

Islam, Media, and the Arab Spring
“and their affairs shall be discussed among them”
(وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ)

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This curriculum unit is recommended for
Arabic Language/Social Studies/9th-12th grade

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Teaching Standards: [Appendix 1](#) addresses the teaching standards in this curriculum unit.

Synopsis: In this curriculum unit, 9-12th grade Arabic language students will be introduced to an overview of democracy. The unit will contain discussion topics about Islam and democracy, and the role that Islam and the media played in the Arab Spring. The Islamic position on democracy, its influence on the daily lives of Muslims, and the rationale for why Islam cannot be ignored in the process of democratization or a sudden change to a democratic system in the Arab countries are addressed. The unit further delves into the recent historic event called the Arab Spring, the socioeconomic and political factors that created the uprising, the failure of the movement in most Arab countries, and the ensuing mass scale emigration and surge in nationalism that impacts the global society. The traditional media and social media played essential roles in delivering, organizing, and facilitating the Arab Spring by creating a platform for the political protesters to interact and coordinate their uprising against totalitarian regimes.

I plan to teach this unit in the second semester of the 2017/18 school year to 50 students in 9-12th grade Arabic language classes.

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Introduction

I am originally from Palestine and lived in Syria and Jordan before immigrating to the US. I have been teaching for 15 years, and have taught Arabic and Global Studies in the past eight years in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools is located in Charlotte, NC and the school district is a very diverse district with over 178 schools. Currently, I teach 9-12th grade Arabic language at Hawthorne Academy. Hawthorne Academy has two magnet programs: Health and Science program and Military, Global Leadership and Public Safety (MGLA) program. I teach students who are in the MGLA program. Both programs are designed to foster leadership and leaders who will have the skills to be productive citizens in the global community. Hawthorne Academy is a Title I school, and Part A of Title I is the cornerstone of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), previously known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and the largest federal education program. Schools designated as Title I are ones in which at least 72% of the student population is from an economically disadvantaged background. Its intent is to ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic content and performance standards.

Rationale

As an Arabic language teacher and native of an Arab country, students ask me questions about Islam and the Arab culture. I thought a unit that clarifies some of these inquiries might be a beneficial for my students. The unit will be designed to encourage student participation in the learning process through discovery and research. The objectives of the introduction are to highlight the elements of democracy and to stress that it goes beyond voting. It will encourage students to view democracy as participation, education, awareness, and involvement. The intent is for students to understand that the world is interconnected and the issues and events ultimately impact them and our democracy. Furthermore, the students should be cognizant of the process in which the interests of other countries with authoritarian governing systems interfere with the execution and maintenance of our democracy and cast doubt on our institutions and the democratic system.

The unit will provide students with knowledge about Islam, and learn that it is a religion that does not separate the spiritual, social, and economic realms. Islam is a way of life that is ingrained in the psyche of each Muslim. However, the content and degree of belief, practice, and understanding of Islam varies among individuals, sects, and nations. The unit will try to dispel some of the negative stereotypes associated with Islam that influence politics and democracy in particular. Students will learn that Muslims do not hold democracy in a negative light but democracy in an Islamic state might take a different shape than in the western world. In other words, Islam is compatible with democracy. The unit is designed to highlight the role of Islam and the media as motivators and catalysts in mobilizing multi-national protests that came to be known as the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring was a collection of unpredictable events that shook the Arab World and created global issues across political borders and involved many countries. The Arab Spring started in 2011 and was spontaneous, alarming, and unique. The world was caught by surprise at the speed of the events that unfolded in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. Political, economic, cultural, religious, and social factors contributed to the rise of the Arab masses that demanded change and the right to be heard. The causes that drove the masses into the streets varied from one country to another, but one certainty is that it was not business as usual in the Arab world's political arena. After the collapse of several regimes, fear spread to other Arab countries. Therefore, the Arab Spring cannot be ignored in our education as there are lessons students can learn from it. The first lesson is that corrupt regimes without accountability will face challenges from social movements using peaceful means. The second lesson is that regime change will not happen if the regime resists and the popular movement does not have a unified front and shared ideology. Students will examine this major world phenomenon and research its causes, accomplishments, and failures.

Traditional media and social media have changed how news is transmitted and how fast it reaches people. Information technology played a crucial role in the Arab Spring. Social media, cell phones, and the internet were the non-violent weapons of the protestors. They were essential tools for the protestors in organizing, networking, mobilizing, and informing the world of the news and events in real time. Digital technology provided a platform for free speech and expression. When they found themselves under threat, the regimes used digital technologies to spread fake news and to mislead the consumers and also monitored the activities of the protestors.

Students who will become the future leaders and global citizens need to be aware of the nuanced aspects and facts about the Islamic religion and the Arab countries. Ignorance breeds ignorance, which leads to misunderstandings about other cultures, including the Arab countries. The unit will aid students in understanding the positive aspects of the religion and the culture in dictating the politics of the region.

Demographics

Of the two magnet programs at Hawthorne Academy, the Health Sciences offers programs of study that focus on general medicine, nursing, emergency services, and pharmacy technologies. These programs prepare high school students for success in college and addresses the reality of continuing workforce shortages in healthcare. The Military, Global Leadership and Public Safety Academy fosters leadership through building positive trusting relationships and service learning, and shapes future leaders who will need the skills and knowledge base to make impactful and positive contributions to the global community. In addition to JROTC, rising 9th grade students have an opportunity to pursue a career in public service. Students have hands-on personalized instruction in the skills needed to succeed in law enforcement, firefighting, and emergency service. All students have an overview of public safety and then focus on their area of interest. The program is designed to provide a foundation of public service while in high school and allow students to advance their skills through a partnership with CPCC and UNC Charlotte.

The student body at Hawthorne Academy consists of African Americans (49.5%), Hispanics/Latinos (40%), and a small percentage of Whites (9%). The enrollment for the academic year 2017-18 is 420 students. The table below shows the number of students in the magnet programs by ethnicity and race.

Ethnicity and race	Hawthorne Academy of Health Sciences	Military and Global Leadership Academy
(AM) American Indian or Alaskan Natives	1	0
(AS) Asian	12	2
(BL) Black or African American	141	67
(PI) Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0	0
(WH) White	29	9
Hispanic/Latino	69	82
Two or More Races	3	5
Unspecified	0	0
Total	255	165

This unit is designed for 9-12th grade Arabic language students. It will satisfy parts of the cultural and global requirements in teaching a global language. The unit can also be adapted for high school social studies courses.

Content Objectives

The issues I will cover in this curriculum unit demand more time than I can allocate; however, the main objective I would like to achieve is to allow students to have an overview of various topics and to introduce students to the contemporary political culture in the Arab countries. The unit will focus on the following objectives:

- Provide a brief introduction of the history of democracy
- Define democracy as we understand it in the United States
- Provide evidence of democratic principles that are promoted in Islam
- Suggest how democracy in an Islamic nation might differ from democracy in a western nation
- Explore the causes of the Arab Spring
- Review the active role that Islam played in inciting the demands for political change during the Arab Spring
- Illustrate how the internet, social media, and mobile phones were indispensable tools during the Arab Spring
- Review the downfalls of the Arab Spring
- Demonstrate how the lack of liberal institutions means there will be no democratization

General Teaching Strategies

The unit will define in both Arabic and in English the vocabularies that are deemed essential to the understanding of the course material. Students will be assigned articles or documentaries before we address questions pertaining to the unit. Whenever possible, students will break into discussion groups. The unit will be conducted in a seminar style and I will provide the discussion topic, students will conduct research on the topic, and a discussion will ensue. While the unit is focused on information, it also incorporates academic skills of research, process of discovery, and oral communication.

To begin the unit, students will share their knowledge of democracy as they understand it. Students will research evidence supporting the fundamentals of democracy in Islam. Briefly, we will cover the cultural, global, economic, and political factors that govern the success or failure of democracy or democratization in the Arab countries. Subsequently, we will focus on learning how democratization might have succeeded in the Arab world during the Arab Spring and what led to its failure. The implementation of democracy depends largely on the existence of liberal institutions or how fast they can be established. The unit will touch on why conflicts and leadership in the Arab world can sometimes become catalysts to implement democracy, protect it, or cause it to fail. At the end of the unit, students will break into groups, and each group will present the events that took place in a country that was part of the Arab Spring.

Fear and controlled/limited democracy are used in some Arab countries to control or pacify the population. However, education and western values are shaping and influencing the Arab people. Our discussion will include suggestions on what type of democracy might be successful in the Arab countries and whether it could be aligned with the Islamic values of human rights, equality, social justice, and participation. Also, the unit will question whether social and economic conditions that trigger people's demand for liberal institutions can be hindered by either internal or external influences. The failure of the Arab Spring sparked global problems, including immigration, identity and nationalist movements, and hate groups. Students will consider why these global issues led some European countries to support the Arab countries' oppressive regimes, under the justification that oppressive regimes have been stable and did not cause problems for the west.

After we examine the Arab Spring, the economic, demographic, social, and cultural factors that sparked it in several Arab countries will be explored. Students will investigate the role of the liberal Arab and social media and how they supported the movement. We will debate some complex issues that brought its failure such as weak or lack of liberal institutions, tribal interests, clan interests, economic disparities, ethnic and religious differences, external interferences, corruption, and fear of the unknown future.

I am planning on teaching the unit over the period of 10-15 days during the second semester of the 2017-2018 school year. I realize that the unit will deal with both simple and very complex issues. However, the instruction and unit topics will be adjusted to each grade level based on the results of periodic assessments.

Content

Democracy Then and Now

Democracy as the Greek envisioned it does not exist. It has been a utopian idea we wanted to materialize but it is an impossibility. However, some countries have blended some principles of democracy with socialism. Democracy by definition is “the rule of the majority.” Nowadays, our definition of democracy is the government of the people exercised by elected representative. The United States, therefore, is a representative democracy. There are three government branches: the legislative branch consists of the Congress which is further divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court, and the Executive branch is the President of the US.

In our present time, the democratic principles of freedom, liberty, rules of law, and due process have been hijacked by interest groups, rich elites, and the media with special agendas. The principles of democracy have been further eroded because of the economic collapse in some countries, and an influx of immigration from countries that are facing conflicts, poverty, terrorism, and xenophobia. This led to the rise of nationalist movements in Europe, fueled by the fear of losing their identity, culture, and security. This fear encouraged some countries to enact laws or procedures which drifted away from the principles of democracy. In the digital world, people can lose part of their freedom and privacy without their knowledge, and it is likely that our individual losses will add up to violation of human rights, privacy, and security in the long run. The rise of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination are happening with the encouragement from indirect and direct messages of hate groups. The principles of democracy, human rights, and values are increasingly being threatened. The need to find the balance to protect ourselves from terrorism, insure that immigration is done legally, help resolve conflicts, practice inclusion not isolation, and stop discrimination in all forms are the best ways to uphold the principles of democracy and human rights. The world is always changing and we cannot isolate ourselves from the diversity and influences of other cultures. Education is the tool to guide our students to respect other cultures, to become responsible citizens, to be informed about what democracy is, and to be leaders in the 21st century.

Islam and Democracy

The main principles of Islam are peace, freedom of speech, freedom of belief, human rights, justice, and equality. These principles or values are aligned with basic democratic values of the west. Islam advocates for a society that is ruled by leaders who represent the people and will strive to fulfill the needs of the populace regardless of skin color, race, or ethnicity. God said in the Quran “O people, we created all of you from the same male and female, and we made you into nations and tribes to recognize each other. The best among you is the most righteous. God is omniscient cognizant” (49:13). Another verse from the Quran says “And because of the mercy of God, you treated them with compassion. Had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have broken away from you. Therefore, you shall pardon them, ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter. Once you reach a decision, then carry it out, putting your trust in God. God

loves those who trust in Him” (3:15). These verses show God’s instructions to his prophet Mohammad to forgive and to consult with people in order to mutually reach decisions about matters that are of concern to them. Islam encourages leaders to make decisions that represent the interests of the majority and to give the majority a voice in the decision-making. God also says in the Quran “And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend” (42:38). The consultation referred in this Quranic verse is a form of representation and democracy that allowed the followers of the prophet Mohammad to engage in the affairs of the state. Islam accepts the rule of the majority if it does not conflict with Islamic principles.

Islam means the submission to only God. This allows a Muslim the freedom of choice and the responsibility of an individual’s deeds or actions is to God only in the day of judgment. A person is free to make choices in life and to express his/her opinions in a peaceful manner. In the Quran it is stated “He also says about freedom of opinions: “So remind them. You are only one who reminds”” (21:22). The verse is an example of freedom of speech. Freedom of religion is another aspect Islam has addressed in one of the verses in the Quran: “The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve” (18:29).

Islam means peace and to live in a peaceful manner in a Muslim or non-Muslim society. It does not condone aggression or fanaticism, and therefore, a true Muslim cannot be a terrorist or a violator of law. “Whosoever kills a human being without (any reason like) man slaughter, or corruption on earth, it is as though he had killed all mankind” (5:32). In this verse, the respect for and protection of all human life is a law that Muslims should abide by. Islam guarantees the right to justice and due process to all. God says in the Quran “Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred except through the due process of the law” (6:151). Fairness and equality are espoused in Islam and mentioned many examples in the Quran. “Their Lord responded to them: "I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female - you are equal to one another”” (3:95).

The examples I have given show clearly that Islam does not separate itself from politics. Islamic outlines for a democracy may not be identical to western democracy, however, the main principles of Islam (peace, freedom of speech, freedom of belief, human rights, justice, equality) are all elements in our democracy. Islamic democracy differs in that the Quran came as the guide, constitution, and law to govern Muslims and enable them have justice, peace, prosperity, and security. Muslims have to believe in the day of judgement that each Muslim is divinely predestined and therefore free to make choices.

Causes of the Arab Spring

On December 17th 2010 Mohammed Bouazizi, a vegetable seller, set himself on fire in Tunisia in protest after losing his vegetable cart to the police. His death triggered peaceful protests that forced the Tunisia president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali to flee to Saudi Arabia. The fire that burned Bouazizi’s body ignited the fire in the Arab world. The Egyptians forced president Hosni Mubarak to resign after two weeks of intense protests. The demands for regime change in Libya

and Syria were met with extreme force by the government against its own people and led to civil wars in both countries. Muammar Gaddafi was removed in Libya but the civil war goes on in Syria. President Bashar Assad remains in power and Syria became a shelter for extremists and this in turn brought more countries into the conflict. Syria became a theatre for sectarian conflict between the Sunnis and the Shiites and a proxy war between different countries.

The Arab Spring was long overdue. The oppressed people in Arab societies were ready for change, and had experienced enough fear, poverty, and lack of opportunity. They were sick of their dictators, corruption, lack of employment, nepotism, police brutality, and injustice. The people wanted to participate in developing their countries and they wanted a democratic political system with all that a democracy entails: freedom, respect, human rights, and justice. They wanted to be represented in the political system and enjoy security, equality, better standard of living, and rights of a citizen. The Arab Spring gave people hope that freedom and liberty are possible and needed.

Those who engineered protests in the streets were people from largely diverse political and socio-economic backgrounds and aspirations. Many of them wanted democracy, and it was not just a fetishized notion but a concrete demand for it. In addition to all the suppressive tools that the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes used to quell the protests, the regimes accused the protesters of being guided by foreign elements, that they are driven by drugs and money and that they are aiding terrorists and extreme Islamic fanatics. These accusations were meant to elicit western support against the Arab Spring uprising. Some claimed that the loss of pride, dignity, and honor, which are core values that are imbedded in the Arab culture and upheld and defended by Arabs, is the underlying cause of the Arab Spring and not the economic, political, and social elements. There might be slight truth to this argument; however, pride, dignity, and honor are fundamental human attributes and the struggles against poverty, abuse, and degradation in the Arab countries have been fought for centuries. The concept of freedom has always remained in the forefront of discussions among young and old Arabs.

The Arab Spring caught both the East and West by surprise, and many tried to comprehend its causes and triggers. The causes are different depending who is analyzing the events. Some of these causes include:

- 1- Unemployment
- 2- Social Medias
- 3- The domino effect
- 4- Dictatorships and nepotism (Egypt, Libya, Syria)
- 5- "The people want to bring down the regime"
- 6- Demography
- 7- Corruption
- 8- Pride, honor, and dignity
- 9- The need for civil liberty
- 10- The need for liberal institutions
- 11- Islam, its principles, Friday prayers, and mosques
- 12- Police brutality and lack of justice
- 13- Climate change (Syria)
- 14- Economic uncertainty (oil prices) and economic injustice

15- Spontaneity

16- Urbanization

17- Demands for political liberty

The unit cannot cover in depth the history, politics, reasons, and the context of each Arab country that was part of the Arab Spring. The unit intends give an outline of what led to the uprising to materialize and to show the protests as a means to democratization. The call for freedom is alive in that region of the world and any setbacks will not hinder or obstruct it for long.

The Media and the Arab Spring

Aljazeera news was launched on November 1st 1996, signaling the birth of the first free press media in the Arab countries. *Aljazeera*'s headquarters is in Al Doha, Qatar. It broke the unwritten rule of not criticizing another Arab government and remains a controversial 24-hour news channel. *Aljazeera* covers news from all over the world and produces documentaries about major global issues and conflicts. As it became a major global media player, it gained the trust of the Arab people in the streets for its honest reporting and professionalism. Western media used *Aljazeera*'s exclusive footage from the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. Al-Qaida leaders chose *Aljazeera* to broadcast their videotape messages. *Aljazeera* became a threat and an annoyance to many governments in the East and the West. The bureaus of *Aljazeera* in Kabul and Bagdad were bombed during Afghanistan and Iraq wars. According to some reports, George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair discussed bombing its headquarters in Qatar, although they did not do so.¹ If the news channel broadcasted news that the governments deemed offensive or not aligned with their propaganda, the bureaus were threatened with closure or closed with the crews expelled. In some cases, the journalists were put in jail as is the case in Egypt. Rulers of Libya and Syria accused *Aljazeera* of treason and dubbed it an enemy of the Arabs. Presently, Saudi Arabia is demanding the shutdown of *Aljazeera* as one of its preconditions for lifting the embargo and restrictions it imposed on Qatar in the summer of 2017.

The Arab masses needed a source that relays the news without government censorship and editing. They wanted to hear truthful accounts of their reality and day to day events from journalists who do the reporting without fear and intimidation from the regimes. They wanted to hear different perspectives and opinions. Therefore, when the Arab Spring started, *Aljazeera* and Saudi Arabia-based *Al Arabiya* news were the first to be on the ground with their cameras and crews to broadcast the protests in real time. The governments tried unsuccessfully to prevent the *Aljazeera* crew from doing its job during the uprising. *Aljazeera* and *Al Arabiya* played a part in enticing people to go out into the streets and demand the fall of the tyrannical regimes. The chant that protesters sang – “the people want to bring down the regime” – has been heard loud and clear in the Arab countries and elsewhere. These news sources showed peaceful marches by Arab youth as well as the extreme violence that met their protests. The bloody scenes that played over and over on the TV screens fueled more anger and showed how far the tyrannical governments were willing to go to suppress dissent and punish the dissenters. In contrast, the government-controlled media in Syria, Libya, and Egypt presented twisted news that were full of contradictions to cover up the repressive and brutal actions of the regimes.

Information technology and social media were not the elements that sparked the uprising. Nevertheless, they were major players in organizing and coordinating the activists and communicating on a mass scale from within countries to the rest of the world. *Aljazeera* was crucial in being the beacon in shaping and educating the Arabic world and providing information. It was able to investigate and address important issues even if it is controversial and did not hesitate to show graphic pictures and videos of maimed, injured, mutilated, or dead bodies during the Arab Spring protests. Protesters themselves became journalists and cameramen as they sent cell phone footage of what was taking place to *Aljazeera*. Twitter feeds and other social media posts by protesters were aired instantly in the news. In some cases, the news was posted on Twitter and Facebook prior to reaching the major news media. Although verifying the validity of the news from social media will continue to be a challenging issue, its central role during the Arab Spring cannot be ignored. The use of the internet, cell phones, social media, and television news have proven that modern information technology can pose a threat to totalitarian regimes all over the world. Realizing its power and efficiency in planning and mobilizing thousands of people for revolts and uprisings, governments enacted measures to control them, even shutting down bureaus and jailing journalists.

Islam and the Arab Spring

Peace, freedom of speech, freedom of belief, human rights, justice, and equality are foundations of a peaceful, stable, and productive society. Muslims believe in these values and that the role of the government is to ensure that these values are protected and upheld. Failure of the government to deliver these values creates resentment, economic hardship, social injustice, corruption, and disappearance of civil and political freedom. Islam requires Muslims to rise and demand that justice be restored in the face of injustice as stated by the prophet Mohammad: "No sin is more swiftly punished than injustice." In several passages in the Quran, God described how He punished many of the nations for indulging in injustice and mischief on earth.

When the Arab Spring began, the Arabic street was boiling with anger due to lack of economic opportunities, government suppression and oppression, corruption, and absence of all types of freedom. Change was needed and the Arab world was primed to explode. When the protestors went to the streets, the mosques became the place to gather and launch protests, and Friday prayer sermons relayed strategies for persistently demanding freedom and justice. Islamic charities mobilized their resources to provide support to the protestors. The deep Islamic influence in the social, cultural, and political fabrics of the region came to the forefront to sustain and support the dissent regardless of the cost. The call to prayer became a time of solidarity and a motivator to stay the course and maintain the resistance. Loudspeakers at mosques became transmitters of news and messages to the protestors. Islam and the Quran became the source of inspiration to keep the momentum and the language of the activists as Muslims were united and saw themselves as one. The abuse, brutality, and ruthlessness by governments against their citizens united dissenters and deepened their beliefs about the injustices in the country. Therefore, Islam cannot be ignored as a major contributing factor in the uprising for it is the core belief that motivated people to be a part of the Arab Spring.

What Caused the Failure of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring spanned Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Egypt, and Syria. The revolt instilled hope all over the world, the hope that people have the power through peaceful means to demand freedom, and basic human and civil rights. The people in the streets wanted the privilege of representation by their governments and to be part of the political process. However, setbacks ensued with the exception of Tunisia: civil wars started in Syria and Yemen, the authoritarian regime returned in Egypt – this time backed by corrupt military elites and the legal system, the state collapsed in Libya, terrorist organizations like ISIS gained power, and serious interconnected global issues such as immigration, nationalism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia became more common. The reasons given for the failure of the Arab Spring are varied and opinion depends on the political pundits and whom they serve.

For thousands of years the Arab countries have been the center of attention due to many factors and some of these factors are still existent:

- 1- Strategic location
- 2- Abundant natural resources/economy
- 3- Ethnic diversity
- 4- Foreign intervention

These and others factors have been a curse to the Arab countries; moreover, whatever transpires in one country invites interference by other players from the region or the outside who want to dictate outcomes or protect their interests. The Arab Spring was no different. The Syrian civil war became a battleground for many countries, each with a different motive. The Yemeni civil war was similar with the US providing support to the Saudis and the Gulf states who were waging a destructive war in Yemen. In Libya, the international powers interfered on behalf of the dissenters, but when the government collapsed the international powers left and sent the country into chaos. In Bahrain, the involvement of the Saudis, including even sending their troops, shored up the power of the Bahraini government.

Many say that the Arab Spring failed because of the non-existence of liberal and civil institutions or plans in what to do afterwards. Others have concluded that there was little unity among the concerned parties that rose against the regimes or that the parties were unable to reach a compromise. The ethnic, tribal, or clan diversity in most of these countries created further challenges in unifying the objectives and advancing their causes. In fact, the regimes used divisive issues among the diverse groups to their advantage and either encouraged or supported one side against the other. The fear of terrorism in western countries was also factor in reestablishing political connections either covertly or openly with the authoritarian regimes. The western governments stopped their support of the rebel groups and in some cases, forced them to make concessions to the authoritarian regimes. The atrocities committed by ISIS and the sectarian division between factions stole the true spirit and the attention from the original intent of the Arab Spring. The regimes and foreign influence created a sense of despair and hopelessness among the public. Combined with the lack of security and peace, people nowadays wish for the return of the old regime days because back then, people were at least able to

maintain a sense of normalcy and have their basic needs met. The regimes wanted the masses to give up on their demands for democracy, and succeeded in putting lasting fear in the people and enforced the idea that they are better off without democracy.

Whatever caused the failure to have democratic governments or setting up a process for democratization in the Arab world, one cannot dismiss the fact that the Arab Spring unveiled the desires of the Arab masses for freedom, economic prosperity, corruption-free systems, equality, identity for the forgotten, and justice. The regimes took notice of the Arab Spring events and while some are implementing reforms, most are clamping down on their people and becoming more oppressive. The root cause of the uprising is still there, as well as the threat to the unstable regimes. The region as a whole is going through major changes and we will never be able to accurately predict the outcome because the region itself continues to be unpredictable.

Instructional Implementation

The curriculum will be implemented for the Arabic language students and divided into six units. Each unit comprises two 90-minute sessions and if needed, additional sessions can be added. It will be covered in a short period but it is a unique opportunity to present content on an important and historic political event. Students will be given articles to read for their research and they will be encouraged to find more sources on their own. They will acquire some knowledge of the political terms, including vocabulary and phrases in Arabic. However, most discussions will be in English because of the complex nature of the materials. Students will be handed a set of questions pertaining to each unit.

Students will gain a deeper understanding of the Arab culture as the political events are influenced by religious, social, and ethnic factors. I hope that by the end of the unit, students will have the desire to learn more about the Arab countries and the Arabs' struggles against tyranny, and that I will have expelled negative stereotypes about Arabs and Islam. The curriculum is not structured to fill students with formatted materials but rather is designed to stimulate critical thinking, teach how to obtain factual information, create opportunities to participate in debates, and connect each student to what influence s/he can have in their own community.

Unit One

Democracy Then and Now

Key words: democracy, institutions, liberal, representation, majority, executive, legislative, judicial

Essential questions given to students to research:

- 1- What is democracy?
- 2- How did it start?
- 3- What type of environment can support and sustain democracy?
- 4- What type of democracy is our system of government?

- 5- How many branches of government are there?
- 6- What is democratization and does it differ from democracy?
- 7- What are the essential human and civil rights under our democracy?
- 8- What are the threats to our democracy that we are facing nowadays?

What students are expected to gain from their research and debate sessions:

- 1- Define democracy and its essential functions
- 2- Provide a short explanation of how our government functions and the roles of the three government branches
- 3- Provide an explanation of democratization
- 4- Review how an authoritarian regime can transfer into a democratic system by providing its citizens with regular elections that will eventually lead to an electorally-legitimated government
- 5- Explain the importance of liberal and civil institutions in upholding or establishing a democracy

Unit Two

Islam and Democracy

Key words: principles, Islam, freedom, religion, terrorism, speech, affairs, human rights, justice, equality

Essential questions given to students to research:

- 1- What are the main principles of Islam?
- 2- Does Islam separate itself from politics? Explain.
- 3- Compare the principles of Islam to democracy
- 4- What is Islam's position on freedom of speech?
- 5- Explain equality and justice in Islam
- 6- How does Islam encourage the involvement of people in their state affairs?
- 7- Does Islam allow the freedom of religion?
- 8- Why does terrorism go against the teaching of Islam?
- 9- Does an Islamic democracy differ from western democracy?
- 10- Do you think that religion interferes with democracy?

What students are expected to gain from their research and debate sessions:

- 1- Learn the basic values and principles of Islam
- 2- Understand that Islam does not separate itself from politics and provides Muslims the freedom of choice as long as it does not conflict with the principles of Islam
- 3- Islam means the submission to God only
- 4- Islam is a religion of peace and advocates healthy and strong societies
- 5- All are equal under Islam; Islam advocates for a strong society that is ruled by leaders who represent the people and who strive to fulfill their needs regardless of color, race, or ethnicity
- 6- Justice is the core element of Islam and Islam guarantees the right to justice and due process of the law to all
- 7- Islam does not condone terror whether in Muslim societies or others

- 8- Islamic democracy differs in that the Quran serves as a guide, constitution, and law to govern Muslims and enables them have justice, peace, prosperity, and security
- 9- Understand the teaching of Islam is against injustice and tyranny and does not contradict the values of democracy

Unit Three

Causes of the Arab Spring

Key words: Arab Spring, event, protest, peaceful, authoritarian regimes, demands, causes, nepotism, economic injustice, corruptions, unemployment

Essential questions given to students to research:

- 1- What is the Arab Spring?
- 2- Where and when did the Arab Spring start?
- 3- What caused the Arab Spring to spread to other countries?
- 4- Why is the event known as the Arab Spring important and unique?
- 5- How did the world respond to this development?
- 6- What types of means did the protestors use to have their demands heard and were they effective?
- 7- What are the causes for the Arab Spring?
- 8- How did the authoritarian regimes react to the events in their countries?
- 9- What were the immediate results of these events?
- 10- Which foreign countries got involved and what role did they play during the Arab Spring?

What students are expected to gain from their research and debate sessions:

- 1- Learn what the Arab Spring is, when and how it started
- 2- The uniqueness of the event and the sudden and the spontaneous start and spread to other countries
- 3- The Arab Spring implanted hope in the masses that peaceful protests can bring about change
- 4- Failure of the authoritarian regimes to foresee the event
- 5- How social, economic, political, and religious elements collectively ignited the masses to move to the streets, demanding changes and the right to take part in the political process
- 6- The role of oppression and police violence in fueling the protests
- 7- The immediate results accomplished by the events in removing the presidents in Tunisia and Egypt
- 8- The regime campaigns to dismiss the protestors as traitors and agents of foreign governments who are misled by money and drugs
- 9- The role of NATO and US in the Arab Spring and how their interferences led to mistakes and poor planning
- 10- The role of the Gulf countries in the uprising and how it changed the outcome of the Arab Spring in some countries
- 11- Understand that changing to a democratic governing system without the creation of proper institutions to support democracy is doomed to fail

Unit Four

Media and the Arab Spring

Key words: *Aljazeera*, *Al-Arabiya*, broadcast, social media, internet, message, extreme, journalism

Essential questions given to students to research:

- 1- What did *Aljazeera* change in how news is broadcasted in the Arab countries?
- 2- What was the role of the internet in the Arab Spring?
- 3- What was the role of social media in the Arab Spring?
- 4- Why were the internet, social media, and mobile phones indispensable tools during the Arab Spring?
- 5- How was the news transmitted in real time?
- 6- How did extreme journalism entice the protestors to carry on with their demands?
- 7- What was the response of the authoritarian regimes to the events?
- 8- Is news from social media accurate all the time and can they be verified?
- 9- How did the authoritarian regimes react to the threat of the internet and social media?

What students are expected to gain from their research and debate sessions:

- 1- *Aljazeera* and its part in changing the news in the Arab countries
- 2- Free unbiased media is crucial in any peaceful uprising
- 3- The media were not the cause of the mass uprising during the Arab Spring
- 4- The masses wanted to be part of the news, have a voice in transmitting the news
- 5- The chant “the people want to bring down the regime” that was heard from the news media played a part in unifying people to persist in voicing their demands
- 6- The speed with which the news spread played a part in protecting the protestors and planning their activities
- 7- The Arab masses needed media to tell their story without censorship and editing
- 8- The media did not hesitate to show the graphic pictures or videos of the maimed, injured, mutilated, or dead bodies during the Arab Spring protests
- 9- The media showed the extent to which the authoritarian regimes would go to crush the uprisings
- 10- Both *Aljazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* had a role in encouraging people to go to the streets to demand change and the fall of the regimes for which the regimes resented
- 11- The regimes directed their anger at the media by accusing them of treason and carrying out agendas of foreign countries
- 12- The media representing the authoritarian regimes were caught off guard during the Arab Spring and their messages were twisted and full of contradictions
- 13- Media were major players in organizing the activists and communicating the events in the country to the rest of the world

Unit Five

Islam and the Arab Spring

Key words: values, road map, proactive, Friday sermons, aggression, oppression, stance

Essential questions given to students to research:

- 1- How did Islam play a role in the Arab Spring?
- 2- How did the Islamic culture influence the masses during their uprising?
- 3- What did the Islamic social services provide to the protestors and why was it important?
- 4- What does the failure of the rulers in upholding the Islamic values cause?
- 5- How did mosques and Islamic Friday sermons help in the Arab Spring?
- 6- Why does Islam have a firm stance against injustice and how did it play out to motivate the protestors?

