

Revolts, Enlightenment and Modern Arab Thought

- 10-11 am: Questions of malaise and cultural critique in modern Arab thought (mid-19th century to the present): General introduction to the main themes and presentation of the changing preoccupations in the course of the decades till our present day; and a comparative location of this Arab thought in the more general post-colonial debate: notes from Latin America and Africa.
- 11-1 pm: A few texts in English will be given to participants to read and discuss on the following themes: the significance of the 1967 defeat for the achievements of the 19-20th turn of century Arab Renaissance, the issue of authenticity, the question of gender and the subject of democracy.
- 1-2 pm: Lunch break
- 2-3 pm: The concept of Enlightenment in the interface of the cultural and the political
- 3-5 pm: A discussion of a number of comments by Arab thinkers on the current Arab revolts: the main themes and their significance for the question of the Arab Enlightenment. Among these themes: the awakening of the “people,” secularism versus islamism, the present uprisings in modern Arab history, the role of intellectuals and the place of culture in these popular revolts, the moral and ethical aspects of the protests, the “trans-national” character of the revolts.

Readings:

The morning session (11-1 pm) will use texts and sources written in English, and participants will be invited to make short presentations on the selected themes.

The afternoon session (3-5 pm) will use recent writings by Arab thinkers in the Arab press. Again participants will be invited to make short presentations on the selected themes. This way those who do not read Arabic could benefit from the reading and presentation of those who do. The readings will be made available in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, here are two background reading suggestions:

Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought. Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.