

Nubia Odyssey

Education 461/Middle Eastern & North African Studies (MENAS) 461

Fall Term 2021 Mon/Wed 2:30-4 2310 School of Education

Instructors:

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Canvas site: “EDUC 461 001 FA 2021” (*all readings will be on Canvas, or will be distributed in class*)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This seminar will provide an opportunity for you to share your knowledge and experience as you seek to engage a diverse network of students in discussions of social and cultural issues. It will also provide a place where you can become acquainted with the history and culture of Nubia, and dimensions of life there and in the Nubian diaspora, along with getting a rich glimpse of the work of the anthropologist.

Earth Odysseys is a work-in-progress. Each term we ask university students to guide high school and middle school students through a process of reflective thought as they consider (and perhaps reconsider) their own cultural practices and viewpoints through looking at those of others. This will be a challenge for the students (as well it should be!) and supporting the students will require patience and understanding on your part, as well as hard work. It is also a process, like most good teaching, of trial and error. Perhaps the single most advantageous trait for an Odysseys Mentor to possess, or to cultivate, is a willingness to experiment with an idea, and to continually adjust your mentoring based on your interpretation of the work done by the students, and the challenges you think they encountered. We hope that in the process of doing this work, you will further explore your own educational beliefs and broaden your intellectual perspective. It has been said that a significant portion of what is labeled as teaching is actually learning--we welcome you to what we hope

will be a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.

READINGS

Our course readings (all available on Canvas) are listed below. Other readings will be assigned on a week-by-week basis and will be distributed via Canvas or in class.

Baumann, Gerd (1996). *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-Ethnic London* (pages 2-21). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. 1915. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1965. New York: The Free Press. pp. 264-65.

Eickelman, Dale (). "Personal and Family Relationships," in *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, pp. 105-107 and 128-134.

El Deeb, Leena. "Nubian language, generational schism and state refusal," *Mada*, 5-17-17.

Erdman, Michael. *Is Arabic Really Just One Language?* *Slate Magazine*, 9-22-14.

Encyclopedia Britannica, "Diaspora"

Hariri, Yuval Noah (2018). *Sapiens*. (pp. 112-118) New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

Kushkush, Isma'il. "In the Land of Kush" *Smithsonian Magazine*, September 2020.

Mortimer, Edward (1982). *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*. (Chapter 1, "Traditional Muslim Attitudes to Political Power," pages 31-37). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Roberts, Jennifer. *Power of Patience* (pages 40-43) *Harvard Magazine*, Nov/Dec. 2013.

Rosenwald, G. C., & Ochberg, R. L. (Eds.). (1992). *Storied lives: The cultural politics of self-understanding*. Yale University Press.

Schultz, Isaac. *El-Kurru's Carved Graffiti Reveal Another Side of Ancient Nubia (Atlas Obscura, 9-19-19)*

Smith, Elizabeth A. (2006). "Place, Class and Race in the Barabra Cafe: Nubians in Egyptian Media." In *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, edited by Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, 399–414. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Story, Joanna & Walker, Iain. *The impact of diasporas: markers of identity (Ethnic and Racial Studies, 39:2, pp. 135-141)*

The World: Public Radio International. **Singing the Song of the Nubian Diaspora** (1/27/2012):
<https://archive.internationalrivers.org/blogs/264/songs-of-a-dam-s-diaspora-nubians-displaced-by-the-aswan-dam-tell-their-story-with-music>

READING THE ODYSSEY REPORTS

Starting the week of September 20th, two reports will be posted each week for discussion. So that you have some background on and context for the reports, we ask that you read the coming week's reports for class each week, and that you come prepared with questions about the reports (what doesn't make sense, or what would you like to know more about?) and thoughts about what the richest discussion issues are that are framed or suggested by the reports.

JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

We will ask you to keep an online journal in which you alternately chronicle the process by which you conceive of, research, and put together your Odyssey activity, and share some thoughts about your experiences as a mentor. Your journal reflections should be posted on our Canvas by the specified ***Sundays***. The prompts are listed on the weekly schedule below for each week that we would like you to do a journal reflection. The first reflection, due on Sunday, October 10th, will require that you read through the Odyssey reports. *To do this, look for a document in the **FILES** section on Canvas entitled "All Nubia Odyssey Reports" that contains the full text of each of our reports.*

LECTURES, READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, ODYSSEY REPORTS & CLASS TOPICS (subject to change):

August 30th

Introduction to the Nubia Odyssey

Nubia – Kush – Sudan – Egypt: looking at the region and the terms that are used; the genesis of the Nubia Odyssey, and general survey of the history of Nubia. What does it mean to be an Odyssey Mentor?

Readings/Viewings for September 1st:

- **READ:**
- **Harari, *Sapiens*** *The author speaks of an: Imagined order woven into our lives” – what does he mean by this? Please come prepared to offer an example of how his notion of “the imagined order” might be exemplified in your own life experience.*
- **Durkheim, On Tattooing** *Emile Durkheim wrote this over 100 years ago, derived from his (vicarious) understanding of aboriginal societies in Australia. Do you think it accurately describes the practice of tattooing in America today? Why or why not?”*
- **WATCH:**
- **“Nubia Express”**
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uN3463mqsoo>) and come to class prepared to discuss the following: What questions does the film raise for you? What, if anything, in the world presented in the film, was familiar to you? What was strange? What questions would you need to ask to better understand the world depicted in the film?

September 1st

A Glimpse of Nubia

We’ll discuss your reaction to “Nubia Express,” the value of “not knowing” in the cultivation of curiosity and empathetic understanding; anthropological fieldwork and bewilderment; Harari’s “imagined order,” the situatedness of human experience and the concept of culture

September 6th

No Class—Labor Day

September 8th

Exploring Mentoring

An introduction to mentoring work

Upcoming Assignment:

Mentoring Assignment #1 (assignment will be distributed in class today, **is due on Canvas on Sunday, September 12th**)

September 13th

Review Mentoring Assignment #1; Michael shares stories, pictures and memories of his trip to Sudan in the winter of 2019, and the genesis of the Nubia Odyssey.

Readings for September 15th:

- “What is Archaeology?” El Paso Museum of Archaeology
- ***Odyssey Report:*** Meet Anwar (*the reports are located in a document entitled “All Nubia Odyssey Reports” in the **FILES** section on Canvas that contains the full text of each of our reports).*

Upcoming Assignment:

Mentoring Assignment #2 (to be distributed in class today, **due on Canvas on Sunday, September 19th**)

September 15th

Discuss “What is Archaeology?” and the nature of archaeology: discovery, appropriation, representation, colonialism: what’s the problem here? How does this relate to current social discussions having to do with equity and diversity? Watch “Story of Nubia” AND clip from archaeologist Geoff Emberling’s comments on archaeology

Readings/Viewings for September 20th:

- **WATCH:**
- Remainder of Geoff Emberling video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7tABAPqMhA>
Please watch 9 minutes from 3:00 to 12:00
- **READ:**
- Schultz “El-Kurru’s Carved Graffiti Reveal Another Side of Ancient Nubia”

September 20th

Discuss Geoff’s video & Schultz article; Discuss Mentoring assignment #2; Orientation to the Odyssey Website

Assignment for Sept. 22:

Come with class with questions for Geoff Emberling

Readings for Sept. 22

- ***Odyssey Reports:*** Meet Anwar, What does an archaeologist do?

September 22nd

Guest Speaker: Archaeologist Geoff Emberling

Reading for September 27th:

- Kushkush, “In the Land of Kush”

September 27th

Looking at/talking about student work; Kushite Kingdoms

Readings for September 29th:

- *Odyssey Reports: Life in field, Archaeology in El Kurru*

September 29th

Introduce Mentoring Journal & Create an activity assignment

Reading for Oct. 4

- **Baumann, Contesting Culture**

The course requires that you (and your mentees) become ethnographer /anthropologists, not of Nubian culture, but of yourselves. Any time anthropologists ask their subjects such questions as, “Why do you ___?” or “What is the meaning behind this celebration?” or “Why is this unacceptable or taboo?” they ineluctably pose the same questions to themselves and, in the process, discover similarities and differences, convergences and divergences. In the process of doing this they often have recourse to certain recurrent terms: “culture,” “community” and “ethnicity,” to account for what they are dealing with—and it is all but certain that we will too.

