Multiculturalism and Human Rights in the Context of the Arab Spring
AFRS 3000 (3 credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Morocco: Multiculturalism and Human Rights

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.

Description
This seminar aims to introduce students to the major current debates in Morocco on the question of multiculturalism and human rights. The course focuses on the new political, cultural, and transnational context in the wake of the Arab Spring. The social revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East have led the Moroccan state to accelerate the pace of reforms. In July 2011, in a constitutional referendum, the people approved a new constitution which acknowledges Morocco’s cultural diversity and institutionalizes the state’s commitment to the respect and promotion of human rights and individual liberties.

The seminar engages Moroccan academics, artists, civil society activists, policy makers, and students in debates on the development of a multicultural society where Amazighi language and identity, Andalusian customs and traditions, sub-Saharan cultural roots and ethnicities, and Arab linguistic and religious mapping are equally celebrated in the public sphere. The seminar is divided into six main themes: politics and institutions of human rights in Morocco, gender and religion in post-Arab Spring Morocco, multiculturalism and social movements, youth and family, major development issues, and cultural representations and the arts. Areas covered tackle the dynamics of Moroccan culture and society through an examination of manifestations of nationality, power, ideology, gender, class, ethnicity, and development. Overall, the approach of this seminar is multi-disciplinary, giving priority to understanding the multifaceted complexity of the questions raised. This allows the students the freedom to relate to the issues at hand through not only the readings, but more importantly the individual experiences and stories encountered in daily life and the challenging learning process across cultural boundaries.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Identify from both a theoretical and practical standpoint the concepts of multiculturalism and human rights in the contemporary context, with particular attention given to Moroccan reality;
- Analyze current issues related to the development of individual and public liberties in Morocco regarding the spheres of human rights, religion, society, culture, and politics;
• Assess the work of institutions and NGOs in the areas of human rights and culture;
• Evaluate the integration of women and minority groups in the public sphere;
• Demonstrate country-specific knowledge about the impact of the Arab Spring on the
development of human rights in Morocco;
• Produce critical papers on issues of multiculturalism and human rights in Morocco and
as they relate to Morocco’s position in the cross-regional context of the Arab Spring.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English, but students will be simultaneously learning Modern Standard
Arabic and expected to engage community members in this language (to the best of their
abilities) when the opportunity arises.

Course Schedule
*Please be aware that course contents, lecturers, and readings may be modified as needed. Should any changes of
class topics or lecturers be necessary, students will be promptly notified.

Module I: Human Rights and Social Movements in the Context of the Arab Spring
This module offers an overview of the different social movements in Morocco and engages with
the dynamic launched by the Arab Spring and the ways Islamism has interacted with it. It will
address the challenges posed by fieldwork on social movements in the Moroccan context. The
sessions are based on a selection of readings that are pertinent to the module and an exercise
in field work.

Sessions May Include:
• Human Rights and Multiculturalism: Current Issues in Morocco
• Moroccan Social Movements and the Impact of the Arab Spring
• The Politics of Post-Islamism in the Context of a Hybrid Regime and Social Movements
• Social Movements, Post-Islamism, and New Research Opportunities in Post-Arab Spring
• Women’s Rights in Morocco

Required Readings:
University Press.
447-463.
Sociology, 61(4), 393-408.
The Berber Manifesto. (2000). Retrieved from

Recommended Reading:
Austin, L. (2011). The Politics of Youth Bulge: From Islamic Activism to Democratic Reform in
the Middle East and North Africa. SAIS Review of International Affairs, 31(2), 81-96.

Module II: Women’s Rights in Morocco—National Law Reform and International
Standards
This module focuses on women’s human and legal rights in Morocco. We will analyze and
contrast international standards, national laws, and lived realities. The sessions are based on a
diverse selection of readings that include theoretical articles, practitioner perspectives, and
primary source texts of international and national laws. This week also includes a research and
fieldwork exercise that combines research on the United Nations human rights system and
community level consultation interviews.
Sessions May Include:
- The Moroccan Family Code: Law versus Implementation
- Human Rights and Violence against Women
- Researching the International Human Rights System
- Field Assignment: International Human Rights Law in Moroccan Context

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Module III – Religion, Politics, and Everyday Life in a Multicultural Society
This module attempts to give an inside perspective on Islam, through its sacred and mundane view: how texts are read and interpreted, who interprets them, how Muslims throughout history live their religion, and how they adapt it to answer questions related to their daily life and social, cultural, and religious day-to-day duties and responsibilities. The seminar aims, through selected texts from the Qur’an/Koran, the Hadith, and the Tafsir (pl.Tafassir), at shedding light on aspects of Muslim life from past to present on issues related to dress, belief, practices, and interreligious dialogue. The Moroccan way of living Islam will also be highlighted during the sessions.

