

Cultural Identity and Transformations in the Mediterranean

(EURO-3500 | 3 credits)

Spain: Social Movements, Democracy, and Cultural Identity

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

The Mediterranean has been for decades the center of different political, economic, social, geopolitical, environmental, security, and border challenges, all of which directly impact the lives of the millions that live around the Mediterranean Sea. The EU, since the “Barcelona Process” in the nineties, has tried and failed to create a space of stability and development in this “neighborhood”. This course will take a multidisciplinary perspective to understand the state of relations between Spain, Morocco, and the EU. The course will also analyze in depth the ways in which local communities struggle in this context to preserve cultural roots, identity, and their own memory and history. Students will also study how these issues are understood and experienced from outside of the EU at different levels, from a global perspective with a comparative lens. The course will study how these issues are interconnected and have concrete effects on local politics, identities and policies, economies, human rights and social movements, advocacy, cooperation and interculturality.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand the current relations in the Mediterranean from a transdisciplinary perspective;
- Examine the social and identity construction of the Euro-Mediterranean space;
- Describe the current conflicts and transformations occurring in the Mediterranean and their similarities and differences;
- Contrast how issues such as social movements, democracy, human rights, and cultural identity are seen, experienced, and analyzed in Morocco.
- Identify and interpret the different advocacy networks and their multidimensional work being done in the Euro-Mediterranean sphere.

Instructional Methods

The objectives will be accomplished through readings, activities, discussions, and student presentations; instructor commentary and presentation; peer feedback; systematic analysis of research studies and journal articles; and the design, completion, presentation, and evaluation of a research study.

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, and 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 concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and 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.

Required Texts

Feliu, L., Ribas-Mateos, N., Mateo, L., & Brichs, F. I. (eds.) (2023). *Social Mobilization in Morocco: Lessons Learned for a Historically Informed Activism*. ibidem Press.

Ribas-Mateos, N. (2015). Chap. 2 "Locating EU-Mediterranean Borders" and chap. 5 "The Catalan Border". In *Border shifts: new mobilities in Europe and beyond*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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, and argumentation, presentation of evidence and use of comparative perspective.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Conflict Poster (35%)

Currently in the Mediterranean one can find many conflicts, tensions, and transformations that involve local communities, governments, or even supranational actors. For this assignment students will create a visual board that shows the most relevant points and issues related to a conflict or transformation of their choice and its impact on politics, society, or identity. The

posters will be displayed on our premises and then discussed orally. The poster should show the student's understanding of the conflict, the different actors, power relations, as well as the impact on the communities involved. It should demonstrate the student's capacity to synthesize arguments, integrate data collected through class lectures and field visits, and provide critical insights about conflict transformation and its consequences for different actors and communities.

2) Comprehensive Essay Exam (35%)

The comprehensive essay exam will consist of a 3-page essay which should demonstrate the student's capacity to synthesize and engage critically with main arguments and experiences addressed through lectures, readings, or field visits throughout the course. Students will be provided with two essay questions to choose from.

3) Oral Presentation (20%)

At the end of the excursion to the north of Morocco, students will be asked to present orally about any of the political, identity, or social issues that have been discussed during the excursion. Students will work in groups and present to the rest of the class about an issue that they choose, analyzing its characteristics, actors involved, and impact in the community, focusing on observations made during the days in Morocco.

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. This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions, and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

Conflict Poster	35%
Comprehensive Essay Exam	35%
Oral presentation in Morocco	20%
Class Attendance and Participation	10%

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

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 (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.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

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.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lectures' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Euro-Mediterranean Relations: Development, Politics, and Cooperation.

The shores of the Mediterranean are one of the points of the planet where it is possible to see human mobility, conflicts, tragedies, as well as also hopes, cooperation, and civil society organizations working in defense of human rights and the lives of migrants and refugees. This module will analyze from a transdisciplinary perspective the current state of the relationship between different actors that interplay in the region's governance, and that have influenced its stability, development, or potential.

Sessions may include:

- Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region
- Intercultural dialogue and exchange in the Mediterranean
- The process of Barcelona and its "failure"
- Spain: Relations with the Mediterranean as a region
- The European Union and its relationship with the Mediterranean
- How do Southern Mediterranean countries engage with the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean?
- Geopolitics and borders in the Mediterranean (southern border of Spain)
- Institutional actors and NGOs' role in the region's governance

Required Readings

Bicchi, Federica and Gillespie, Richard (2011) The Union for the Mediterranean: continuity or change in Euro-Mediterranean relations? - special issue, edited by Bicchi, F. and Gillespie, R. *Mediterranean Politics*, 16 (1). ISSN 1362-9395

Fossum, J. E., et al (2023). Governing diversity in the multilevel European public space. *Ethnicities*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968231158381>

Zapata-Barrero, R. (2020). "Towards an Urban Mediterranean Migration Agenda on this 25th Anniversary of the Barcelona Process", *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, N. 30-31; 47-54.

Recommended Readings

Del Sarto, Rafaella and Schumacher, Tobias. (2005), From EMP to ENP: What's at Stake with the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Southern Mediterranean? *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 10(1). pp. 17 – 38

Woertz, E., & Soler, E. (2020). Populism and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation: The Barcelona Process 25 years after. *Mediterranean Politics*, 27(3), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2020.1799165>

Roccu, R., & Voltolini, B. (2018). Framing and reframing the EU's engagement with the Mediterranean: Examining the security-stability nexus before and after the Arab uprisings. *Mediterranean Politics*, 23(1), 1–22.

