Course: MA in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies (MA-CEMES)
Lecturer: Professor Ronald G. Sultana
Unit weighting: 5 ECTS
Assessment: 100% assignment/research project.
Mode of delivery: Lectures, participatory workshops, self-directed study.

Course Description: This study unit will provide a state-of-the-art introduction to education in the Arab region. It will first adopt a historical approach, highlighting the place and value of formal and informal education in the Arab world, particularly from the time of the rise of Islam, through the Arab Renaissance, and down to the modern period. It will specifically stress the debt that the European world owes to Arabo-Islamic culture in relation to various realms of knowledge, including medicine, philosophy, social sciences, and higher learning and culture more generally. The course will then explore some of the most pressing educational challenges that are facing the various Arab states and territories today, paying particular attention to the grouping of Arab countries along regional lines, namely the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), the Machrek (Libya and Egypt), and the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the Occupied Territories). Some attention will also be given to the Gulf countries, and their particularities in terms of revenues generated by oil, and the impact this has on their human resource development policies. This inter- and intra-regional comparison will serve to open up debates about some of the most important issues that mark educational development in the Arab world, and will include a focus on: [a] educational reforms and policy-making; [b] the impact of globalisation on educational development; [c] the inter-relationship between culture, religion and education; [d] education and the formation of elites; and [e] future scenarios for education in the Arab region. The unit will also consider Arab diasporas internationally, and the issues that arise when Muslim minorities make demands on the shaping of educational provision in ‘western’ democracies.

Study Unit aims:
The study unit aims to introduce students to some of the complex dynamics in the Arab region, focusing in particular on countries in the Middle East and North Africa. This region is seen as an outcome of the intersection of a number of historical forces, including colonialism, post-colonialism, and globalization. The unit therefore builds on—and contributes to a deeper and contextualized understanding of—the theoretical frameworks and analyses introduced in EMC5705 (Education and Globalization) and EMC5708 (Education and Development). In particular, the study unit aims to challenge some of the most common prejudices regarding education in the Arab region, showing that this ‘world’ is very diverse both within and across its borders. It also sets out to move away from a deficit discourse regarding education in the Arab region, highlighting some of the major achievements that have been made at various levels of the education system, while identifying some of the remaining challenges. The issue of Arabo-Islamic cultural and religious traditions in education are also discussed from the perspective of multi-cultural and multi-faith communities in western democracies, in the light of the tensions that are currently emerging and the way they are being ‘managed’ in different European countries.
Learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding:
By the end of the study unit, students will:

1. Have an improved understanding of the political, cultural and economic dynamics prevalent in the Arab region, and the impact they have on educational development.
2. Have a deeper knowledge of at least one, and up to three Arab states, and will be able to analyse the challenges faced in this/these countries, in relation to a particular educational topic (e.g. literacy, curriculum, pedagogy, special education provision, etc), and in comparison to a European country of their choice.
3. Develop an awareness of the debt that Europe and the ‘western world’ has towards the Arab world when it comes to culture and knowledge.
4. Have a good comparative overview of the key educational achievements in the Arab states, and the challenges that remain.
5. Appreciate more critically the interaction between processes of globalization and educational development.

Skills (including transferable) skills:
By the end of the study unit, students will:

1. Become critically aware of deeply held and unexamined preconceptions about Arab history, culture and education.
2. Develop a deeper awareness of the implications that a multi-cultural, multi-faith world has for education.
3. Promote learning by comparing, and improved understanding of one’s own education systems but learning about that of others.
4. Develop enhanced intercultural skills, particularly in relation to their application in educational and learning contexts.

Suggested Readings:

Key Texts:

Other resources—Books:


Other resources—a selection of papers and monographs, including:


