

HISTORY, MEMORY, AND SILENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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HISTORY 430/594.002 / ANTHRCUL 430/558.003

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3 CR

Course Guide: bit.ly/fa19_hist430

Description: This seminar is an exploration in the anthropological approaches to the study of history and memory. It introduces and problematizes the concept of “silence” in the empty archives, ruptured oral historical accounts, and fragments left behind by past events. Taking the demise of the Ottoman Empire as a starting point, the readings probe into the history, historiography, and historicity of minorities, refugees, genocide survivors, as well as undocumented populations and unarchived events to navigate the following questions: How do we trace and represent the past in the aftermath of violence and destruction? How do we conduct research when the evidence is destroyed? What constitutes “evidence” for history? How could we entertain (im)material remnants of the past to rethink our understanding of the “archive”? The readings are anchored in the ethnography of the Middle East and North Africa, with a comparative reference to the Balkans. We take the Armenian genocide and the politics of its historiography, commemoration, and denial as a case study.