

Curricular Materials
Women in the Arab World
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These notes and the accompanying power point slides have been put together based on teaching materials I have used in Politics of the Middle East, as well as materials gathered as part of my Division of Global Affairs, Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center, and Women's Leadership Center funded research on women leaders in Arab monarchies. The slides and notes below cover a range of topics such that hopefully they can be used – in whole or in parts—as a useful module for a range of classes from sociology to anthropology to women's studies to world cultures. I am also happy to consult with any faculty members or instructors wishing to use the materials who has questions, etc. I can be reached via email at mhallwar(at)Kennesaw.edu

Possible Readings¹

“Women, Structure, and Agency in the Middle East” by Valentine M. Moghadam
Feminist Formations, Volume 22, Issue 3, Fall 2010, pp. 1-9 (Article available via Project Muse database)
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ff/summary/v022/22.3.moghadam.html> (if you are on campus or logged into the databases you can access the full text through this link-read the WHOLE article not just the summary)

Laipson, Ellen. 2016. "Taking the Long View on the Changing Status of Women in the Middle East." World Politics Review (Selective Content) 1-3. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed April 27, 2017).

<http://proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=119227933&site=eds-live&scope=site>

- A policy briefing type piece that looks at future changes in Saudi Arabia based on changing educational policies toward women and girls

PBS Global Connections: What factors determine the changing roles of women in the Middle East and Islamic Societies?

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/questions/women/>

Beitler, Ruth Margolies, and Angelica R. Martinez. 2010. Women's Roles in the Middle East and North Africa. Santa Barbara, Calif: Greenwood, 2010. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed April 27, 2017). [has chapters on work, religion, law, politics, family; could be used for different classes]

Women's Movements and Countermovements : The Quest for Gender Equality in Southeast Asia and the Middle East (1). Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UNITED KINGDOM: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 27 April 2017.

- Book has several case studies that may be relevant, for example, Chapter 6 by Mona Ennaji on Morocco. Conclusion provides a good overview of some of the tensions and challenges in studying the field, as well as issues of positionality, the lack of a ‘universal’ theory on women’s rights, and a section looking at secular vs Islamic approaches to women’s rights

¹ These are a few possible readings that could be assigned to students related to this module, or for additional background for the instructor using the module. These resources are on the general side, and/or have chapters with different foci so that they can be adapted to different class settings

Pretest/Post test

Use this short "quiz" to assess student knowledge of women in the Middle East prior to the module. You can use the quiz again at the end of the module to assess changes.

True or False:

1. Women in the Middle East are not able to work outside of the home T/F
2. All women in the Middle East are limited by shari'a law (Muslim law) T/F
3. Muslim women are active shapers of culture, religion and society in Middle Eastern countries. T/F
4. The veil oppresses women. T/F
5. All women in the Middle East are forced to wear a veil. T/F
6. The terms "Arab" and "Muslim" are interchangeable. T/F
7. Polygamy is widespread throughout the Middle East T/F
8. Support for the rights of Middle Eastern women has been used to justify foreign intervention in Middle Eastern countries T/F

Multiple Choice

9. Women in the United States earn approximately how much for every dollar men earn?
a. \$0.25; b. \$0.50; c. \$0.80; d. \$0.94
10. What is the gender pay gap for Oman according to a recent UN Women study?
a. 3%; b. 10%; c. 50%; d. 90%
11. Which of the following countries is *not* in North Africa?
a. Tunisia; b. Egypt; c. Yemen; d. Algeria
12. Women comprise which percent of the workforce in Saudi Arabia?
a. 0; b. 15% c. 25% d. 50%

Short Answer.

13. List the names and countries of origin of any Middle Eastern women leaders you know.
14. In a paragraph or two, tell us what you know about Middle Eastern women's experiences in the political, economic, and social arenas.

Answers: 1. F; 2. F; 3. T, 4. F; 5. F; 6. F; 7. F, 8. T; 9. C; 10. A; 11. C; 12. B

Power point Teacher Notes:

SLIDE 2: What do you see?

Slide with a cartoon showing an image that can be seen as either a young woman looking away with a fancy plumed hat and a fur stole OR an old woman/hag with a large nose and a pointy chin and a head scarf

Let students examine the picture, ask them to think about what they see, ask several students to volunteer to share what they see. Make sure there are at least some who see each image.