In this reading, Baumann effectively confesses that, in setting out to undertake an ethnographic study of the culture of ethnic communities in a London suburb, every one of those terms became somehow more elusive and complex than he had first imagined. His argument is not to do away with terms that seem to be stubbornly indispensable, but to problematize them: in other words, an invitation to critical reflection.

We’ll consider questions like: What exactly do we mean when we use this word “culture?” Precisely how distinct or coherent is any group of people designated as “a community?”

October 4th

Defining our Terms: Culture, Community, and Ethnicity (Baumann Reading)

Readings for Oct. 6

- ***Odyssey Reports:*** archaeological mission arrives, End of the season:
The Temple

October 6th

Continuation of Monday's Conversation

Reading for Oct. 11

- Erdman, "Is Arabic Really Just One Language?"

Upcoming Assignment:

First Journal Reflection (Due on Sunday, October 10th on Canvas):

Which report interests me as a focal point for my project, and why? What do I need to learn more about so that I can create a good activity?

October 11th

Discussion of Arabic Language

Readings for Oct. 13

- ***Odyssey Reports:*** *Excavating pyramid, Shaigiya Haircut*

October 13th

More about the Activity project, informal sharing of project ideas.
Conversation with an Odyssey facilitator (tent.)

Upcoming Assignment:

Second Journal Reflection (Sunday, October 17th on Canvas):

Share some thoughts about the inquiry questions you'll be exploring for your activity project, and about what you want to provide for the teachers to help them get the most out of your project for their students.

October 18th

No Class—Fall Break

Readings for Oct. 20

- ***Odyssey Reports:*** *A Window and a Mirror, Parts 1 and 2*

October 20th

Window and a Mirror reports, Value of cultural misunderstanding

Readings for Oct. 25

- Moll “Paradise Lost”
- ***Odyssey Reports: Nubian Identity & Displacement of Nubians***

October 25th

Exile & Displacement

Watch Nubian Human Rights video

Readings for Oct. 27

- “Diaspora” Encyclopedia Britannica
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/diaspora-social-science>;
- Story and Walker, “The Impact of Diasporas: Markers of Identity”

October 27th

Diaspora

Readings for November 1:

- Smith “Place, Class and Race in the Barabra Cafe: Nubians in Egyptian Media.”
- ***Odyssey Reports: Emigration from ancestral land, Race in US/Egypt***

Upcoming Assignment for Nov. 1:

Please come to class on 11-1 with a displacement/exile/diaspora story

November 1st

Islam and Religious Life

Reading for November 3:

- Rutherford, “Skin in the Game”

November 3rd

Discuss Rutherford reading: How might contemporary notions of identity and the historical (and unscientific) constructs of “race” inform our mentoring work?

Readings for Nov. 8

- El Deeb, “Nubian language, generational schism and state refusal”
 - ***Odyssey Reports: My experience with Nubian Language, Learning English***
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November 8th

Nubian language in general

Podcast for Nov. 10

- **Singing the Song of the Nubian Diaspora**
<https://archive.internationalrivers.org/blogs/264/songs-of-a-dam-s-diaspora-nubians-displaced-by-the-aswan-dam-tell-their-story-with-music>

November 10th

Nubian Displacement & Forced Migration

Upcoming Assignment:

Third Journal Reflection (Due by Sunday, November 14th on Canvas):

Post your Project Statement, which includes a) your "driving question"--your succinct framing of the issue you want the kids to think about, and b) a succinct statement connecting your driving question to a specific report and C) your "scope of work," a brief summary of the specific pieces that will make up your completed activity. You will be giving a brief oral presentation about your presentation in class on November 17th.

