HI309 Colonialism, Science, and the Subaltern in the Middle East and North Africa

Seminar Leader: Dr. Edna Bonhomme
Office Hours: Mondays, 13:00-15:00 or by appointment

Course Description
Science and medicine in their ability to demarcate power and space can serve as an index for social and political relations, a fact which becomes particularly evident in respect to the lives and experiences of those who are less powerful or influential, and whose activities have often been neglected in scholarly discourse. This course critically examines science in the Middle East and North Africa from the 1800s until the contemporary period. We will collectively consider the role that colonialism has played in shaping scientific practice and discourse. At the same time, the seminar will consider the ways that the subaltern, i.e., the working poor, women, lay people, were also active participants in producing scientific and medical knowledge. By exploring the contradictions and tensions between colonialists and their subjects, the course will uncover how science has been used as a colonial tool but also an instrument of resistance. In this seminar, students will be exposed to a range of historical texts, visual materials, and film from the nineteenth-century Middle-Eastern and North-African contexts.

Learning Outcomes
● To problematize terms such as science, colonialism, and subaltern
● To gain awareness about the history of the “Middle East” and North Africa
● To become familiar with the ways that non-elite, or the subaltern have been active participants in knowledge production
● To critically analyse texts, films, and other (social) media
● To develop and summarize arguments with concision and precision

Requirements
You are expected to bring to class the reading materials that have been assigned. This class will be conducted in a seminar style. this means that we are co-learning, attentive to each other, and actively participating to the best of our ability. Active participation may take any or all of the following forms: verbal communication, active listening, or supporting your co-learners to speak. You will be evaluated on the basis of:

Academic Integrity
Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects honest academic practice from students in their studies. In instances that students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity, I will consult with the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance
Attend all class sessions. Please bring to each class the course reading materials, a notebook containing this syllabus, your class notes, and your reading notes. For each class that you miss, you will lose 1 point. If illness or an emergency prevents you from attending, please inform me as soon as possible.

1 Please refrain from using laptops in the seminar unless you require the electronic device to help with an impairment.
possible; attendance credit will then be arranged on a case-by-case basis. You are responsible for all class material that you miss. 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. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

**Assessment**

**Overall participation**

Participating in discussion allows us to have a collective conversation so that we can learn together. Pure attendance is not enough, more important is to engage with the course material, demonstrating that you understand the readings, and engaging in discussion with your peers in a respectful manner. At the same time, we all have different learning abilities and confidence levels, which are connected to country of origin, class background, ethnic backgrounds, gender, language etc, so I will be mindful of this as we engage with each other and (hopefully) learn to trust each other. We can try to create a dynamic and progressive set of ground rules to help make the classroom a safer space\(^2\). Please plan to:

1. Come prepared (do the reading and reflect);
2. Discuss the works. Even when you do not think you fully understood every point or you ideologically disagree with the author(s);
3. Volunteer to answer questions, make comments, and ask questions of your own. Full credit for the participation part requires you to speak in class without being called on;
4. Make discussion questions, summarize the previous classes, debates, and quizzes, write one paragraph essays, present a topic and so on in groups, pairs, or individually, as directed;
5. Be respectful in all of your interactions with your classmates and the instructor, including referring to your co-learners by their preferred gender pronoun. For example, “they/them/theirs” for gender neutral or gender non-binary people.

**Map Quiz**

You will have an in-class quiz during the second week (4 February 2019) where you are expected to know the locations of cities and countries in the Middle East and North Africa. This quiz will assess your knowledge of the geography of the Middle East and North Africa.

**Précis**

You are required to submit 2 précis that analyse and critique the readings from Sessions 4 and 7 which will be due before the class convenes. Include at least one well thought out question that could be addressed in class. For example, you would have to submit the response for Session 4 by 17 February at 12pm.

- Word Count: 500 words
- Format: Double spaced, Source Sans Pro, 11-font
- Submit by Sunday night prior to class, 10pm via E-mail

**Op-Ed**

Assume I am an editor of *Al Jazeera*, *The Guardian* or a German-based paper. Write an Op-Ed on a pressing contemporary issue based on one of the issues/themes in the course up to Session 11. Read sample op-eds from *Die Zeitung*, *The New York Times*, etc for examples. I will grade for clarity of writing and strength of argument. Be concise and focused.

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\(^2\) For those who are not familiar with the term, “safer space” please refer to: https://saferspacesnyc.wordpress.com/
Media/Archive Project
You will be assigned into groups and collectively work on an archival/media project. During the second half of the semester, I will assign you to a group. You will be expected to use creative forms of expression to make this archive and present your work to the class on 6 May 2019.

