Critique and the Archive**

Oct. 16 – Scholarly Approaches (IV)

HW: read Mahdi Ganjavi, Chapter 4, “History and International Evolution of the Franklin Book Programs (1952-1977),” (Reading 13) from *Education and the Cultural Cold War in the Middle East*

Oct. 18 – Scholarly Approaches (V)

HW: prepare for your first session doing your own research at the Ransom Center. Make a plan for things you might like to investigate in the archive. What do you hope to find? What do you think you might actually find?

Oct. 20 – in-class workshop at Ransom Center – bring questions and problems you have come across so far; *wash your hands* on the way. Be ready to explore the archive—know your job before coming to class! (Independent research session #1)

HW: prepare for our session with Middle East Studies Librarian Dale Correa at the PCL by thinking about what sorts of secondary sources might be useful to investigate for more information about Franklin Books and/or contextual information about the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Middle East (Egypt specifically)

### **Week 10: Oct. 23 – Oct 27**

Oct. 23 – MEET AT PCL Learning Labs (first floor)! Session with Dale Correa, UT’s Middle East Studies Librarian

HW: find a relevant secondary source you would like to explore further and either check it out from the Library and/or download it to your machine to consult later in the semester.

Oct. 25 – Debrief about PCL experience – where do you see Library resources fitting into an Independent Inquiry project in this course?

Oct. 27 – in-class workshop at Ransom Center. Be ready to *take photos* of documents that you think might be relevant to your research. (Independent research session #2)

HW: write your 2<sup>nd</sup> Research Progress Post: *research question* – in your post, you should, in roughly 250-500 words, outline the question that you hope to answer in your investigation of the FBP archive and secondary literature. What problems might you face? How will you need to approach the archive? Will you need to collaborate with colleagues or not?

### **Week 11: Oct. 30 – Nov. 3 – Undertaking Our Independent Inquiries**

Oct. 30 – discussion of Post #2

HW: begin outlining your work plan for the remainder of the semester and finalize *at least* 3 secondary sources (two of which must be things we *haven’t yet discussed in class*) that you plan to use for your Independent Inquiry project; *write Peer Reviews of Post #2*

Nov. 1 – “Show and Tell” with our secondary sources

HW: prepare for Friday’s session in the archive and read your secondary sources

Nov. 3 – Prof. Thompson in Montreal for Middle Eastern Studies Association Annual Meeting! In-class workshop at Ransom Center *on your own!* (Independent research session #3)

HW: write your 3<sup>rd</sup> Research Progress Post: work plan.

### **Week 12: Nov. 6 – Nov. 10 – Implementing Our Work Plan**

Nov. 6 – Discussion of Post #3 + set an appointment to meet with Prof. Thompson about your project.

HW: work on your Independent Inquiry + select *at least one document* you want to share with the class (this is worth 1/10<sup>th</sup> of your Participation grade, or 1/100<sup>th</sup> of your overall course grade, so you *must do it* if you want to maximize your Participation score); write Peer Reviews of Post #3

Nov. 8 – Class Document Share Activity

HW: work on your Independent Inquiry

Nov. 10 – in-class workshop at Ransom Center. (Independent research session #4)

HW: write 4<sup>th</sup> Research Progress Post: review of outside research and sources that are *particular* to your Independent Inquiry project.

### **Week 13: Nov. 13 – Nov. 17 – Organizing and Presenting Our Research**

Nov. 13 – discussion of Post #4

HW: work on your Independent Inquiry; write Peer Reviews of Post #4

Nov. 15 - progress check ins + covering what work to do for Friday

HW: work on your Independent Inquiry

Nov. 17 – in-class workshop at Ransom Center. (Independent research session #5)

HW: finish your 5<sup>th</sup> Research Progress Post: preliminary results

### **Week 14: Nov. 20 – Nov. 24 – FALL BREAK! NO CLASS!**

### **Week 15: Nov. 27 – Dec. 1 - In-Class Presentation of Research Results (+ Finish Your Research!)**

Nov. 27 – Student Presentation Fair (~10 students will give 2-minute synopses of projects + engage colleagues at a booth each day this week); write Peer Reviews of Post #5

Nov. 29 – Student Presentation Fair

Dec. 1 – Student Presentation Fair

**Week 16: Dec. 4** – Looking ahead: what did we find out with our research? What remains to be done in the future? Any advice for future students in this course?

Dec. 4 – Final Class: Wrap Up and Looking Ahead

Final report due to Prof. Thompson by **12:00 noon, Dec. 7th**