

Probationary Faculty Development Grant
Spring 2021

Project title (Textbook proposal):

The Middle East and North Africa: A critical introduction

Project objectives:

The major objectives for this project were preparing a textbook proposal and signing a contract with a publisher. The proposal includes: 1) describing a demand and need for the textbook, 2) summary of the textbook and its structure, 3) detailed synopsis and chapter headings, 4) details of illustrations, 5) special textbook features, 6) definition of market and likely competition.

Project description:

The Middle East and North Africa represent an important region for contemporary scholarship on social movements, political institutions, and cultural processes. Over the years, critical geographic scholarship on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has grown immensely. However, there is a disconnect between the ongoing work of scholars and textbook materials available to undergraduate students. For instance, topics on Islamic feminism, liberation of Middle Eastern women, intersectional identities, Islamophobia, hijabophobia and marginality of Muslims under hegemonic colonial powers tend to remain absent from classroom discourse. Existing textbooks tend to focus on discrete case studies or political institutions at the expense of adequate analysis of the interrelated processes that undergird the human geography and political relationships in the region.

The present text aims to bridge these gaps in the literature by bringing together critical scholarship and contemporary thematically-organized analysis of these important topics. The proposed textbook is divided into eight interconnected chapters, as follows. CH1: Introduction to the Middle East and North Africa; CH2: Colonialism and orientalism; CH3: Gender and sexuality; CH4: Terrorism, regional rivalry, and territorial conflict; CH5: International relations, migration, and displacement; CH6: Natural resources and political economy; CH7: Contemporary MENA; CH8: Conclusion. The book also offers supplementary materials at the end of each chapter including guided discussion questions, suggested further readings and resources, and possible projects or assignments to advance students' learning and engagement.

It has to be noted that one of our primary goals is to bring forth the work of scholars from the region who embody the culture, and to amplify their important scholarship. The fields of Political Science and Geography continue to be dominated by a small subset of perspectives. We intend to incorporate the voices of scholars who are underrepresented in the disciplines of political science and geography, whose paradigms reflect the experiences of the region more broadly. As a result, the textbook represents a more accurate and comprehensive body of knowledge than what is currently available.

Project results:

During Spring 2021 semester, the focus was on designing an accurate textbook proposal. After some revisions, the final contract was signed with Routledge in early July 2021. The first draft of the textbook is due by July 2022 and the textbook should be fully edited and ready to be published by July 2023.

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