

ISLAM, MEDIA, AND THE WEST (ILA) E59.1200.005

New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
Fall 2008

Monday & Wednesday 11:00am – 12:15pm

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Office Hours	Wednesdays 1 – 2pm; and by appointment

DESCRIPTION & READINGS

This course examines contemporary media in (primarily Arab parts of) the Middle East and the US and their relationship to the perceived rift between Islam and the West. Readings and media examples focus on the politics of culture, religion, modernity, and national identity as they shape and intersect with contemporary geopolitical events, cultural formations and media globalization.

This is an upper-level inter-disciplinary course that draws on readings in media studies, communications, political science, history, literary criticism, sociology and anthropology. Reading and writing requirements for this course are demanding. You will occasionally be asked to watch films and/or videos outside of class.

This is not a course on the history and politics of Islam and the Middle East. You do not need to have prior knowledge of the subject matter, although it will help. Class lectures and hand-outs will provide brief historical and political context, and background reading materials will help in furthering such knowledge. You should however be pro-active in learning more about the regions we will be discussing through your own outside research and reading (keeping up with global affairs, gaining familiarity with political issues and countries, looking up historical events, watching/reading news from/about the region, etc.). Some helpful background readings from on-line newspapers and media outlets will be provided on Blackboard.

REQUIRED READINGS & VIDEOS

- Graphic Novel: Toufic El Rassi, *Arab in America*. Last Gasp, 2008.
- Graphic Novel: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon Books, 2003.
- Graphic Novel: Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis II: The Story of a Return*. Pantheon Books, 2005.
 - Alternatively you can buy the 'box set' of *Persepolis*. Pantheon Books, 2005.
- Graphic Novel: Joe Sacco, *Palestine: The Special Edition*, Fantagraphics, 2007 (new hardcover edition, with introduction by E. Said). Please make sure you get the 2007 edition ONLY.
- Book chapters, articles, web links, and other readings will be available on Blackboard.
- Film: *Control Room*, 2004 (directed by Jehane Noujaim), available on reserve at the Avery-Fischer Center in the Bobst Library, Call #DVD2792, and most video rental stores.

EXPECTATIONS & GRADING

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation = 10%

- You are expected to thoroughly read **before** each class and participate in all class discussions, as well as in-class and any Blackboard-based assignments and discussions.
- Your participation grade is based on presence and punctuality, and quantity and, most importantly, *quality* of in-class participation. You are expected to come to class prepared to **intelligently** and **critically** discuss readings and audio/visual assignments.

4 Papers = 40%

- You will be given specific instructions for each.
- These papers require you to show in-depth involvement with the issues and provide your thoughtful and thorough analysis of the readings and videos for the four major sections of this course.
- Typed, double-spaced, stapled, between 750 – 1,250 words (3-5 pages) each. If you wish to email your papers, you must do so no later than 10:30am on the due date.
- You are **required to post your papers on your blog** no later than **10:30am** on the due date (see below).
- Due Dates: Paper 1: Sep. 29. Paper 2: Oct. 6. Paper 3: Oct. 29. Paper 4: Dec. 3

Blog/ Public Journal = 40%

- You are required to keep an on-going **blog: a writing project of your thought process/progress** throughout the semester. In it, you should respond to readings, ideas, media **from class** and **other** readings and media that you have come across **outside** of class. You must provide a clear, coherent analysis / response to the issues, themes, questions, debates. Do not simply describe, reiterate, paraphrase or quote, but explain what is interesting, what is theoretically convincing or questionable, what is pertinent, problematic, exemplary, etc.
- The journal must be on-line and **continuously available/accessible** (hence, blog). The format is open-ended. There is no formal structure requirements except providing citations and/or links whenever you are referring to materials. You can use this as a stream-of-consciousness journal, a wiki with sub-categories, a web site, or any form of 'journal' in whatever style you wish: formal, informal, 'dear diary', letters, fake interviews, Q&A's, etc.
- You are free to post any items you wish, as long as they relate to your entry and are thoroughly explained/analyzed: images, clips, links, music videos, newspaper articles, blogs, etc.
- You should have a minimum of 10 entries and/or 4,000 words. There is no upper-limit (but don't go nuts!)
- Your blog must be up and running no later than **Sept. 22**, at which time the links will be posted on Blackboard.
- You must have **at least 30% of your blog completed by Nov.3** (between 3 and 4 entries and/or 1,500 words)
 - You will be given detailed feedback and a tentative grade on the first installation.
 - You may, of course, ask for feedback earlier in the semester.

