

SO300 Contemporary visual cultures in/of the 'Middle East': an interdisciplinary survey of (mis)representation

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Office Hours: Upon appointment

Course Description

This course explores the formation of the Middle East as a geographical region, an idea, and a discursive construct through visual culture.

The representation of the Middle East remains a crucial aspect of its study and understanding. The interdisciplinary field of study termed "visual culture" has come to form now possible ways of offering a critical understanding of the representation(s) of the Middle East through the theoretical insights related to analysing visual material.

Representations stem from various parties, as part of the legacy of a colonial power producing orientalist depictions that contribute to an ongoing process of othering or again by a wide range of parties with differing ways of seeing and showing to their communities, or to various others. This rich visual history of representation and misrepresentation, from within and without uncovers and contributes to the making of what we call the Middle East.

Throughout the course we will explore some of this rich archive of visual cultures produced in the region or elsewhere and addressed to different interlocutors and audiences: local, regional or foreign.

Visual cultures refer to the various forms of imaging that contribute to the formation of narratives about the Middle East and can include a wide array of forms and formats that we will explore across the semester: Iconic American films depicting the Muslim other, contemporary cinematic productions from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and elsewhere in the region that try to write a local history and think in the present, a rich world of visual narratives, graphic novels and comics, different practices of mapping from the position of power to the position of dissent, several forms of visual archiving (such as documentation of conflicts and events online, digital archiving of historic sites in war zones, or personal histories). These are some of the material we will analyse and debate in class.

Requirements

No prerequisites. Attendance is mandatory for all sessions. Students are expected to be punctual and prepared and to participate actively in the class discussions and activities.

Students will have to write a mid-term and a final paper in addition to giving a 15/20 min presentation.

* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

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.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Absences will significantly affect the grade for the course. Absences are registered in all classes. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

Please see the Student Handbook for college policies on absences due to serious illness or other important cause.

Assessment:

Writing Assignments

Mid-term paper: Max 2000 words. Students will be required to write a critical analysis of one specific visual cultural example of their choice that either comes from the Middle East or is about the Middle East.

Paper due 15 March [Grades to be delivered by 22 March]

Final paper: Max 3000 words. [Students will be required to write a critical analysis of one specific visual cultural genre or movement of their choice that either comes from the Middle East or is about the Middle East.]

Paper due 10 May for Seniors / 15 May for everyone else [Grades for seniors by 16 May / for others 31 May]

Presentation: During each session, students will give presentations of 15 to 20 min related to the weekly readings.

*The presentations can also serve as preparation for your papers.

Class participation: For class, students will be expected to prepare questions and discussion topics based on the readings or the weekly theme. You are encouraged to bring with you to class any examples of texts and visual material that you think is relevant to discuss together.

*Class participation constitutes 30% of the grade in this class.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All assignments and written work must be submitted electronically and on time. Essays 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.

Grade Breakdown

20% Mid-Term paper

30% Final paper

20% Presentation

30% Participation

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. Students 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/>

Required readings for each session will be determined in advance and circulated to the students by the instructors (expect around 30-40 pages of readings per week). Additional resources will also be made available for students.

Session 1: Introduction

I: Politics of Representation

Session 2: Histories & Approaches- The invention of the Orient: seeing, othering, depicting

Session 3: Representing the Middle Eastern/Muslim other
[Screening]

Session 4: Visual Narratives (1) - Writing the self in comics

II: Visual archiving and memory

Session 5: Moving Images (1) - Science fiction and imagined pasts
[Screening]

Session 6: Visual Archives (1) - Maps and digital archiving
[Guest Lecture]

Session 7: Moving Images (2) - Film & local politics
[Screening]

III: War, Violence, Journalism

Session 8: Violence and images
[Guest Lecture]

Session 9: Visual Narratives (2) - Comics as journalism

Session 10: Visual Archives (2) - War aesthetics and political archives

Session 11: Art and uprisings

IV: Popular Culture and Fiction

Session 12: Moving Images (3) - Egyptian film
[Screening]

Session 13: Masculinity, imagined histories, and honor on TV

Session 14: Closing notes

Class Resources

Abirached, Zeina. (2012). *A Game for Swallows. To Die, To Leave, To Return*. Minneapolis, MN: Graphic Universe.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. (2002) "Do Muslim Women really Need Saving?," *American Ethnologist* 104(3):783-790.

Abu-Lughod, Lila (2005) "Chap. 6: The Ambivalence of Authenticity." In Abu-Lughod, L. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.135-161.

Al-Ghazzi, Omar. (2013). Nation as Neighborhood: How Bab al-Hara dramatized Syrian identity. *Media, Culture & Society*. 35: 586-601.

