Modernization and Social Change Seminar
MDES 3000 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Jordan: Modernization and Social Change

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
The Modernization and Social Change Seminar introduces students to major national and international concerns affecting Jordan and the Middle East. Students engage with local academics, civil society activists, and policy makers as they examine the mutually constitutive themes of modernity and social change in Jordan. The course provides a broad survey of fundamental issues of “Jordan in Transition” and enables students to focus in-depth on each of the additional following four topics: Palestine and Middle East Politics, Political Islam, Gender, Approaches to Development, and the Question of Refugees. The seminar includes classroom activities (lectures and reading assignments) and incorporates educational excursions, visits to organizations, workshops, critical thinking exercises, voluntary work, and field-based assignments. The Modernization and Social Change Seminar has an interdisciplinary, integrative, and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits).

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Identify historical and contemporary forces for social change shaping modern Jordan
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of local and regionally specific issues including Palestine and Middle East politics, Jordanian foreign policy, political Islam, gender, development, and the question of refugees
- Compare and contrast Jordan’s modernization and social change challenges with those in neighboring countries including Turkey
- Analyze rural development challenges in the context of rural development models and capacity building
- Design and compose a lecture discussion paper and a comparative case study of modernization and social change
Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English. Students are exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits.

Course Schedule

Module 1: Modernity and Tradition

Session 1: Jordan: Historical Background: Government, Tribes, Parties, and National Identity
This session provides an overview of the construction of national identity in Jordan, with an emphasis on political actors and institutions which both define and are defined by history, ethnicity, and tribal influence.

Required Reading:

Session 2: Social Change in Jordanian Society
Students will discuss the factors influencing changes in demographics, political beliefs, social mores, and cultural norms in Jordan. The Arab Spring provides a regional and theoretical lens through which students may view the changes in Jordan, and Jordan will be contrasted with neighboring nations.

Required Reading:

Session 3: Jordanian Youth
This session addresses the divergence between the older and more conservative population and the liberal Jordanian youth population. Emphasis will be placed on youth activism, particularly from students. Economic disenfranchisement and political apathy will be analyzed as drivers of or impediments to change.

Required Reading:

Module 2: Post-Arab Spring: Politics and Refugees in Jordan

Session 1: Formation of Foreign Policy and the Political System in Jordan
The development of Jordan’s foreign policy will be tracked from a historical perspective. Important events which shaped the trajectory of Jordan’s political system and regional role will be highlighted.

Required Reading:
Session 2: Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine
This session explores differences, perceived and real, between Jordanians of Palestinian descent and Jordanians of Jordanian descent from within a political and ethnic perspective. The effect of Palestinian refugees and Jordan’s proximity to and relations with Israel will be evaluated within this same context.

Required Reading:

Session 3: Iraqi and Syrian Refugees in Jordan
This session analyzes the effects – political, social, and economic – of Jordan’s significant population of refugees from across the Arab world. Emphasis is put on the case studies of Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

Required Reading:

Module 3: Islam and Democracy in Jordan

Session 1: Islam and Modernity
The role of Islam within changing social mores will be discussed. Modern ideas of government will be contrasted with the resurgence of Islamism at a political level. The average Jordanian’s religiosity will be highlighted and contextualized within the political and social atmosphere.

Required Readings:

Session Two: The Future of the Islamist Movement in the Middle East and Democratic Participation
Islamism will be discussed within the changing context of the Middle East, particularly in relation to regional political changes. An emphasis will be placed on the Muslim Brotherhood in both Jordan and regional states.

Required Reading:

Module 4: Gender Relations in a Traditional Society

Session 1: Women in Islam
This session analyzes gender relations and the role of women within the family and community through the context of Islam. The panel will also juxtapose the plurality of perceptions, cultural realities, and religious values.

Required Readings:

Session 2: History of the Women’s Movement in Jordan
This session reviews and analyzes the history of the women’s movement in Jordan. The focus is on the aspirations, organizations, and efforts – successful or otherwise – of the women’s movement over the past decades. The session will also assess the achievements and challenges of the feminist movement both within the context of Jordanian society and in comparison with feminist movements elsewhere.

Required Readings:

Session 3: Violence against Women
This session analyzes the frequency, intensity, and motivations behind violence directed at women from an empirical and theoretical perspective. Causes and effects will be discussed and contrasted with cultural expectations as well as outsider perceptions.

Required Readings:

Module 5: Modernity & Tradition in Turkey

Session 1: Turkey’s History and Role in the Middle East
Students will be exposed to materials and lectures that will outline Turkey’s importance as a regional and global actor. Subjects of study will include social mobilization, economy, religion, and Turkey’s changing policies both at home and abroad. Turkey’s influence and its relations with the U.S. will be stressed in order to create a strong foundation for understanding Turkey’s role in the Middle East.