Once you have some who see each of the image, ask the students if they can now see both images.

Questions to consider:

- Why do some see one image and some see another? What unconscious lenses do we carry?
- Did you have difficulties seeing the other image once you knew it existed? Why or why not?
- What might this image tell us about social reality and images?

-You'll want to tease out the fact that different people see the same event or the same image differently.

This is conditioned by our own experiences, our own cultural assumptions, our own expectations,

-Some things are not "either/or" but they can be "both/and"; there are also variations and shades of gray in any socio-political context and variation within those contexts

SLIDE 3: Different Views, Same Picture: Ideological & Cultural Lenses

This slide holds a cartoon image of a woman in a bikini and a woman in niqab thinking the other is oppressed due to what they are wearing (or not wearing).

Once students have examined the cartoon image, you can ask questions such as:

- What are the assumptions in this cartoon regarding gender roles?
- What are the assumptions in this cartoon regarding women's agency?

→ You'll want to tease out questions of the assumption that women did not choose to wear what they are wearing (assumption they are wearing that because men forced them too)

- ➔ Various social norms and expectations and constraints that may be absorbed by women; or women may actively prefer to wear what they are wearing; this could be a very large discussion depending on the focus of the class [i.e. how are such 'desires' created and sustained and fostered, and how do these change over time and place within and between cultures and societies. For example, the 'norm' that girls wear pink and boys blue has accelerated in US culture in recent years but was not always such a divide. Do girls actively prefer pink, or are they conditioned to prefer pink because that is what social cues all around them suggest]

SLIDE 4: Who is Oppressed?

This slide has a few additional cartoons for students to look at. Have them examine the cartoons and jot down notes regarding what they think the cartoonist is trying to say in the cartoon. What are the issues under debate?

- ➔ Have students jot down their lists and then share with a classmate. See what similarities/differences they had. Either bring back to the whole group, or move on. Depending on

the class, after having them share their observations with a partner, and/or with the larger group you can ask questions about what oppression is and how it is defined

- <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/oppression>: a situation in which people are governed in an unfair and cruel way and prevented from having opportunities and freedom:

Examples:

Every human being has the right to freedom from oppression.

War, famine and oppression have forced people in the region to flee from their homes.
the oppression of women

- Research Starter on “Oppression” has a fuller definition and discussion could be expanded as desired for class purposes depending on the course and its goals
<http://proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=113931194&site=eds-live&scope=site>

Some basic questions could include:

What is oppression?
Who defines it?
What are its effects?

SLIDE 5: Defining our Terms

Women in the Arab world are those defined by the Arab culture. Arab identity is most closely identified with the Arabian Peninsula, and then spread to surrounding areas, including North Africa, with the spread of the Islamic empire.

SLIDES 6-8: Maps of the Region

- Note that the Arab world ≠ Muslim world ≠ Middle East
- While there are overlapping boundaries in this area, the Middle East is a geographic term rooted in colonial history (the Middle East was between the Far East and the Near East, both part of the British empirical geography, and then later was a region for the British Navy). Sometimes the region is defined in terms of the Middle East and North Africa.
- Ask your students “Middle of What?” “East of where?”—both are relative terms that define the region vis-à-vis Europe
- Different branches of the US government define the region differently, i.e. the US Dept of State and the US Dept of Defense
<https://www.state.gov/p/nea/>
<http://www.centcom.mil/AREA-OF-RESPONSIBILITY/>
These differences are related to different scopes of work and interests of these agencies; they reflect the idea that the definition of the region is political and related to the interests of those defining it rather than a pre-existing set category
- Turkey and Iran are two states that are often included in the “core” Middle East but are non-Arab; in some cases Turkey is included in Europe (i.e. the *Economist* magazine has Turkey in its European section)
- There is a difference between “Muslim” world, i.e. Muslim majority countries, and “Islamic” world, which implies states that are governed by Islamic law and/or political Islam. The most populous Muslim majority country is Indonesia, which at various points in time has been considered a democracy of sorts

- ➔ Arab is a culture/nationality descriptor and Muslim is a person who adheres to Islam (a faith/religion)
- ➔ These various descriptors have different ramifications when it comes to how one is thinking about women and the influences and socio-political structures that influence women's role in society

SLIDES 9-12: Different Head coverings

- ➔ Women in the region are defined by much more than whether they are covered or not and to what extent they are covered
- ➔ However, the question of the head scarf has been politicized, and women's attire has been used as a political tool and argument not only within countries in the region (and in the Muslim world) but also as a political tool between the West and the Muslim world
- ➔ In Turkey, a Muslim majority country, it is against the law to wear a head covering in any government building or institution. This includes universities. It means that the wife of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has led Turkey since 2002 (as prime minister and then president) has not been allowed at state functions or dinners since she wears the headscarf
- ➔ In Iran prior to the 1979 Revolution, women were not allowed to wear head coverings; after the revolution it became mandatory. Again, a *political* decision impacting women's lives
- ➔ These two slides examine variations within coverings seen in the Muslim world and also a slide that shows other cultures and religions that cover. Note that these slides reflect both *cultural* and *religious* practices of covering the head. This is a good reminder that there are historic traditions in both culture and in religion for covering, and one cannot ascribe covering solely to religion. Further, covering of the head is a tradition in other religious traditions besides Islam
- ➔ Many women choose to cover their heads. Reasons include: modesty, ease of dress (not having to do their hair or worry about their attire under their robes), fashion (some of the head coverings are incredibly stylish and expensive), religiosity, traditional culture, protection from the sun
- ➔ Note that men in many parts of this same region also cover their heads and dress modestly, also part of traditional culture and modesty and protection from the sun; it's not all about gender
- ➔ Not all women in the Middle East are Muslim, and many Christian women in the region do not cover
- ➔ Not all Muslim women cover, either because they are secular, or because they see the practice of wearing the headscarf as one of tradition rather than religious dictate. There are other reasons why not all Muslim women cover, including some who feel their voices will be heard and taken more seriously in the "West" if they are uncovered
- ➔ Here is a little short video that shows a range of Muslim women answering short questions on a range of topics – its humorous (3 min 52 sec)
- ➔ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrFkxH9ot0g>
- ➔ Another short article and multimedia on US Muslim women and their decisions to unveil
- ➔ <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/21/135523680/lifting-the-veil-muslim-women-explain-their-choice>

The slide on not covering shows a few images, of Turkish business women, a group of veiled and unveiled friends and a famous Lebanese singer, Fairouz. The take away point is that hijab is not a defining characteristic of women, and women do not segregate along veiled or unveiled lines. Further, the veil is not, for many, a religious dictate, nor do Muslim women feel it should be the only or most important symbol of their spirituality and/or moral worth

SLIDE 13: Women and the West

The topic of how women have been portrayed within the Middle East has been the subject of much critical scholarship in recent decades. In his classic text, *Orientalism*, Edward Said documents how

women were portrayed as either erotic or untouchable, and the manner in which women were treated was used as a justification for external 'civilization' or power/disciplinary action from the West

- Colonialism and the trope of the "white man's burden" of civilizing other peoples/races
- Feminization of the "Orient"
- "Representing non-western women as "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.," and western women as "educated, modern [...] having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions" simply widens the already huge gap in global sisterhood" (Md. Mahmaudul Hasan, "The Orientalization of Gender" *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 22:4 p. 29), citing C. T. Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." In *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, eds. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 261
- Said notes that the Orientalist project gives women a triple subjugation as woman, "Oriental", and Muslim

These quotes in the slides raise questions of the objectification of Muslim women and also women in the non-West as well

Using the "oppression" of women as a justification for attacks on the Taliban (although the problem had persisted earlier and the West ignored it then)

Banning of the "burkini", although later at least one court said this ban was not legal, illustrates the way women's attire, when seen as affiliated with Islam, is "policed" by the West

- In a famous and oft-quoted essay, Gayatri Spivak raises similar issues in terms of how "third world women" are portrayed and framed and rendered voiceless. Several quotes and articles from recent decades provide illustrations of the role of Muslim women vis-à-vis Western actors
- 'Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence.' It is, rather, that both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. (p. 41)

"White men are saving brown women from brown men" -- dangers of our efforts to give the subaltern a voice (p. 48)... "the protection of woman (today the 'third world woman') becomes a signifier for the establishment of a *good society*" (p. 50)

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2010 Can the Subaltern Speak? In Morris, Rosalind C., and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 2010. *Can the Subaltern Speak? : Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 26, 2017).