Module 2: Cultural Identities in the Mediterranean: Historical Roots, Contemporary Issues

Many civilizations have emerged around the Mediterranean and there has been undeniable and non-stop exchange, cooperation, tensions, commerce, and conflicts. In this context, how do we discuss and describe a Mediterranean identity? Or at the same time, how do the contemporary multitude of identities develop in the region and interact with the state, civil society, or the European Union? This module will explore the historical roots, and current issues and dynamics of different cultural identities living in the Mediterranean region.

Sessions may include:

- Is there a Euro-Mediterranean identity?
- The Mediterranean Sea, place of exchange, commerce and more
- Territorial and minority national identities in the Mediterranean
- Romani communities in Andalucía
- Jewish struggles, heritage, and current communities
- Mudejar and Islam in contemporary Spain
- Conservative turn and backlash to minorities
- Ethnic and race issues in Spain

Required Readings

Caballero Gálvez, A. A. (2017). The downfall of Spanish stereotypes: Andalusian, Basque and Catalan identities in 'plurinational' Spain. *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies*, 9(1), 67-85.

Kende, A., Hadarics, M., Bigazzi, S., Boza, M., Kunst, J. R., Lantos, N. A., Láštiová, B., Minescu, A., Pivetti, M., & Urbiola, A. (2020). The last acceptable prejudice in Europe? Anti-Gypsyism as the obstacle to Roma inclusion. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24(3), 388–410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220907701>

Tabea Alexa, L. (2014). Chapter 5 and Conclusion. In *Jewish Spain: A Mediterranean Memory*. Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.11126/stanford/9780804787390.001.0001>

Recommended Readings

Bravo López, F. (2023). Moorish Blood: Islamophobia, Racism and the Struggle for the Identity of Modern Spain. In: Feldman, D., Volovici, M. (eds).

Antisemitism, Islamophobia and the Politics of Definition. Palgrave Critical Studies of Antisemitism and Racism. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16266-4_4

Hale, S. (2009). Transnational Gender Studies and the Migrating concept of Gender in the Middle East and North Africa. *Cultural Dynamics* 21(2), pp. 133-5.

Juventeny Berdún, S. (2017). Much 'more than a club': Football Club Barcelona's contribution to the rise of a national consciousness in Catalonia (2003–2014). *Soccer & Society*, 20(1), 103–122.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2016.1267624>

Module 3: Human Mobility, Advocacy, and Rights in the Mediterranean

The European Union has in the last years been in constant tension due to its relations with other countries of the Mediterranean and the constant flow of migrants and refugees, but also internally for the emergence of illiberal regimes among its borders that jeopardize the human rights of these countries' citizens. The current European context provides several examples of the extreme vulnerability of migrants and refugees as well as of modern human rights violations, both of which will be discussed and analyzed in this module.

Sessions may include:

- Human mobility, globalization, and geopolitics in the XXI century EU
- Contemporary human rights in Spain
- European advocacy networks and the defense of human rights
- EU external migration policy and the protection of human rights
- Immigration and human rights in the southern border of Europe
- Impacts of migration on the identity of migrants
- Temporary workers and lack of workers' rights for immigrants
- Housing rights and evictions: an ongoing conflict
- Women's rights and current backlash

Required Readings

Anduiza, E., & Rico, G. (2022). Sexism and the Far-Right Vote: The Individual Dynamics of Gender Backlash. *American Journal of Political Science*.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12759>

Cardwell, P. J., & Dickson, R. (2023). "Formal informality" in EU external migration governance: the case of mobility partnerships. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(12), 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2023.2193743>

Stierl, M. (2017). A Fleet of Mediterranean Border Humanitarians. *Antipode*, 50(3), 704–724. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12320>

Recommended Readings

Cusumano, Eugenio (2023) Failing through: European migration governance across the central Mediterranean, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(12).

Dennison, J. (2022). Re-thinking the drivers of regular and irregular migration: evidence from the MENA region. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-022-00296-y>

Sikkink, K. (2017). The Power of Networks in International Politics. In *Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance* (pp. 228–248). Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801458880-013>

Module 4: Morocco: Migration, and Local Struggles

The excursion to northern Morocco provides an opportunity for students to analyze the interconnected history between the two sides of the Mediterranean and contextualize the debate around social movements, democracy, and cultural identity and its global impacts and interconnections. Through meetings with political and social actors, as well as with academics, students will appraise the multidimensional complexities of northern Morocco as well as learn from an active and participatory civil society.

Sessions may include:

- Social movements and activism in contemporary Morocco
- Mediterranean relations: cooperation and tensions
- Temporary worker migration from the north of Africa
- Border and refugee crisis
- Geopolitics of borders

Required Readings

Belghazi, T., & Moudden, A. (2015). Iibat: disillusionment and the Arab Spring in Morocco. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 21(1), 37–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2015.1084097>

Maghraoui, D. (2019). On the relevance or irrelevance of political parties in Morocco. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 25(6), 939–959. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.1644920>

Feliu, L., Ribas-Mateos, N., & Mateo, L. (2022). Social Mobilization in Morocco: Lessons Learned for a Historically Informed Activism. Columbia University Press.

Recommended Readings

Graiouid, S. (2020). The intellectual as *zaṭāṭ*: the public sphere, the state, and the field of contentious politics in Morocco. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 26(6), 1221–1245.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1768853>

Ben Moussa, M. (2019). Rap it up, share it up: Identity politics of youth “social” movement in Moroccan online rap music. *New Media & Society*, 21(5), 1043–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818821356>

Volpi, F., & Clark, J. A. (2018). Activism in the Middle East and North Africa in times of upheaval: social networks’ actions and interactions. *Social Movement Studies*, 18(1), 1–16.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2018.1538876>

Evrard, A. Y. (2014). *The Moroccan women’s rights movement*. Syracuse University Press.