January is Middle Eastern Heritage Month

I know very little about the Middle East and, since I consider myself well-rounded I was eager to research a new culture and find out how we in America celebrate Middle Eastern Heritage Month. Unfortunately, I was unable to find anything local or much elsewhere in the United States.

I am not sure whether this is because the month is one of the newest celebration months in the cultural calendar, or because the most recent chapter of world history is so turbulent, or because of some other reason.

I did find that there is a celebration in Chicago. Some parts of California also hold an Arab Heritage Celebration during Middle Eastern Heritage Month. Many aspects of these events seemed really cool to me. The celebration in Chicago, for example, had authentic music, speakers, and dancers.

But, as I looked more closely, I saw that celebrating Arab culture does not “cover” Middle Eastern culture. Jewish, Turkish, Persian and Greek cultures all contribute, to say nothing of influences from North Africa and Asia.

One major thing that I was unsure about was how many countries comprise the Middle East. My first count came up with these 16: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The more I looked, the more I found that “Middle East” was a concept that defied its own criteria for definition. To say it is exclusively Arab (which it isn’t) would mean an area running from the Iran-Iraq border to Morocco. To say it is exclusively Islamic (which it isn’t) would stretch from Morocco, half way across the globe to Indonesia and beyond. And to pen it in between the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Arabian Sea and Red Sea excludes many areas we currently see as Middle Eastern, such as Libya and Afghanistan.

It began to look to me as if Middle East was an overly-convenient term for an inconveniently complicated region. (Continued on back page)
Many events, exhibits scheduled during January

Diversity is the running theme among a large array of events and displays this months. MECA, the TCC art gallery, and of course the folks at Student Programs and Activities will provide a variety of cultural happenings.

Free Events
Check out MECA’s Middle Eastern Awareness Month displays in Building 11. They are located outside the Senate Room, and on the landing in the North stairwell (on the way up to MECA and the Tutoring Center).

The Student Programs Office is starting off the year with *The Arab Diaries*, as series of short films on the Arab experience, the week of Jan. 3-7. Titles include: *Birth, Home or Maids in My Country, Love and Marriage, Youth and Work*. Show times are 8-8:30 a.m., 11:30 noon, and 1-1:30 p.m. The films will be shown in the Student Center.

The Gallery at TCC will host an exhibition on Brazilian woodcuts January 10-March 18. Curator Dr. Carol Ann Lorenz will give a presentation on the exhibit, “Arte Popular Do Brazil: Village Life in Contemporary Woodblock Prints” at the gallery, 2 p.m., January 31.

Other free events include a presentation by Gina Crocetti, author of *Culture Shock! United Arab Emirates*, 12:30 p.m. January 13 in the Student Center. There will be a belly dancing performance, featuring Middle Eastern dance artist Claire Wesley, 12:30 p.m. January 19th in the Student Center.

Two personal development events are also planned: a “Careers and International Fair” is planned for 11:30 a.m. January 20; while a college transfer fair is slated for 9 a.m. January 27. Both events will be held in the Student Center.

Free Student Workshops
MECA, CASA and the Writing Center are offering the following free student workshops in January:

- **FAFSA Online**, 1:30 p.m. January 13
- **Plan Your Transfer**, 12:30 p.m., January 18.
- **Electronic Database Information**, 12:30 p.m., January 26.
- **Winter Stress Relief**, 11:30 a.m., January 31.

The one-hour workshops are free, and will be held in the Rainier Room (top

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It’s good to have those basic historical ideas, because, in conclusion, I have to admit that I feel more confused then ever. That is not totally true, but I think that I have a splinter of knowledge that I need to expand on before it completely confuses me.

I have always been curious about the Middle East and my research has made me more curious. And I think it’s important for all of us to learn more. The roots of Western Civilization are there; the roots of many new Americans are there; and many young Americans are serving and dying there.

—Kiara Alexander, TCC Student

Cultural Heritage Calendar

| January — Middle Eastern Cultural Awareness Month |
| February — Black History Month |
| March — Woman’s History Month |