- You may submit a **2nd installation** of your journal no later than **Nov.24**. This is **optional**, and strongly recommended if you want feedback before your final submission.
- Your blog must be **complete and fully accessible by Dec. 1**
- Your blog should additionally include links/posts of your 4 short papers, to be posted no later than each due date, and your classmate feedback due Dec.10 (see below). These are NOT counted as part of the total word-count!
- You are welcome to use any blog software, or alternatively go through **blogs.nyu.edu** to set one up and follow the instructions on how to do so.

Classmate Feedback = 10%

- You will be given specific instructions.
- You are required to read your classmates' blog, and post one final entry on your own blog that responds to your classmates collectively.
- 500 – 750 words.
- Due: Dec. 10, to be posted on your blog.

GRADING POLICIES

- Students with special needs, either with physical and/or learning disabilities, or religious observances, must come talk to me at the beginning of the semester in order to assure any special needs: extra time for papers; access to materials, etc. Moreover, any student who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd
- Grades will not be curved. If you attend class, do the required work and have a reasonable grasp of the information, you should have no trouble earning at least a C, which indicates satisfactory work.
- Late papers and assignments will be graded down -.1 for every day late (24 hours from 11am, including weekends and holidays). Papers and assignments will not be considered once they are more than 5 days late (24 hours from 11am, including weekends and holidays) and will automatically result in an F (0%).
- Timely and intelligent participation in class is required, and is predicated on completing readings and any assignments before class. Your grade will decrease by -.1 for every class you miss. You **MUST** notify me in advance if you are going to miss a class or a deadline, and you will need a legitimate excuse (doctor's note, arrest warrant, etc.).
- You are expected to abide by NYU's and Steinhardt's standards of Academic Integrity. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic F (0%). Additionally, departmental and university policy permits harsher actions, if warranted.

GRADING STANDARDS

A (4.0) = Excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Work demonstrates comprehensive understanding and presents thoughtful and creative interpretations, well-focused and original insights, well-reasoned commentary and analysis.

B (3.0) = Good. Work demonstrates complete and accurate understanding of course materials, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding.

C (2.0) = Adequate. Work demonstrates adequate understanding but remains superficial, incomplete, vague or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations; writing may be vague or hard to follow.

D (1.0) = Unsatisfactory. Work demonstrates a lack of understanding and fails to express basic aspects of the course. Participation was inadequate or superficial.

F (0) = Failed. Work was not submitted or completed according to parameters (page length, topical focus, types of sources), or completely failed to express the most basic and elementary aspects of the course.

SCHEDULE

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

- The syllabus is a roadmap at best. While it is intended that the course will follow the schedule below, modifications along the way are **inevitable**. Changes will be reflected on Blackboard.
- Readings are listed in the suggested reading order.
- Readings are listed as **required** (obvious what that means), **browse** or **background**. Skim through or read the 'browse' ones enough to get a general idea of what the piece is about. 'Background' readings are provided for further information, these are strongly recommended if you know little about the topic, history, region and are feeling 'lost' in class.
- Readings are to be completed by the day listed. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, and any assigned web sites or audio/visual materials.

PART I: INTRODUCTIONS

Wed. Sep. 3 – Introductions, Music Videos

Mon. Sep. 8 – Media Attack!

Required:

- Akbar S. Ahmed, 'Media Mongols at the Gates of Baghdad,' *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Winter 2002: pp.46-62.
- Memorize regional map

Wed. Sep. 10 – Culture, Religion, and Politics in the Arab World

- Andrew Hammond, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Chapter 1. pp.1-51.

PART 2: POLITICAL / THEORETICAL CONTESTATIONS: Paper Due 9/29

Mon. Sep. 15 – The Clash, as Imagined in the US

Required:

- Bernard Lewis 'The Roots of Muslim Rage,' *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990.
- Samuel Huntington 'Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), Summer 1993.
- Choose ONE of the following (your choice):
 - Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*: 'Defusing the Holy Bomb', November 27, 2002
 - Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*: 'The Land of Denial', June 5, 2002
 - Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*: 'Courageous Arab Thinkers', October 19, 2003

Wed. Sep. 17 – The Clash, as Imagined by Bin Laden

Required:

- Osama Bin Laden, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*:
 - Introduction by Bruce Lawrence, pp.xi-xxiii
 - 'Declaration of Jihad', August 23, 1996, pp.23-30
 - 'To the Americans', October 6, 2002, pp.160-172
- Daniel Kimmage, 'The Al Qaeda Media Nexus', Radio FreeEurope, March 2008.

Background:

- Osama Bin Laden, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*:
 - 'Terror for Terror', October 21, 2001, pp.106-129
- Derek Gregory: *The Colonial Present*: Chapter 3 "The Land Where Red Tulips Grew," pp.30-46. (history of Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda)

Mon. Sep. 22 – Jihad, McWorld... Globalization?

