

LT122 The Politics & Practice of Cultural Production in the Modern Middle East & North Africa

Seminar Leader: Dina A Ramadan

Course Times: T/TH 9-10:30am

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30pm-5:30pm (98a.0.04)

Course Description

The politics and practice of cultural production in the Middle East and North Africa can provide for a complicated and multifaceted understanding of the region. This course will draw upon a series of thematic case studies, beginning with European colonialism in the late 19th century to today's contemporary 'globalized' context and the "Arab Spring". These case studies will illustrate how cultural production can be read as a form of documentation, potential intervention or resistance to a range of prevailing narratives. In doing so, this course asks how the social, economic, and political conditions of the region bear upon the production and consumption of culture, and the ways in which cultural producers negotiate such conditions.

Each thematic case study will focus on a particular historical moment and is not intended to be overarching in scope. Interdisciplinary in its approach, this course will ask students to apply the historical and theoretical frameworks provided through the discussions and readings, to a close examination of a range of texts including novels, films, video artworks, performance, painting, television, blogs and tweets. Short films, videos, and clips will be shown during class. Feature length films will be screened out of class. **Attendance of film screenings is mandatory.**

Course Requirements

- Regular attendance, completion of all reading assignments, and active participation (30%)
- Weekly Reading Responses: approx. 250 words each due **Monday 5pm (20%)**
- Midterm Paper: 5 pages due in class **Thursday October 18th (25%)**
- Final Paper: 5 pages due **Tuesday December 17th (25%)**

Course Material

Unless otherwise stated all readings will be posted on googleclassroom. Please print readings and bring to them to class. Students should purchase books marked (*). Please let me know if you have any problems locating these texts.

Course Schedule

[NB This syllabus is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class]

Week One: 4th/6th September

Introduction: Reading Cultural Production/ Reading the Middle East

Readings:

- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1979), Introduction, pp. 1-30.

Recommended:

- Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (April, 1989), pp. 217-236.

Week Two: 11th/13th September

Questions of Colonial Encounter: Algeria

Readings:

- Assia Djebar, *Fantasia* (1985) selection.
- Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized; Anthropology's Interlocutors," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2002), pp. 293-316.

Screening:

- *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

Week Three: 18th/20th September

Questions of Colonial Encounter: Algeria

Reading:

- Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (1986) selection.

Week Four: 25th/27th September

The Invention of Tradition: Anti/Pastoral Narratives

Readings:

- Samah Selim, "Introduction: The Peasant and Modern Narrative in Egypt," in *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985* (2004), pp.1-24.
- Eric John Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition," in *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric John Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (1992), pp.1-14.
- Tawfiq Al-Hakim, *Return of the Spirit* (1933) pp. 155-184.
- Tawfiq Al-Hakim, *Diary of a Country Prosecutor**

Screening:

- *The Nightingale's Prayer* (Henri Barakat, 1959)

Week Five: 2nd/4th October

Aesthetics, Architecture and Modernity: Turkey

Readings:

- Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi, "Introduction: Modern Architecture and the Middle East: The Burden of Representation," in Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi eds., *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (2008), pp.3-36.
- Sibel Bozdoğan, "Democracy, Development, and the Americanization of Turkish Architectural Culture in the 1950s," pp.116-138.
- Ela Kaçel "Integration of Arts and Architecture in Postwar Turkish Modernism." Edited by Sibel Bozdoğan, *Journal of Propaganda Arts*, no. 28 (2016): 214–37.

Week Six: 9th/11th October

Aesthetics, Architecture and Modernity: Iraq

- Magnus T. Bernhardsson, "Visions of Iraq: Modernizing the Past in 1950s Baghdad," pp.81-96.
- Panayiota Pyla, "Baghdad's Urban Restructuring, 1958: Aesthetics and Politics of Nation Building," pp.97-115.
- Haytham Bahooora, "Modernism on the Margins: Le Corbusier's Baghdad Gymnasium and the Politics of Discovery," forthcoming in *Aesthetic Practices and Spatial Descriptions: Historical and Transregional Perspectives*.

Week Seven: 16th/18th October

Dreams of a Nation: Egypt

Readings:

- Gamal Abdul Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution* (1955), selection.
- Virginia Danielson, "Performance, Political Identity, and Memory: Umm Kulthum and Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasir," in Sherifa Zuhur ed., *Images of Enchantment: Visual and Performing Arts of the Middle East* (1998), pp.109-122.
- Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century* (1997), selection.

