Politics, Civil Society, and Migration in Tunisia

Tunisia and Italy: Politics and Religious Integration in the Mediterranean

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.

Course Description
This interdisciplinary seminar addresses ways in which government politics and civil society action bear on human mobility in Tunisia and the region. The succession of revolutions in the MENA (Middle East, North Africa) region and the disintegration of authoritarianism in Tunisia and its replacement by nascent democracy have not only accented human mobility across North Africa and Europe but also created a new legal, economic, cultural, and political framework to deal with it. The seminar explores the diverse roles of state and civil society in the democratization process and shows the treatment of migration is shifting from the perspective of European safety and security to immigrant human rights and integration of asylum seekers. The dynamic role played by the Tunisian NGOs explains the success of democratic transition and testifies to the humane and multifaceted question of human mobility in the region today.

Learning Outcomes
The Politics, Civil Society, and Migration in Tunisia seminar comprises 45 hours of instruction (3 credits). Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- List the Tunisian laws on human mobility and human trafficking and the main international conventions on the issues;
- Identify the main civil society organizations active in the field of migration and human trafficking;
- Evaluate the connection between civil society and human mobility and human trafficking;
- Formulate an informed, culturally appropriate and intellectually rigorous independent study project grounded in course readings, lectures and discussions, site visits, and educational excursions both in Tunisia and in Italy

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English. Students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and locales.

**Instructional Methods**

SIT’s teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a \textit{concrete experience}, \textit{reflective observation}, abstract conceptualization, and \textit{active experimentation} embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

**Course Schedule**

*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: Impact of Arab Revolutions on the Euro-Mediterranean Space**

This module is designed to familiarize the students with the concept of Mediterranean history and culture, exploring common political, social, religious and economic features. Salient among these features today is the Arab Spring revolutions, and their impact on human mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Sessions address:
- Brief History of the Mediterranean from antiquity to the present;
- European attitudes towards the recent revolutions in North Africa;
- Impact of the revolutions on the European countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean: Italy and Greece;
- Human mobility in the Euro-Mediterranean space after the revolutions.

**Session 1: Conceptualizing the Euro-Mediterranean Space**

In this session the students will explore the idea of a Mediterranean culture, dwelling both on the similarities and the differences, continuities and disruptions between the different national “cultures.” More importantly the conceptualization will consider the political, economic, and social implications of the idea of Euro-Mediterranean space, its institutional formulation, and the modalities of its apprehension of the phenomenon of human mobility and migrants’ integration within it.
Required Readings:

Session 2: A New Social Actor: Civil Society in Tunisia
This session focuses on the emergence of Tunisian civil society, principally women and youth associations, as key players in Tunisian polity, and their roles in the January 2011 Revolution, and ongoing democracy-building process. The session shows that without civil society, the challenges of immigration and human mobility would probably have been approached merely from security perspective. The session will include onsite visits to associations to evaluate their action in the democratic process and the role they play in immigrant integration.

Field Visit: Institut de Developpement Humain (youth radicalization prevention through culture, sports and the arts); Al Bawsala (Observatory of the Political scene and Parliament action); I-Watch (Transparency and good governance), Ligue des Electrices Tunisiennes (League of Tunisian Women Voters, for women’s rights and empowerment in political representation).

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Session 3: Civil Society and Minority Groups
This session focuses on the various minority groups organized in civil society associations that operate as watchdogs for democracy consolidation in Tunisia, including trade unions. Students examine the UGTT historical role in the post-revolutionary democratic transition “national dialogue” (which earned it the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize); women’s associations both secular and Islamist, and the thriving associations for minority groups such as LGBT, Jewish, Amazigh, and Tunisians of sub-Saharan origin. Field visits to M’nefty (My Dream), NGO against racism and racial discrimination; Damj (inclusion), for LGBTQ+ rights.