SLIDE 14: History of Women Protestors

In contrast to the way Middle Eastern and/or Muslim women are portrayed in the West (as passive or as overly erotic, i.e. the harem or behind walls and veils), women have actively participated in their societies in history and today.

Slide shows women in Iran and women in Egypt fighting in revolutions; women also fought in Algeria's revolution

Optional activity: Have students do research on women's involvement in protest movements in the Middle East; in the various countries that experienced the Arab Uprisings (e.g. Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Morocco, Libya) to see the diversity of activism. Just Vision has a forthcoming film on women's activism in the first Palestinian intifada that might also be a good resource.

SLIDES 15-18 Family/Personal Status Law

The legal system in much of the Middle East differentiates between civil law and personal status (family) law/code. The family law is often influenced by religious teachings and interpretations, often shaped by patriarchal norms

- Tunisia and Turkey have banned polygamy in these codes, for example (although already monogamy is the norm), whereas Morocco still allows polygamy (the husband must receive permission from the court, and the first wife must agree to it; fewer than 1000 per year ask for more than one wife),
- The paternal line is how inheritance is passed, in part due to the lack of social welfare policies at the state level;
- In some cases women have a bride price or mahr as part of the marriage arrangements; this money is then the women's for living expenses, etc, in case of a divorce
- Laws vary between countries—they are a political negotiation not only a religious one
- In many societies, men are responsible for providing their wife's maintenance, or *nafaqa*, even if she is wealthy; this includes providing food, shelter, medical care, etc. Women have the right to their own private money and she can deal with it how she wishes. Woman's duties to her husband include obedience to the husband, responsibility for the home, and look after their children http://odaa.oregon.gov/events/personal_status_law_english_sharia_law.pdf (see articles 37, 38, 44 of the Omani code)
- In Morocco, the family code specifies mutual respect between husband and wife, the wife assuming with the husband the responsibility of managing and protecting household affairs and the children's education, consultation on decisions regarding the management of family affairs, the right to inherit from each other; (Article 51); women often have rights if the husband abandons her or takes an oath of abstinence from her; husbands are required to pay maintenance for his wife; also salary is due for breastfeeding the child (Chapter II, Article 194, Article 201) <http://www.hrea.org/programs/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/moudawana/#15>

Read through segments of these codes together as a class or individually, and ask students to discuss their reactions to these codes. What might be the costs and benefits of spelling out the rights and obligations of spouses? Are there any similar codes in US custom? What are the similarities and differences?

- Text of marriage vows in traditional Christian services
- Georgia marriage laws

What are the similarities and differences in terms of obligations and rights?

- Note the issue of abuse, and how it is more recent in the US; how the standards for how spouses should treat each other and their obligations are clearer in the Omani and Moroccan examples
- Issue of the dowry as being more standard....women's financial bearing; could think of it like a pre-nuptial agreement of sorts
- Both Morocco and the US talk about inheriting from each other

- Maintaining sexual relations more of a priority and statement in the middle eastern ones than the US ones
- Issue of wealth, tax status, etc, this financial aspect of marriage is seen in all of the various cases; marriage as a legal, economic contract

Debate over whether equality means “same” or not; for many religious Muslims, women and men have different rights and responsibilities, which makes them different, not the same, but they suggest this does not prevent them from being equal

- Islam teaches that men and women have different roles; they are complementary pairs; no sense of blame on women for what happened in the Garden of Eden. Woman is not a temptress of evil (Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)
- Ideally everything women need to fulfill primary duty of child raising should be provided by society, by men—only women can give birth—men providing her maintenance is a way of freeing her from oppression of needing to give birth and provide for material/physical protection
- Feminist scholars like Amina Wadud use the Qur'an and interpretations of the Qur'an to make their case for women's rights
- Women are seen as equally able to pray to God, etc, in Islam; there is not the sense there is in Christianity of women being responsible for “the Fall” from Eden