What students are expected to gain from their research and debate sessions:

- 1- The Islamic principles are essential in building a strong and peaceful society, and Muslims can make the free choices in the state affairs if they do not contradict the Islamic values and principles
- 2- The principles can be a road map to an Arab style of democracy and learning lessons for western democracy
- 3- Islam will not support the oppression and aggression of corrupt rulers
- 4- Islam can be a motivator against tyranny and injustice
- 5- Muslims should unite to face oppressors and stop injustice
- 6- Mosques supported the peaceful marches and the protestors' quest for freedom and liberty
- 7- The teaching of Islam demands a proactive stance in the face of tyranny and the uprising was not only to demand change but also to protest the abuse, brutality, and ruthlessness of their governments against its citizens

Unit Six

What Caused the Failure of the Arab Spring

Essential questions given to students to research:

- 1- What are the obstacles that the Arab Spring faced?
- 2- Which Arab countries are in a civil war at present?
- 3- What caused the return of the Egyptian authoritarian regime?
- 4- Why did Tunisia enjoy a better outcome from the Arab Spring?
- 5- What caused the collapse of the statehood in Libya?
- 6- Why did the lack of unity and compromise have negative effects in the outcome of the Arab Spring?
- 7- Why did the Arab Spring trigger many global issues?
- 8- Why are the Arab countries the center of attention and conflicts throughout history?
- 9- Which foreign powers are currently involved in the Arab countries and what are their interests and roles?
- 10- How did extreme terrorist organizations steal the spirit of the Arab Spring and what did the authoritarian regimes do to take advantage of these terrorist groups?

11- Was the Arab Spring a failure and why or why not?

What students are expected to gain from their research and debate sessions:

- 1- The failures in the Arab countries caused by many reasons
- 2- Tunisia's revolution is the only one that brought about positive results and regime change
- 3- Failures caused horrific civil wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen
- 4- Failures brought in the involvement of foreign countries in on-going civil wars with the excuse that their interference is necessary to combat terrorism and to protect their interests which hijacked the Arab Spring objectives
- 5- The Arab world is and will be the center of attention and foreign interference will continue because of abundant resources and strategic location
- 6- The authoritarian regimes took advantage of the existing divisions among people and the inability of different factions to reach a compromise, which intensified fights between factions and damaged unity and objectivity
- 7- In Yemen, Libya, and Syria the ethnic, tribal and clan diversity further complicated the efforts to unify the objectives of the rebels or advance their causes
- 8- The deflated drive in the masses, continuous civil wars, and divisions among different groups led to disappointment and despair
- 9- The failure of the Arab Spring caused massive migrations to Europe to escape civil war and collapse of law and order
- 10- The migration triggered Islamophobia, insecurity, fear of terrorism, nationalism, and hate groups in Europe
- 11- The fear of terrorism in western countries was also a factor in reestablishing relationships either covertly or openly with the authoritarian regimes, stopping western support of rebel organizations and in some cases forcing rebel groups to make concessions to the authoritarian regimes
- 12- The region as a whole is undergoing major changes and we will never accurately predict the outcomes because the region itself is unpredictable

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Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

This curriculum unit will cover:

NM.CMT.4.4 Identify how knowledge of the target language is useful in a global economy.

NH.COD.4.2 Identify the products of the target culture.

NH.COD.4.1 Understand cultural practices and perspectives from the target culture.

IL.COD.4.1 Analyze cultural practices and perspectives from the target culture with the students' culture.

IL.COD.4.2 Understand how prominent citizens and events impact(ed) the target culture and the students' culture.

IM.COD.4.2 Understand how practices and perspectives impact the target culture.

IM.COD.4.1 Understand how geography and history impact the development of the target culture and its civilization.

IM.CMT.4.2 Explain how events in the target culture's history have impacted contemporary perspectives, practices, and products.

IM.CMT.4.3 Evaluate the traditions of the target culture and the students' culture.

IH.COD.4.1 Understand how geography and history impact the development of global culture and civilization.

IH.COD.4.2 Analyze the target culture and its civilizations in terms of how products, perspectives, and practices are interdependent.

¹ "Memo: Bush Wanted Aljazeera Bombed," *Aljazeera* (online), November 22, 2005.