Required:

- Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Tribalism and Globalism are Reshaping the World*:
 - Introduction, pp.3-20
 - Chapter 10, 'Jihad vs. McWorld or Jihad via McWorld?', pp.155-168
- Andrew Hammond, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Chapter 4, pp.107-135.

Background:

- Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Tribalism and Globalism are Reshaping the World*:
 - Chapter 6, 'Hollywood: McWorld's Videology', pp.88-99
 - Chapter 14, 'Essential Jihad: Islam and Fundamentalism', pp.205-216

**** Blog must be up ****

Wed. Sep. 24 – Cultural and Political Critiques

Required:

- Mahmoud Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terrorism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2004:

- Introduction: 'Modernity and Violence'
- Chapter I: 'Culture Talk; Or, How Not to Talk About Islam and Politics'
- Carla Pasquinelli, 'Fundamentalisms,' *Constellations* 5(1), 1998.

Background:

- Gilbert Achcar, *Eastern Cauldron: Islam, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq in a Marxist Mirror*, Introduction 'U.S. Imperial Strategy in the Middle East', pp.9-45 (analysis of US involvement in Middle East).
- Ali Mirsepassi, 'Reflections on 'Muslim Anger'', *CSSAAME* 27(3): 497-502 (critique of 'culture talk' in case you find Mamdani difficult or insufficient)
- Timothy Mitchell, 'McJihad' (political rebuff to Benjamin Barber, with detailed accounts of US's often-harmful role in the Middle East)

PART 3: TOWARDS A MEDIA CRITIQUE: Paper Due on 10/6

Mon. Sep. 29 – Orientalism

Required:

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978.
 - Preface, pp.xv –xxx
 - Introduction, pp.1-28
- Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, Chapter 1, pp.1-12.

**** Paper I Due on Part 2 (Sept. 8 – 24) ****

Wed. Oct. 1 – Media Representations

Required:

- Toufic El Rassi, *Arab in America* (entire book)
- Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World:*
 - Introduction, pp.xlix-lix
 - Chapter 1 'Islam as News: Islam and the West', pp.3-35
- Jack Shaheen, 'Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 588 (July), pp.171-193.

Background:

- Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World:* Chapter 3 'Knowledge and Power: Knowledge and Interpretation', pp.162-173.

PART 4: COMIC(AL?) POLITICS: Paper Due 10/29

Mon. Oct. 6 – Iran, from the Inside Out and Back Again

Required:

- Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis I and II* (entire books)

Background:

- Annabelle Sreberny & Ali Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution* (analysis of Iranian political and media events leading up to the 1979 Iranian revolution).
 - Introduction
 - Chapter 5 ‘Oppositions: Secular and Religious’,
 - Chapter 8 ‘The ‘Heavy Artillery’: Small Media for a Big Revolution’
- Melani McAlister, 2001: *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000: ‘Iran, Islam, and the Terrorist Threat, 1979-1989’*, pp.198-234 (analysis of US media coverage of the Iranian revolution).

**** Paper 2 Due on Part 3 (Sept. 29 – Oct. 1) ****

Wed. Oct. 8 – Voyeurism in the Palestinian Territories

Required:

- Joe Sacco, *Palestine: The Special Edition* (entire book)

Background:

- Edward Said, *After The Last Sky*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986 (poetic/political explanation of Palestinian dispossession)
 - Introduction, pp.3-9 & Chapter 1 ‘States,’ pp.11-49
- Derek Gregory: *The Colonial Present*: Chapter 5 “Barbed Boundaries” pp.76-106 (history of Palestinian Territories and Palestinian-Israeli conflict)

Mon. Oct. 13 – No Class

Wed. Oct. 15 – ‘Normal’ Life in Un-Normal Circumstances

Required:

- Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*: pp.1-28.
- Mazen Kerbaj, ‘A Happy Childhood’

Background:

- Film: *West Beyrouth*, (directed by Ziad Doueiri; aka *West Beirut*), 1998, Available on reserve at Avery Fischer Center at Bobst Library, Call # VCA 10774

Mon. Oct. 20 – War Blogger

Required:

- Salam Pax. *The Clandestine Diary of an Ordinary Iraqi*. New York: Grove Press, 2003:
 - Introduction by Ian Katz, pp.ix-xiv
 - September 2002 excerpts
 - October 29, 2002
 - November 2, 2002
 - November 15, 2002
 - December 3, 2002
 - January 7, 2003 & January 21, 2003

- March 16, 2003 & March 20, 2003
- March 21, 2003 – March 23, 2003
- April 1, 2003 – April 7, 2003

Background:

- Derek Gregory: *The Colonial Present*: Chapter 7 “The Tyranny of Strangers” pp.144-179 (history of Iraq and US involvement in past two Gulf Wars)

Mon. Oct. 27 – Islamic Heroism

Required:

- Tashkeel Comics, ‘The 99’ (entire series)

Wed. Oct. 29 – Orientalizing Space: Dubai

Guest Lecture by Mohamed Elshahed.

