

4.621

ORIENTALISM & REPRESENTATION



This is a seminar that examines how political, historical, and ideological attitudes and biases inform — and sometimes dictate — the representation, codification and production of knowledge. It uses Orientalism as its focus, which it maintains 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 the “West” and the “Orient” from Antiquity to the present and critically reviews texts, art, architecture, and institutions, which have been influential and/or paradigmatic in shaping the concepts and images of the “Orient” over time. These include medieval and Enlightenment-age sources as well as more recent works by scholars, artists, and architects dealing with the Islamic world.

The seminar also considers contemporary critical issues, such as the “clash of civilizations,” identity, exile, multiculturalism, and hybridity that impact how we see and 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.

FALL 2013

TIME: Tuesday 2-5
ROOM: 5-216
INSTRUCTOR: Nasser Rabbat
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REQUIRED TEXTS:

Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
 Thierry Hentsch, *Imagining the Middle East* New York, 1992.

SUGGESTED TEXTS:

Ian Richard Netton, ed. *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*. London: Routledge, 2013.
 Mohammad R. Salama, *Islam, Orientalism and Intellectual History: Modernity and the Politics of*

Exclusion since Ibn Khaldun. London: I B Tauris, 2011.

The readings are an important component of the class. Students must read all the assigned texts and participate in class discussion. Further readings from books and articles will be on a stellar site.

Consent of instructor required
Open to graduate and advanced undergraduate students