A Not So Subjective Look at a Great Class

When writing about a class I feel like I should talk about the content of the syllabus, the material we cover, the students enrolled in the course, and the instructor objectively and not let my own bias influence what I say.

In the case of Modern Arabic Literature with Annette Lienau, I can't. As a Middle Eastern Studies major I'd studied the politics, history, religions, languages, and culture of the region, but this class gave me the opportunity to study literature again (something I really loved and missed) with a fantastic professor. This class has been one of the best that I've taken at UMass, and I can't speak highly enough about it.

We started the semester by examining each of the terms by which we defined our class. What does it mean to be modern, Arabic, or literature? Professor Lienau challenged our assumptions and offered us a historical framework which demonstrated the true, wide boundaries of these categories which at first seemed so simple. Since then we've studied a range of works from pre-Islamic poetry to recently-published novels, but regardless of the content we study, classroom discussions are always compelling, dynamic, and largely student-driven.

Though this class is an honors class, the students in it are from different colleges, majors, and classes, but all participate with enthusiasm and interest. Class is never the same from day to day, and often the pace or format of discussion will have changed by the end of a class period. Professor Lienau encourages us to analyze these works thoughtfully, and is encouraging even when we propose ideas that we aren't
entirely confident about. She's incredibly knowledgeable, creative, and an instructor that I feel really lucky to have taken a course with.

So, keep a watch on SPIRE and if there is anything open with Professor Lienau, grab that spot now! You'll be glad you did.

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