November 15th

Reflection on the mentoring work so far.

Readings for November 17:

- **Odyssey Reports:** Sailing Boats, Songbirds

November 17th

Activity Presentations: Today in class, each of you will give a short (5-10 minute) presentation today in which you share your "ideas in process" about your activity. Use the opportunity to not only share your ideas but to ask for help and feedback from your classmates and professors. *What kind of experience do you want to provide for your students? What are you interested in having the students think about, or think about differently?*

Reading for November 22:

- Roberts, "**Power of Patience**" *Please come to class with your observations about the applicability of what Roberts discusses to our mentoring work. We'll talk about what she means by deceleration, and how that idea might be relevant to our work, and we'll explore whether there are meaningful parallels between paintings and student postings.*

Upcoming Assignment:

Fourth (and final) Journal Reflection (Due on Sunday, November 21st on Canvas):

Discuss your understanding of a student posting to which you responded, what you felt was needed by way of a response, and why you thought so. You might talk about what a particular student response evoked for you personally, or about a choice you faced as you considered your response.

Upcoming Assignments:

Odyssey Activity Project due on Canvas **by Sunday, December 5th.**

November 22nd

Discussion of the Roberts article; close observation

Reading for November 29:

- *Mortimer*, "Traditional Muslim Attitudes to Political Power," Come to class on November 29th with one thing you've learned from the Mortimer article that you didn't know before, and with one question the reading raised for you.

November 24th

No Class—Thanksgiving Break

November 29th

Mortimer article, Islam

Readings for December 1:

- Pages 89-99 from "Nights of Musk" by Haggag Hassan Oddoul;
- Excerpt from "Storied Lives" by Rosenwald and Ochberg;
- ***Odyssey Reports:*** Sultan's Son, Sultan's Son 101

December 1st

Power of stories

Readings for December 6:

- ***Odyssey Report:*** Family
- Eickelman "Personal and Family Relationships"

Upcoming Assignment:

Each of you will also give a short presentation on December 6th about your finished activity, letting your classmates know what you created, and what you're hoping your activity will make possible for your students to do and to think about.

December 6th

Family Structure; Discussion of Eickelman reading; In-Class Presentations of your Odyssey Activities

December 8th (Final class session)

Reflections on Odyssey Mentoring experience
Video Conference with some of your students (tent.)

Upcoming Assignment:

Final Reflection Paper *Due on Canvas by **December 17th***

ODYSSEY ACTIVITY PROJECT

Each of you will create an activity to be used by future Odyssey teachers and students. This activity must be linked to one of the Odyssey reports, and you will be charged with coming up with the activity idea, describing that activity so that a teacher can use it with her students, and assembling all of the other resources (readings, maps, web URLs, worksheets, discussion questions) that a teacher would need to do your activity, including your description of the activity, how it links to a particular Odyssey report, and what the larger idea(s) are that your activity is designed to frame for the students. This larger idea will be your driving question(s)--what do you most want the students to be thinking about or otherwise exploring as a consequence of doing your activity. We will be asking you to write a series of entries in your online journal that take you through the various steps of pulling your project together, and we will also discuss the project in class.

Your finished activity is due on December 5th (on Canvas) and should include the following elements:

- 1) An introductory (one-page) essay for the teachers and students that includes your driving question, how you derived it, why you feel it is important, and how you are connecting all of this to your activity.
- 2) Which report is your project linked to, how and why?
e.g. "Logos": Arbaab's report showed how impactful seeing one's own language in the "everyday world" can be. I decided to create an activity in students would be asked to look at their visual environment and to think

about representation and the potential significance of visual disruption..."

3) Detailed description of the activity

A step-by step sequence of what will happen, from preparation to conclusion. This should include descriptions of discussions necessary before the activity, orientation to the activity, directions for both teacher and students, description of what will take place, questions you want the students to consider, possible connections to the student's lives, and debriefing/post-activity discussion topics and prompts.

