

Contextual Studies in Journalism: Morocco and North Africa

JOUR 3000 (4 Credits)

Morocco: Field Studies in Journalism and New Media

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

This interdisciplinary course contextualizes journalistic practice within Morocco and North Africa,

Lecture topics from leading Moroccans in the artistic, social, and political realms (established academics, journalists, and civil society actors) include: religious institutions and practices, women's rights, economic development and migration, education and literacy, human rights, and cultural trends. The course covers the history of journalism in the region since Morocco's independence (in 1956), the role that journalism and broadcast media play in the development of individual and public liberties in North Africa, and the role of social media in public mobilization and discourse, particularly post Arab Spring. These timely lectures form the framework against which students understand contemporary Morocco, undertake their own reporting assignments, and gain from the unique reporter-editor relationship afforded by this program. Students collaboratively maintain a news site for which they monitor daily news on and from Morocco, familiarizing themselves with the media landscape.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe major social, political and cultural issues in Morocco and North Africa and summarize trends;
- Explain the role of media (including social media) in the region, historically and post-Arab Spring, and its relationships to civic freedoms and to political mobilization;
- Differentiate among media outlets in Morocco such as by ownership and independence.
- Analyze international news coverage of the country including identifying biases.
- Evaluate the significance and implications of events in the news.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content and words in Moroccan Arabic useful in field reporting.

Course Schedule

Students will be provided a detailed course schedule during orientation on the program. Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Morocco's Current Social, Political, and Cultural Climate

This module consists of lectures by respected scholars, recognized experts, artists and writers, and civil society actors. Students are assigned readings to prepare for each lecture and expected to ask questions of each lecturer after his/her presentation.

Topics for this module include:

- Religion
- Women and gender issues
- Youth and youth culture
- Economic development and inequality
- Migration
- Education and literacy
- Artistic culture (literature, music, dance, visual art, architecture)
- Agriculture and food
- Public health
- Berber culture
- Politics, including Morocco's version of the Arab Spring
- Human rights
- Sexuality

Lecturers

The following are a sampling of the lecturers students can expect.

- Stephanie Wilman Bordat, Global Rights Maghreb Director, on women's rights
- Abdessamad Dialmy, Moroccan sociologist, on sexual practices, attitudes and policies
- Kenza Sefrioui, cultural reporter and independent publisher, on literacy and cultural policies
- Alpha Camara, founder of ASCOMS platform representing migrant and refugee associations, on migration
- Yelins Mahtat, teacher of Arabic and Islamic studies at the Mowafaqa Institute, on religious practices and institutions

Required Readings:

Miller, S. G. (2013). *A history of modern Morocco*. Cambridge University Press.

Mernissi, F. (1995). *Dreams of trespass: Tales of a harem girlhood*. Perseus Books.

Mernissi, F. (1987). *Beyond the veil: Male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society* (Vol. 423). Indiana University Press.

Willis, M. (2012). *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*. London: Oxford University Press.

Ayouch, N. (2012). *Horses of God* (film).

Students will also be assigned a variety of other topical readings, including reports by international organizations; news articles and documentaries; and scholarly articles.

Excursions:

Students will visit institutions such as the historic human rights association AMDH (Association Marocaine des Droits Humains) and the Mohamed VI modern art museum.

Module 2: Journalism in Morocco: History, Politics and Law

This module consists of lectures on the practice of journalism in Morocco and how it relates to the country's political history and its legal framework. All lectures will be delivered by respected scholars or recognized professionals in the field. Students are assigned readings to prepare for each lecturer and are expected to ask questions of the lecturer after his/her presentation.

Topics for this module include:

- History of journalism in post-colonial Morocco
- Current state of the media in Morocco (media ownership, freedom of press, and Islamist media)
- The relationships between media, freedom of expression and human rights
- The press, the judiciary, and government policies and agencies. Ways in which domestic and international journalists negotiate press restrictions when reporting from outside the US, specifically in North Africa
- Social media: uses and implications

Lecturers

The following are a sampling of the lecturers students can expect.

- Driss Ksikes, professor and former editor-in-chief of *Tel Quel* magazine
- Taieb Belghazi, professor of cultural studies and history at the Faculty of Letters at Mohamed V University in Rabat
- Abdelhay Mouddeh, a professor at Mohamed V University in Rabat, specializing in human rights and political science
- Omar Radi, independent journalist, on investigative reporting and online activism

Required Readings:

Lesire-Ogrel, B. and Stangler, C. (2017). "The Revolutionary Potential of Journalism in Morocco," *The Nation Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-revolutionary-potential-of-journalism-in-morocco/>

Slyomovics, S. (2005). *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bouhmouch, N. (2012). *My Makhzen and Me* (documentary film).