SLIDES 19-24 Women in Politics

Website showing women in Parliaments around the world; note that the US is behind several Middle Eastern countries

- <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

The Quota project has data on countries with gender quotas around the world

- <http://www.quotaproject.org/>

You can have a discussion on the relative merits of a quota—whether that breeds excellence or whether it simply enhances tokenism; there are arguments on both sides of this debate; for example, even if women are physically there, they may not be on key committees, may still be expected to get coffee, etc, or may not be included in the agenda-setting and decision making that occurs at various levels in parties and in the government

- <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/01/are-quotas-for-women-in-politics-a-good-idea/251237/>
- <https://www.ft.com/content/d65795f2-0de6-11e5-9a65-00144feabdc0>

Here is a speech about women in politics and the shared view of the need for women's empowerment in Jordan and the US (US ambassador to Jordan speech March 2015)

<https://jo.usembassy.gov/advancing-womens-empowerment-a-shared-vision-for-the-united-states-and-jordan/>

Slides 20 and 21 provide more specific examples of women in politics. Bothaina Kamel ran for president in Egypt (she spoke at KSU during her campaign), and Nouzha Skalli, a politician in Morocco. A case study of Nouzha Skalli along with teaching notes is appended at the end of this document.

Slides 23 and 24 highlight two political leaders in Oman, a country that has grown substantively since the Sultan Qaboos came to power in 1970. Her Excellency Hunaina al Mughairy and Her Excellency Rawiya al Busaidi both spoke at KSU during the Year of the Arabian Peninsula's conference on Women in Oman. <http://dga.kennesaw.edu/yearof/arabianpeninsula/women-oman.php>

Read this short article about Her Excellency, Hunaina Al Mughairy, the Omani Ambassador to the US and her husband:

Oman's Power Couple

http://washdiplomat.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6643:-omans-power-couple-&catid=1006:october-2007&Itemid=275

Here is a youtube video of the ambassador giving a speech to the World Affairs council in D.C. It is a 58 minute video

The introduction, which gives a good deal of information on Oman and the US relations with it, goes for 10 minutes or so. At 10:42 he begins the introduction of the ambassador herself

At 16 minutes in she begins to talk, remarks end at 30 minutes; then a discussion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gykJceBgEKA>

Interview with HE Dr. Rawya Saud al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education of Oman

<https://www.thebusinessyear.com/oman-2015/the-right-moves/interview>

SLIDES 25-29 Women in the Work Force

Labor data for women in the workforce and how that has changed over time. Note that many women are in the informal sector and their economic activity is not measured by these kinds of indicators.

Women also tend to be concentrated in particular sectors of the economy, such as the agriculture or services sector, or in elementary education and nursing

Women tend to have greater unpaid care duties (caring for sick or ill relatives, children, elderly parents)

- <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>
- The UN Women report on women in Indian Ocean rim countries has a wealth of information as well, including data on gendered poverty, the wage gap, women's employment in various sectors, women's managerial positions, and education by field <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/enabling%20womens%20contributions%20to%20the%20indian%20ocean%20rim%20economies.pdf?vs=1451>
- UN Women has a number of useful publications with data on women's participation in the workforce, development, etc, on their website <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/poww-2015-factsheet-middleeastnorthafrica-en.pdf?vs=1514>
- The World Economic Forum has an annual Global Gender Gap report <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/> with data from around the world, searchable by country
- The US Dept of Labor has a page with a range of interesting topics related to women in the Labor force https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/stats_data.htm (I.e. top 3 jobs for women in US in 2014 were secretaries/admin assistants, elementary/middle school teachers, and registered nurses)
- Data on women in the Omani workforce by sector <http://timesofoman.com/article/88025/Oman/Government/Omani-women-playing-a-larger-role-in-public-and-private-Sector>

- http://www.oxfordstrategicconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/OxfordStrategicConsulting_OmanEmployment_Jan2016.pdf (data on employment in Oman more broadly)
- Views on women's leadership in Libya, Tunisia, and Libya, along with demographic and other information
http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%2010%20AWLI%20Survey%20of%20Attitudes%20Towards%20Women.%20October%2025-November%208.%202013_0.pdf
- Note that some countries, like the Gulf have high numbers of expat workers (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, etc.) who come to work in the country but who have no citizenship status and sometimes may be paid under the table. How these workers are integrated or not into the data can affect the numbers

