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ETHN 166/LTEN179
Arab- and Muslim-American Identity and Culture
Course Times: Tues/Thurs 2:00p-4:50p
Course Location: Warren Lecture Hall 2207

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12p-2p in SSB 241, or by appointment.

Course Description: This course examines the cultural byproducts of colonialism, imperialism and globalization in both local and trans-national contexts through the self/representations of Muslim- and Arab- Americans in U.S. In particular, we will analyze popular cultural formations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, paying particular attention (and also destabilizing) the geo-political moment referred to as 'post 9/11.' Dominant themes include the racialization of Islam, the productive discourse of the "war on terror" in various media outlets, Muslim feminism/s, diasporic critique, immigration struggles, racism, and citizenship.

Because power functions simultaneously through the social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and other structures, this course utilizes a necessarily intersectional approach in its presentation of theoretical and empirical materials. While this course is in no way a comprehensive survey of the relationships between culture and politics, students will be exposed to a broad array of literary, musical and visual texts that offer theoretical treatments and/or case studies from various disciplines. Centering the role of culture and representations in the formulation of dominant discourses of 'racial Others', this course will challenge us to appreciate the dialectical relationship between culture and politics: not only does culture reflect, maintain and reproduce oppression and domination; cultural formations also challenge existing power structures, re-negotiate discursive terms, and challenge hegemonic assumptions.

The course is divided into the following themes:

The Racialization of Islam: If the majority of U.S. Muslims are not Arab Americans and the majority of Arab Americans are not Muslim – why are the two communities largely interchangeable in the public eye? This course will offer some opportunities to explore these questions through our engagement with theories of politicized identity construction and the various ways in which they evolve.

Orientalism and Popular Culture: Contemporary perceptions of minorities are often grounded in historical legacies of colonialism and the new forms they take. Central to the marginalization of Muslims is a set of interacting tropes that Edward Said has termed "Orientalism." After briefly exploring the roots of this ideology, we

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will look at how it plays out in popular culture, particularly within contexts perceived as apolitical entertainment.

Violence as Regulating Pathology: Racialized communities are constructed as having inherently pathological cultural values and traits that exceed the proprieties of a nation. In the context of “clash of civilizations” and “war on terror” discourses, Muslims are frequently represented as being, culturally or literally, at war with the West; in fact, however, the West has very literally penetrated the Muslim world and continues to do so: Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Pakistan, and many others serve as eerily consistent examples. Furthermore, these military interventions are often framed as humanitarian missions, reflecting a normative, patriarchal master-narrative of a benevolent democracy. This theme draws on the works of Muslim feminists and their responses to the “unsettling hermeneutics” of U.S. benevolence to reveal these urgent inconsistencies as well as the ways in which post/colonial violence relies on sexualized and gendered pathologies in order to exist.

Texts: All course materials will be available through the course website (TED). Because there are no required texts to purchase, students **MUST** print out **ALL** readings from the course website and bring them to class. Where possible, please try to engage in environmentally conscientious practices (using recycled paper, printing on both sides of a page, etc.).

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (15% of Course Grade)

Because this course meets a total of 10 times within the span of five weeks, students are required to attend **all** course sessions. If you are unable to attend class due to an urgent matter, you must provide the professor with adequate documentation and, where possible, prior notification of your absence. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from classmates, view films, produce assignments and stay on top of readings in accordance with the course schedule. It is advised that you network with peers and exchange contact information with at least 3 classmates.

Presence and preparedness are key aspects of the successful fulfillment of course requirements for this course. Attendance, presentness, and participation (through active listening and active engagement) are the most central components of learning. *No laptops, instant messaging, texting and/or surfing the web is permitted during class. Students engaging in this behavior will be counted as absent and asked to leave. Arriving late and leaving early will also be noted and will reflect negatively in the final grade unless proper notification is submitted to the instructor ahead of time.*

Students should prepare **1-2 questions per each set of reading and/or a cultural piece** (photograph, cartoon, news article, music video, advertisement, public interview, etc) in the form of a web link to share. Questions about clarification of reading content are highly encouraged. We will begin the first class session with an opportunity to raise such questions. These questions or comments should

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demonstrate your own engagement with and analysis of course materials. Focus on whatever strikes you as particularly important/difficult/confusing etc. about the text in question. The purpose of this exercise is to prompt critical thinking about the issues and texts with which we will be working and as an occasion for each of you to articulate your own intellectual investments in the material at hand.

Media: This course emphasizes the role of culture and representations in global power relations. We will actively engage with, analyze, and critique media. Films and musical pieces function as texts in this class just as any assigned reading. You are expected to engage and understand media materials as well as the printed texts. Note-taking is highly recommended. It is your responsibility to screen any film or listen to music you miss on your own time.

Reflection Papers (30% of final grade)

Each student is responsible for submitting a total of **6** reading reflection papers that are no less than two pages (double-spaced, 12pt. font) and no more than three pages in length. Reflection papers are opportunities for you to raise questions or issues about the readings, make connections between various readings, apply the readings to current events, etc. **Reflection papers are not opinion papers nor are they summaries of the readings.** They are spaces for exploration and inquiry that could also contribute to your final paper. Use this exercise to synthesize different ideas from the lectures and readings with any films or music presented in class (or assigned). These papers allow me to follow your progress with the materials over the course of the quarter. Each reflection paper should have your name and the reflection number written at the top. Only one reflection paper will be accepted per class meeting. Also, reflection papers are not to be submitted in my mailbox or by email.