Latest reports on press freedom and media laws in Morocco and North Africa by international and domestic watch dogs (CPJ, HRW, AMDH).

Excursions

The NGO e-Jussour, which supports digital community radio in Morocco; the independent publishing house En Toutes Lettres, which publishes investigative journalism books.

Module 3: Morocco's Margins, Borders, and Diversity

This module consists of excursions that take students out of the capital city of Rabat. They are an opportunity for students to learn more about Morocco's varied regions and cultures; about issues such as the rural-urban divide, youth unemployment, women's access to education, Morocco as a source and crossroads of migration, and the Amazigh (Berber) culture, language and identity. On excursions, students have the opportunity to visit educational, cultural and media institutions (schools, museums, film studios, radio stations) as well as to experience changes and challenges in rural Morocco during a village homestay.

Southern Excursion (Marrakech, Ouarzazate, and Agadir)

Students visit the Connect Institute in Agadir. They have a group discussion with young Moroccan students about the main issues in the region, and a day-long workshop practicing journalistic skills. In Ouarzazate, they spend the night at a secondary boarding school for young women. They learn about issues of education, literacy, and the challenges facing young women, especially in rural Morocco. Students are exposed to Amazigh (Berber) identity, language and traditional architecture.

Village Stay Excursion (Beni Kulloa, Ouazzane Province)

Students dive deeply into issues facing rural Morocco, spending five days immersed in village life. They are given an assignment observing and writing about rural life. They are expected to learn about the community and to pose informed questions at a final roundtable discussion with villagers.

Northern Excursion (Chefchaouen and Ceuta)

After reading about migration and hearing lectures in Rabat on the topic, students observe first hand the border between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta.

Required Readings

Collyer, M. (2010). Stranded migrants and the fragmented journey. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(3), 273-293.

Vox. (2018). Spain/Morocco, Africa's Gateway to Europe. Retrieved from:
<https://www.vox.com/a/borders/spain-morocco>

Bachelet, S. (2014). "Sub-Saharan Migrants' Quest for Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits," Jadaliyya.

Module 4: Reporting Morocco

Students closely monitor the news from Morocco. Through their work on the Reporting Morocco site, the class acts as a news team (see details below), deciding every day which stories should be featured on the site on the basis of relevance and reliability. Students analyze local and international coverage of Morocco and critically discuss breaking news stories. This module informs students' ISPJ proposals, as well as class discussions and question and answer sessions with lecturers.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Two Reporting Assignments (40%):

Reporting assignments include 2 short feature stories. The first will include writing a short feature story on food in Morocco, reported on the streets of Rabat; and the second will be writing about an aspect of rural life in Morocco, based on observation from the village stay. Assignments are revised and edited until they are polished and ready for posting on the on-line magazine, *Reporting Morocco*, which is produced by the students on this program.

(<http://morocco.roundearthmedia.org/>)

Daily News Postings and Fulfilling Roles Assigned for Reporting Morocco (30%):

Every day, throughout the program, a student posts three news stories that reflect “today’s top news” from Morocco on the Reporting Morocco site; they also post a photograph. Each student posts two to four times in the semester. Students with a facility in French will be asked to share news from French-language news sources; Arabic speakers will be asked to do the same.

Students choose roles to play managing the Reporting Morocco site and its social media channels: they can be news editors; photo editors; program outreach (contacting and interviewing alumni); and social media editors who produce posts via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Attendance and Participation (30%):

Assessment of a student's participation in the course will be based on prompt attendance at all course activities and positive presence in all course environments, as well as active listening—paying attention in class/during field excursions, taking full advantage of a lecturers’ knowledge by asking appropriate questions, entertaining contradictory perspectives, and taking notes.

Active participation includes coming to class prepared, having read all the assigned materials, as well as conducting independent research/reading on topics, lecturers and news stories as the need arises.

Students are expected to ask questions of lecturers. These questions should reveal the student’s understanding of the issues we’re studying and the unique and important role of a journalist in gleaned information from interview subjects.

Participation also includes involvement in class discussions—sharing knowledge and information both in small or large groups—and respect—positive and full interaction with host institutions, learners, SIT program affiliates, local communities, and fellow students.

