

# WHEATON COLLEGE

## Student-Initiated Connection Proposal

**Connections Learning Outcomes:** As a result of connections students will be able to:

1. Understand how different academic disciplines analyze topics and solve problems
2. Apply methods or concepts from more than one discipline when analyzing topics or solving problems
3. Communicate using more than one different disciplinary perspective
4. Identify other disciplinary connections both in and outside the classroom

**DIRECTIONS** for structuring and submitting a Self-Initiated Connection Proposal:

The final date to submit the proposal is the "last day to drop a course without record" deadline of the semester in which you plan to take the last course of the Connection. Refer to the academic calendar on the Web for the specific date this semester.

- A proposed two-course Connection must link courses from at least two different Areas, a three-course Connection must link courses from three areas. **The six areas are:** History (ARHS), Creative Arts (ARCA), Humanities (ARHM), Social Sciences (ARSS), Natural Sciences (ARNS), Math/CS (ARMC).
- One single course cannot be used in two Connections.
- You cannot use English 101, Writing, or First Year Seminar, in a Self-Initiated Connection.
- When including an Independent Study in your proposal, you must also submit a statement that includes a full description of the Independent Study, plus the reading list. *It is the responsibility of the student to provide this information.*
- **Attention Seniors:** Proposals may not be submitted in your final semester.

Student Name: Eman Hay AlKudair Date: 09/27/19  
 Wheaton ID: W00378048 Class Year: 2020  
 Title of Your Proposed Connection: Arabic & the Middle East

1. Attach the syllabi from all courses included in this Connection.
2. In a brief essay, identify the inter-connection you have found among these courses. Your essay should address the **Connections Learning Outcomes** found at the top of this page.
3. The faculty teaching each course must read your essay and approve this proposed Connection in the box below.
4. Submit this form, the accompanying essay, and the syllabi to the Committee on Educational Policy, care of the Office of the Provost, Park Hall.

Course #	Course Title	Area	Semester Taken	Faculty Approval
<i>(Example)</i> SOC 230	<i>(Follow this format when filling out your proposal)</i> Race and Ethnicity	ARSS	Fall 2014	Please print your name and sign below.
POES 263	Politics of the Middle East	PSc (Social Sci)	Fall 2017	"I have read this proposal and approve it." Print Name: <u>Alireza Shomali</u> Signature: <u>Alireza Shomali</u>
HRA 201	Intermediate Arabic	FL	Fall 2017	"I have read this proposal and approve it." Print Name: <u>MONA ROWAN</u> Signature: <u>Mona Rowan</u>
				"I have read this proposal and approve it." Print Name: Signature:

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chair, Committee on Educational Policy  
 cc: Registrar revised 08/2015



Eman Haj Alkhdair

09/27/2017

Student Initiated Connection Proposal:

**Arabic in the Middle East**

I propose a connection between Politics of the Middle East (POLS 263) and Intermediate Arabic (ARA 201). The two courses have significant impacts on my understanding of the other. In Arabic, we are past the point of learning the actual alphabet; we are delving into the language, sayings, and more — now, we also explore culture, commonly used words, prevalent beliefs, customs, foods, etc. This advanced Arabic course is by no means simply a language course — it is one that goes way beyond that. What makes it very interesting to me is that it gives me the knowledge of language through this excursion into culture and ideas.

By politics of the Middle East, I mean the way people live in the Polis, along with the way they handle and administer their public and private lives, both in the household and in the city. Culture always demands to be included in the practice of Politics; thus, politics and culture are indeed *always* already merged. It is impossible to have a good understanding of politics without looking at the role of cultural factors, including religion. The icing on the cake is language, which serves as a mirror of culture through its reflection of cultural nuances and sophistications. Each step that I take in understanding the language, I feel myself more equipped with the ability to get the nuances of political behavior in the Middle East.

In my politics course, we studied common “sins” — that is, methodological mistakes — in studying Middle Eastern politics. One of these “sins” is going to the elites— elitism can be a costly mistake of studying politics of the Middle East because elites do not necessarily represent

the ideologies, sentiments, and political feelings of the public, or the “average Joe.” Going to the masses and understanding their input and ideas is a significant element of comprehending situations, especially those including revolts and uprisings. I find my Arabic course of tremendous help because it familiarizes me with the masses and makes sense of the politics that follow.

In my politics course, another thing we noted was the “sin” of presentism, which disregards the history of the Middle East when studying it; this is problematic because history shapes the present. We studied the political/historical background of the two main theories of political authority in the Islamic World, Sunnism and Shi’ism. In my Arabic course, I am provided with the ability to further delve into the contemporary as well as historical and cultural background of the Sunni-Shi’ite schism.

Arabic has many dialects, and we are learning the Levantine informal dialect (alongside the formal written Arabic which is broad and can be understood by all Arabic speaking countries), which is the most common dialect in the Arabic language in the Middle East. In Politics of the Middle East, as evident in the title of the course, we explore the Politics of the region as well as its impeded economic development and how external interferences shaped its present state. The Middle East is a large region consisting of many countries — the Levant states make up a notable portion of them. The two courses complement each other in many ways, and taking both of them has provided me with a more well-rounded understanding of the region and its underlying and persistent cultures.

One of the first readings for Politics of the Middle East was an article about translation — “*Lost in Translation*” — which explores the mispronunciations and misspellings much of the West makes of names and regions in the Middle East. In my Arabic course, we learn the

phonetics of the Arabic language and how to embrace every letter in a way similar to those of native speakers. While doing readings for Politics of the Middle East, I was able to pronounce regions correctly, and understand some aspects of the culture spread within. Furthermore, in my Politics of the Middle East class, we explore myths about the region. This knowledge is complemented by the cultural portion of my Arabic class and is strengthened by exploration of fundamental nationalism-based questions emphasized by both courses. As Professor Alireza Shomali noted: nationalism *always* needs an enemy. Furthermore, the idea of nationalism and its linkage to religion, sacrifice, and *belonging*, supplements materials taught in both classes.

Nationalism always constructs a myth, and that myth is supposed to function as the glue for social bonding. Myths give meaning to sufferings of those who are politically active. My Arabic course gives me the tool to further study that “myth” by seeing the cultural elements that my politics course always notes is in the process of reconstruction. Myths undergo a process of restructuring in order to become up to date and politically functional.

Professor Rowan is Lebanese and has dedicated a significant portion of the class to enhance and encourage colloquial conversation amongst students. In these conversations, she has spoken to us about her history of growing up in Lebanon and what that was like. The Lebanese Civil War and its interplay within the Arab-Israeli conflict is an essential part of our study of dispute within the Middle East. Being able to connect the cultural facets of the Lebanese population with the political sentiments of the war broadened, corrected, and personified my understanding of it.

Another portion that connected between the two classes was the in-depth study of the Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict and what has come from it. The “Levantine” region is interconnected through history, politics, violence, and power in multiple ways. The similarities in

the Arabic dialect (shared by Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine) make sense of the politics that split up the region that was unified under Ottoman rule. The title, “Levant state” was issued to refer to the French mandate over Syria and Lebanon post WW1 — this subject was extensively toured in my Politics of the Middle East class.

Currently, approximately 60% of the Middle East speaks Arabic. It is a region of diverse ethnic groups and religions. However, the intertwining of cultural events strung around the Intermediate Arabic curriculum as well as the myths, sins, and misconceptions studied about the Middle East in my Politics of the Middle class connect and justify events beautifully. My knowledge of the region, even five weeks in, is very well-rounded. The Middle East is a region stricken by crisis and impeded development, but in all its turmoil, various customs, traditions, and language(s), make it worth exploring and worth loving.