

SOC 290/FALL 2010
“Islam” and the “West”
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Office Hours:
M & W: 4:00 to 4:30pm

I COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES:

Course Description: How can we best understand the so-called “civilizational clash” between “Islam” and the “West”? Many have argued that there is a fundamental difference in the religious and cultural ethos of Muslims from that of the “modern” and Western type, and conclude from this assumption that the present conflict is a by-product of these differences. Others have challenged the clash of civilization argument by demonstrating that such a claim oversimplifies the “Islamic world,” that the history of Islam and the West must be viewed historically, and that an analysis of power and the colonialist excursion of the West into the Islamic world must be placed at the center of any analysis of the conflict. Yet a third, more nuanced, perspective has emerged. The idea of a “West,” an “Islam,” an “Arab” and a “Jew” are, according to this new perspective, discursively narrated by political forces whose intentions are multiple but always interested in creating a Self defined by the negation of its Other. We will explore this debate in detail, tracing the relationship between “Islam” and the West” or “Arab and Jew” historically. Should it be understood as a clash between two different cultural systems, one modern and democratic and the other feudal and fanatic? Or, is the violence systemic, taking a variety of forms in different parts of the globe? What role does power and inequality on a global scale have to do with it? These and many other questions will be dealt with in this course. We will trace the way these three perspectives interpret the so-called conflict between “civilizations” and “nations,” “men and women,” and “immigrants and nationals.” Throughout the course we will analyze how modernity transformed the relationship between “Islam” and the “West,” Jew and Arab, male and female, and how nation, race and identity, with the inception of modernity, transformed radically the social relations of the inhabitants of the Middle East.

II REQUIRED TEXTS:

PURCHASE THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, University of Chicago Press (2007)

Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel*, Verso Press (2008)

III GRADING – total points = 100

94 to 100 = A	74 to 76 = C
90 to 93 = A-	70 to 73 = C-
87 to 89 = B+	67 to 69 = D+

84 to 86 = B
80 to 83 = B-
77 to 79 = C+

64 to 66 = D
60 to 63 = D
0 to 59 = F

TWO ORAL EXAMS 30 points each x 2 (60 points total): Students will visit me twice in my office for a thirty to forty minute discussion in which they will be evaluated on their competence over the course material.

GROUP LED DISCUSSIONS – 5 points:

Each student will be assigned a group on the first day of class. The group assigned to lead discussion is responsible for offering good discussion questions. Since you will have 4 or 5 members per group, you will “plant” (in top secret) 2 to 3 of your members in the audience whose function is to stir-up discussion.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: 20 points

Each student is expected to come to class prepared. A failure to participate in class will result in fewer points awarded. A student who comes prepared to class and participates regularly in class discussions will receive all 20 points. **NOTE:** One thing to keep in mind: if you participate in such a way that it is obvious you have not done the readings, this will only hurt your grade.

WEEKLY REFLECTION JOURNALS: –15 points

For each class where readings are assigned, you are expected to write (about three to four pages, typed, double-spaced) a journal entry in which you reflect on the readings. You can get creative, incorporating the readings into a movie you saw, a discussion you had with a friend or family member, found possible venues towards a future career idea, or simply a concept or an idea you found interesting or troubling. You are expected to show me this at the beginning of each class, making sure to receive a signature from me. This is your responsibility. A failure to get my signature during class time negates any possibility of receiving it afterwards. I will not grade these until the very end of the course. I will at that time ask you to hand in your entire journal for grading. The 1st week you must hand in the journal to receive comments, but after that I will no longer provide comments. You are to hold on to these journals to the end of the semester, at which point I will collect them and grade them in one sitting. **You may not hand in journals late. If you are absent on a given day, your journal for that day will not count.** A failure to hand in a journal (even if it is lost) will result in zero points for the journal grade. Your journal grade will also be determined by how will you “deconstruct” the readings (see the example of the Onion on Deconstructing Bandito Burrito’s take-out menu (available on moodle).

ORAL EXAMS MISSED: Only medical or family related absences will be accepted, and only with the approval, in writing, of a Macalester counselor, nurse, or the Dean of your college. Documented material must be handed in to the instructor. If excused and permitted to take a make-up, be prepared for a more difficult exam than the original. If not excused, you will be rescheduled but penalized a full letter grade.

CLASS ATTENDANCE – You may miss up to one class, after which you forfeit half a letter grade for each absence thereafter. Please read “Excused Absences” below.

COMING TO CLASS LATE: You are allowed two tardiness (15 minutes or more late), after which every two tardiness counts as one absence. NOTE: If you miss more than 30 minutes of a class, but less than one hour, it is considered half an absence. More than an hour is a full absence.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Since you are permitted one absence without penalty, the absence functions as your buffer for emergency days. Thus there is no need of sending me an email asking to be excused for an absence.