4) "What does a teacher need?"

This should include actual materials needed, discussion questions, a list of activity prompts a teacher could use, or debriefing questions. It should also include the readings or resources you would want to the kids to read (with annotated descriptions).

5) Complete list of references used.

In summary, we want you to give the teacher a finished activity including everything you think s/he will need to actually conduct your activity in their classroom. Your work will then become a part of our Odyssey teacher resources.

FINAL REFLECTION

In an essay of *at least* 6 pages in length, double-spaced (not including the illustrations of your posting or those of the students), please answer the questions below. *Be careful both to make assertions and to support them...what led you to reach the conclusions you reached, or to ask the questions that linger in your mind?*

We'll discuss your thoughts about these questions during one of our final class meetings. **Your final reflection essay is due on Wednesday, Dec. 17th.**

A) Select two postings made by the same student over the course of the Odyssey that indicate progress made by the student in question. Talk about what you see in the two posts, identifying their strengths and their shortcomings (if applicable), and discuss how the second post indicates progress made by the student. Be specific in breaking down the qualities of the posts and describing the measure(s) of progress you're employing. Please include the text of the actual postings.

B) Please walk us through a "second look" at an interaction that you had earlier in the semester. Start by choosing an interaction you had with a

student sometime during the first 2-3 weeks of mentoring. Show us the student work to which you were responding, and the response that you made. Tell us about the thinking that informed the posting you wrote and then, based on what you've learned from the ensuing weeks of mentoring, or perhaps based on your seeing different kinds of opportunities, we'd like for you to *craft and write out* a new response to the same student posting. In addition to showing us this new response, please explain the thinking that went into your new posting, and tell us what it demonstrates about what you've learned about yourself, your students, or about doing the mentoring work.

C) Discuss some of what you've discovered about yourself as a teacher and learner from your Odyssey experience as you engaged in and made sense of the mentoring work. Draw from your experience at supporting the intellectual work of younger people and challenging them to think more deeply, as well as your engagement with the broad set of cultural issues evoked by the reports and discussions. Be sure to illustrate your insights by excerpting particular interactions from the Odyssey that support and illustrate your points. Please also don't be shy about speaking of lingering challenges and uncertainties—you've tackled some challenging issues in your mentoring, and you don't need to pretend that you have everything figured out.

Informational Resources

We have some great information resources at our [Teaching Resources](#) site.

COURSE GRADING

Virtually every mentor in the history of Earth Odysseys chose this class because of their enthusiasm for helping kids to learn about more about their world, to sharpen their thinking, and to feel more confident in their writing and in articulating their point-of-view. As a consequence of this intrinsic motivation, most mentors do top quality work. Still, you should know the criteria upon which your grade will be decided:

- 1) Diligence and the quality of thought as shown by your participation in, and preparation for seminar.
- 2) Staying current with course readings, and all written assignments.
- 3) The quality of your research paper and other class assignments.

- 4) Most Importantly...the quality and frequency of your on-line interactions with the students, and your demonstrated engagement with doing this mentoring work, and with your reflection on this work.

You will have a key role in supporting the students as they seek to engage with ideas and to conduct a rich and respectful discourse. Your mentoring work constitutes the most important aspect of the course. The general rule is that you're expected to spend 5 hours per week outside of class doing your online work (or other out-of-class assignments), and to be consistent in responding to the students, as well as completing reading and other course assignments. **We expect each of you to make an average of at least ten substantive postings per week for each of the ten weeks** of online discussions.

Grades will be determined based on the following:

Quality and consistency of online mentoring work (25%)

Seminar participation & attendance (20%)

Journal writing (15%)

Odyssey activity project (20%)

Final reflection (20%)

Grade Scale

A	4.0	95 - 100
A-	3.7	90 - 94
B+	3.3	86 - 89
B	3.0	82 - 85
B-	2.7	78 - 81
C+	2.3	74 - 77
C	2.0	70 - 73
C-	1.7	67 - 69
D	1.0	60 - 66
F	0.0	0 - 59