Assessment:

Two Reporting Assignments	40%
Daily News Postings and Fulfilling Roles Assigned for Reporting Morocco	30%
Attendance and participation	30%

Grading Scale

SIT Study Abroad awards letter grades to all students in order to give standard values to an assessment of work. Pass/Fail and Credit/No Credit are not options.

The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
Below 64%	F

Grading Criteria

A: Ready for editing for publication or broadcast. Shows mastery of facts and elements. Story is compelling and original.

A-/B+: Accurate, contains all relevant material but may lack maximum precision and clarity in storytelling. May have spelling or grammar errors in text, lighting and sound problems in images and footage. The difference between an A- and B+ is the degree to which these occur.

B: Needs some editing, some minor rewriting, and minor production editing. All the elements are included.

B-/C+: A significant problem or two somewhere in the analysis, focus, organization, shooting, and/or production. The difference between a B- and C+ is the degree to which these problems appear.

C: Missing facts and key information. Major re-editing/reshooting or post production editing necessary. Missing crucial elements.

C-: Very weak effort.

D: Overhaul required. Poor organization, reporting, shooting, and/or production. Major storytelling issues (including sourcing, imaging) and absence of critical thinking.

F: Failure to meet assignment requirements and standards. Missed deadline.

Final grades will reflect plus (+) or (-) minus.

I = Incomplete

W = Withdrawal (student initiated)

AW = Administrative withdrawal

Note: SIT does not award A+ grades

General Expectations

Students are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate fully in all lectures, course discussions, and field visits/educational excursions. In addition to completing the required readings and being able to discuss them with a lively curiosity, students are expected to read local, regional, and global newspapers and other media.

Assignments are designed to facilitate study, reflection, and analyses of trenchant issues of journalism and new media in Morocco and North Africa utilizing all aspects of the program—

lectures, seminars, field excursions, and research conducted during the semester. Grades are based on preparation and participation in all seminars, discussions, and activities; peer edits; and demonstrated completion of all assigned readings. Timely completion of all course assignments is expected. Late submissions will be penalized.

Deadlines:

Please make them. To receive full credit for an assignment, you must turn it in by the deadline. All written assignments should be sent by e-mail. Make sure you keep back up files so nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.

Electronic Devices:

No texting, surfing, tweeting, or logging onto social media or the Internet while in class, unless instructed specifically for an assignment.

Lectures:

This is not only a chance to hear what experts have to say about important topics in Morocco, but also a chance to interview them. Do your homework before each lecture. Have questions ready. If it is your turn, be ready to introduce the lecturer. Your questions for the lecturers will be taken into account in your grade for the courses. A big part of doing good journalism is asking the right questions. Respect differences of opinion (classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen and consider other perspectives with respect.

Academic Honesty Policy:

This program has zero tolerance for plagiarism. Academic honesty is expected of all students. All quotes and source material must be properly attributed and verified. Your reporting must be original, truthful, accurate and free of fabrication. Any work you present as your own must be your own. Violations of this policy include plagiarism, fabrication, and any other form of cheating.

Communication:

It is your responsibility to know what's going on. This includes checking MOODLE *every day before class* for announcements, updates and changes in our course schedule. There will be changes. There will be new and/or additional assignments.

CARRY A NOTEBOOK WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES. A CAMERA AND RECORDER ARE ADVISABLE, TOO, though be discrete and abide by the rules of the program.

Definitions and Examples:

CHEATING: The conscious use of unauthorized, prohibited, or unacknowledged materials or methods, including, but not limited to, checking mobile devices, computers, or notes during online courses or copying others' work.

FABRICATING: The conscious falsification or invention of information, quotes, sources, or any other material presented as non-fiction. **THIS IS JOURNALISM: DO NOT MAKE UP ANYTHING** in work submitted on our program.

PLAGIARIZING: The conscious representation of someone else's work as your own. Please note that ANY failure to accurately and completely document ALL uses of source material constitutes academic dishonesty. You may use a quote from another source, but it must be attributed in journalistic style. Background and contextual information may NOT be taken from Wikipedia or many other online sites. When in doubt, discuss appropriate sourcing with me BEFORE submitting your assignment.

Academic Policies: SIT prides itself on providing students with an experientially based program; we hold ourselves, and our students, to the highest of academic standards. Students are asked to refer to the **SIT Study Abroad Handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.