****Midterm papers due in class****

Week Eight: 23rd/25th October

Nationalism and its Discontents: Palestine

Reading:

- Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun* (1963)*

Week Nine: Fall Break

Week Ten: 6th/8th November

Nationalism and its Discontents: Egypt

Reading:

- Naguib Mahfouz, *Miramar* (1967)*

Watch online:

- *Four Women of Egypt* (Tahani Rached, 1997)

Week Eleven: 13th/15th November

The Art of War: Lebanon

Readings:

- Stephen Wright, "Like a Spy in a Nascent Era: On the Situation of the Artist in Beirut Today," *Parachute* (2002): 13-31
- Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, "Cityscape Beirut: Living with Ghosts," *Flash Art* (2004): 53-55
- Suzanne Cotter, "Beirut Unbound," in *Out of Beirut* (2006): 26-34
- Sarah Rogers, "The Politics of Display: Lebanon's Postwar Art Scene," 2006
www.lamiajoreige.com
- Lamia Joreige, "Objects of War," in *Art Journal* (Summer 2007): 23-33
- Elias Khoury & Rabih Mroue, "Three Posters," in *Tamáss: Contemporary Arab Representations* (2002): 100-113
- Rabih Mroue, "The Fabrication of Truth," in *Tamáss: Contemporary Arab Representations* (2002): 114-117
- Rabih Mroue, "Who's Afraid of Representation?" in *Home Works III: A Forum on Cultural Practices* (2005): 142-161
- Janet A Kaplan, "Flirtations with Evidence," *Art in America*, October 2004.
- Walid Raad, "Missing Lebanese Wars," *Public Culture*, Volume 11, Number 2, Spring 1999, pp. i-xiv

Week Twelve: 20th/22nd November

History, Narrative, and the Art of Archives: Palestine

Readings:

- Kamran Rastegar, "The Time that is Lost," *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East* pp.93-121.
- Nurith Gertz & George Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory* (2008), pp. 1-11.
- Refqa Abu-Remaileh, "Elia Suleiman: Narrating Negative Space," in *Ten Arab Filmmakers: Political Dissent and Social Critique*, ed. Josef Gugler (2015), pp.76-97

- Gil Hochberg “Archival Afterlives in a Conflict Zone: Animating the Past in Jumana Manna’s Cinematic Fables of Pre-1948 Palestine” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (2018) 38 (1): 30-42.

Screening:

- *The Time that Remains* (Elia Suleiman, 2009)

Week Thirteen: 27th/29th November

State Sponsorship, State Censorship: Syria

Readings:

- Rasha Salti ed. *Insights into Syrian Cinema* (2006), selection.
- Kay Dickinson, *Arab Cinema Travels: Transnational Syria, Palestine, Dubai and Beyond* (2016), selection.

In class screening:

Everyday Life in a Syrian Village, Omar Amiralay (Syria, 1974)
There Are So Many Things Still to Say, Omar Amiralay (Syria, 1997)

Week Fourteen: 4th/6th December

State Sponsorship, State Censorship: Iran

Readings:

- Richard Tapper, “Introduction,” in *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (2002), edited Richard Tapper pp. 1-25
- Hamid Dabashi, *Close Up Iranian Cinema: Past, Present and Future* (2001), pp. 33-75.

Screening: *The Taste of Cherry* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1998)

Week Fifteen: 11th/13th December

Cyberspaces and Blogospheres in the “New” Middle East

Readings:

- Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq* (2005) selection
<http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>

In class screening:

- *Control Room* (Jehane Noujaim, 2004)

Schedule for Film Screenings

All screenings will begin at 6pm

[NB Film selection is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class]

September 12th *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)

September 26th *The Nightingale's Prayer* (Henri Barakat, 1959)

November 28th *The Time that Remains* (Elia Suleiman, 2009)

December 5th *The Taste of Cherry* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1998)

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Student should consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Weekly Reading Responses

- Weekly responses to the readings should be posted on the Moodle discussion page. I will open a weekly discussion page. Post your response by replying to this thread.
- Responses are due no later than **Monday 5pm** from **week 2-15**.
No late responses accepted
- **Word count** 250 words
- **Edit** and proof read your response papers. **Italicize** the names of books and films. Make sure names are spelt correctly. Cite pages if you quote the texts.
- The main purpose of the reading responses is to encourage you to read the material **closely** and **simulate discussion** in class.
- The reading responses ought to be focused **analysis** of the readings, not summaries, reviews, or reports on what you liked or did not like about the readings. Focus less on your “personal reaction” to the reading and more on **critiquing** the way in which the author constructs her/his argument.
- Each reading response must have a **central thesis** or organizing idea, a position you are taking on a particular aspect of the readings.
- When constructing your argument think about the questions the readings raise and their relationship to earlier readings.

Midterm and Final Paper

- Midterm papers are due in class **Thursday October 18th**
- Final Paper are due **Tuesday December 17th by 2pm**
- **Hard copies only**, do not email.
- **Format** Times New Roman 12-pt font, 1” margins all around, double-spaced, name and page numbers in top left-hand corner. No cover page.
- **Length** 5 pages not including bibliography.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Papers that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.