American University of Beirut  
Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
History and Archaeology Department

Course Syllabus

History 258 UA: Introduction to Urban History of the Middle East, 1700-1850  
Spring 2010  
Monday and Wednesday 4:00-5:30 in Nicely 415

Dr. Malek Sharif  
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Office: Nicely 208, ext. 4282  
Office Hours: Monday 3:00-4:00 pm and Tuesday 2:00-3:00 pm

Course description: This course aims to introduce the students to the social history of urban centres in the Middle East in a period which is described as ‘traditional’, i.e. before the impact of the West and its institutions. The city of Aleppo, the third largest metropolis in the Ottoman Empire, is used as a case study. Secondary literature on Syria and Aleppo are studied parallel to contemporary primary source material available in English. Information from the primary sources on the city and its environs will be examined and interpreted in view of modern theories and interpretations discussed in the readings.

Learning outcome:  
introduction to new theories on urban history of the Middle East  
study of urban society and its main protagonists in historical context  
examining urban institutions and their significance  
identification of the complexities of urban amenities  
critical reading of primary source material  
practicing oral presentations and substantiated arguments

Course requirements: The course will be held in a lecture-discussion format. Students are expected and encouraged to participate in class discussion. They are also expected to have read the assignments as indicated in the schedule.

Grading criteria:  
Attendance and class participation: 10%  
Short presentation: 10%  
Mid term exam: 40%  
Final exam: 40%

Course etiquette: Mobile phones (cellular phones/cellulaires) should be OFF and PUT AWAY. Violators will receive one warning. Each violation thereafter will result in five (5) points being deduced from the student’s final grade.
Course Schedule:


Feb 15  General Introduction
Feb 17  Eldem, Edhem, et. al.: “Introduction: Was there an Ottoman City?”, in: Edhem Eldem, et.al., eds. The Ottoman City between East and West Aleppo Izmir and Istanbul (Cambridge 1999), pp. 1-16.
Feb 24  Khoury, Dina Rizk: “Political relations between city and state in the Middle East. 1700-1850”, in: Peter Sluglett, ed. The Urban Social History of the Middle East, 1750-1950 (Syracuse 2008), pp. 67-103.

March 1  Textbook Chapter 1: “The Place: Setting and Local consciousness”, pp. 13-36
March 31 Masters , Bruce: “Aleppo: the Ottoman Empire’s Caravan City” in: Edhem Eldem, et.al., eds. The Ottoman City between East and West Aleppo Izmir and Istanbul (Cambridge 1999), pp. 17-78.

April 5  Easter vacation
April 7  Revision
April 12  MIDTERM


April 19  Russell, Alexander: The Natural History of Aleppo (London 1794), vol. 2, pp., 1-27


April 24  Primary source material and its analysis

April 26  Revision.