Required Reading:

Session 4: Group Discussion and Reflection on the Thematic Content of the Module

Module 2: Civil Society, Immigration, and Human Trafficking Awareness in Tunisia
The module examines the complex issues of immigration, both documented and undocumented, as well as human trafficking in Tunisia through two workshops organized by the dynamic civil society organizations in the field of human mobility and human trafficking: FTDES (The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights) and Not4Trade (Human trafficking).

Sessions address:
- Understanding precise terminology related to migration and human trafficking;
- Understanding the difference between the various statuses: asylum seeker, refugee, migrant, victim of human trafficking;
- International cooperation and civil society in the prevention of human trafficking and defending migrants’ rights;
- Familiarization with all signed conventions related to the issue;
- Immigration and social media.

Session 1: Workshop on Immigration
This session consists of a workshop organized by The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights. Over a period of two days the students will acquire a clear understanding of the history of migration and mobility in Tunisia, learn about the signed conventions and the organizations working in the field and learn to identify all the factors of the “push and pull” at
work in human mobility in Tunisia and the region. The workshop ends with a meeting and
discussion with the director-general of the National Office of the Immigration.

Recommended Readings:
file:///C:/Users/GRAIOU~1/AppData/Local/Temp/WP95%20Fifty%20years%20of%20Maghreb%20emigration.pdf
Studies, December 36:10, 1531-1536.

Session 2: Workshop on Human Trafficking
This session consists of a workshop on human trafficking organized by Not4Trade founder,
Racha Haffar. Over a period of two days, the students will learn about human trafficking in
Tunisia, and the goals, means, and actions undertaken by the association. They will also learn
about Tunisia’s national legislation on human trafficking (law of 26 August 2017) and the
international conventions signed by the Tunisian state (the Palermo convention), and mainly
the reasons why, despite progressive legislation, human trafficking persists in the country. The
workshop ends with a meeting and discussion with members of the National Commission on
Human Trafficking.

Recommended Readings:
Slavery and Human Trafficking Bibliography. University of Texas at Arlington. Retrieved from:
https://libraries.uta.edu/dillard/subfiles/SlaveryHumanTraffickingBib.htm
Slavery and Human Trafficking Bibliography. Georgetown University. Retrieved from:
https://isim.georgetown.edu/sites/isim/files/files/upload/2.23.2015%20Trafficking%20Biblio
graphy.pdf

Session 3: Group Discussion and Reflection on the Thematic Content of the Module

Module 3: Public Authority, Immigration, and Human Trafficking in Tunisia
This module premises that the Tunisian state is aware that immigration and human trafficking
are fundamental challenges to the ongoing democracy-consolidation phase in Tunisia, and that
they are the social, economic and cultural founding of democratic system. Whereas the first
challenge hinges around youth unemployment and aims mainly at circumventing this very
cause that triggered the January 2011 Revolution, the second one aims at shoring democracy
from the gross infringements of human rights. The module argues that in the response to both
challenges the role of public authority is crucial. Students examine how historically
marginalized constituencies in Tunisian society, namely women, youth, children, transit
migrants, ethnic minorities, all vulnerable to immigration and human trafficking, are protected or unprotected by the state.

Sessions address:
- Legislation on undocumented immigration and human trafficking before the 14 January 2011 Revolution;
- Legislation on undocumented immigration since the 14 January 2011 Revolution;
- The mission of the Tunisian Office of Immigration and Technical Cooperation;
- The EU treaties on undocumented immigration with the Tunisian government;
- Women and children protection laws in Tunisia.

Session 1: Immigration and Human Trafficking Legislation
This session provides a critical review of the main existing legislation related to undocumented immigration and human trafficking since Independence.

Required Reading:

Session 2: Immigration, Education, and Social Media
This session is devoted to education in Tunisia. It will review the challenges and hopes associated with education and its effect on immigration, both in the selective form known as “brain drain” and undocumented across-the-Mediterranean mobility. The session also examines the role played by social media in the preparation and organization of documented and undocumented human mobility.

Required Readings:

Recommended Reading:

Session 3: Immigration and Jihadism
Taking Tunisia as an example, the session explores the relationship between radical Islam and immigration. The session examines the notion of “holy war” in its dual manifestation as radicalized youth leaving in numbers Muslim and non-Muslim countries to fight in Libya and Syria, and young Jihadists leaving these war-zones as refugees bent on actions of violence in asylum countries. The session also looks at the actions undertaken by civil society associations to prevent, through the arts, sports, and culture, the radicalization of youth.
**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**Session 4: Group Discussion and Reflection on the Thematic Content of the Module**

**Module 4: Mobility, Citizenship, and Security in the Mediterranean**
This module focuses on the context of mobility across the Mediterranean and demonstrates how it impacts definitions of citizenship both in the host country and country of origin. The module also looks at the impact of mass migration and refugee flux and related security concerns on Mediterranean crossings. Discussions started in this module would continue during the excursion to Italy and students have the opportunity to see how issues such as security and citizenship play out in physical space and help reconstruct the social and cultural life-world of European societies.

**Sessions address:**
- Citizenship and the nation state: shifting categories in a changing social and cultural environment;
- Immigrants, asylum seekers, and the question of borders;
- Youth radicalism in the Mediterranean and beyond;
- Can Europe close its borders to humans fleeing zones of conflict?;
- Italian associations working with immigrants.

**Session 1: Citizenship in Limbo**
Through life narratives, we study in this session the case of the “harraga” or clandestine migrants who obliterate their personal documents to efface any trace that may betray their country of origin, in the hope of foiling the risks of “refoulement” or deportation. Beyond the sheer dramatic hopelessness of such a gesture, the students are invited to reflect on the ambiguity of the correlation between citizenship, personal identity, and politics.

**Session 2: War Heroes or Criminals?**
In this session we examine the problematic issue of the returnees from the war zones of Syria and Libya, the ambiguity of popular perception (heroes or terrorists?), the contradictory...
statistics, the government measures for their reinsertion, and the role of civil society organizations. Of special importance in the session is the example of the many dozen Tunisian girls who engaged in what is known as the “Jihad Nikah” or “Holy Prostitution” in Syria, and the civil and legal status of the children begat from the unions.

Session 3: Migratory Flows in the Mediterranean: Push and Pull Factors
With the support of illustrative maps, the session will help students to trace the migratory flow across the Sahara and through Tunisia, from the countries of origin, Mali and Niger, to the countries of destination, Italy and Greece. Though one of the learning outcomes is to identify and understand the push and pull factors related to migratory projects, a leading objective of the session is to recognize the violence of human trafficking involved in this migratory flow.

Session 4: Group Discussion and Reflection on the Thematic Content of the Module

Required Readings:

Assignments and Evaluation
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.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Critical Paper (50%)
During the semester, students will be required to write one critical paper that analyzes an aspect of political or religious transformation in Tunisia. Students are also encouraged to extend the analysis to the Mediterranean region. The paper should be at least five pages long.

2) Appraisal/Design of Social Entrepreneurship Project (30%)
Students will also do a critical assessment of a social entrepreneurship project. This project can either appraise the reach and efficiency of an existing project or the blueprint of a project thought through and proposed by the student and should be 10 – 15 pages long.

3) Oral Presentation of the Entrepreneurship Project (10%)
Students will provide a 10 to 15 minute presentation of the social entrepreneurship project.

4) Class Attendance and Participation (10%)
Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and during other activities and excursions.

**Assessment:**
- Critical Paper - 50%
- Appraisal/Design of the Entrepreneurship Project - 30%
- Oral Presentation of Immigrant Integration - 10%
- Class Attendance and Participation - 10%

**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

**Program 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, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. 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 (those of classmates, lecturers, and local constituents). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

**SIT Policies and Resources**

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.
Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.