Required:

- TBD

Background:

- TBD

**** Paper 3 Due on Part 4 (Oct. 6 – Oct. 29) ****

PART 5: EVERYDAY MEDIA & CULTURAL PRACTICES: Paper Due on 12/3

Mon. Nov. 3 – (News, Part I) From Al Jazeera ...

Required:

- Andrew Hammond, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Chapter 8, pp.205-218.
- Mohamed Zayani, ‘Introduction: Al Jazeera and the Vicissitudes of the New Arab Mediascape’, pp.1-41, in *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*, 2005.
- *Control Room* (film), on reserve at Avery Fisher Center at Bobst, Call #: DVD2792

Browse:

- R.S. Zaharna ‘Al Jazeera and American Public Diplomacy: A Dance of Intercultural (Mis-) Communication’, pp.183-200, in *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*.

Background:

- William Rugh, *Arab Mass Media*,
 - ‘Arab Radio and Television Prior to 1990,’ pp.181-199;
 - ‘Arab Television Since 1990: Structure,’ pp.201-227.

**** 1st Installation of Blog Due ****

Wed. Nov. 5 – (News, Part 2) ... to Al Hurra

Required:

- Lawrence Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens: America, Islam, and the War of Ideas*:
 - Chapter 7 'Weaponizing the Media'
 - Chapter 11 'Brand America'

Mon. Nov. 10 – Ramadan Serials

- Andrew Hammond, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Chapter 8, pp.231-236.
- Walter Armbrust, 2000, 'The Riddle of Ramadan: Media, Consumer culture, and the 'Christmasization' of a Muslim Holiday', in *Everyday life in the Muslim Middle East*, Donna Lee Bowen, pp.335-348.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila 1993. 'Finding a Place for Islam: Egyptian Television Serials and the National Interest.' *Public Culture* 5(3): 493-513.

Wed. Nov. 12 – Reality TV

Required:

- Hammond, Andrew, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Chapter 8, pp.223-229.
- Kraidy, Marwan 2007. 'Idioms of Contention: *Star Academy* in Lebanon and Kuwait,' in Naomi Sakr, Ed. *Arab Media and Political Renewal: Community, Legitimacy and Public Life*: 44-55.
- Carroll, Rory 2005. 'Trial by Television' *Salon.com* (March 28).
http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2005/03/28/mosul_station/

Background:

- Khalil, Joe 2005. 'Inside Arab Reality Television: Development, Definitions and Demystification' *Transnational Broadcasting Journal* 15, Fall 2005.

Mon. Nov. 17 – Islamic Pop / Popularizing Islam

Required:

- Echchaibi, Nabil 2007. 'From the pulpit to the studio: Islam's internal battle' *Media Development*.
- Christian Pond, 'The Appeal of Sami Yusuf and the Search for Islamic Authenticity,' *TBS* 16, 2006.

Background:

- Reading TBD (on Amr Khaled)

Wed. Nov. 19 – Women's Television

Required:

- Mernissi, Fatema 2004. 'The Satellite, The Prince, and Scheherazade: The Rise of Women as Communicators in Digital Islam.' *Transnational Broadcasting Journal* 12, Spring-Summer.
- Matar, Dina 2007. 'Heya TV: A Feminist Counterpublic for Arab Women?' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27(3): 513-524.

Background:

- Otterman, Sharon 2006. 'Fatwas and Feminism: Women, Religious Authority, and Islamic TV.' *Transnational Broadcasting Journal* 16

Mon. Nov. 24 – No Class

**** Optional Deadline for 2nd Installation of Blog ****

Wed. Nov. 26 – No Class

Mon. Dec. 1 – Hizballah's Screens

Required:

- Helga Tawil Souri, 'The Political Battlefield of pro-Arab Games on Palestinian Screens,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27(3): 536-551.
- Reading on Al-Manar TV TBD

Wed. Dec. 3 – Recent Arab Music: From Rai to Rap

Required:

- Andrew Hammond, *Popular Culture in the Arab World*, Chapter 6, pp.159-186.
- Joan Gross, David McMurray and Ted Swedenburg 'Rai, Rap, and Ramadan Nights: Franco-Maghribi Cultural Identities,' pp.257-268
- Film: *Slingshot* (web link will be provided)

**** Paper 4 Due on Part 5 (Nov. 3 – Dec. 3) ****

Mon. Dec. 8 – No Class

Wed. Dec. 10 – No Class

**** Classmate Feedback Due ****