



## A Cultural Journey across the Arab World

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### Session One

A brief intro to the course and to the Arab World and challenges of definitions. The development of Arabic language, script and book culture.

**Activity:** We will take half of the class on campus then head to the **Chester Beatty** to see Arabic manuscripts and objects with the aim of tying Arab culture to the material input and showing the students examples of Arabic script and its variation. Visit will take place that day before the closure of the Museum mid-June.

Students will use this visit to come up with ideas for an end-of-course presentation on any aspect of Arab culture.

### Session Two

An overview by the instructor on Arab travel literature from medieval to modern times. The overview includes a discussion of maps and the conception of the world by the Arabs.

Students will read and discuss excerpts from:

The *Rihlas* of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta (medieval travel accounts)

Ahmed Hassanein Pasha, *The Lost Oases* (Modern travel account)

\*Further Readings:

Nizar Hermes, *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture: Ninth-Twelfth Century AD* (The New Middle Ages) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Sally Abed, "Water Rituals and the Preservation of Identity in Ibn Fadlan's *Risala*," in *Time, Space, and Identity in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen, *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, Vol.22, 2018.

Sally Abed, "The first Egyptian Aviators: A brief History" (al-Ahram Weekly online)

**\*Task:** Students will find other accounts and read excerpts for the following class and discuss their findings.



## Session Three

An overview by the instructor on women in the Arab world between history, fiction, art and cinema. The intro will cover women in medieval and modern history and focus on female representations.

Students will read excerpts from:

Fatima al-Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Polity, 1994).

Injy Aflatoun, "We Egyptian Women" in *Opening the Gates: Century of Arab Feminist Writing*. eds. Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (Virago Press Ltd., 1990).

Vioila Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2007).

Rebecca Hillauer, *The Encyclopaedia of Arab Women Filmmakers* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2006).

Excerpts from the *1001 Nights*

We will watch clips from documentaries and movies.

\*Further Readings:

Fatima al-Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems* (Washington Square Press, 2002).

Sally Abed, "The Transformation of the World through Pleasure and Performance in the Thousand and One Nights," in *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, ed. Albrecht Classen, Vol.23, De Gruyter, 2019.

**\*Task:** Students will read a short story or a critical piece by a female writer for the next class. Selections and suggested readings will be provided.



## Session Four

The last session will examine some of the literary output of Arab culture. We will also examine food and gastronomy in Arab culture.

Students will read and discuss samples of poems (Jibran Khalil Jibran), Joha's stories (an example of Arab folklore that became global and was adapted to many cultures). The discussion will include watching parts of the documentary "Gastronomy in Medieval Baghdad: cooking for Pleasure and Health" and/or the documentary series "Flavours of the Arab Golden Age" to discuss gastronomy broadly in the Arab world turning also to popular dishes in modern Arab culture.

\*Course ends with students' brief presentations on any aspect of Arab culture that interests them whether covered in the course not, or on an object/manuscript that caught their attention at the Chester Beatty.

**Some readings might be subject to change as the course progresses.**

## Course Duration

The course will run each Wednesday from 5:30 – 8:00pm from 3 June to 24 June 2026.

All learning materials will be provided.

## Further Information

- [School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies: Short Courses webpage](#)
- Email: [shortcourses.sllcs@tcd.ie](mailto:shortcourses.sllcs@tcd.ie)