

INTRODUCTION TO MODERN STANDARD

ARABIC (MSA)

Michael Guggenheimer

Course Description and Goals

The Arabic language consists of a number of varieties: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is the official language of 26 states and used mainly in written texts and formal settings, and various dialects of colloquial Arabic, one of which is the native language of every Arab. This course teaches the fundamentals of MSA. The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the Arabic alphabet, provide a basic vocabulary in MSA, and introduce the rudiments of Arabic grammar.

Students will be trained to acquire the following skills:

1. Familiarity with the Arabic alphabet and reading words in the Arabic script, including all vowels and other added signs.
2. Arabic typing and using online Arabic-English dictionaries.
3. Basic grammar and vocabulary of MSA.
4. Reading and understanding simple sentences.

Emphasis is on basic reading comprehension in MSA.

Each session (two academic hours) will consist of four main elements: (i) A quiz (dictation in the first part of the course, and a vocabulary exam in the second); (ii) Review of the homework; (iii) Learning and practicing elements of the Arabic alphabet (in the first part of the course) and basic aspects of MSA grammar (in the second part of the course); (iv) Using basic vocabulary to form simple expressions and sentences (in the second part of the course).

Course requirements

- Attendance, quizzes, assignments and class participation
- Midterm exam (the Arabic writing system)
- Final Exam (take-home)

Grading system

Quizzes	25%
Attendance, homework and class participation	25%
Midterm exam	30%
Final exam (take-home)	20%

Selected References

For students who wish to pursue the course's subject matter further the following textbooks are recommended:

The Arabic Alphabet

1. *Easy Arabic Script*, 1st Edition, by Jane Wightwick and Mahmoud Gaafar, McGraw-Hill Education, 2005 (Paperback). This book teaches the Arabic alphabet in a way that is quite similar to your course.
2. *Write It in Arabic: A Workbook and Step-by-Step Guide to Writing the Arabic Alphabet*, 2nd Edition, by Naglaa Ghali, Fun with Arabic, 2009 (Paperback and Kindle). This book uses a different system to teach the alphabet than your course, but is user-friendly and can be used for review.

Basic Grammar

Easy Arabic Grammar, 1st Edition, by Jane Wightwick and Mahmoud Gaafar, McGraw-Hill Education, 2005 (Paperback). A very useful book, which covers much of the same grammatical material as the course (gender, pronouns, demonstratives, nominal sentences, possession and verbs in the past), although not in the same order. Very useful for review.