

Course Objectives for Arabic 101

Prepared by Dr. Kristen Brustad
University of Texas, Austin

Course Materials:

- 1) *Alif Baa , an Introduction to Arabic Letters and Sounds* by Brustad, Al-Batal & Al-Tonsi. This book comes with DVDs that you will use every night. We will use this text for the first month.
- 2) *Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al- 'Arabiyya* , Part I . We will use this text after finishing *Alif Baa*.

Course Objectives For Arabic 101:

By the end of Arabic 101 you will, *in-shaa'a-llaah* :

1. have mastered the Arabic alphabet and sound system, be able to distinguish and pronounce all Arabic sounds, and write accurately from dictation;
2. initiate social interactions, ask for basic information, and be aware of basic cultural aspects of social interaction in the Arab world;
3. be able to talk about yourself, your education, and your family with any native speaker of Arabic;
4. comprehend simple written texts on familiar topics;
5. comprehend simple audio/video texts on familiar topics;
6. be able to compose simple paragraphs about yourself;
7. be familiar with some of the differences between formal and spoken Arabic.

Course Requirements and Grade:

1. Attendance and Participation (25%):

You must attend all classes throughout the semester and arrive to class on time. MESAS Department Policy on excused attendance states that absence must be excused with a written note from an appropriate office (doctor or dean). **Every three unexcused absences results in one-half a letter grade being deducted from your final course grade.** Please inform us of absence as soon as possible before--not after--the class you will miss. In emergencies, you may attend a different section of Arabic 101 on the same day provided you get prior permission from the instructor. This is a good way to keep up with class and keep your absences to a minimum. You must come prepared to participate fully in class activities. This means listening to CDs/online material and learning new vocabulary and structure so that you can **actively** use them in class.

2. Homework Assignments (25%):

There will be **daily written assignments** due at the beginning of class on the day designated in the periodic schedules. **Late homework assignments may be checked but will not be given any credit.** You are encouraged to study and work on homework assignments together, with the

stipulation that each student must participate fully in doing the work and must submit her/his own individual paper. Remember that the honor code is in effect in this class. Submitting work that is not your own, or that you did not participate fully in doing, is a violation of that code. If you have any questions about the honor code, please ask.

Please hand in homework written out clearly on a separate sheet of paper; pages Xeroxed out of the book will not be accepted. Homework will be graded on a range of 1-3, three being the best possible. **It is important to follow up on any instructor's** comments on your homework, and it is your responsibility to come to office hours or make an appointment to see us when needed.

3. Quizzes and Presentations (35%):

There will be several short quizzes (15-20 minutes each) and 2-3 oral presentations (some in groups). You will be informed of the dates of these quizzes and presentations at least a week in advance.

4. Final Examination (15%):

The final examination will be comprehensive and will test all the skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The date of the final examination is **December 19 from 12:30-3:00**; room to be announced.

Please Be Aware

- Any student who has previous knowledge of Arabic should speak with the instructor so they can be placed in the proper level. To remain in the incorrect level constitutes a violation of the honor code.
- Class will be cancelled on Wednesday the 23rd of November.
- Remember to have fun.

WELCOME TO ARABIC !

How to Do Well in this Class:

This class is a group effort! We can make much more progress as a class than as individuals by creating an Arabic-speaking community of which you will be a fully participating member. The following suggestions will help you get the most out of the course:

- 1. Prepare for active participation in class.** You should soon be able to predict what kinds of questions will be asked and what kinds of activities will be performed. Be ready for them by guessing what they will be and practicing beforehand.
- 2. Once is not enough.** When you are pronouncing new vocabulary along with the tape or practicing a new grammatical pattern, you should repeat the activity several times. It is best to pronounce new vocabulary words at least ten times, so that you can say them easily. Remember: if you cannot pronounce a new word easily, you haven't really learned it yet.
- 3. Study out loud.** The only way to train your brain and your mouth to speak this language is by doing. Thinking about it is not enough!
- 4. Study in pairs/groups.** This is a great way to prepare for class and review-as long as you do the work in Arabic as much as possible, of course! Ask each other questions, brainstorm about assignments, go over materials covered together. You are encouraged to collaborate on assignments, as long as each student hands in her/his own paper. The Emory Honor Code applies to this course too: you may only submit work in which you have participated. Any assignments that must be done individually will be announced.
- 5. Personalize vocabulary.** Make words relevant by thinking of what you can say about yourself with them. Write extra sentences that are meaningful to you so that the vocabulary becomes yours.
- 6. Learn to guess.** The approach we use here at Emory encourages you, the learner, to use what you know to derive what you do not. Think about how you acquired your native language: you learned new words by guessing their meaning from context, and you learned how to produce sentences by imitating and using patterns. As adult learners, we can take some shortcuts, but guessing skills remain central to language acquisition. Do not leave blanks on the homework, but do not allow yourself to become frustrated; give it your best shot, and move on.
- 7. Good language learners learn from their own mistakes and those of others.** Correcting mistakes is an essential part of the learning process. In this class, you will never be penalized for a mistake that you make when trying something new. When your classmates are speaking, be an active listener by listening both to what they are saying and how they are saying it. Think about how you would correct their sentences.
- 8. The first month of class requires an extra time investment on your part.** Expect to spend an extra hour per day during the first month while we are doing the alphabet drills. This investment will pay off later: by learning to write what you hear and vice-versa,

you will not have spelling problems, you will memorize vocabulary more easily, and you will be better able to speak with and understand native speakers of the language.

