

ISLAMIC CULTURES AND THE WEST

The course examines, through the lens of art history and visual culture, the long and checkered history of relations between the Islamic world and the Christian West. The immediate occasion is the rise of Islamophobia in the United States and elsewhere, and the aim of the course is to put this in historical perspective from the emergence of Islam, through the far-reaching implications of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, to the impact of 19th century European colonialism and the seemingly endless tensions that have arisen since the foundation of Israel, the OPEC oil embargo, the Iranian Revolution and the invasion of Iraq.

But the story is more complex. Over the centuries, it includes not only extensive trade and commerce, military and diplomatic alliances, but long phases of creative dialogue, even in time of war: the Crusades and the Christian Spanish Reconquista, for instance, were the backdrop for the *convivencia* (literally, 'living together') of philosophical and scientific debates between Jews, Muslims and Christians in Muslim Spain and Norman Sicily. The history of art and visual culture contains endless examples of cultural dialogue and mutual influence.

European colonialism coincided with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. This turning point produced an entire system of thought—*orientalism*—which scholar Edward Said describes as “a Western style for dominating, structuring and having authority over the Orient.” For us its most important reflections have been a major tendency in 19th century painting, especially in the colonial powers, Britain and France; and post-WWII imagery in fine arts and popular culture, especially in the US, successor to the European powers as the dominant force in the region.

SESSION 1

Islamophobia, *Reel Bad Arabs* and orientalism: From common ground to perennial tension

We start the course in the throes of Hollywood's orientalist Islamophobia (*Reel Bad Arabs*, 2006), then contrast this to the common ground between the three Abrahamic religions, and the origins of Islamic architecture in Christian and Roman building types. This begins our journey through eras of dialogue, cooperation and conflict between Islamic cultures and the West.

SESSION 2

From the Crusades to colonialism: Fantasy and superstition cede to 'scientific' orientalism

We trace Europe's extensive cultural and artistic interaction with Islamic civilizations from the Middle Ages to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, which initiated a new kind of 'scientific' orientalism, designed to provide the knowledge and justification needed to exploit the new European colonial territories necessitated by the industrial revolution.

SESSION 3

Ethnographic realism and the “Imaginary Orient”: Orientalist painting and tourism from Delacroix to Matisse

A related documentary, *Edward Said on Orientalism*, opens us to the fascinating history of orientalist painting from Delacroix to Matisse and beyond. Whether romantic, realist or modernist, this important tendency is linked to the progress of colonization. Meanwhile mass tourism, supported by the picture postcard, becomes a major vehicle of orientalist imagery and ideas.

SESSION 4

**Decolonization and self-representation vs. U.S. hegemony:
International modernism and nationalism in the Islamic world**

Post-WWII and following decolonization, Arab artists—including women—create new visual languages linking a critique of orientalism and patriarchy with national aspirations, indigenous traditions and international modernism. We look at the implications of these developments in the arts of Egypt, Morocco, Iran, Pakistan and diaspora groups in the West.

SESSION 5

**Islamic urbanism—challenging the myths:
Tradition and modernization in Cairo and Fez**

We examine Islamic urbanism as a site of traditional culture, nationalist struggle, international tourism, modernization and gentrification. We counter the orientalist image—timeless and labyrinthine (and ironically now adopted by state tourist agencies)—with one that emphasizes its logical hierarchy of building types, transportation networks and spatially defined functions.

SESSION 6

**Media and messaging in the post-9/11 world:
Roots and ramifications**

Finally, in light of the previous five weeks' discussions, we examine clips from three movies with different positions on Islamic/Western relations: two address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: *Paradise Now* (Palestine, 2005), and *Use art to turn the world inside out* (France/US 2011); third, Clint Eastwood's iconic *American Sniper* (2014), deals with the war in Iraq.

READINGS

Each reading will have the option of very short and longer excerpts. Page numbers in brackets offer additional readings.

SESSION 1

Richard W. Bulliett. *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 9-16 (16-45), 99-102, 135-138, 154-161. www.en.islamic-sources.com/book/the-case-for-islamo-christian-civilization/

Samuel P. Huntington. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.72 #3, Summer 1993. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20045621>

Edward Said. *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*. Lecture transcript, 2001.

<https://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Edward-Said-The-Myth-of-Clash-of-Civilizations-Transcript.pdf>

SESSION 2

Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003 (1979), pp. xxii-xxiv, 1-4, 20-28, 79-88, 346-351. https://www.eafor.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Said_Edward1977_Orientalism.pdf

SESSION 3

Linda Nochlin. "The Imaginary Orient." In *The Politics of Vision: Essays on 19th century art and society*. New York: Harper and Row, 1989, pp. 33-39, 54-59. <https://vdocuments.site/linda-nochin-imaginary-orient.html>

SESSION 4

Melani McAlister. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001, Introduction, pp. 1-12, 32-35, 39-42. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pn6j4>; or available missing

three pages at <https://www.amazon.com/Epic-Encounters-Interests-American-Crossroads/dp/0520244990>

SESSION 5

Stefano Bianca. *Urban Form in the Arab World: past and present*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000, pp. 23-48: “Basic principles of Islam and their social, spatial and artistic implications”; pp. 161-183: “The impact of western models on the contemporary development patterns of historic Muslim cities.” <https://archnet.org/publications/4932>

SESSION 6

Edward Said. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, New York: Vintage, 1997. Introduction.

<https://read.amazon.com/kp/embed?asin=B0138OGOW2&tag=bing08-20&linkCode=kpp&reshareId=YTCE54AVKQY7CZATXXP&reshareChannel=system>

Deepa Kumar. *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*. London: Haymarket Books, 2012, Chapter 3, section 1: “The persistence of orientalist myths.”

Melani McAlister. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001, **Conclusion, pp. 267-276 (266 missing), 280-290, 303-307.** <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pn6j4>; or available missing three pages at <https://www.amazon.com/Epic-Encounters-Interests-American-Crossroads/dp/0520244990>

FURTHER READINGS ON WOMEN IN ISLAMIC CULTURES

Fatima Mernissi. *Beyond the Veil: male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society*. Revised edition. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987 (first English language edition Schenkman publishing, Cambridge, Mass., 1975). Preface: “A note to the western reader,” pp.7-10; Introduction: “Roots of the modern situation,” pp.11-24.

https://books.google.com/books?id=4F-xf-R9vNEC&pg=PA7&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false

Fatima Mernissi. *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam*. Translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (New York: Basic, 1991).

<http://www.guernicus.com/academics/pdf/brmernissi.pdf>

Elizabeth Coleman. “Women, Islam and the New Iraq.” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 2006), pp. 24-38. https://www-jstor-org.jp11net.sfsu.edu/stable/20031840?sid=primo&origin=crossref&seq=15#metadata_info_tab_contents

Maria Holt & Haifaa Jawad. *Women, Islam, and Resistance in the Arab World*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013. Review by Mahmood Monshouri <https://muse-jhu-edu.jp11net.sfsu.edu/article/581687>

VIEWINGS

All films and clips will be discussed in class. *Reel Bad Arabs*, *Edward Said on Orientalism*, *Paradise Now* trailer, *Use art to turn the world inside out*, and *American Sniper* official trailers 1 and 2 will be shown in full. In addition, please try to view movies or clips before class.

SESSION 1

Reel Bad Arabs: how Hollywood vilifies a people. Director Sut Jhally, narrator Jack Shaheen. Media Education Foundation (2006). 50 mins.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ko_N4BcaIPY

SESSION 3

Edward Said on Orientalism. Director-producer Sut Jhally, interviewee Edward Said. Media Education Foundation (1998). 42 mins. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g

SESSION 6

Paradise Now. Director Hany Abu-Assad, producers Bero Beyer et al (Palestine, 2005). Trailer, 3:16 mins. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhvNx2ZwRvY>

Use art to turn the world inside out. J.R. TED Talk. (France/US 2011). 24 mins.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PAy1zBtTbw>

American Sniper. Director Clint Eastwood, producers Clint Eastwood, Bradley Cooper et al, writer Jason Hall (2014) <https://123movies.al/movie/american-sniper-2014/>

American Sniper: please watch Official Trailers Nos. 1 and 2.

Simon Kenrick

March 2019

[watch?v=Ko_N4BcaIPY](#)

Simon Kenrick
March 2019