Class activity option:

- The power point slides include a chart that compares data on Women in the Workforce for four MENA countries (Oman, UAE, Yemen, and Egypt) along with the USA on a series of indicators.
- Assign students to predict or make guesses regarding the comparable statistics for other MENA countries and then look up the data (for example, which countries will have the highest labor force participation by women? Which will have the lowest?). Students can work in partners or group and report back to the larger group what they find. Look for patterns and surprises

Short videos:

- The power point includes two short videos about women-run businesses, one in Oman (chocolate) and one in Morocco (Argan oil)
- What are the challenges facing the women business owners in each of the videos?
- What are the similarities and differences between the women's experiences?
- What are the business challenges they face? To what extent are these challenges due to their gender?

Things to draw out of the discussion:

- Note the diversity between the two films: one is about an urban-based business that is a luxury/leisure item (chocolate) while the other is based in a rural area and is agricultural
- Note the relatively short start up time for the chocolate, and the 10 year investment in tree planting
- Note the small team for chocolate, as well as the investment in entrepreneurship from the government of Oman
- Note the need for the cooperative venture in Morocco due to the fact that Argan oil is produced in such small quantities (30-50 kg of fruit needed for 1 liter of oil)
- Argan oil traditionally seen as "women's work"; manual, tedious work; Berber custom
- Challenge of meeting women in the traditional woman village; women in Casablanca would be different situation for women
- Women improve their economic standing and power in the course of selling Argan oil, but their earnings do not compare to the pharmaceutical companies—what are the possible ramifications for the future?
- How do the women's earnings in each case affect their lives? (i.e. education, training, etc.)

SLIDE 30: Links of Interest

Appended to this File are Several Case Studies and Teaching Notes on Women Leaders in Morocco who were interviewed in October 2016 (Nouzha Skalli, Aicha Echenna, Wafaa)

Case Study: Nouzha Skalli

The long road to the Moroccan parliament began at 19 years old for Nouzha Skalli. At that time she saw that her country was poor and underdeveloped and wondered why some countries were advanced and others were poor without education. She determined that the difference was in the involvement of the people in political life. It was from this conclusion that she dedicated her life to equality, the dignity of her people and the betterment of her country.

Nouzha's mother was widowed at the age of 32. She had seven children and no money. Despite all these challenges, Nouzha credits her mother with the drive to ensure that all of her children succeeded. The key to that, she says, was education. "She thought that if we studied that we could have everything. But we had to be passionate and to make efforts. And she said that people who make efforts, they never fail. Everything is possible to exist if we make it," said Nouzha.

Much to the joy of her mother, all seven of her children graduated with high degrees – and three of her daughters served as members of Parliament.

Nouzha's older sister was the first woman elected to the Parliament in Morocco and her younger sister was elected to office in the 2016 election. Nouzha ran for election for the first time in 1976. She ran for office seven times in 20 years before she was finally elected in 1997 as a local counselor in Casablanca. In 2002, Nouzha made her way to Parliament and in 2003 was appointed the president of her party's caucus – the first woman to ever be appointed.

Later that year Morocco's king, King Mohammad VI, declared that changes needed to be made to the personal status code². Nouzha knew that the only way for effective changes to take place were for women in parliament to have a voice. She said: "if there were no women to discuss this law it would be worse than before." Nouzha led the charge in Parliament for the amendments to the personal status code to bring about more gender equality and less discrimination and violence toward women. It became law on October 10, 2003.

In 2007, Nouzha was appointed a minister in the government. One of the first things she did was to ask the king if October 10 could be known as the National Day of Women in Morocco in honor of the great achievement that took place in 2003. During her tenure as minister she promoted a culture of equality and fought for better laws prohibiting violence against women.