Principles for Group Activities:

There can be no language without community. In our community, respect for each other at all times will ensure a positive and fruitful learning experience. Help and encourage your colleagues: each of you can learn with and from everyone else. Work with different people on a regular basis, because everyone has her/his own particular strengths.

Due to the importance of getting ample opportunity to participate and practice, and with a large class size, we will spend at least 75% of class time in small group or pair activities. During these activities the instructor plays the role of personal trainer. Learning a language is a lot like going to the gym. Rather than arm muscle, however, we need to build mental and throat muscles and train that brain-mouth coordination :)

- **Come prepared.** Don't be someone who slows down a colleague by not being ready. If an emergency or that biochemistry midterm has prevented you from preparing, let me know before class begins. I will then be able to arrange the groups so that you can learn by listening.
- **Speak Arabic at all times.** If you feel frustrated, raise your hand rather than breaking into English.
- **Stay focused on the task at hand without rushing to finish.** Most activities are designed to elicit creative play with vocabulary and structures on which we are working. I will often call time before everyone is finished. If your group does not finish, you may want to take a few minutes to study the rest of the exercise after class as part of your regular study and review.
- **When your group finishes the task, raise your hand to let me know.**

Things that People “Good at Languages” Know

Prepared by Professor Kristen Brustad

The most important thing you can learn here is *how to learn Arabic*. The teacher's job is not to teach you the language but to guide you while you teach yourself.

❖ • **Knowing about the grammar is not the same as knowing the grammar.** Grammar lectures and explanations are useful only to the extent that they tell you what you need to practice. You will not “know” the grammar until you have internalized it: until you can form and recognize *idaafas* and use the correct form of verbs without thinking, you do not know them. Obviously, this process takes time. The two months you will spend at Middlebury is the best opportunity you can have to work on internalizing structure, by saying things over and over again, and concentrating on the way you are saying them, by listening to the teachers, tapes, etc., and imitating, and by listening to your classmates and learning from what they do right *and* what they do wrong. Correcting (to yourself) the mistakes that others make will reinforce correct patterns.

❖ **Learning from Input**

There are three main steps to learning from input, whether oral or written. All are equally important:

1. Understanding what is being said.
2. Understanding **how** it is being said. Often, you will need to listen or read a second or third time to concentrate on this, so it is particularly important to utilize taped materials for this purpose.
3. Imitating it.

❖ **Listening and Speaking**

Being an active listener will improve your speaking skills. There is no reason to be bored in any class or lecture, whether or not you understand or like everything that is being said. If the person is talking at a more advanced level, try to understand as much as you can from context. If the level is too high, practice listening for individual sounds, words, grammatical structures, and so forth. Try to identify the beginning and end of sentences. If the speaker is saying something you already know, take the opportunity to concentrate on how it is being said. Listen to the kinds of constructions and vocabulary being used, the vocabulary to express ideas, pronunciation, etc. If the speaker is making mistakes, correct them to yourself. There is no better drill or practice than to be constantly repeating to yourself correctly formed sentences, and this is something you can do whenever you are not speaking out loud. Everyone can learn to pronounce Arabic like native speakers. All it takes is the desire to do so, and some muscle work. Two sets of muscles are involved in speaking: the mouth and the brain. If you would like some help with pronunciation, talk to your teacher.

❖ **Form is sometimes more important than content.** Concentrate not just on *what* is being said but also on *how* it is being said. Remember too that there can be no content without form: paying attention to detail enables you to understand and express your ideas. Take time to think through what you want to say *before* you say it.

• Memorization

The first and most important step in learning vocabulary is to listen to the DVD when you go over vocabulary for the first time. The combination of aural and written input together will help you learn the new words better than any other method, and you will learn them correctly from the very beginning.

You will spend a great deal of time memorizing vocabulary. If you do not have good memorization skills, ask others how they do it, or ask the teachers for help. Experiment with different techniques—usually a combination of oral-written, active and passive exercises will be the best. We suggest you try all of the following and find the combination that works best for you:

- listening to words and repeating them out loud—not once but five times, or until the word is easy for you to pronounce
- flashcards
- writing out vocabulary by hand over and over—but remember to pronounce it out loud while you do
- using new vocabulary in sentences
- studying in groups and quizzing each other
- using word association techniques

Do not limit your memorization to individual words. It is also important to memorize phrases, sentences, and short, culturally important texts, such as song lyrics, poems, proverbs, and the like. Most importantly, memorize *all forms of the verbs and nouns* at the same time: past and present, singular and plural, verb and preposition. Study in pairs or groups. Do not lock yourself in your room day after day. Language is used for communication and interaction, and you can only learn it by practicing. Studying with others is more fun and more productive. Arab culture is a very interactive and participatory culture, and the best way to learn about it is to get involved

HAPPY LEARNING!