RETHINKING THE REGION:

New Approaches to 9-12 U.S. Curriculum on the Middle East and North Africa

UNIT:
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

TOPIC **More than "Muslim Rage": Popular Depictions of Public Opinion in MENA**	
LESSON OVERVIEW	In the first part of the lesson, students will view clips from *Argo* and *Planet of the Arab.* Based on the clips, students will discuss common themes, how people are depicted, how certain depictions can contribute to the "Otherizing" of a group, and how this might lead to the development of a rationale for political action in MENA. Students will read "The Roots of Muslim Rage" and discuss the limitations of making religion the main cause of political action and public opinion. In part two, students will read an excerpt from the graphic novel *Persepolis.* While reading, students will take notes on how the author describes the political opposition to the Shah and the different kinds of people who protested his rule. Finally, students will examine the *Newsweek* piece "Muslim Rage." The class will discuss the hashtag #muslimrage, which emerged on Twitter following the story. Students will have time to search for #muslimrage on Twitter and respond to what they found by sharing the tweets that most transformed or destabilized the meaning of the events. They will also analyze and discuss how the use of social media can affect the impact of public events.
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS	• How do media representations both shape and reflect our understandings of political currents in MENA? • How is public opinion in MENA often depicted by Western media sources? • How might our understandings change by looking at how people from the region and the diaspora use media to respond to these depictions and/or represent themselves?
LESSON	<u>Learners will be able to</u>

OBJECTIVES	• Gain experience in critical media analysis by examining popular representations of public opinion and political thought in MENA across print, visual, and digital formats • Recognize recurring representations of public opinion as "Muslim rage" across different media formats • Critically and comparatively discuss the limitations of religious identity as a one-size-fits-all category of analysis • Explore and articulate alternate viewpoints through online research
STANDARDS	**Common Core Standards** *Common Core Grade 9-10:* CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources. *Common Core Grade 11-12:* CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear

the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

New York State Standards

Performance Indicators   Students will:

Standard 2, Key Idea 1

- Analyze historic events from around the world by examining accounts written from different perspectives

- Analyze changing and competing interpretations of issues, events, and developments throughout world history

Standard 2, Key Idea 2

- Analyze evidence critically and demonstrate an understanding of how circumstances of time and place influence perspective

- Explain the importance of analyzing narratives drawn from different times and places to understand historical events

	Standard 2, Key Idea 3 • Explain the dynamics of cultural change and how interactions between and among cultures has affected various cultural groups throughout the world Standard 2, Key Idea 4 • Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments in world history • Analyze different interpretations of important events, issues, or developments in world history by studying the social, political, and economic context in which they were developed; by testing the data source for reliability and validity, credibility, authority, authenticity, and completeness; and by detecting bias, distortion of the facts, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts (Taken from National Standards for World History)
MATERIALS	• *Persepolis.* Graphic novel. Sections 1-7. • Introductory sequence to the film *Argo* (2012): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6RGeqNFaQM • *Planet of the Arabs:* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mi1ZNEjEarw • Lewis, Bernard. "The Roots of Muslim Rage." *Atlantic Monthly* (1990): http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643/?single_page=true • "They Hate Us Because of Their Religion": http://thinkprogress.org/media/2012/09/17/856741/joe-scarborough-on-the-entire-muslim-world-they-hate-us-because-of-their-religion/ • "Meet AbdelRahman Mansour Who Made 25 January A Date to Remember," *Jadaliyya:* http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/9772/meet-abdelrahman-mansour-who-made-25-january-a-dat • *Newsweek* magazine cover: "Muslim Rage," September 12, 2012: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/17/newsweek-muslim-rage-cover_n_1890124.html • Graphic Organizer Optional • Ali, Ayaan Hirsi. "Muslim Rage & The Last Gasp of Islamic Hate." *Newsweek* (2012): http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/09/16/ayaan-hirsi-ali-on-

	the-islamists-final-stand.html

PROCEDURE
 	
DAY 1
	1. **Opening Activity** (25-30 minutes)
	
	• Set the stage by discussing with students how different media constitute an important source of information about the world. Paraphrasing Arthur Miller, the media is "a nation talking to itself." Screen the *Argo* and *Planet of the Arabs* video clips for the students. As students view the videos, they should write down the ways in which Iranians and Arabs are represented. They will use these notes to participate in the ensuing discussion. (15 minutes)
	
	• After the students have seen the clips, ask them to discuss the common themes that emerge from the visual imagery. What stood out to the students? What is the dominant emotional state of the people depicted in these videos? How might this contribute to the "Otherizing" of a group? How might this connect to a rationale for political action in MENA, according to these videos? (10-15 minutes)
	
	2. **A Textual Analysis** (25-30 minutes)
	
	• Have students read Bernard Lewis' "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (15-20 minutes). As they read, have students use the graphic organizer to identify the reasons Lewis gives for why the "Muslim World" hates "the West." Ask them to try to identify points of similarity in the article and in the videos they have just viewed.
	
	• After finishing the article, students should use the information collected in their graphic organizers to provide examples and engage in a broader discussion about the reading and the videos (10-15 minutes). Some possible questions to consider for a class-wide discussion:
	
	    a. What are your thoughts on the interchangeable way in which Lewis uses the terms "Muslim world/lands of Islam" and "the Middle East?" What does this suggest about identity in the Middle East?
	
	    b. What are the limits of making religion the main force of political action and public opinion? How would one then describe local politics in terms of a "Christian rage" or a "Jewish rage"? How would such a characterization be perceived?
	
	    c. Thinking about your own experiences, what might get lost in

	overemphasizing religion as an explanation for how and why people think and act?
	d. What problems can we anticipate if, instead of religion, we used race or gender or socioeconomic status to explain how people act? 3. __Homework__: Read sections 1-7 from the graphic novel *Persepolis*. Students should take notes on how the author describes the political opposition to the Shah of Iran, and which kinds of people were protesting the Shah's rule.
PROCEDURE **DAY 2**	1. __Opening Activity__ (__10 minutes__) • Have students share their reactions to *Persepolis*. Ask students for their thoughts, and whether seeing an Iranian perspective on the Iranian Revolution has changed their understanding of that period in history. Have the students discuss the different social and political groups mentioned in *Persepolis* that opposed the Shah's rule. 2. __Optional Transition__ (__5 minutes__) • Screen the clip "They Hate Us Because of Their Religion": http://thinkprogress.org/media/2012/09/17/856741/joe-scarborough-on-the-entire-muslim-world-they-hate-us-because-of-their-religion/. Ask students for their reactions to the argument made by the journalist, and what larger message it is sending to the viewing audience. 3. __Main Activity__ (__35-40 minutes__) • Use the *Newsweek* cover ("Muslim Rage") as a hook to introduce the next activity. Ask students for their initial thoughts on the image and what messages it conveys. Explain to the students that Newsweek magazine tried to start a social media discussion of the cover photo and story by encouraging readers to use the hashtag #muslimrage. See further references below for additional context on this if needed. Tell the students that a lot of people used the hashtag following the release of the story, but not in the way that was envisioned by the magazine. Breaking students into small groups (as accessibility to computers will allow), have them search twitter.com for tweets using the hashtag #muslimrage. Ask them to write down examples of tweets that most transformed or destabilized meaning. Students should search Twitter for 10-15 minutes. • Afterwards, have the students write their favorite tweets on the board and/or

read them aloud to their classmates. Ask the students to consider how their tweets (and those of their classmates) could challenge the power of traditional media (newspapers, television, magazines, etc.) to shape debates about social issues. What happens when media becomes interactive? What possibilities exist for everyday people to change or challenge media representations?

4. **Concluding Activity (10 minutes)**

- Screen the AbdelRahman Mansour interview for students. If time permits, ask them how they would compare this interview and its depiction of social organizing and protest with those that are more commonly visible in American media.

5. **Assessment**

- There are different ways to assess how students understand the limits of using religion as an explanation for politics in MENA. The multiple chances for critical discussion provide opportunities for formative assessment. Below are some other possible assessment approaches that show engagement with the essential questions and mastery of the learning objectives.

  a. **Option 1**: Students could write a short essay (2-3 pages) about how Marjane Satrapi's depiction of the revolution in *Persepolis* contrasts with the one shown in *Argo*. How did their understanding of the Iranian Revolution change after reading *Persepolis*?

  Optional: Students can combine the reading of *Persepolis* with Chapter 3 from Maziar Behrooz's *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Iranian Left*.

  b. **Option 2**: Reflecting on the in-class #muslimrage activity and the AbdelRahman Mansour interview, students may write about how social media provides possibilities to move beyond simple consumption of the news. In what ways does the "Day of Rage" Rahman called for on January 25, 2011 differ from the typical depictions of "Muslim rage?"

  c. **Option 3**: To show what they have learned across these different activities, students can write a short essay detailing how they will respond the next time someone tries to explain MENA politics and public opinion as "Muslim rage." What strategies will they use to

	illustrate the limitations of religious identity as a one-size-fits-all category of analysis?
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	• **Discuss**: Global Connections: Connecting Questions: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/questions/types/index.html What are some typical misperceptions and stereotypes Westerners hold about Islam and MENA, and vice versa? • **Read**: Chapter 3 of Maziar Behrooz's *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Iranian Left* for further information on the Iranian Revolution and the role of leftist organizations and student movements in Iranian politics before and after the Revolution. • **Read**: Chapter 2 of Edward Said's *Covering Islam*, for further information and context on how the media treated the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis. • **Watch**: Edward Said lecture on the "Clash of Civilizations": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boBzrqF4vmo&list=PL61E0C4CFC1B7328F&index=1 • **Read**: "Newsweek's 'MUSLIM RAGE' Cover Draws Angry Protest": http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/17/newsweek-muslim-rage-cover_n_1890124.html for *Newsweek* magazine cover image, additional context on the *Newsweek* article, and coverage of "Muslim Rage" after the Libya bombing of the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi. • **Read**: "Days of Rage" by Steven Coll: http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2012/10/01/121001taco_talk_coll