- Potential Format: exhibition, film, performance art, podcast, website, etc
- In Class Presentation on 6 May 2019

Final Research essay
The final research paper should critically explain a theoretical question by engaging with the course materials. The paper should be analytical, not descriptive. You are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss your topic before submitting the final essay. Keep in mind the following:

- Layout: Double spaced, Source Sans Pro, Font size 11
- Length: 5000 words
- Format: Chicago Style
- A research question (What do you plan to analyze/explain). Be as specific as possible. Avoid general questions.
- It will help to write a summary of your research paper (250 words) as a step to discussing the paper with me
- Rely on at least 6 academic articles or book chapters that focus on your specific topic. You can use newspaper articles or web material but they won’t count as academic articles.
- Submit by 8 May 2019, 10pm by E-mail

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). As per Bard College Berlin’s policy, instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If 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, a student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown
- Overall participation: 20%
- Map Quiz: 5%
- Précis: 15%
- Op-Ed (Midterm): 20%
- Media/Archive Project: 15%
- Final Research essay: 25%

Grading Scale:
A=100-94;
A-=93-91;
B+=90-88;
B=87-84;
B-=83-81;
C+=80-78;
C=77-74;
C-=73--71;
D+=70-68;
D=67--61;
F=60 and below
## Schedule

Spring 2019 classes start on Monday, January 28 and run until Friday, May 17 with spring break planned from Monday, April 15 – Sunday, April 21. Completion week is from May 13-17. You are required to be on campus during completion week. Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading: [https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/](https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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| **Session 1**  
28 January 2019  
What is the “Middle East”? | **Introduction**  
- Overview of Seminar and Collectively establish ground rules  
- Discussion of the term “Middle East”  
**Reading**  
- Sati al-Husri, “Muslim Unity and Arab Unity,” 1944  
- Adam Hanieh, *Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East*, (Chapter 1: Theories and Perspectives; Chapter 2: Framing the Region: Imperialism in the Middle East), 2013  
- Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, *Anthropology’s Politics: Disciplining the Middle East*, (Introduction: Academics and Politics; Chapter 1: The Politics of Becoming a Scholar), 2015  
**Further Reading**  
- Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, 2001  
| **Session 2**  
4 February 2019  
Framing Colonialism and the Subaltern | In this session, we will attempt to parse out key concepts such as (settler) colonialism, imperialism, and Orientalism since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This section will also give us an opportunity to reflect on formations of power and struggle. How has the term “subaltern” been used historically and how has it been applied? How did notions of “traditional” healing get received under colonization?  
**Reading**  
- Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* [Excerpt], 1913  
- Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 1955  
- Frantz Fanon, “Medicine and Colonialism” from *A Dying Colonialism*, 1959  
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” 1988  
**Further Reading**  
- Antonio Gramsci. Excerpt from the *Prison Notebooks*  
- Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* [Excerpt], 2000 |
<p>|  | <strong>In-class assignment:</strong> Map quiz |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Session 3</th>
<th>11 February 2019</th>
<th>Disrupting Science</th>
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<td>During this class we will explore the various meanings of science and knowledge and how that has come to emerge since the eighteenth century. Within the Middle East and North Africa, we will try to look at the ways that intellectual shifts, such as <em>nahda</em> (the Arab Renaissance), were part of a global shift in knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Sayyid Qutb, “Islam and the Foundation of Knowledge”</td>
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<th>Session 4</th>
<th>18 February 2019</th>
<th>Gender and Sexuality</th>
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<td>What are the ongoing debates about gender and sexuality? What is the relationship between the state and sexuality?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
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<td>● Afra N. Najmabadi, <em>Professing Selves: Transexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran</em> (Chapter 1: Entering the Scene, Chapter 2: Before Transexuality), 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Further Reading</strong></td>
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<td>● Sara R. Farris, <em>In the Name of Women’s Rights: the Rise of Femonationalism</em>, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Afra N. Najmabadi, <em>Professing Selves: Transexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran</em> (Chapter 1: Entering the Scene, Chapter 2: Before Transexuality), 2013</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment Due:</strong> Précis for Session 4 due 17 February at 12pm</td>
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<th>Session 5</th>
<th>25 Feb 2019</th>
<th>Colonising Bodies</th>
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<td>We will look at the ways that the body features in science and medicine especially with respect to labour, religion, and colonization. We will try to unpack how bodies have been historically constructed and how they have been used as a site of contestation and resistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● David Arnold, <em>Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India</em>, (Introduction, Chapter 1; Occidental Therapeutics and Oriental Bodies), 1993</td>
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### Session 6
4 March 2019
Rationalism and Resistance

During this session, we will show how nineteenth century notions of rationality and science were used to challenge colonial rule. Moreover, we will consider the ways that seminal Arab & Muslim thinkers engaged with emergent nineteenth century technologies such as the telegraph.

**Reading**
- Jamal al-Din Qasimi, “Guiding Mankind to Act on the Basis of Telegraphic Messages,” 1908
- Al-Afghani, “An Islamic Response to Imperialism,” 1883

### Session 7
11 March 2019
“Race” and Evolution

We will explore the ways that notions of “race,” racial categories, and evolution feature into science studies in the Middle East and beyond.

**Reading**

**Assignment Due:** Précis for Session 7 due 10 March 2019 at 10pm

### Session 8
18 March 2019
Another Reason

During this session we will explore the ways that mental illness, trauma, and psychiatry feature into colonial and popular discourses in the Middle East.

