

Freshman Seminar 142

From the Arabian Nights to the Prince of Persia: Orientalism in Literature and Film



Princeton University, Spring 2013

Instructor: Daniel J. Sheffield

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Course Meeting Time: Tuesday 1:30-4:20

Office: Joseph Henry House 25A

Office Hours: Thursday 2:00-4:00

Location: Butler College 1976 Hall 027

Course Description:

American news media, movies, video games, and novels are filled with images of the Islamic world. All too often these images perpetuate stereotypes of this diverse and complex world, which spans the Middle East, North Africa, and Central and South Asia, as both a fantastical realm of Arabian Nights and a hotbed of fanatical, misogynistic, and despotic Muslims. In a time in which engagement with the Islamic world is of pressing importance, this seminar attempts to scrutinize the origins of commonly held notions about the Islamic Orient by those who have represented it in scholarship, literature, art, and film – the “Orientalists” – and to prepare students to critique connections among popular media, foreign policy, and the ethics of identity and representation in the modern world.

Our seminar will be divided into three units. In the first unit, we will examine the roots of Orientalism, paying particular attention to how the areas of the world that we have come to refer to as “the West” and “the East” were construed in Classical and medieval times. Reading authors ranging from the Greek historian Herodotus to the chroniclers of the Crusades, we will delve into issues of ethnic and religious identity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In the second unit, we will chart the rise of interest in Orientalist literature and art in early modern Europe, and its connections to burgeoning European mercantile, imperial, and colonial pursuits in the Islamic world. In early translations of The Arabian

Nights and the Qur'an as well as the works of Rudyard Kipling, we will also see how the Orient was imagined during an age of empire. Finally, in the third unit of our seminar, we will examine depictions of the Middle East and Islam in the American psyche from the time of the First World War to the present, focusing on films such as *Aladdin*, television programs such as *24*, and news media.

Course Requirements:

The course will meet once a week. Students are expected to attend all course meetings. Reading and participation is mandatory. In addition, the student must watch five of the eight films, submitting a short "film diary" entry (1 page) after viewing each film. The course will have two mandatory projects. The first assignment, due on March 15, will be a close reading of an Orientalist text or work of art chosen from a list of works distributed in class. For the final assignment, the student may either choose to write a 12-15 page research paper, or to create a artistic project (short story, comic book, play, film) with an accompanying text describing how the project relates to the themes of the class, in consultation with the Instructor.

Special Needs:

Students must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (ods@princeton.edu; 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests for academic accommodations for this course need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, and again at least two weeks in advance of any needed accommodations in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. No accommodations will be given without authorization from ODS, or without advance notice.

Academic Integrity:

Students must at all times adhere to the standards of academic integrity and honesty, as expressed in the Princeton Honor Code (<http://www.princeton.edu/honor/>) and elaborated in the booklet *Academic Integrity* (<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity>).

Evaluation:

- Seminar Participation: 25%
- Film Diary: 25% (5% per entry)
- Short writing assignment (5-7 pages): 15%
- Final project (12-15 pages): 35%

All work must be submitted in a timely fashion. Late assignments will be penalized by one degree of a letter grade per day (i.e., a B+ paper turned in two days late will receive a B-) late.

Required Books:

1. Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism* (25th Anniversary Edition). Penguin Books: New York. ISBN: 9780394740676.
2. Ballaster, Ros. 2008. *Fables of the East: Selected Tales, 1662-1785*. Oxford University Press: New York. ISBN: 9780199267354.
3. Melani McAlister. 2005. *Epic Encounters*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520244993.

Coursebooks available in Labyrinth Books. All other readings will be available on the course website.

Course Schedule

Introduction

Week 1 (February 5): Orients of the Mind: Constructions of the Islamic World in Popular Culture

1. Freneau, Philip & Hugh Henry Brackenridge. 1770 (ed. 1975). *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia*. Princeton: Princeton University Library.

Week 2 (February 12): Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Its Responses

1. Said, Edward. 1978. "Introduction" and "The Scope of Orientalism." In *Orientalism*. Vintage Books: New York, 1-112.
2. Lewis, Bernard. 1982. "The Question of Orientalism." *The New York Review of Books* (June 24, 1982): 49-56.
3. Huntington, Samuel. 1993. "The Clash of the Civilizations." *Foreign Policy* 72 (3): 22-49.

Unit 1: The Roots of Orientalism

Week 3 (February 19): The Classical Orient from Herodotus's *Histories* to Zac Snyder's *300* (2007)

1. Herodotus. Selections from *The Landmark Herodotus*. Ed. by Robert Strassler. Pantheon Books: New York.
2. Gruen, Erich. 2011. "Persia in the Greek Perception: Aeschylus and Herodotus." In *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 9-52.
3. Hartog, François. 1988. "A Rhetoric of Otherness." In *The Mirror of Herodotus: the Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 212-259.

