

## ***Hon 240/Anth 400: Understanding Contemporary Egyptian Culture***

Summer (pre-session) 2010

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### **Overview:**

In this course, we will examine current ethnographic perspectives on Egyptian culture. We will focus on religion, urban and rural culture, and gender.

In the U.S., Egypt is often imagined as the land of pyramids and pharaohs. Much less attention is paid to contemporary Egypt – its recent history, social frameworks, and cosmopolitan culture. In this course, we will examine current ethnographic perspectives on Egyptian culture. We will focus on religion, ethnicity, and gender, with a particular focus on lived experiences. Through classroom study and travel to Cairo and surrounding areas, we will explore the ways in which contemporary Egyptians live, the forces that shape their daily lives, and the spaces that frame their experiences. Some of the themes this course will address include ethnic diversity, the role of the family, poverty and development, gender relations, religion, popular culture, and modernization. In order to explore these concepts in greater depth, students will develop research projects that will be conducted in Cairo. While several days are set aside for research, the nature of this kind of experience means that students will have an intensive learning experience. Lectures and formal course material will be presented on the move – our classroom will be the bus, the street, the mountain.

After four days of introductory work in Clarion, students will have the opportunity in the first few days in Egypt to visit the pyramids of the Giza plateau and other sites associated with ancient Egypt. Beyond enjoying these monuments, they will be encouraged to see them from an ethnographic perspective – what is the impact of tourism on the Cairo street? How do foreigners see and understand “Egyptians”? A visit to the CultNat Institute will expose students to research in modern Egypt, and set the agenda for the next several days, where students will engage in intensive study of the central Cairo district. They will work in small groups mapping and documenting specific subjects. This research will be presented to the class during the last few days of the trip.

From Cairo, we will move to the Sinai peninsula to explore other aspects of Egyptian culture. We will visit St. Katherine’s monastery and Mt. Sinai, looking at the complex history of global religions in the region. We will then visit Ras Mohammed, an area with important ecological and environmental significance that will let us think more about cosmopolitan culture and global issues. Upon our return, we will proceed to Alexandria, where we will visit important cultural and historic sites before our return to Cairo and the US.

### **Evaluation**

Participation in activities – 30%

Research project – 30%

Research presentation – 20%

Journal – 20%

## Course Schedule

May 9 – 12 (Clarion)	Topics: What is ethnography? Ethnography of Egypt (part 1). Methods in social research. Development of research topics. Discussion of readings.
May 13	Travel to Cairo
May 14 -17	Tourism and images of Egypt. Visits to pyramids, Giza, and museums
May 18 – 20	Research days in Cairo. Data will be collected by research teams in Cairo.
May 21 – 23	Cultural diversity within Egypt. Visit to Bedouin region and Sinai
May 24 – 25	Globalization, old and new. Visit to Alexandria <i>Research presentations in evening 5/25.</i>
May 26	Rural communities. <i>Research presentations in evening.</i>
May 27	Travel from Cairo to US. <i>Journals due.</i>

## Readings:

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (University of California Press, 1993) (selected sections)
- Wynn, L.L. *Pyramids and Nightclubs* (University of Texas Press, 2007) (selected sections)
- Crane, Julia and Michael Angrosino. "Making Maps." In *Field Projects in Anthropology*. (1984, Waveland Press, pp. 30-43.)
- Timmer, Andria. "Learning through Doing." 2004. *NAPA Bulletin* 22: 106-112.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. (University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 1-16)
- Hoodfar, Homa. *Between Marriage and the Market* (Univ. of California Press, 1997) (selected sections)