

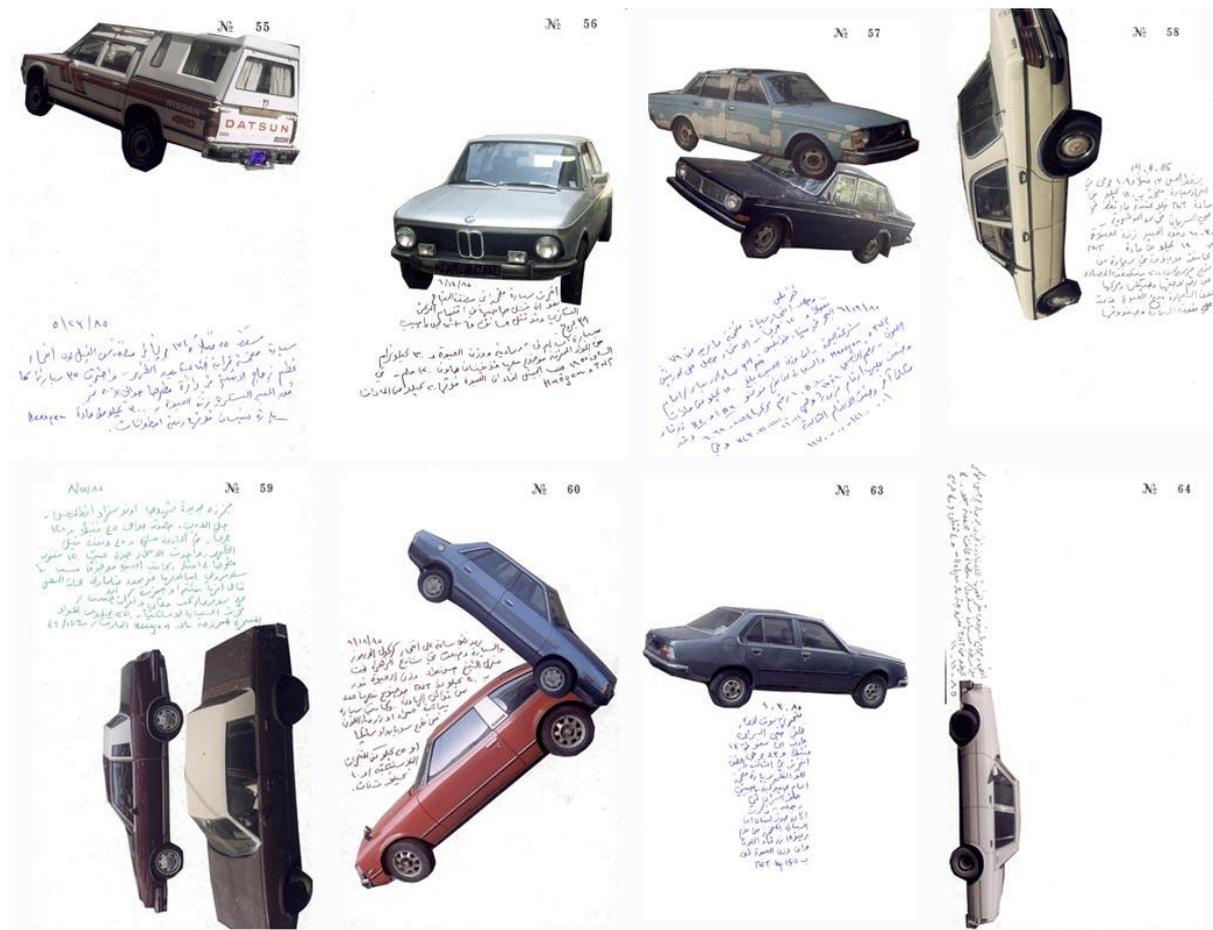
Advanced Subject Part II - Paper 21 [2022-23]

Title of Course:

Middle Eastern Modernities, c1950-2011.

Name / Email of Convenor:

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The Atlas Group, Already been in a lake of fire (1975-2002) (2002)

This work by the Lebanese artist Walid Raad, working under the name The Atlas Group, shows a number of pages purportedly drawn from the notebooks of Dr Fadl Fakhouri, a Beirut physician who set about cataloguing every car bomb which struck his native city in the course of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). In truth, these images, and the accompanying notes, are works of fiction, false archival pieces put together by Raad. Alongside his other work, they form part of an ongoing contemplation on conflict and the postcolonial condition, history and memory, remembering and forgetting, and the archive as artefact, which is at once poignant and often mordantly amusing.