IV COURSE SYLLABUS

Part I: Introduction

W 9/08: Overview of the Course:

- a) Why the words “Islam” and the “West” in the course-title are in quotes
- b) What this course is and is not about: Instead of the labeled, let’s look at those who have the power to label and narrate. You will learn very little about Islam or the West, the proper interpretation of the Qur’an, Iraq, Oil and politics... Instead, we will focus our attention on the political implications of constructing the world in terms of “Islam” and the “West” for issues as diverse as:
 - The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (3 weeks)
 - Sexual & Gender Politics (1 week)
 - Nationalist & Religious Identities of the Middle East (2 weeks)
 - European Identity and “Islam” (1 week)
 - Women, Gay Rights, and “Islam” (2 weeks)
 - Alternatives? (1 week)
- c) How to read and prepare for this class: This is not just about learning the “facts” and specific arguments of the readings, the “truth” of a particular reading, but to be able to recognize the *epistemological* and *ontological kinds* of claims an article or book makes towards a particular history, a people, civilization, or a religion.
- d) **In Class Exercise:** In-class reading exercise: The Onion, Deconstructing Bandito Burrito’s Take-Out Menu (moodle). Notice, instead of trying to understand the objects of the menu, the labeled, in this case the author (a grad student) is instead turning the lens onto the labeler or narrator, looking at the representation rather than the object (the burrito) itself.
- e) **In Class Exercise II:** When it is “them” it is culture, when it is “us” it is an individual: read Stanly Fish’s commentary and reflect
- f) Read the syllabus closely for 5 minutes and then take a quiz.
- g) The “Intimate” Experience: Most days the entire class will meet, but on other days you will be coming to my office for a more “intimate” experience.
- h) **FILM NIGHTS:** 9/22 (6pm); 10/06 (6pm); 11/03 (5:10pm); 12/01 (6pm): Since you will meet on a number of occasions for only one hour, you are expected to come early to view a film on the above dates.
- i) Group assignment (groups 1 through 3)
- j) Getting to know one another

Part II: “Styles of Thought”: The Two Perspectives of Islam & the West

W 9/15: The Clash of Civilizations? The Time-Immemorial

Perspective: A Critique

[On Moodle, I have the readings organized around 2 perspectives: 1. Scriptural-cultural Essentialism 2. Postcolonial-Deconstructionist. Compare and contrast the two perspectives and note how they differ.]

(a) 7:00-8:00: *A Brief “History” of Islam and the Middle East (Lecture)*

(b) 8:00-8:45: **FILM:** *EDWARD SAID ON ORIENTALISM* (we will watch during class time)

(c) 8:45-9:00: 15 minute break

(d) 9:00-10:00: *Objectivist vs Constructionist Perspectives* (COV large class discussion)

1. The Dominant Epistemology of the Orient/Occident Binary: Or, When Liberal and Conservative Epistemologies Merge (objectivist):
 - Spencer, "On Muhammad"
 - Dakake, "The Myth of Militant Islam"
 - Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations"(all three articles on moodle)
2. Trying to Break Out of the East/West Boxes (social constructionist)
 - Edward Said, "Clash of Definitions" (moodle)
 - Brown, "Tolerance as a Discourse of Depoliticization"(both articles on moodle)
- (short op-ed) If it's "them" it is their "culture," but if it's "us" then it is the act of an individual

Part III: Palestine & Israel: How Should We Understand the Conflict?

W 9/22: Jews and Arabs as Continuous, Historical Constant Beings

FILM NIGHT I: PLEASE COME AT 6pm (food served at 6pm)

(a) 6:00 to 7:00: *Paradigms of Arabs and Jews* (Lecture)

(b) 7:00-8:40: FILM: Occupation 101 (90 minutes)

(c) 8:40-9:00: Break

(d) 9:00-10:00: GROUP ONE LEADS DISCUSSION

- a) *The Anti Time-Immemorial Perspective: Modernity is to blame for why the relationship went bad, not cultural or religious DNA*
 1. Samman, "Zionism and the Nationalization of Jerusalem"
 2. Gregory, "Barbed Boundaries and Defiled Cities"
 3. Ran Greenstein, "Israel/Palestine and the Apartheid Analogy" (all three essays on moodle)
- b) *The Time-Immemorial Perspective: Have Jews and Arabs always been in a Love-Hate Relationship?:*
 1. Bat Ye'or
 2. Cohen (moodle)

W 9/29: Deconstructing Israeli Peoplehood I {1 hr. COV GROUP Discussions}

G1: 7:00 to 8:00

G2: 8:00 to 9:00

G3: 9:00 to 10:00

Deconstructing the "Jewish Nation" I: Narrating a Jewish Nation"

- Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism*: chs 2, 3, 4 (please purchase book)

W 10/06: Deconstructing Israeli Peoplehood II

FILM NIGHT II: PLEASE COME AT 6pm (no food tonight)

(a) 6:00-7:00: *Deconstructing the "Jewish Nation" II: Narrating the Land Racially*

GROUP TWO LEADS DISCUSSION

- Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism*: chs 6, 7
- Julie Peteet, “Words as Interventions: Naming in the Palestine-Israel Conflict” (moodle)

(b) 7:00-8:30: FILM: *PEACE AND PROPAGANDA IN THE PROMISED LAND* (80 minutes)

(C) 8:30-8:45: BREAK

(c) 8:45-10:00: Fishbowl

Part IV: The Eurocentric Trap: The Colonizer’s Temporal Template and Its Reproduction in the Middle East

W 10/13: From Disney to Istanbul and Amman:

(a) 7:00 to 8:15: *The Time Machine: Lecture and Discussion: Lecture w/ illustrations*

(b) 8:15 to 8:45: FILM: *MUSLIMS* (We will watch during class)

(c) 8:45 to 9:00: Break

(d) 9:00 to 10:00: Fishbowl

Khalidoun Samman, *The Clash of Modernities* (Intro and chs. 3, & 5)

W 10/20: Sexual Politics {1 hr. COV Group Sessions}:

G2: 7:00 to 8:00

G3: 8:00 to 9:00

G1: 9:00 to 10:00

Nader, “Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Control of Women” (moodle)

Samman, (chapter 6) “Women as the Sign of the Times” (moodle)

Peteet, “Gender Rituals of Resistance in the Intifada” (moodle)

Boyarin, “Colonial Drag” (moodle)

W 10/27: ORAL EXAM 1 SCHEDULING (no reading assignments this week)
Students must schedule their 30-minute session with the professor

W 11/3: How Jews and Arabs Became Two Different Compounds {1 hr. COV Group Sessions}

FILM NIGHT III: PLEASE COME AT 5:10pm (food served at 5:10pm): *FORGET BAGHDAD* (115 minutes)

G3: 7:00 to 8:00

G1: 8:00 to 9:00

G2: 9:00 to 10:00

Samman, “The Anti-Semitic Gaze and Zionism”

Haggai Ram, “The Unclassifiable: Iran’s Jews in Zionist/Israeli Imagination”

Ein-Gil and Machover, “Zionism and the Oriental Jews: The Art of Co-optation”

(all three articles on moodle)

Part V: The Culturalization of Politics

W 11/10: Honor Crimes

(a) 7:00 to 8:30: *Perspectives on Human Rights, from Universalism to the Situational*

GROUP THREE LEADS DISCUSSION:

1. Gendercide Watch
 2. Phyllis Chesler on Honor Crimes
 3. Listen to podcast on Honor Killing
 4. Razack, "Modern Women as Imperialist"
 5. Ewing, "The Honor Killing"
 6. Uma Narayan, (ch.2) "Sati and Colonialist Discourse"
- (all 6 on moodle)

(b) 8:30-8:45: Break

(c) 8:45 to 10:00: FILM: *Jihad for Love* ??or?? Honor Lost??

W 11/17: When Human Rights Travel East: Gay Rights

7:00-8:15: *When Human Rights Incites the Other: Large class discussion*

- Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (read: pp. 29-50; 72-73; the entire chapter 3; 201-223; 264-268; 269-290; 415-418)

8:15-8:30: Break

8:45-10:00: Fishbowl (discussing Massad and film, *Queers Against Occupation* (on moodle)

Part VI: Muslims in the West

W 11/24: Muslims as Aliens {1 hr. COV Group Sessions}:

G1: 7:00 to 8:00

G2: 8:00 to 9:00

G3: 9:00 to 10:00

The "*Muslim Invasion*":

1. Caldwell, Rules for Sex (moodle)
2. Watch video of Caldwell on the Colbert Report (moodle)
3. Joan Scott, "France's ban on the Islamic veil has little to do with women's emancipation" (moodle)
4. Yilmaz, "Ethnicized Ontologies, Immigrants, and Danish Culture" (moodle)
5. Hervik, "Original Spin and Its Side Effects (on Danish Cartoons)" (moodle)
6. Fekete, "Enlightened Fundamentalism" (moodle)

Part VII: Are there alternatives to the discourse of Islam & the West?

W 12/01: Boundaries as Fluid and Messy:

FILM NIGHT IV: PLEASE COME AT 6:00pm (food served at 6:00pm): *SLINGSHOT HIP HOP* (90 minutes)

7:30-8:30: Are there alternatives? (large COV class discussion)

(a) *Strategic Essentialism*?

- Bederman, "White Man's Civilization on Trial" (moodle)
- On breaking the right-liberal alliance: Glenn Greenwald on why he spends so much energy criticizing liberals like Thomas Friedman and Jeffrey Goldberg:

<http://thenextweb.com/media/2010/09/01/clash-of-the-blogosphere-titans/>

(b) *What Is an Authentic Muslim and Western?*

- LeVine, “Rock and Resistance in the Muslim World” (moodle)
- Samman, “Thinking Outside the Time-Space Box of Colonial Modernity”

(c) *Public performace or use your profession to deconstruct hegemonic narratives:*

- Adopt Public Performance: Target Boycott as Example (moodle)
- Maria Starzmann, “Anticolonial Archaeology” (moodle)

8:30-8:45: Break

8:45-9:15: *The One State Solution* (small group discussion):

9:15-10:00: *Concluding Remarks:*

- Each student will have 3 minutes to tell a story that revolves around the themes of this course.

***JOURNALS DUE:** Students must hand in their entire journal (please staple them chronologically by date)

F 12/3: ORAL EXAM 2

W 12/08: Wrapping up