Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel & Zionism  
The Woodman & Scheller Israel Studies International Program (WSISIP)  

**Anthropological Paradigms & Middle Eastern Cultures**  
016220010120211  

2023-2024 (draft)  

Tuesday, 08:30 – 12:00  
Sde Boker Campus, The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel & Zionism  

Prof. Kobi Peled  
Email: kobip@bgu.ac.il  
Phone: 08-6596963 (office)  
Office hours and location:  
1. Beer Sheva, Main Campus, Building: 74, Room: 460 – Wednesday 12:00-13:00  
2. Sde Boker Campus, The Ben-Gurion Research Institute – Tuesday 12:00-13:00  

**Course Description:**  
In this course we read and discuss important sociological and anthropological studies that are highly relevant for understanding Middle Eastern societies past and present. Some of these studies directly deal with Middle Eastern cultures while others emerge from various historical contexts outside the Middle East. Together, we will examine the methods, the theories and the problems of major sociological and anthropological works and their contribution to our understanding of the Middle East.  

**Course Objectives:**  
The main aim of the course is to provide the necessary theoretical foundations in the field of anthropology for the purpose of interpreting Middle Eastern cultures and societies. Another principal objective of this course is to gain experience in critically reading canonical texts – revealing their premises, studying their weak spots and examining their contribution to our understanding of the cultures of our region.  

**Course Structure:**  
The course is divided into 26 meetings. In most of the course meetings there will be a discussion of one major study (+ further reading), based on individual reading.  

**Total # of Credits:**  
4  

**Teaching Method:**  
The course will be based on individual reading at home and group discussion in class. The students should prepare their weekly assigned readings and come to class with significant questions that stem from the readings. Every student will present two or three studies (Further Reading) in the classroom according to the list of presentations.
Course Requirements:
Compulsory attendance – Yes
Pre-requisites – None

Structure of Final Grade:
Course grade will be based on class attendance, individual presentations, knowledge of readings and active participation (75%), and on a final paper, which will review a major sociological or anthropological work that is relevant to the understanding of the modern Middle East (25%).

Course Schedule Layout:

October 17 – Week 1:
Weekly subject title: Introduction

1. General Introduction

2. Introduction to the History of Anthropology

October 24 – Week 2:
Weekly subject title: Sociological Foundations


Further reading:


Further reading:


October 31 – Week 3:
Weekly subject title: Urban Sociology

Further reading:


Further reading:


Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass*, pp. 11-91.


November 7 – Week 4:
Weekly subject title: Historical Materialism


Further reading:


Further Reading:

November 14 – **Week 5:**
Weekly subject title: **Functionalism**


Further reading:


Further reading:


November 21 – **Week 6:**
Weekly subject title: **Culture and Personality**


Further reading:


Further reading:

November 28 – **Week 7:**
Weekly subject title: **Field Trip**

December 5 – **Week 8:**
Weekly subject title: **Local Knowledge**


Further reading:

Further reading:

December 12 – Week 9:
Weekly subject title: Self and Society


Further reading:


Further reading:

December 19 – Week 10:
Weekly subject title: Structuralism


Further reading:


Further reading:

December 26 – Week 11:
Weekly subject title: Cultural Anthropology


Further reading:


Further reading:


January 2 – Week 12:
Weekly subject title: Critical Anthropology


Further reading:


Further reading:

January 9 – Week 13:
Weekly subject title: Social Amnesia


Further reading: