

Department of English
English 695: Orientalism and Occidentalism: Theory & Context

Class Time: Thursday, 9:30-12:00
Professor: Ranen Omer-Sherman
Office: 401 Ashe Building
Office Hours: Monday: 2:00-4:00; Tuesday: 3:00-4:00;
Wednesday: 2:00-4:00; and by appointment
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I was seated on the carpet like an Oriental, to the great delight of Ahmed Vassif...but still more to that of little Mohammed, who kept whispering to me with a tone of voice that went to my soul, and pressing my hands with inconceivable tenderness. I thought myself in a dream—nay, I still think myself so, and expect to wake...Mohammed and I continued drinking each other's looks...with such avidity that we forgot how the time passed.

(William Beckford in *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788*)

Intervening in an interconnected world, one is always, to varying degrees, “inauthentic”: caught between cultures, implicated in others. Because discourse in global power systems is elaborated vis-à-vis, a sense of difference or distinctness can never be located solely in the continuity of a culture or tradition. Identity is conjunctural, not essential.

(Clifford Geertz in *The Predicament of Culture*)

... How quickly would I print (the world delighting)
A Grecian, Syrian, or Assyrian tale;
And sell you, mix'd with western sentimentalism,
Some samples of the finest Orientalism
(Byron)

Course Texts

Available in campus bookstore:

Paul Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky*
Ehud Ben-Ezer, *Sleepwalkers & Other Stories: The Arab in Hebrew Fiction*
Washington Irving, *Tales of the Alhambra*
Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*
Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*
Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Random House)
Alan Richardson ed., *Three Oriental Tales: Frances Sheridan, William Beckford, Lord Byron*
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North: A Novel* (Three Continents Press)

On Reserve in the Richter Library:

Paul Bowles, “A Distant Episode”

Timothy Brennan, “The Illusion of a Future: Said’s *Orientalism* as Traveling Theory”

From John Docker’s *1492: The Poetics of Diaspora*: Chapters 10 and 11,

“The Disaster of 1492 in World History” and “The Disaster of 1492: Europe and India” pgs. 189-226.

Gerber, Haim. “Zionism, Orientalism, and the Palestinians.”(note: this item must be accessed directly from the library’s electronic version of *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIII, no. 1 (Fall 2003): pgs 23-41.

Oliver Goldsmith, “Excerpts from *The Citizen of the World*”(1762)

From Washington Irving’s *The Alhambra: A Series of Tales and Sketches of the Moors and Spaniards* (1832)

R. Kabbani. “ ‘Among the Believers’ ” from R. Kabbani’s *Europe’s Myths of Orient* (Indiana UP 1986)

Bernard Lewis, “Selections from *A Middle East Mosaic*

Avishai Margalit and Ian Buruma, “Occidentalism” (*NY Review of Books*)

Dorit Naaman, “Orientalism as Alterity in Israeli Cinema.” *Cinema Journal* 40.4.

Richard Pells, “American Culture Goes Global, or Does It?” (*Chronicle of Higher Education*)

Tudor Parfitt, “Redemption from the Orient”

Diego Saglia, “William Beckford’s ‘Sparks of orientalism’ and the Material-Discursive Orient of British Romanticism.” *Textual Practice* 16(1), 2002.

Jeffrey L. Schneider. “Secret Sins of the Orient: Creating a (Homo)Textual Context for Reading Byron’s *The Giaour*” (*College English* 65.1)

Edith Wharton, “A Bottle of Perrier”

—. *In Morocco*

A.B. Yehoshua, “Facing the Forests”

Films:

Pépé le Moko (Dir. Julien Duvivier, 1936)

The Letter (Dir. William Wyler, 1940)

The Maltese Falcon (Dir. John Huston. 100 min. Warner Brothers, 1940)

Hamsin (Dir. Daniel Wachsmann, 1983)

Additional Recommended Readings:

Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies A People* (2001)

Video: *Interview with Edward Said*

Matthew Bernstein & Gaylyn Studlar, eds., *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (1997)

Barbara Harlow & Mia Carter (editors) *Imperialism and Orientalism: A Documentary Sourcebook* (1999)

Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (1996)

Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourses and Post-Colonial Theory* (1994)

Meyda Yegenoglu. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998)

Course Calendar

Jan 16

Introduction

Distribution of Research Paper Assignment

Jan 23

Distribution of Peer Critique Assignment

Group presentations: Edward Said and *Orientalism* (Chapters 1 & 2)

Timothy Brennan, "The Illusion of a Future: Said's *Orientalism* as Traveling Theory"

Jan 30

Prospectus due in class

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Chapter 3)

Feb 6

Group presentations: *Three Oriental Tales: Frances Sheridan, William Beckford, Lord Byron*

Diego Saglia, "William Beckford's 'Sparks of orientalism' and the Material-Discursive Orient of British Romanticism"

R. Kabbani. "'Among the Believers' " from *Europe's Myths of Orient*

Jeffrey L. Schneider. "Secret Sins of the Orient: Creating a (Homo)Textual Context for Reading Byron's *The Giaour*"

Feb 13

Group presentations: Washington Irving's *The Alhambra*

Edith Wharton's "A Bottle of Perrier"

Edith Wharton, *In Morocco*

Feb 20

Preliminary draft due to me in class

Group presentations: Paul Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky*

Paul Bowles, "A Distant Episode"

Feb 27

Group presentations: *Pépé le Moko* & *The Letter*: Two cinematic case-studies of Orientalism

Mar 6

Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*

Edward Said and his interlocutors: essays to be assigned.

Reconceived draft due in class

Sign up for appointments with me

March 8-16 : Spring Recess

Mar 20 : Appointments. No class meeting

Mar 27

A draft of your research paper due to your peer in class

In-class Screening of *Hamsin*

Dorit Naaman, "Orientalism as Alterity in Israeli Cinema."

A.B. Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests" and other assigned short stories from *The Arab in Hebrew Fiction* (to be announced in class)

Apr 3

Restructured draft due in class

Israeli Orientalism: Tudor Parfitt, "Redemption from the Orient"

Gerber, Haim. "Zionism, Orientalism, and the Palestinians."

Readings from *The Arab in Hebrew Fiction*

Apr 10

A polished draft of your research paper due to your peer in class

Group Presentations: Avishai Margalit and Ian Buruma, "Occidentalism"

Richard Pells, "American Culture Goes Global, or Does It?"

Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*

Bernard Lewis, "Selections from *A Middle East Mosaic*"

Apr 17

Final version of your research paper due to me

Group Presentations: Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North: A Novel*

If time allows: individual research presentations (these shouldn't exceed fifteen minutes each: see note below)

Apr 24

Last day: Research Presentations (note: the best way to think about preparing for this is sculpting a well-structured and coherent conference paper from your work)

Required Paper: A journal-length essay (20-25 pages), to be submitted in outlined stages (a process described in a separate document). The paper may take the form of an analytical discussion of theoretical articulations of Orientalism, or may employ theory to analyze a novel, film, short stories, play, television program, or other relevant cultural product. In addition to my feedback, you will also work closely with a peer to facilitate the revision of your paper (a detailed clarification of this requirement will be distributed in class). You will present your research paper to the class at the last meeting, April 24th.

Oral Work: I view my role in this course as a facilitator. Hence, early in the semester, a sign up sheet will be distributed for discussion topics. Each of you will be responsible for preparing two discussions and a set of 4-5 discussion questions, e-mailed to the group by 5:00 PM every other Wednesday (at the latest!). When appropriate, handouts should be brought in to help outline your concerns and provoke response. All members of the seminar must contribute passionately to the discussion even when they are not designated discussion leaders for that session. The ultimate success of the seminar depends on your thoughtfulness and willingness to engage the texts as well as each other.

E-Mail: It is your responsibility to "register" your email address with the university so that you will receive any email comments that I will send out to the class (my own email address is included on this syllabus).