Aouragh, Miriyam and Anne Alexander (2011) "The Egyptian Experience: Sense and Nonsense of the Internet Revolution." *International Journal of Communication* 5: 1344-1358.
<http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1191/610>

Armbrust, Walter. (1995). "New Cinema, Commercial Cinema, and the Modernist Tradition in Egypt." *Alif* 15, pp. 81-129.

Armbrust, Walter. (2004). "Egyptian Cinema On Stage and Off." In Shryock, A. (ed). *Off Stage/ On Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Baudrillard, Jean (1995) *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. (2006). War Porn. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 5(1), 86–88.

Bayoumi, Mustapha & Rubin, Andrew (Eds.) (2000). *The Edward Said Reader: Chapter 4 'Orientalism'* (pp.63-93). New York: Vintage Books.

Boëx, Cecile. (2011). "The End of the State Monopoly over Culture: Toward the Commodification of Cultural and Artistic Production". *Middle East Critique* 20:2, pp.139-155.

Boëx, Cécile. (2012) "Emergency Cinema. An Interview with Syrian Collective Abounaddara," *Books & Ideas*, 5. October. <http://www.booksandideas.net/Emergency-Cinema.html>

Chaudhuri, Shohini. (2018). "The Alterity of the Image: the Distant Spectator and Films About the Syrian Revolution and War". *Transnational Cinemas* 9:1

Chouliaraki, Lilie. (2006). The Aestheticization of Suffering on Television. *Visual Communication*. 5.

Chute, Hillary. (2011). "Comics Form and Narrating Lives". *MLA Profession*: 107-117.

Chute, Hillary. (2014). Joe Sacco. In *Outside the Box*. Chapter 7: pp 139- 153.

Della Ratta, Donatella. (2012). "Syrian Hands Raised: User Generated Creativity between Citizenship and Dissent," *Jadaliyya*, 31 October. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8125/syrian-hands-raised-user-generated-creativity-betw>

Dubbati, Barkuzar. (2017). "The Woman in Hijab as a Freak: Super(Muslim)woman in Deena Mohamed's webcomic Qahera." *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 8:5, 433-449.

El-Rassi, Toufic. (2007). *Arab in America*. San Francisco, CA: Last Gasp.

Gallien, Claire. (2017). "Trouble in the Archive. Of Counter-Memories, Breakable Memories and Other Proleptic Moves into the Past in Larissa Sansour's and Wael Shawky's Arts." *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 2 (1), pp. 2-33.

Gilmore, Leigh. (2011). Witnessing Persepolis: Comics, Trauma, and Childhood Testimony. In Michael A. Chaney (Ed.), *Graphic Subjects. Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*. (pp.157-163).

Gordon, Joel (2000) "Nasser 56/Cairo 96: Reimagining Egypt's Lost Community." In Armbrust, W. (ed), *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 161-181.

Gruber, Christiane. & Haugbolle, Sune. (Eds.) (2013). *Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East: Rhetoric of the Image*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Haugbolle, Sune. (2013) "Naji Al Ali and the Iconography of Arab Secularism" in Gruber & Haugbolle, chap.11.

Hochberg, Gil Z. (2018). "'Jerusalem, we have a problem': Larissa Sansour's Sci-Fi Trilogy and the Impetus of Dystopic Imagination". *Arab Studies Journal* xvi:1.

Hodapp, James. (2015). "The Postcolonial Joe Sacco". *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*. 6:4, pp.319-330.

“How to Save the Memories of the Egyptian Revolution?”:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/an-internet-archive-rekindles-the-egyptian-revolutions-spirit/551489/>

Karimi, Pamela. (2008). “Imagining Warfare, Imaging Welfare: Tehran’s Post Iran-Iraq War Murals and their Legacy”. *Persica* vol.22.

Karimi, Pamela. (2014). ‘Weapons of the Resilient: A Postscript to “She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World’, *Jadaliyya*

Karimi, Pamela. (2014). “Of Cultural Diplomacy and ‘Culture Games’: Curating Non-Western Art”. *ArtMargins* (MIT Press).

Kraidy, Marwan (2012) “The Revolutionary Body Politic: Preliminary Thoughts on a Neglected Medium in the Arab Uprisings,” *Journal of Middle Eastern Culture and Communication* 5(1): 66-74.

Maasri, Zeina. (2009). *Off the Wall. Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War*. London: IB Tauris.

Mosireen: Archiving as a Tool of Resistance:
<https://madamasr.com/en/2018/02/11/feature/culture/858-archiving-as-a-tool-of-resistance/>

Nanquette, Laetitia. (2013). *Orientalism Versus Occidentalism. Literary and Cultural Imaging Between France and Iran Since the Iranian Revolution*. London: IB Tauris.