Although I view the Reflection Paper as an opportunity for intellectual experimentation, at the very least, each paper you submit should address the following set of questions:

1. What is the thesis or argument presented in each of the authors in the set of readings?
2. What is their evidence and who might their audience be (i.e. who might the piece be addressed to and why?)?
3. What are the dissonances among the authors in the set of readings? How do they differ?

Mosque Visit and Reflection (20% of final grade)

- Reflection papers are not restricted in length or format.
- Details for preparation will be distributed prior to our mosque visit.
- The San Diego Islamic Center is located in Kearny Mesa. If you do not have a mode of transportation, please let the instructor know.

Final Paper OR Final Project (35% of final grade)

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Students will have the option of producing either a final paper or a final project. Students who choose the final paper option must submit one 6-8 page final by Saturday, September 8 at 3pm. You are welcome to submit papers before the due date but will not receive any extra credit for doing so. A paper prompt with 3 essay options will be handed out at least one week prior to the due date. I encourage all students to meet with me prior to submitting their final papers! Students who choose to produce a final project will create a musical piece, visual montage, or other sensory production that is submitted in a DVD format. This project will be presented during our scheduled final (September 8) and may not exceed 10 minutes. A 2-3 page paper that explains the project's engagement with **at least 3 texts from the course** must also be submitted with the final project. The project must address one of the themes listed above or obtain approval from the instructor. All students MUST be present for their peers' presentations on Saturday, September 8, 2012- NO EXCEPTIONS.

Email Policy: Please allow 48 hours for responses to emails. In addition, I generally do not reply to emails over the weekend. For all emails, please include a subject line indicating your reason for emailing, and employ professional email etiquette.

Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies at UCSD Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of "interest" yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact the Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277.

Week 1: Course Introductions

August 7, 2012

Distribution of Syllabus

Film: *Race: The Floating Signifier* (lecture by Stuart Hall)

August 9, 2012

Melani McAlister, "Introduction: Middle East Interests" in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* by Melani McAlister (2005).

Edward Said, "Introduction" in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* by Edward Said (1997).

Film: *Reel Bad Arabs*

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Week 2: The Racialization of Islam

August 14, 2012

Nadine Naber, "Introduction: Arab Americans and U.S. Racial Formations" in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds. (2008).

(Pages 1-40 only.)

Sawsan Abdulrahim "'Whiteness' and the Arab Immigrant Experience" in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds. (2008).

August 16, 2012

Nadine Naber, "Look Mohammed the Terrorist is Coming!" in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds. (2008).

Mustafa Bayoumi, "The Racing of Religion".

Week 3: Orientalism and Popular Culture

August 21, 2012

Edward Said, "Introduction" in *Orientalism* (1978).

Maira, Sunaina "Belly Dancing: Arab-Face, Orientalist Feminism, and U.S. Empire" in *American Quarterly* Vol. 60, No. 2 June 2008.

Youtube Link: Suheir Hammad's "Not Your Erotic, Not Your Exotic"

Arabic Music Videos (links to selections posted on TED)

August 23, 2012

Gopinath, Gayatri "Bollywood Spectacles: Queer Diasporic Critique in the Aftermath of 9/11" in *Social Texts* Volume 23, Number 3-4, 2005.

Yegenglu, Meyda "Veiled Fantasies: Cultural and Sexual Difference in the Discourse of Orientalism" in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds. (2003).

Boone, Joseph A. "Vacation Cruises; Or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism" in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds. (2003).

Week 4: Gender, Sexuality, and Post/Colonial Violence

August 28, 2012

Dana Cloud, "To veil the threat of terror': Afghan women and the 'clash of civilizations' in the imagery of the U.S. war on terrorism".

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Spivak, Gayatri "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* by P. Williams and L. Chrisman, eds. (1993).

August 30, 2012

"The Seen, The Unseen and the Imagined: Private and Public Lives" in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds. (2003).

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really need Saving?"

El Guindi, Fadwa "Veiling Resistance" in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds. (2003).

Week 5

September 4, 2012: Palestine in the United States

Re-read: Spivak, Gayatri "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* by P. Williams and L. Chrisman, eds. (1993).

Selections from Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* (1980).

Visit and peruse www.ifamericansknew.org

Film: *Paradise Now*; excerpts from *Slingshot Hip Hop*

September 6, 2012: Transnational Movements and Transformative Possibilities

Vijay Prashad, "Bandung" in *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (2008).

Vijay Prashad, "The Merchant Is Always a Stranger" in *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (2002).

Jeff Chang "Yellow Man's Got a God Complex: A Proposal for a Screenplay on the Life of Satohata Takahashi".

Our Final Exam is scheduled for Saturday, September 8, 2012. Please be sure to make accommodations accordingly as attendance is mandatory regardless of prior completion of final paper.

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