Love and loss are universal human emotions, borne of our attachments to, and departures from, one another. Literature is a powerful vehicle for communicating and coming to terms with these vital emotions. This course explores the interrelated motifs of love and loss in one of the richest—but often unfamiliar—global literary traditions: Classical Arabic literature. Students will be guided through readings of select poetry and prose in translation to gain a deeper understanding of how Arabic writers—like writers in many cultures—make sense of a variety of experiences of love and loss. Amidst much media coverage of political violence in the Arab world, reading about love and loss in the classical Arabic literary heritage is a valuable reminder of these most tender and intimate emotions underpinning our common humanity.

Reading List:
All readings are available in the textbook:
ISBN-13: 9780814738269 (pb); 9780814771204 (e-bk).

Poetry
“Love in the Desert: A Qasidah by Dhu’l-Rummah” (21-6).
“Udhri ghazal attributed to Majnun Layla” (29-30).
“Love Poem by Umm Khalid” (33).
“Muhdath ghazal by Abu Nuwas” (37).
“Ghazal of Abu Nuwas on a Boy called Ali” (38-9).
“Two Wine Poems by Abu Nuwas” (40-2).
“Three Love Epigrams by Ulayyah bint al-Mahdi” (46-8).
“Strophic Poem (muwashshahah)” (67-8).
“Mystical ghazal by Ibn al-Farid” (79-82).
“Two Elegies on the Death of his Concubine, by Ibn Nubata” (85-8).

Prose
“Princess on the Myrtle Leaf” (114-16).
“Farazdaq on Imru’l-Qays and the Girls at the Pond” (123-26).
“Unhappy Love Story of Qays and Lubna” (127-65).