

Beginning Modern Standard Arabic

ARAB 1003-1503 (3 Credits)

Jordan: Geopolitics, International Relations, and the Future of the Middle East

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 introductory Arabic course is designed for students with limited or no prior exposure to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Jordanian Colloquial Arabic. Over 45 instructional hours, the course builds foundational proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, aligned with ACTFL Novice-level standards. Students begin by mastering the Arabic script, phonological patterns, and essential vocabulary, progressing to basic sentence structures and conversational exchanges relevant to daily life.

The course follows a functional-communicative, task-based approach that emphasizes real-world application. Students engage in interactive exercises and role-plays to navigate everyday situations such as shopping, dining, transportation, and social introductions. Cultural immersion is central to the learning experience: students explore Jordanian customs, expressions, and social norms through language, enhancing their ability to engage meaningfully with local communities.

Instruction draws from Alif Baa (3rd ed., 2010) and Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-'Arabiyya (3rd ed., 2011). Students in ARAB 1003 complete Alif Baa and Units 1–2 of Al-Kitaab, while those in ARAB 1503 progress through Units 1–4. In addition, students receive early exposure to Jordanian Colloquial Arabic. This course integrates classroom instruction with experiential learning, including guest speakers, cultural partners, and site-based activities in Amman and surrounding areas.

Jordanian Arabic

Immediately after arriving in Amman and during the first week of orientation, students participate in a 15-hour introduction to Jordanian Colloquial Arabic, which is part of the broader Levantine colloquial dialect. The sessions cover basic vocabulary and sentence structure, in addition to simple dialogues and interactive exercises. The objective of these sessions is to provide students with an elementary background and early familiarity with Jordanian/Levantine Colloquial Arabic in preparation for the homestay experience and for navigating daily life in Jordan.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Write the Arabic alphabet, numbers, and days of the week;
- Ask for and understand directions, and negotiate prices for local transportation;
- Shop, pay for items, and order meals in Arabic;
- Respond to demographic questions (e.g., nationality, marital status, occupation);
- Introduce themselves and others formally, and use appropriate greetings and leave-taking expressions;
- Engage in basic conversations about family, hobbies, and daily routines using present tense verbs.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught primarily in Arabic. Students are immersed in Modern Standard Arabic and Jordanian Colloquial Arabic from the outset, with English used only for occasional clarification or linguistic comparison. Instruction is delivered through Arabic-language materials, classroom interaction, and experiential learning activities. Students develop their language proficiency through Arabic-based lectures, guided practice, and cultural engagement, enabling them to build confidence and fluency in real-life contexts.

Instructional Methods

This course is grounded in experiential and communicative language teaching methodologies, aligned with ACTFL proficiency guidelines for novice-level learners. It is designed to create an immersive, student-centered environment that fosters meaningful language acquisition through real-world application and cultural engagement.

Instructional methods include:

- **Experiential Learning:** Students engage in authentic communicative tasks—such as navigating transportation, ordering food, and interacting with host families—that connect classroom content to lived experiences.
- **Task-Based and Functional Instruction:** Lessons are structured around real-life functions (e.g., introducing oneself, asking for directions), enabling students to use Arabic purposefully and confidently in daily interactions.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Pair and group activities promote peer interaction, dialogue practice, and cooperative problem-solving, reinforcing both linguistic skills and intercultural awareness.
- **Cultural Activities:** Students participate in hands-on cultural experiences that deepen their understanding of Jordanian society and enhance language use in context. These include preparing traditional meals with host families, learning dabke (Jordanian folk dance), practicing Arabic calligraphy, and engaging in local customs and rituals such as weddings and family celebrations.

This integrated approach ensures that students not only develop foundational skills in Modern Standard Arabic and Jordanian Colloquial Arabic, but also cultivate the confidence,

adaptability, and cultural sensitivity essential for effective communication in Arabic-speaking environments.