Required Readings:

Session 2: Islam and Modernity in Turkey
Students will be exposed to an overview of the challenges facing Turkey regarding modernity, secularism, and Islam within Turkish society. They will be expected to analyze these subjects through the lenses of political and cultural theory and evaluate the relationship between religion and secularism in modern times. Subjects of study and debate will focus on everything from social norms to national security, with a strenuous focus on cultural, historical, and political analysis.
Session 3: Turkey and the Arab Spring
Turkey’s foreign policy has been reconfigured in recent years in order to address the rise of the country into the group of “second-tier BRIC” states. Although Turkey’s involvement in the Arab Spring took a major toll on the country’s soft power potential, it has also initiated a learning process for Turkish diplomacy. Through select lectures, readings, and field observance, students will evaluate the importance of Turkey’s position in influencing regional development, and how the Arab Spring has changed the country’s status quo with its Kurdish population.

Required Reading:

Module 6: Modernization and Sustainable Development

Session 1: The Jordanian Economy
This session will provide an overview of major Jordanian industry, revenue streams for the government, and trade partners. Points of economic contention for the Jordanian people and regime will be emphasized.

Required Reading:

Session 2: Environment and Sustainable Development
Jordan’s environmental challenges, including water scarcity, lack of domestically produced energy sources, pollution, and desertification, will be evaluated alongside regional and localized solutions. The influence and effectiveness of NGOs and civil society will be highlighted.

Required Reading:

Session 3: Tourism and Sustainable Development in the South of Jordan
Through an educational excursion to the South of Jordan, students visit cultural, historical, and environmental landmarks in Jordan and evaluate the importance of tourist destinations from the perspective of modernization, environmental sustainability, and cultural heritage. The excursion is structured around field visits of select associations and development projects, readings, field assignments, meetings with local communities, and reflection sessions.

Required Readings:
Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Participation and Attendance: 10%
Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory, and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and outside class.

Book Review: 15%
Write a critical book review (min. 5 pages) for Cities of Salt or The Modern History of Jordan. Please bring your 5-8 page paper discussing one of the two books with you to the first day of orientation. Make sure to answer the following questions in well-written language free of grammar and spelling errors: What did you learn about modernization in the Middle East and in Jordan? What is the vantage point of each author? What key further questions were provoked by your reading that you hope to explore during the semester?

Discussion Leadership: 20%
Student-led discussion of a pre-assigned lecture topic: including emphasis on assigned readings, preparation of discussion questions, and presentation of supplemental materials on the topic (interviews, articles, discussions with lecturers, etc).

Lecture Analysis Paper: 20%
A 2-3 page paper completed in tandem with the Discussion Leadership assignment and focused on the following:
1. Based on your readings and the lecture for which you led the discussion, identify the main themes and issues raised in the lecture.
2. In what way does the theme contribute to the concept of Modernization & Social Change in Jordan?
3. What aspects of the lecture facilitated cross-cultural exchange or understanding?
4. Pay attention to style (lingo and terminology) and issues of presentation: how do the lecturers construct themselves, the “natives,” the local landscape, etc., in their presentation?
5. What lessons can be learned and applied from this lecture and accompanying readings to your semester in Jordan and/or your ISP topic?

Comparative Case Study - Modernization and Social Change in Jordan: 35%
In 5-8 pages, present a comparative analysis of the various aspects of modernization, development, and change in both Jordan and Turkey following your weeklong stay in the latter. In your analysis, cover three of the following areas:
- Political life and citizen involvement / National identity
- Democratic change / Religious life and role of Islam in politics
- Minorities / Education and social consciousness
- Conditions of women
- Urbanization and development
- Social life: The cultural scene, youth culture and participation
- Any other aspects you would like to consider

Assessment:

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Grading Scale
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

Expectations and Policies

Students are responsible for the timely reading of materials assigned for each session. In addition to readings, it is also your responsibility to keep up to date with current events. At a minimum, you are required to read the Jordan Times newspaper (in hardcopy form or online http://www.jordantimes.com. It is also recommended that you read a daily newspaper available on-line in English (for example, Ammon News at http://en.ammonnews.net/)

Attendance and active participation during lectures is required of all students. The success of the thematic seminars depends upon the construction of a community of active thinkers, listeners, and readers. You will rely on each other for lively discussion, respectful dissension, and conscientious, critical analysis of the lectures.

Once during the seminar, each student will lead a discussion of a pre-assigned lecture topic, including an incorporation of the assigned readings, preparation of discussion questions to prompt critical inquiry, and the provision of supplemental materials on the topic.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.