FRIDAYS IN MEDFORD

The Nuances of Arabic & Muslim Culture

Study Group Leader: Yara Shaban*
4 Fridays, 10am–12pm
Begins Jan. 15 $100

Discover the complexity and nuances of Arabic-Muslim culture from a Jordanian perspective as you enjoy the opportunity to discuss, reflect, and ask questions in a non-judgmental environment. Your study group leader will introduce you to readings, documentaries, artistic content, and social-media stories that shed a light on cultural issues and the lives of people in her part of the world. The aim is to appreciate a different perspective from what is depicted in western media; to discuss our own assumptions about our personal relationship with our culture; and to better understand how to approach and understand “the other.” We’ll start each session by viewing a cultural artifact, then actively deconstructing its meanings. The specific content of each session will depend on the participants’ interests. Home Internet access is required as we’ll be sharing links to online content via email.

Four Films Noirs

Study Group Leader: Merrill Hudson
4 Fridays, 1:30–4:00pm
Begins Jan. 15 $100

Film noir (French for “dark film”) is a style of filmmaking characterized by elements such as cynical heroes, stark lighting effects, frequent use of flashbacks, intricate plots, and an underlying existentialist philosophy. The genre was prevalent mostly in American crime dramas of the post-World War II era. We’ll take a look at two older black and white films (Double Indemnity and Sunset Boulevard) and two more modern color films (Body Heat and L.A. Confidential). We’ll try to identify the elements that are usually included in period noir films and see if the categorization still holds up in the present.

Russian History in a Nutshell

Study Group Leader: Irina Yakubovskaya*
4 Fridays, 1:30–3:30pm • Begins Jan. 15 • $100

Explore the major eras of Russian history in just four sessions! Through lectures, discussion, and weekly reading assignments (no more than 10 or so pages per session), we’ll whisk our way through history, reviewing everything from transatlantic migrations to Peter the Great; from the end of serfdom to the rise of the working class; from the beginnings of the Cold War to the “roaring 60s.” We’ll even discuss the fall of the Soviet Union, Perestroika and the 1990s, the influence of Putin, and Russia’s possible future. Along the way, we’ll contextualize historical phenomena and identify recurring trends. Active discussion will be encouraged, and participants’ opinions will be valued. History is a complex matter. Join us as we attempt to untangle and challenge some of its narratives, using examples from literary, dramatic, and artistic sources to illustrate historical changes. No textbook required. Informative handouts will be provided.

*Tufts Scholar