Required Texts

Brustad, K., Al-Batal, M., & Al-Tonsi, A. (2011). *Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-'Arabiyya: A Textbook for Beginning Arabic, Part One* (3rd ed.). Georgetown University Press.

Al-Batal, M., Brustad, K., & Al-Tonsi, A. (2010). *Alif Baa: Introduction to Arabic Letters and Sounds* (3rd ed.). Georgetown University Press.

Additional worksheets, audio recordings, and vocabulary lists will be provided by the instructor throughout the course. Supplementary readings and cultural materials may be assigned based on weekly themes and field activities

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1. Interactive Language Tasks and Cultural Engagement (15%)

Students will complete weekly communicative tasks that integrate language and culture, such as role-playing daily scenarios (e.g., shopping, dining, asking for directions), participating in cultural activities (e.g., cooking traditional meals, learning dabke, practicing Arabic calligraphy), and engaging with host families. Assignments will be assessed based on linguistic accuracy, cultural relevance, and active participation.

2. Vocabulary and Grammar Quizzes (20%)

Short quizzes will be administered regularly to assess students' mastery of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and script recognition. These quizzes are designed to reinforce classroom learning and track individual progress.

3. Midterm Examination (15%)

The midterm exam will evaluate students' progress at the halfway point of the course. It will cover vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and short oral/written tasks. The exam is worth 15 marks (15%) and provides feedback on areas of strength and improvement before the final project and final exam.

4. Final Arabic Project (15%)

Students will prepare and present a final project in Arabic, demonstrating their ability to use learned vocabulary and structures to describe personal experiences, cultural observations, or thematic topics. Projects may include oral presentations, visual posters, or short written compositions. Evaluation will consider clarity, creativity, and linguistic competence.

5. Final Examination (25%)

The final exam will assess students' proficiency across all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It will include comprehension tasks, sentence formation, short dialogues, and script-based exercises. The exam reflects cumulative learning and prepares students for continued Arabic study.

6. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Active involvement in all course components is essential. Students are expected to attend all sessions, arrive on time, and engage respectfully and consistently in classroom discussions, group work, and cultural excursions.

Attendance and Participation

Due to the immersive and experiential nature of SIT Study Abroad language programs, full attendance and active participation in all class sessions, cultural activities, and program excursions are mandatory. Student performance is evaluated not only through academic assignments but also through consistent engagement in all components of the course. Students are expected to contribute meaningfully to classroom discussions, language practice, and cultural interactions.

Participation includes punctuality, respectful behavior, and a willingness to communicate in Arabic to the best of one's ability. Absences—whether from class, field visits, or scheduled cultural events—must be communicated in advance and approved by the academic director or designated staff. Unexcused absences may negatively affect academic standing, final grades, and overall program continuity. Students may not opt out of required activities, as each component is integral to the learning experience and language development.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad language programs combine classroom instruction with experiential learning, cultural immersion, and field-based activities. The curriculum is designed to build sequentially toward key outcomes such as final projects, presentations, and applied language tasks. Timely completion of assignments is essential to ensure students benefit from the cumulative nature of the course and maintain consistent progress in language acquisition. Students may request a justified extension for one assignment during the semester. Requests must be submitted in writing at least 12 hours before the posted deadline. If the reason is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted. No additional extensions will be approved. Assignments not submitted within the extension period will receive a failing grade ('F'). Late submissions without prior approval will be penalized and may affect the final course grade.

Grading Scale:

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

Program Expectations Program Expectations

Students enrolled in Beginning Modern Standard Arabic are expected to prepare for class by completing readings, arriving on time, and coming ready to engage thoughtfully. Assignments must be submitted on schedule, and all work must reflect the student's own effort, as plagiarism or any form of unethical behavior will not be tolerated. Active participation in discussions, interactions with guest speakers, and engagement with cultural partners are essential for language development, and students are expected to show respect for diverse perspectives at all times. Personal devices may be used only for class-related purposes, and off-task use will be counted as an absence. All course materials and updates will be posted on OneDrive, which students should check regularly, and any access issues must be reported promptly. Some topics may involve sensitive or challenging content, and students are encouraged to engage respectfully and seek support if needed.