Sessions May Include:
- Hijab between the religious texts and its practice today,
- Sharia in Islam: between revelation and practice
- Religious freedom and human rights in Morocco

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• Islam and Sexuality
• How to conduct research using the religious texts?
• Group Discussion with Moroccan students on religion and human rights

**Required Reading:**

**Module IV: Social Change and Individuation Processes in Morocco**
We intend, through this module, to contribute to a better understanding of the process of individuation in Moroccan society. Social and economic change is disintegrating traditional structures and relationships. Primary groups are increasingly losing their authority over the individual. Globalization is also contributing to the process of freeing the individuals from a mechanical obedience towards their traditional groups of belonging. As an effect of this context of social, economic, and cultural change, individuation processes are being accelerated in families and communities and new modes of sexist and intergenerational conflicts are emerging.

**Sessions May Include:**
- Processes of Individuation in Moroccan Society
- Language and Human Rights in Morocco
- Youth and Social and Political Transition
- The Next Generation: Discussion with Moroccan University Students
- Doing Research on Social Change Processes

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Module V: Major Development Issues in Morocco**
As a developing country, Morocco is under a process of economic, social, and political change. While the agrarian aspect of the economy is still consistent, the industrial sector is developing in large cities, as are tourism and service activities. Education is contributing to improved human capital and a qualified workforce. Yet women are still marginalized as regards education and employment; little effort is done to empower women and fully integrate them economically. Over the last two decades, living standards have generally improved in Morocco, but life in villages and rural areas is still hard, with rising poverty and limited access to education and social welfare. A relative effort is made by the Moroccan state to support small producers and a self-employed population through microfinance and incentives for cooperatives.

**Sessions May Include:**
- Major Development Issues in Morocco
- Microfinance and Women’s Empowerment
Researching Development in Morocco
Field Session: Informal Economy and Development

Required Reading:


Module VI: Multiculturalism and Contemporary Moroccan Visual Arts
This module focuses on Moroccan post-colonial art and the various aesthetic strategies of resistance developed by Moroccan artists to break away from the colonial ethnographic and exotic representations. The module also offers a critical introduction into the works of some of the most challenging 21st century Moroccan artists.

Sessions May Include:
- Colonial vs. Post-Colonial Art in Morocco: From Resilience to Resistance
- Multiculturalism, Art, and Craftsmanship
- The School of the Sign
- Islamist Movement and the Arts
- Field Session: Visit to Bank Al Maghrib Museum

Assignment:
Students should form six groups and select one of the following questions to work on and do a group presentation:
1. Using some specific examples, show how “The School of the Sign” art movement has tried to rehabilitate the Moroccan cultural heritage.
2. If you were part of that movement, which element(s) from the Moroccan pop culture would you have revisited and how?
Your presentation could be either in the form of an argument or an artistic work.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria
Description of Assignments:
Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.

The program requires two papers for the HRMS assessment (one mid-term and one final). Each paper should be five pages long and should be based primarily on library sources (e-resources included). Its theme is expected to be inspired by the lectures and the readings assigned (either the required or the recommended). Justify the selection of your topic if it seems unrelated to the wordings of the sessions’ titles or the readings. For instance, if you choose desertification and its impact on the Amazighi culture of the south of Morocco, this is justified by its relation to Amazighism as a social movement. The public space can be tackled as a topic related to politics or gender. The overall grade will be based on the mid-term (35%) and the final papers (55%), as well as on class participation (10%).
Class Participation:
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening, and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, educational excursions, assignments, and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. An absent student is responsible for contacting the instructor, the tutor, and/or fellow students to be prepared for the assignments s/he missed and the ones scheduled for the next class.

Assessment:
Midterm paper 35%
Final paper 55%
Class participation 10%

Grading Scale:
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:
An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation and consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical, and/or historical evidence. In terms of class participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening, and active engagement in all academic seminar lectures, discussions, field trips, and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of student participation will be monitored and taken into account.

Student Expectations
• Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
• Have assignments completed on schedule. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
• Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
• Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
• 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 across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

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.