² This is also sometimes called the family code or the *moudawana*

Teaching Notes
Nouzha Skalli Case Study

Possible Readings:

<http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/index.php?Nouzha-Skalli>

“Generational Politics and Renewal of Leadership in the Moroccan Women’s Movement” by Loubna H. Skalli. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Volume 13, Issue 3. Pp. 329-348.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.kennesaw.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=3cc4b689-957d-4f3d-b814-b2fe276197ab%40sessionmgr101&hid=114>

“The central role of the family law in the Moroccan feminist movement” by Fatima Sadiqi. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Volume 35, Issue 3. Pp. 325-337.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fatima_Sadiqi2/publication/308673837_The_Central_Role_of_the_Family_Law_in_the_Moroccan_Feminist_Movement/links/57ea806408aed3a3e08aa662.pdf

Discussion Questions:

1. What surprises and/or inspires you about Nouzha’s story?
2. What assumptions about women’s leadership in the Arab world does she challenge?
3. Nouzha came from a low-income, single parent family. In what ways did this drive her success? How is her situation different from what you might expect of such an influential political leader?
4. Historically, feminism has been a movement led primarily by white elites. Why has that been and what are the consequences? How has Nouzha Skalli impacted feminism? See:

<http://www.hrea.org/programs/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/moudawana/>.

Case Study: Aicha Echenna

For Aicha Echenna, becoming a leader of public opinion and reaching out to help the disenfranchised came at an early age. According to her, “It was 58 years of investment in the field and I had to learn as I went along.”

In order to help her family pay rent and take care of her younger siblings, Aicha went to work for the Moroccan League Against Tuberculosis helping lepers – a pretty unusual job for a teenager. She found the job to be depressing and she had a hard time dealing with the emotional stress of seeing such suffering every day. Her boss almost fired her. But when he found out how young she was and how she used her salary to help her family, he decided to give her another chance. This time she would work with those fighting tuberculosis.

It was this move to the tuberculosis center that first helped her to see the plight of young women in her country. Next door to the center was a center for women and children. Aicha watched as women would have a baby and be back a little over nine months later to have another one. She was confused and concerned about how these women living in poverty could care for so many children.

During this time period, Morocco was undergoing social change. The traditional or tribal family unit that included grandparents and aunts and uncles was slowly being replaced by the more nuclear family. As a result, Aicha felt that mothers needed even more access to information and more help.

In 1957 the Moroccan League for Children and Protection of Sanitary Health was created and Aicha immediately volunteered. After volunteering for some time, an assistant with the League encouraged her to become a social assistant by going to nursing school. She told Aicha that she had the gift of speaking to people and being heard. Aicha didn't want to go back to school and change her job. But feeling pressure from the assistant, she decided she would at least sit for the competitive nursing school entrance exams, all the while hoping she would fail the exams and continue with the work she was already doing.

Aicha sat for the exams, taking the hardest ones possible to increase her chance of failure. When the assistant came back to her telling her she had passed the exams, Aicha was shocked. But she told the assistant she still couldn't take her position at school because she had to make money to care for her family.

Recognizing Aicha's gifts for speaking with people in difficult situations, the assistant managed to retain a salaried position for Aicha while she finished nursing school. The assistant told Aicha, “You have to give back what you get from society. It is very important.” She recognized that for Aicha to live out her passion to help single women and children and truly make a difference in society, she needed a little more training. Becoming a nurse would make all the difference.

After graduation, in 1965 she began work on family planning and in 1966 began working with orphanages and speaking about family planning to television audiences. She was told she couldn't speak about money and its connection to family planning. But Aicha knew that poverty played a key role in why families had so many children with so little money. So she planted people in the audience to ask prepared questions so she could answer them. It was live television, she says, and it wouldn't be her fault because she was simply answering a question.

This was the just the beginning for Aicha. She went on to create the Women's Solidarity Association – an organization devoted to helping unwed mothers and their children. When fully funded, the association has the capacity to help 50 mothers with their babies. As a result of the hard work of Aicha, the center's staff,

and donors from many faith backgrounds, hundreds of otherwise outcast children have been reintegrated into society. As of 2016, the association is able to self-finance about 70% of their necessary income.

This great movement toward self-funding has given Aicha and her association a position of power and worldwide recognition. She's received the \$1 million Opus Prize for humanitarian action from the United States, the Legion of Honor from France and an award of excellence from the World Bank, just to name a few.

