

4.621

ORIENTALISM AND REPRESENTATION

F A L L 2 0 0 9

This is a seminar on the politics of knowledge, that is, how political and ideological attitudes, concerns, and biases inform – and sometimes dictate – the representation, codification and production of knowledge. It uses Orientalism as its example, which it argues is a discursive classification, i.e., one that is historically and culturally constructed. Adopting a flexible historical framework, the seminar explores selected cases of cultural encounters between Europe and the "Orient" from Antiquity to the present. Its method is to critically review texts, illustrations, architectural projects, and institutional traditions, which have been influential and/or paradigmatic in shaping the concepts and images of the "Orient" over time. They include medieval sources, both European and Islamic, treatises by Orientalist scholars and travelers of the post-Enlightenment age, and, more recently, by academicians, artists, and architects working on the Islamic world (what was traditionally called the Orient). The seminar also considers contemporary critical issues, such as the "clash of civilizations," identity, exile, multiculturalism, and hybridity that are impacting the ways we see and



DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

TIME:	Monday 2-5
ROOM:	5-216
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PREREQUISITE:	Consent of instructor

Open to graduate and advanced undergraduate students

represent the Islamic world today. The aim is to gain a historically grounded awareness of the complexities of cultural identities, which are always contesting and sometimes subverting the representations that claim to depict and define them. The readings are an important component of the class; they will provide the focus of class discussion. You must read all the assigned readings in addition to participating in class discussion. Further readings

from books and articles will be on the stellar site.(3000-4000 words) to be presented in class and then submitted at the end of the course. Topics are limited to in-depth studies of texts and/or art or architectural examples. They can either be chosen from the enclosed list or should be decided in consultation with the instructor by the end of the 3rd week of the semester. Students should submit a one-page abstract with a preliminary bibliography by the end of week 4.