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](#), [Accessibility Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

Please note that weekly topics and cultural excursions may shift to accommodate emerging opportunities, guest availability, or safety considerations. Students will be notified of any changes in advance.

This 45-hour course is distributed over 5 weeks and is structured around weekly modules that integrate classroom instruction with experiential learning and cultural immersion. This extended 5-week format allows students to learn more effectively, as they continue studying and practicing the language consistently over time. In addition to attending class three times per week, students are encouraged to engage in regular practice outside of class to reinforce what they learn. Each week focuses on developing core language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—through thematic content, task-based activities, and exposure to Jordanian culture. Students participate in guided practice, interactive exercises, and cultural experiences that support ongoing language acquisition and sociolinguistic awareness..

Week 1: Arabic Alphabet and Phonology

This week, students will study and able to:

- Recognize Arabic letters in their initial, medial, and final forms within words.
- Distinguish between Arabic letter sounds and identify key phonetic differences.
- Begin reading simple words using learned phonemes and letter combinations.

- Progress to reading short sentences with basic vocabulary and structure.
- Read and comprehend short paragraphs composed of familiar expressions.
- Learn basic daily dialogue for communication.
- Greet and be greeted appropriately.
- Communicate on a day-to-day level using essential vocabulary (approximately 25 pages covering daily expressions, prepositions, numbers, and common verbs).

Week 2: Nominal Sentences and Daily Interaction

This week, students will:

- Cover *Al-Kitaab* 1, Unit 1.
- Learn how to form nominal sentences and apply gender in nouns and adjectives, including al-nisba.
- Practice writing using the Arabic alphabet.
- Read and write simple words.
- Learn essential vocabulary and expressions related to daily life.
- Introduce themselves and others in Arabic.
- Give directions to taxi drivers using basic phrases.

Week 3: Questions, Pronouns, and Verb Basics

This week, students will:

- Cover *Al-Kitaab* 1, Units 1 and 2.
- Learn how to form short sentences and basic questions.
- Understand plural forms and subject pronouns.
- Use main verb conjugations such as “**to want**” and “**to have.**”
- Relate simple verbs and expressions to cultural and health contexts.
- Talk about their families and friends using learned vocabulary and structures

Week 4: Possession, Polite Requests, and Cultural Expression

This week, students will:

- Cover *Al-Kitaab* 1, Units 3 and 4.
- Learn al-idāfa structures and possessive pronoun rules.
- Form polite requests using common expressions.
- Conjugate essential verbs needed for daily communication.
- Talk in more depth about food, drinks, body parts, and basic health-related terms

Week 5: Review and Final Assessment

This week, students will:

- Consolidate key linguistic and cultural concepts covered throughout the course.
- Prepare and deliver their final Arabic language presentations.
- Participate in structured review sessions to reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and communicative skills.
- Complete the final Arabic language exam, demonstrating proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Present their final Arabic projects and sit for the final Arabic assessment

Each week, this Arabic language course focuses on key linguistic and cultural themes through classroom instruction and experiential activities. Sessions are guided by SIT faculty and include

interactive language practice, cultural immersion, and structured skill development. Students participate in weekly modules that integrate Modern Standard Arabic and Jordanian Colloquial Arabic, supported by readings, audio materials, and task-based exercises.

Course readings are selected from *Alif Baa* and *Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-'Arabiyya* (3rd editions), along with instructor-provided worksheets and vocabulary lists. Supplemental materials—including cultural texts, dialogues, and visual aids—are distributed based on weekly themes and current events. Students may also engage with guest speakers, local artists, and advanced Arabic learners to enrich their understanding of language in context.