**Reading**
- Lamia Moghnieh, “Humanitarian therapeutics of war and the politics of trauma and violence in Lebanon”, Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support, 2015
- Orkideh Behrouzan, *Prozak Diaries: Psychiatry and Generation Memory in Iran*, (Introduction: Ethnographic Experiments across sites and Disciplines; Chapter 1: Mapping Prozak Diaries and Medicalization, Conclusion: Reflections on Mental Health and Interdisciplinary Conversations across Cultures), 2016

**Further Reading**
- Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 1961
### Session 9
25 March 2019
Pandemics & Climate Change

This session focuses on the ways that epidemics and environmental disaster feature into science and colonialism, especially with respect to the fictive and anthropogenic forces at play.

**Reading**
- Mackenzie Ward, Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene, (Preface), 2015
- Amitav Ghosh, The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, (Part II: History), 2016
- Sandra Sufian, Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920-1947, (Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, chapter 5, Chapter 7), 2018
- Edoardo Buccignani *et al.*, “Climate change projections for the Middle East–North Africa domain with COSMO-CLM at different spatial resolutions,” 2018
- Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute. “Mystery of Yemen cholera epidemic solved: The most likely source of the cholera epidemic in Yemen has been discovered by scientists.” *ScienceDaily*. *ScienceDaily*, 2 January 2019

**Further Reading**
- Chris Gratien, “The Ottoman Quagmire: Malaria, Swamps, and Settlement in the Late Ottoman Mediterranean,” *IJMES* 49/4, November 2017
- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 2014
- Anna Tsing, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, 2017
- Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, 2018

### Session 10
1 April 2019
Surveillance Technologies

We will meditate on the ways that the military industrial complex, surveillance, and other technologies feature into contemporary colonial paradigms in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Reading**

**Optional**
- David Harvey, *A Brief history of Neoliberalism*, 2005

### Session 11
8 April 2018
Science from Below

Oil wealth and water have an inordinate influence on Middle Eastern politics, causing civil and international wars and the opulence of the Gulf. In this class we will look at rentierism and inter-regional tensions concerning water.

**Reading**
- Robert Vitalis’ *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, (Chapter 1: Captive Narratives: A Brief and Unexceptional Introduction to the History of Firms and States), 2006
- Alden Young, *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Transformation*, (Chapter 1: From Colonial Economics to Political Economy, 1820-1940), 2017

**Film**
- Al-Jazeera Documentary, *The Factory*

**Further reading**

**Assignment:** 1000 word Op-Ed due 10 April at 10pm

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**No Session**
15 April 2019
Spring Break

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**Session 12**
22 April 2018
The Biomedical Turn

We will explore the ways that biomedicine has become predominant specifically with respect to genetics research and the politics of disability.

**Reading**
- Elise Burton, “Narrating ethnicity and diversity in Middle Eastern national genome projects,” *Social Studies of Science*, 2018

**Further reading**
- Ahmad Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, 2015

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**Session 13**
29 April 2019
Science Fiction, Alternative Media, and Radical Futures

Co-lecture with filmmaker Mariam Mekiwi. We look at graphic novels, hip hop, and science fiction and see how Arab and Muslim creatives construct alternative futures. We also explore Arab and Afrofuturism, race and identity in our contemporary world. You will be assigned one graphic or sci-fi novel based on your last name.

**Reading**
- Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, *Sultana’s Dream*, 1905

**Film and Music**
- Revolutionary Arab Rap: [http://revolutionaryarabraptheindex.blogspot.com](http://revolutionaryarabraptheindex.blogspot.com)
| Session 14 | This week we will go over the region’s contemporary politics and how that influences medicine and science. How do we understand science, medicine and the archive in the context of the recent Arab uprisings and concerning the ways that scientific objects and ideas travel during the contemporary period?

### Reading

- Lamia Zaki, “Transforming the City from Below: Shantytown Dwellers and the Fight for Electricity in Casablanca,” in *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from below in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2008
- Bayat, Asef. 2010. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. (Chapters 4: The Poor and the Perpetual Pursuit of Life Changes)
- Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (Introduction), 2012
- Vijay Prashad. *The Death of the Nation and the Future of the Arab Revolution*, (Chapter 1 and 2), 2016
- Lucia Carminati, “Dead ends in and out of the archive: an ethnography of Dār al Wathā’iq al Qawmiyya, the Egyptian National Archive,” 2018

### Film


### Further Reading

- Jehane Noujaim, *The Square*, 2013
- Lorraine Daston, *Science in the Archives*

### In-class Presentation

- Media/Archive Project Presentation

### Essay Deadlines

- Mid-term essay due Wednesday, 8 March 2019, 10 pm
- Final Essay is due, Wednesday, 8 May 2019, 10pm

### Grades Submission

All grades are submitted digitally to the Registrar’s office in a template provided in advance. Reminders about the above deadlines will be communicated by registrar@berlin.bard.edu
Library and Book Purchase Policies
If you have not yet contacted library services (s.paltineanu@berlin.bard.edu) regarding the preparation of your course reader or the ordering of reserve course texts for the library, please do so as soon as possible. For your information: the college book policy for 2018-2019 is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis.