

April 23, 2008

To: St. Olaf Faculty  
From: Curriculum Committee  
Re: New Course Proposal

At the May Faculty Meeting the Curriculum Committee will move that the faculty approve the following two courses:

**Sociology/Anthropology 266 Religion and Society in the Middle East**

Catalog description:

Students explore connections among religion, culture, politics, and social change in the Middle East, particularly Turkey, Morocco, and Egypt. The course focuses on how religious belief, practices, and identity shape acceptance or resistance to social change in family life and political movements. The course also focuses on “everyday theology” and life for Muslims, but with a look at Christians and Jews. Students learn through observational projects and journals as well as texts and reading.

Rationale:

This social science course is the field supervisor’s course for the Term in the Middle East and will look at the role that religion plays in the lives of everyday people, particularly in shaping their societies and politics on an institutional level. The role of religion in the Middle East – whether as something important in itself or something that shapes political movements – has become even more important for Americans to understand, given both American dependence on oil from that region, and U.S. involvement in the Gulf War, the events of September 11, and the war in Iraq. It is important to go beyond stereotypes to understand Islam – its origins, the important differences in belief (and especially practice) from country to country and group to group.

A larger purpose for the course will be to serve as a place where students can share experiences on the Term in the Middle East program as a whole, perhaps to make connections among other local courses they are taking and to help process difficult experiences. The course level is consistent with other Sociology & Anthropology offerings at the 260’s level. There is no prerequisite given the need to make it accessible to all students in the Term in the Middle East program.

Bruce Nordstrom-Loeb will teach this course once, during fall 2009, as the Field Supervisor’s course for Term in the Middle East.

## **English 256 Writing Travel**

### Catalog description:

This course offers intensive study of, and practice in, writing about travel. Students read a wide selection of travel writing, fiction and non-fiction, historic and contemporary, about the countries and regions the course visits, and en route write about their own versions of what they experience. The course is centrally concerned with the literary construction of travel, and the many factors – personal, cultural, and aesthetic – that shape that construction. Prerequisite: completion of GE 111 or equivalent.

### Rationale:

This new course is designed to be the field supervisor's course on the Global Semester 2009-10. In subject and study, it draws on the basic and defining element of the Global program: travel. Informed and guided by the study of a wide range of writing about travel – both historic and contemporary, both fiction and non-fiction – students will write their own accounts of traveling in the regions through which the Global semester passes. Writers studied may include the following: Robert Byron, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, Paul Fussell, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, and V. S. Naipaul. Travel texts will range from the Old Testament to modern tourist guidebooks, from diaries to letters, from postcards to blogs. Students will have a broad range of options for their own writing, which may include factual description, expository prose, creative non-fiction, or prose, verse, or drama. The aim of the course is to raise and complicate participants' awareness of the experience and meaning of travel in unfamiliar places, and to develop their ability to record in words what they discover. The literary and reading component is comparable to other Level II English courses that are open to non-majors and satisfy ALS-L. Jonathan Hill will teach this course once, during fall-interim 2009-10, as the Field Supervisor's course Global Semester. GE: ALS-L and WRI.