

Media and the Middle East
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Fall 2007

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Description

Since the event of 9/11, there has been increased interest in how the West perceives the Middle East and world of Islam. This course takes the view articulated by many scholars that the West's perceptions of the Middle East have deteriorated since 2001. Yet, to fully understand contemporary rhetoric, it is important to examine the historical encounter between the West and the world of Islam, which spans fourteen centuries. The first part of this course will provide an overview of this historic encounter, paying attention to various discourses that have emerged at key moments.

In the second part of the course, we will examine the history of colonialism in the last few centuries and the role of the British and French, and later US, empires in crafting particular images of the Middle East. While British and French imperialism is dealt with, the main emphasis will be on US foreign policy since World War Two, and the ways in which the news and popular entertainment reflect or challenge larger political agendas. We will look at both the news media (print, radio and television) as well as popular entertainment (films and television shows).

Course Goals and Outcome

1. Students will have a more thorough understanding of the history of the Middle East, and the relationship between the West and the world of Islam. This will enable you to think more critically about US foreign policy and media representations.
2. Students will learn how to think critically about stereotypes as well as methods of story telling that marginalize those we consider to be "other."

Reading Material

Goldschmidt and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 8th edition, Westview Press, 2006.

Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, Pantheon Books, 1981.

Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, IB Tauris Publishers, 2002.

All the remaining readings are available on-line at the library web site. Please be sure to download the articles well in advance of when they will be discussed in class.

Class Format

Classes will consist of a variety of the following methods:

*Lectures

*Small and large group discussions

*Video presentations of news segments and educational videos

*Presentations by students

Requirements

The following are the assignments upon which your grade will be determined.

1. Class participation and attendance—20%

Participation: This class will be conducted like a seminar. I will lecture at the beginning of class and will explain complex theories and concepts; I will also bring in extra materials to help you contextualize the readings. After this you will be asked to discuss various questions related to the articles you have read for class or the videos that you will watch. You will do this both in small groups and as a class. Your participation in class is therefore *mandatory*. In order to participate, you *must come to class having done the readings for the day*. As part of your participation grade, you will be required to bring in examples from the media that demonstrate some aspect of the concepts you will learn in this class. You will present both the concept and how your article, picture, movie, trailer or comic etc. demonstrates that concept (5%).

Attendance: You will be required to attend classes regularly. You are allowed to miss 2 classes beyond which you will be penalized. Finally, I expect you to come to class on time. **Persistent lateness will result in penalties to your grade.**

Indigenous

2. Exams—50%

There will be a mid term and a final exam in this class

3. Term paper and presentation—30%

You will select one or several media products (films, tv show, magazine articles, newspaper articles etc.) and analyze its representation of the Middle East. You will present your research in class (10%) and then write an 8-10 page term paper (20%).

Plagiarism: Except for collaborative/group assignments all work a student submits must be his/her own independent effort. Students must cite properly all outside sources consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university policy

on Academic Integrity (see the website for the Teaching Excellence Center). Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE *

The Birth of Islam and Early Encounters with the West

- 09/10: Introduction
Christian Christiansen, "Islam and the Media"
- 09/17: Goldschmidt and Davidson, A Concise History of the Middle East, Chapters 3,4,5,6
Screening: Crusades, Part 1
- 09/24: Goldschmidt and Davidson, A Concise History of the Middle East, Chapter 7,8,
Screening: Crusades, Part 2
- 10/01: Maxime Rodinson, Europe and the Mystique of Islam, pp. 3- 37
Zachary Lockman, "In the Beginning"
Screening: An Islamic History of Europe
available at <http://blog.wyzemoro.com/documentary-film-an-islamic-history-of-europe/>

The Ottomans, Orientalism, and Colonization

- 10/08: Goldschmidt and Davidson, A Concise History of the Middle East, Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12
- 10/15: Maxime Rodinson, Europe and the Mystique of Islam, pp. 37-82
Zachary Lockman, "Orientalism and Empire"
Screening: Orientalism

10/23: Mid Term Exam

The United States and the Middle East

- 10/29: *The Cold War, Arab Nationalism, US Policy*
Gilbert Achcar, "US Imperial Strategy in the Middle East"
Paul D'Amato, "US Intervention in the Middle East"
- 11/05: *The US, Israel, and Palestine*
Lance Selfa, "Israel: The US Watchdog"
Annie Zirin, "The Hidden History of Zionism"
Screening: Palestine video
- 11/12: *The Rise of Political Islam*
Stephen Zunes, "The Rise of Extremist Islamist Movements"
Edward Said, Covering Islam, Chapter One (1 and 11)

11/19: *Framing Islam and the Middle East*
Edward Said, Covering Islam, Chapter Two
Screening: Reel Bad Arabs

11/26: *9/11 and the "War on terror"*
Robert McChesney, "Remembering September 11 and the Structural Limitations
of US Journalism"
Karim H. Karim, "Making Sense of the "Islamic Peril""
Screening: Hijacking Catastrophe

12/03: *Women and Islam*
Sharon Smith, "Women and Islam"
Kumar and Stabile, "Unveiling Imperialism"
Screening: Afghanistan Unveiled

12/10: Term paper Presentations and Final Exam

12/15: Term paper due in my mailbox (3rd Floor SCILS building)

* The schedule is subject to change and students are required to keep up with these changes.