Film 1: *300* (2007) dir. Zack Snyder, starring Gerard Butler & Lena Headey.

Week 4 (February 26): The Saracen from the Rise of Islam to the Crusades: Muslims in the Medieval Christian Imagination

1. Guibert de Nogent. 1108 (trans. 1997). *The Deeds of God through the Franks*. Trans. by Robert Levine. Boydell Press: Woodbridge, UK.
2. Quinn, Frederick. 2008. "The Prophet as Antichrist and Arab Lucifer (Early Times to 1600)." In *The Sum of All Heresies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 17-54.
3. Tolan, John. 2002. "Saracens as Pagans" and "Muhammad, Heresiarch." In *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 105-170.

Film 2: *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), dir. Ridley Scott, starring Orlando Bloom & Eva Green.

Week 5 (March 5): From the Dawn of Oriental Studies to the Arabian Nights: Translating Islam in the Age of Enlightenment

1. Ballaster, Ros. 2005. "The Framed Sequence." In *Fables of the East: Selected Tales, 1662-1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 13-100.
2. Ballaster, Ros. 2005. Chapters 1, 2, 6 from *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England, 1662-1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-58, 360-375.

Film 3: *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), dir. Lotte Reiniger.

Unit 2: Orientalism and European Colonialism

Week 6 (March 12): Representing the East: Travellers and Painters in the Middle East and South Asia

1. Ballaster, Ros. 2005. "Travels and History." In *Fables of the East: Selected Tales, 1662-1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 139-204.
2. Said, Edward. 1978. "Orientalist Structures and Restructures." In *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 113-200.
3. Davies, Kristian. 2005. Selections from *The Orientalists: Western Artists in Arabia, the Sahara, Persia, & India*. New York: Laynfaroh.

March 19: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Week 7 (March 26): The Colonial Harem: The East and the European Sexual Imagination

1. Byron, Lord George. 1813. *The Giaour*.
2. Kennedy, Dane. 2005. "The Gypsy" and "The Sexologist" from *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 10-25, 206-247.
3. Alloula, Malek. 1986. "Women from the Outside: Obstacle and Transparency," "Women's Prisons" and "Women's Quarters" In *The Colonial Harem*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 7-36.

Film 4: *Arabian Nights* (1974), dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE MARCH 26

Week 8 (April 2): Lawrence of Arabia

1. Lawrence, T. E. 1922. Excerpts from *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.
2. Caton, Stephen. 1999. "An Anti-Imperialist, Orientalist Epic." In *Lawrence of Arabia: A Film's Anthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 176-199.
3. Said, Edward. 1978. "Orientalism Now." In *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 201-328.

Film 5: *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), dir. David Lean, starring Peter O'Toole.

Unit 3: America and the Islamic World

Week 9 (April 9): Holy Land, Hollywood: The Middle East at Home and on the Silver Screen

1. McAlister, Melani. 2005. Chapters 1-3 of *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media & U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-154.
2. Nadel, Alan. 1997. "The Whole New (Disney) World Order: Aladdin, Atomic Power, and the Muslim Middle East." In *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, edited by Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar. London: I. B. Tauris, 184-203.

Film 6: *Aladdin* (1992) dir. Ron Clements & John Musker, starring Robin Williams.

Week 10 (April 16): Islam, Terrorism, and the New World Order after the 1979 Iranian Revolution

1. McAlister, Melani. 2005. Chapters 4-6, Conclusion of *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media & U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 155-308.

Film 7: *Not Without My Daughter* (1991), dir. Brian Gilbert, starring Sally Field.

Week 11 (April 23): In the Towers' Shadow: Representing the Islamic World after September 11

1. Alsultany, Evelyn. 2012. "Challenging the Terrorist Stereotype," "Evoking Sympathy for the Muslim Woman" and "Regulating Sympathy for the Muslim Man." In *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11*. New York: New York University Press, 18-46, 71-131.
2. Gottschalk, Peter and Gabriel Greenberg. 2007. "Stereotyping Muslims and Establishing the American Norm." In *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 61-88.

Film 8: *Argo* (2012), directed by and starring Ben Affleck.

Week 12 (April 30): Orientalism of the Self: Representing Islam in Contemporary America

1. Thompson, Craig. 2011. Excerpts from *Habibi*. New York: Pantheon Books.
2. Knight, Michael Muhammad. 2009. Excerpts from *Blue-Eyed Devil: A Road Odyssey through Islamic America*. Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.
3. Moezzi, Melody. 2007. Excerpts from *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims*. Little Rock, AR: University of Arkansas Press.
4. Alsultany, Evelyn. 2012. "Selling Muslim American Identity" and "Epilogue." In *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11*. New York: New York University Press, 132-178.

FINAL PAPERS DUE MAY 14