Course Description:

This paper examines the manifold ways in which the inhabitants of the region we now call the Middle East have engaged with modernity in its various manifestations. Plotting a chronological and thematic course through the region's history, the paper looks at the attempts of its rulers and peoples to craft, customise, and recalibrate discourses and practices they thought of as distinctively modern.

The paper begins in the nineteenth century with the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms and the intellectual innovations of the Arabic Nahda, or 'awakening', and ends with the Arab revolutions of 2011 and their continuing legacies. Over its course, it considers themes such as nationalism, gender and the changing meanings of femininity, Arab visions of sovereignty, development, and global order in the time of decolonisation, and the Arab neoliberalism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Over the past century-and-a-half, the political, social, economic, cultural, and intellectual lives of the people of the Middle East have been defined by consistent efforts to make sense of, give meaning to, and interrogate the novel facts of modernity. Instead of a reductive stress on religion, repression, international conflict, or forced displacement, this paper places the people of the region front-and-centre, examining their lives and changing experiences.

This paper takes what we now call the Arab world—the Arab states of the Levant, the Gulf, and North Africa—as its central focus. It aims to provide an overview of overarching themes in the modern history of the Arab world, while allowing students to develop an understanding of the history of particular countries and regions.

To do so, the paper draws on the perspectives of political, social, cultural, economic, and intellectual history, but also from other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and urban studies. The course thus aims to familiarise students with a variety of historiographical debates and disciplinary approaches. It also undertakes to understand the ways in which the Arab world's engagements and entanglements with the world beyond—whether in the form of imperial encroachment, colonial settlement and economic exchange, or intellectual and cultural interchange—have shaped its history. The Middle East, this paper suggests, cannot be considered in isolation as an exceptional space. It must be set within broader global trends.

Course Structure and Teaching:

The paper consists of fourteen topics. These are largely thematic and synoptic. Students will be encouraged to adopt a broad perspective, comparing and contrasting the historical experiences of particular territories and regions within the 'Middle East' in order to understand their particularities and commonalities, and to gain a sense for the unevenness of historical processes across time and space.

Students will be taught through a series of **14 weekly 2-hour classes**, divided equally between Michaelmas and Lent. (Each term will have one reading week.) The classes will begin with a **50-minute** class conversation based on primary and secondary sources. This will be followed by a **10-minute break** and a **45-minute lecture** of between introducing the following week's topic, leaving time for questions. Readings and guiding questions will be provided in advance.

1-2 90-minute revision classes will be held in Easter term.

Students will write **4 essays**. They will be supervised in **small groups** in **Lent Term** and will have to write an essay for each. They will have two weeks to write each essay. Students will receive 1-2 individual revision supervision(s) in Easter Term.

Maximum Student Capacity:

12 students

No knowledge of Middle Eastern languages is required for this course. Students will be encouraged to consider the experiences of the Middle East's peoples through primary sources in translation, which will include works of literature and political thought, as well as music, films, and photographs. Many can be found online, and links and extracts will be provided on Moodle.

TOPICS:

1. The Tanzimat: government and reform in the nineteenth-century Ottoman world
2. Economic transformation, class, and community in the nineteenth-century Ottoman world
3. The Arabic Nahda: intellectual histories of the long nineteenth century
4. The late Ottoman empire, c.1876-1918: autocracy, intervention, revolution, and war
5. Living with European imperialism, c.1900-1952
6. Political culture and nationalism in the Arab world, c.1908-1948
7. Gender, femininity, and masculinity, c.1890-1952
8. Decolonisation and postcolonial state formation in the Arab world, c.1943-1973: sovereignty, development, and the meanings of democracy
9. The international politics of the Arab world, c.1952-1991: anti-colonialism, the 'Arab cold war', and the 'global cold war'
10. Cultural and intellectual histories of the postcolonial Arab world, c.1948-1979
11. State formation in the Arab world, c.1973-1993: counter-revolution and authoritarianism
12. Arab neoliberalism(s), c.1991-2011
13. Islamic 'awakening(s)', c.1973-2011: piety, politics, welfare, gender, and everyday life
14. The 2011 Arab revolutions