



UCB1: Media and Society: The Middle East in the Global Context

Hosted by the University of California, Berkeley

Course dates: 5 July – 12 August, 2011

Students must arrive by Monday, 4 July 2011 (move-in from 10am to 10pm). Move-out date is Saturday, 13 August 2011 (10am)

Course Description

This course will examine global media coverage of the Middle East and the political, cultural and social impact it has on policy decisions and contemporary understandings of Arab identity. Through the analysis of media politics and communication biases, the course aims to broaden students' understanding of the region's complexity by pushing students to move beyond the narrow discussion of intractable regional conflicts and structural failures. Students in this course will analyze divergent political and media discourses concerning "the Middle East" reality and will critically assess the intellectual and policy consequences produced by conflicting and over-simplified paradigms of the region. They will also explore the social, cultural and media phenomena that are slowly changing the collective imagination of the Arab region.

The course will cover the following key topics, among others:

- Patriarchal societies and community values: The relationship between men and women in the Middle East
- The blossoming of internet-based social networks and blogging: What role do new media play in fostering community mobilization and encouraging social cohesiveness?
- Western Media and the creation of the Muslim enemy: A constructed clash of civilizations?
- A comparison of western and Arab media coverage of international crises: What are the similarities, differences and policy consequences?

Students have to complete all the sections listed below (5 units total). Course lectures will follow the trajectory outlined below:

Media and Society: The Middle East in the Global Context (4 units)

Part 1 – Grounding and Transcending Identities: The Dynamic Relation Between Media and Local Communities in the Arab Region.

In the first part of the course, lectures will explore the relationship between Arab societies and their media to understand how local media shapes political views and social mobilization, as well as cultural and identity biases across the region. In particular, we will note how the flourishing of new mass communication technologies (such as internet social networks) will re-shape future social interactions and inter-community dialogues.

Part 2 – Re-imagining the Region: Western Media in the Construction of the Middle East

In the second part of the course, lectures will focus on the western media's role in the construction of contemporary understanding and imagination of the Middle East. We will seek to explain why western political and ideological discourses of the region are generated and how they are sustained through effective manipulation of media strategies. Finally, we will explore how these very same discourses directly affect and influence western policies involving Middle Eastern countries.

Part 3 – Into the World: The Arab Region as Producer of Information and Knowledge

In the third part of the course, lectures will explore the Arab media's role in challenging the western-driven, neo-liberal political agenda. We will seek to compare how western and Arab networks broadcast regional and world news. We will ask how media (both western and Arab) interact with national authorities, what type of information they produce and in which way they contribute (or undermine) political and social stability. Finally, we will discuss if and how the diverging world views of western and Arab media will impair future international cooperation.

The course will adopt an interdisciplinary approach by offering both lectures and multimedia workshops. We hope students will continue to post to their individual websites and engage in media analysis after the conclusion of this class.

Group Study Section (1 unit)

The group study section will meet 1 hour per week for the 6-week duration of the "Media and Society: The Middle East in the Global Context" course. During this hour, students will break into groups tasked to analyze global media coverage surrounding assigned Middle East events. Students will individually research a specific country's coverage (across all platforms: print, broadcast, online) of an assigned event, summarize key findings into a 500-word blog post and share their research with their group members. The groups will then compare and contrast the geopolitical influences and limitations affecting the dissemination of news around the globe and package their conclusions into cohesive group web presentations.

Target Audience

Undergraduate students with background knowledge of Middle East history and a basic understanding of the region's contemporary political, social and economic features are required. Working knowledge of Arabic is an asset for some exercises, but is not a requirement. Also, we do not require any prior communication expertise or multimedia skills (e.g. HTML or blogging).

Please note that this class is NOT suitable for students wishing to improve their command of the English language.

Delivery Method, Exams & Learning Outcomes

The course will rely on student participation and active involvement through web-based (individual and group) assignments, as well as in-class discussions and group presentations.

During the first 4 weeks, half of the students' time will be spent in class lectures and discussions, while the other half will involve a series of media workshops. Lectures will illustrate the work, communication strategies and biases (intentional or not) adopted by key Arab and western media outlets. The media workshops will provide tutorials on a number of web-based multimedia tools, with specific focus on helping students conceptualize and launch their own websites and blogs. These individual websites will house all of the work the students produce over the duration of the course.

By the fifth week, students will be divided into groups. Each group will research global media coverage of a specific regional crisis (past or present). Over the next 2 weeks, members of each group will investigate how different media outlets report(ed) on the development of the crisis and the resulting public discourse of key events. Each group will be asked to design a website to communicate their findings. This exercise will be a collaborative endeavor, through which group members will not only develop their world view of the region, but also increase their web proficiency through the collaborative design of a multimedia presentation. The aim of the group project will be two-fold:

- To increase students' awareness of key media players in the region, while exposing them to several (and often divergent) world views of the Arab region
- To strengthen students' communication skills, web proficiency, creative thinking and leadership abilities

We hope students will continue to post to their individual websites and engage in media analysis after the conclusion of this class.

The class will meet Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1pm to 4:30pm. Attendance is mandatory for all sessions. The academic coordinator will be available during office hours throughout the 6 weeks of the course.

Media workshops will introduce students to the WordPress online publishing platform, as well as a number of web-based multimedia tools geared to help advance students' research findings.

This will be a 5-unit class.

Participation in class activities/discussion = 10%

1x individual website = 20%

5x 400-500 word blog posts = 30%

1x group website = 20%

1x group oral presentation = 20%

Please note: We will place great emphasis on group work because it will encourage students to think collectively around a specific issue and capitalize on each other's knowledge and expertise to identify viable solutions.

This course is conducted by Tara Graham (Academic Coordinator), plus faculty guest lecturers.

Where You Will Stay

Summer Sessions Residence Halls

http://conferenceservices.berkeley.edu/summersess_index.html

Costs

Tuition fee: USD \$2,085

The tuition cost can be broken down as follows:

USD \$1,400 course fee

USD \$385 enrollment fee

USD \$300 International service fee (not required for U.S. citizens or permanent residents)

Accommodation: USD \$2,193 (double) / USD \$1,841 (triple); All meals are included with housing, this amount is estimate for personal expenses or entertainment

Estimated visa cost: USD \$340

Estimated text book costs: USD \$216

Estimated living expenses: USD \$380

Further Information

Please visit <http://gsp.berkeley.edu>