Teaching Notes
Aicha Echenna Case Study

Possible Readings:

“Help for Unwed Mothers in Morocco” by Kristen McTighe. *The New York Times*
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/world/middleeast/02iht-M02-MOROCCO-HAMMAM.html>

“Discussions with Aicha Ech-Channa, Founder and President, Association Solidarite Feminine, Casablanca, Morocco.”
<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/discussions-with-aicha-ech-channa-founder-and-president-association-solidarite-feminine-casablanca-morocco>

“Morocco: Aicha Ech Chenna Wins Opus Prize”
<https://globalvoices.org/2009/11/13/aichaechchenna/>

“Gender, reproductive rights and health in Morocco” by Fenneke Reysoo. *Development*, Volume 42, Issue 1, pp. 63-66.

"Legal empowerment of unwed mothers: Experiences of Moroccan NGOs" by Stephanie Willman Bordat and Saida Kouzzi. *Legal Empowerment: Practitioners Perspectives* (2010).
http://www.idlo.org/Documents/Legal_Empowerment_Practitioners_Perspectives_Book.pdf#page=180

Discussion Questions:

5. What surprises and/or inspires you about Aicha’s story?
6. What assumptions about women’s leadership in the Arab world does she challenge?
7. How does the world’s recognition of Aicha’s accomplishments put her organization in a position of power?
8. In what ways does Aicha’s fight speak to issues of human rights?
9. How do the changes made to the Moroccan personal status code (*moudawana*) in 2004 help unwed mothers and their infants? What challenges still remain?

Case Study: Wafaa

Wafaa started as an assistant professor and in a little over 10 years managed to work her way up to vice president of a university. How did she do it?

According to her it started with a dream and a lot of hard work.

Wafaa grew up as an only child. She credits her parents for gifting her with a desire to succeed. "Since I was a baby, three years old, my dad told me, 'If you get good grades, I'll send you to the U.S. to study,'" she said. Wafaa also says her parents instilled in her a desire to do better and to do things without necessarily expecting anything back.

That led her down the road to successful higher educational leadership in a field dominated by men.

Wafaa met the criteria set out by her father, and thus studied for her PhD in the U.S. She was hired at a Moroccan university as an assistant professor before she had even defended her dissertation. Her hardworking ambition and her involvement with students caused her to be noticed by the higher-ups. As a result, she was asked to manage the school's internship program.

After successfully revamping the system, Wafaa was offered a position as the undergraduate program coordinator, then dean and finally vice president of academic affairs.

Wafaa says that although the academic world, especially in Morocco, is dominated by men, she also says that she sees the problem everywhere. It's universal; not Moroccan. When asked how she deals with men who don't like having women as a boss, her answer is casual but professional: "As educators, we're all here for the same objective, for the same good, which is to educate these kids. Their parents put their trust in us and it is our obligation to give them the best education they can get."

But being a woman in a high leadership position is not the only way Wafaa breaks social norms with such grace. Wafaa is also a single woman in Morocco, never married and with no children. While a challenge in her culture, Wafaa says perhaps that is helpful in her rise to the top. She doesn't face the same pressures at home that other women do.

Wafaa says that while her family and her determination played a role in her rise to success, she also says that women can rise to top positions in Morocco by being competent. According to her: "It's because of what I do, because of what I've done in the past, because of my positive attitude to want to do good."

Teaching Notes
Wafaa Case Study

Possible Readings:

“Gender Inequality in Morocco Continues, Despite Amendments to Family Law” by Aida Alami. *The New York Times*.

https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/17/world/africa/gender-inequality-in-morocco-continues-despite-amendments-to-family-law.html?_r=0

“Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Workforce”. The World Bank.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/03/10/middle-east-and-north-africa-women-in-the-workforce>

Discussion Questions:

1. What surprised and/or inspires you about Wafaa’s story?
2. What assumptions about women’s leadership in the Arab world does she challenge?
3. In discussions about Middle Eastern women’s role in the workforce, many women talk about the “glass ceiling”. What is it? If women like Wafaa can seemingly break it, what keeps other women from doing the same?
4. Is the “glass ceiling” specific to Morocco and other countries in the Middle East? Do you see the same problem here in the States? How is it the same? How is it different?
5. What are steps that can be taken toward gender equality in the workplace?