Nashef, Hania. (2012). “Disconcerting Images: Arab Female Portrayals on Arab Television”. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. 14:4, pp. 515-532.

Peterson, Mark Allen (2011) “Egypt’s Media Ecology in a Time of Revolutions,” *Arab Media and Society*, 14 <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=770>

Rastegar, Kamran (2015). *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East*. IB Tauris, Chapter 6 ‘Wanting to See: Wartime Witnessing and Postwar Haunting in Lebanese Cinema’.

Sacco, Joe. (2003) *Palestine*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Sacco, Joe. (2009). *Footnotes in Gaza*. Metropolitan Books.

Said, Edward. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Said, Edward. (2003) 'Homage to Joe Sacco'. In Sacco, J. *Palestine* London: Jonathan Cape. pp. i-v.

Salamandra, Christa (2012) "The Muḥannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama and the Arab Female Gaze," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 85:1, pp.45-78.

Salamandra, Christa (2012) "Prelude to an Uprising: Syrian Fictional television and Socio-Political Critique," *Jadaliyya*, 17 May.

Salamandra Christa. (2013) "Syrian Television Drama: A National Industry in a Pan-Arab Mediascape". In: Guayyabess T. (eds) *National Broadcasting and State Policy in Arab Countries*. London: Palgrave, pp.83-95.

Salti, Rasha. (2006). "Critical Nationals. The Paradoxes of Syrian Cinema". *Kosmorama* 237. Danish Film Institute.

Samanci, Özge. (2015). *Dare to Disappoint: Growing up in Turkey*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Satrapi, Marjane. (2004). *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. New York: Random House.

Sattouf, Riad. (2015) *The Arab of the Future: A Childhood in the Middle East, 1978-1984* . New York: Metropolitan Books.

Sattouf, Riad. (2016). *The Arab of the Future: A Childhood in the Middle East, 1984-1985*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Schielke, Samuli and Jessica Winegar 2013 "The Writing on the Walls of Egypt," MERIP 265. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer265/writing-walls-egypt>

Shafik, Viola (2007) "Chapter 2: The Allegorical Nation." In Shafik, V. *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, pp. 100-115.

Sisler, Vit 2008 "Digital Arabs: Representation in Video Games," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11: 203 <http://www.digitalislam.eu/article.do?articleId=1704>

Solomon, Keith. (2007). 'The Spectacle of War and the Specter of "The Horror"', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 35:1, 22-31, DOI: [10.3200/JPFT.35.1.22-31](https://doi.org/10.3200/JPFT.35.1.22-31)

Sontag, Susan. (2003) *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Stone, Christopher (2009). "Ahmad Zaki and Muhammad Khan: Icons of the Nile's Unlikely Golden Age." In *The State of the Arts in the Middle East*, 45-47 .

Szep, Eszter. (2014) "Graphic Narratives of Women in War: Identity Construction in the Works of Zeina Abirached, Miriam Katin, and Marjane Satrapi". *International Studies* 16:1, 21-33.

Van Gils, Martijn & Shwaikh, Malaka M. (2016). "Fighting without Weapons: Palestinian Documentary Films and Acts of Resistance". *Asian Affairs* 74:3, pp. 443- 463.

Wedeen, Lisa. (2011) Tolerated Parodies of Politics in Syrian Cinema. In Gugler, J. (ed). *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence*. 104-112.

Wessels, Josepha. (2018) *Documenting Syria: Filmmaking, Video Activism, and Revolution*. London: IB Tauris.

Wilkins, Karin Gwinn (2012) "Wearing Shades in the Bright Future of Digital Media: Limitations of Narratives of Media Power in Egyptian Resistance," *MedieKultur* 52: 49-61.

Whitlock, Gillian (2006). "Autographics: The Seeing 'I' of the Comics". *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 52 #4: 965-979.

Zaatari, Zeina. (2014). "Desirable Masculinity/Femininity and Nostalgia of the "Anti-Modern": Bab el-Hara Television Series as a Site of Production." *Sexuality & Culture*. 19: 16-36.

Zayani, Mohamed (2005) "Introduction: Al Jazeera and the Vicissitudes of the New Arab Media." In Mohamed Zayani, (ed.) *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*. London, Pluto Press: 1-46.

Zayani, Mohamed & Ayish, Muhammad. (2006). "Arab Satellite Television and Crisis Reporting Covering the Fall of Baghdad". *International Communication Gazette*. 68. 473-497.