

Submitted by Homeira Foth

## **Course plan for English 1 at Chabot Community College: Global connections with emphasis on the Middle East**

English 1 is our first-year transfer English composition course at Chabot College, and all students are required to take it whether they plan to transfer to a four-year university or receive an AA. As English faculty, we are fortunate in that we choose any theme or topic for the class. Because the course emphasizes critical thinking through reading and writing, I believe it is a perfect platform for our students to be exposed to other cultures that they may not know much about or may be curious about. It would allow students to make connections between their lives, their experiences, with other cultures across the world. They would also be able to demonstrate what they have learned through a research project based on a topic of their own interest having to do with the Middle East AND connecting it to some issue in the U.S. Why the Middle East? For two reasons: Hayward (where Chabot College is located), and the Bay Area in general, is home to large population Middle Easterners, and this would allow students who are not familiar with Middle Easterners to have a better understanding of their neighbors, co-workers, classmates, etc. I also think the Middle East is the most misunderstood and misrepresented region in the world. The goal of this course is to demystify and clarify some preconceived ideas they may have, and maybe through what they learn and research, students will create a new understanding of -- and a more truthful narrative about -- the Middle East.

This will be a multi-media course involving not just written texts (books, articles) but also a graphic novel, videos, films, art, music, and blogs. The course is comprised of several shorter units that will lead to their final research project.

### Unit 1: Intro to middle east

- Objectives of the class
- Intro to the Middle East (read a couple chapters from Leila Hudson's *Middle Eastern Humanities*)
- General background on Islam and other religions in the Middle East
- Discuss stereotypes (generally and the middle east)
- Watch comedy videos (i.e. Ramy Youssef)

### Unit 2: Sports as protest

- Moroccan soccer: "The Ultras"- Stadium as a space for protest
- Connect to sports/ protest in United States and civil rights (Kaepernick, Muhammad Ali Clay, etc.)
- Soccer in Iran – female protests \*segue to unit 3

### Unit3: Women and gender issues

- General look at women's issues in the Middle East, the newer generations
- women in Iran: read article by Honarbin-Holliday, Mehri. *Becoming Visible in Iran: Women in Contemporary Iranian*

- Videos: *Divorce Iranian Style*
- Connect to issues for women in U.S. (me too, “lock her up”)
- Graphic novel: Samanci’s *Dare to Disappoint* (Turkish)

#### Unit 4: Education

- Book: Thomson’s *Syria’s Secret Library*
- Connect to issues in education in U.S. (educational inequality, curricular censorship)

#### Unit 5: Art and Activism

- Look at and analyze art from: Tammam Azzam (Syria), Wafa Bilal (Iraq), Yazan Halwani (Palestine), Mandana Moghaddam (Iran), and Boushra Almutawakel (Yemen)
- Connect to art and activism in the U.S (social justice, environmental activism, sexuality and gender)
- Read “Look at the Activist Artists Who Actually Walk the Talk” by Lent
- Look at images and watch Ted Talk videos.

In the Fall of 2020, I am planning on collaborating with our Middle Eastern Studies Professor to invite a speaker from BAM “Book a Muslim” to come to speak on campus. They provide great information and diversity training for schools in a fun and accessible way. I went to one of their sessions at the NCORE conference last May, and I thought it would be perfect not only for our students but for our faculty and staff as well!

Here is the website:

<http://bookamuslim.com/diversity-trainings/>