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:

Recommended:

Week Two: 11th/13th September
Questions of Colonial Encounter: Algeria

Readings:

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

Week Three: 18th/20th September
Questions of Colonial Encounter: Algeria

Reading:

Week Four: 25th/27th September
The Invention of Tradition: Anti/Pastoral Narratives

Readings:
- Tawfiq Al-Hakim, *Diary of a Country Prosecutor*

Screening:
- *The Nightingale’s Prayer* (Henri Barakat, 1959)
Week Five: 2\textsuperscript{nd}/4\textsuperscript{th} October
Aesthetics, Architecture and Modernity: Turkey

Readings:


Week Six: 9\textsuperscript{th}/11\textsuperscript{th} October
Aesthetics, Architecture and Modernity: Iraq

Readings:


Week Seven: 16\textsuperscript{th}/18\textsuperscript{th} October
Dreams of a Nation: Egypt

Readings:


**Midterm papers due in class**

Week Eight: 23\textsuperscript{rd}/25\textsuperscript{th} 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:
  - [www.lamiajoreige.com](http://www.lamiajoreige.com)
- 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.

Screening:
• The Time that Remains (Elia Suleiman, 2009)

Week Thirteen: 27th/29th November
State Sponsorship, State Censorship: Syria

Readings:
• 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:

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

Week Fifteen: 11th/13th December
Cyberspaces and Blogospheres in the “New” Middle East

Readings:

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.