

The University of Texas at Austin – Department of Anthropology

Spring 2012

ANT 391 • *Gender and Masculinities in the Middle East*

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Office Hours: T 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. or by appointment

Unique #: 31500 Time: Monday 3:00 PM-6:00 PM Location: SAC 4.120

The subject matter of this graduate seminar is the analysis of gender and masculinities in the Middle East. While the methodological focus of the class will be an anthropological one, an interdisciplinary attention will be given to such concepts as sexuality, power, and desire. The readings on which the seminar is based focus mostly on Arab and Iranian culture and include writings in anthropology, history, and fictional literature. While the course does not provide an inclusive overview over the extensive body of work on the subject of gender and masculinities, it attempts to communicate important theoretical concepts and understandings that are at the forefront of current debates within the social sciences. This includes the close reading of newly published ethnographies on Middle Eastern societies, but also historical works on pre-modern homoeroticism, as well as novels and blogs written over the last couple of years on the subject of sexuality, authority, and violence in the region. Next to examining some of the major theoretical discussions in anthropology and gender/queer studies, the seminar will consider critically how the issues raised in class can be contextualized in terms of differing understandings of what constitutes gender and gender identities in the contemporary world.

Required Texts: (in alphabetical order)

- Abdel Aal, Ghada (2010) *I Want to Get Married! One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights*, University of Texas Press.
- Alsanea, Rajaa (2008) *Girls of Riyadh*, Penguin (Non-Classics).
- Booth, Marilyn, ed. (2011) *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Duke University Press.
- El-Rouayheb, Khaled (2005) *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, University of Chicago Press.
- Jacob, Wilson C. (2011) *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940*, Duke University Press.

- Kanaaneh, Rhoda Ann (2009) *Surrounded: Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military*, Stanford University Press.

- Khoury, Elias (2008) *Yalo*, Archipelago Books.

- Limbert, Mandana E. (2010) *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory, and Social Life in an Omani Town*, Stanford University Press.

- Mahdavi, Pardis (2011) *Gridlock: Labor, Migration, and Human Trafficking in Dubai*, Stanford University Press.

- Motlagh, Amy (2011) *Burying the Beloved: Marriage, Realism, and Reform in Modern Iran*, Stanford University Press.

- Talebi, Shahla (2011) *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran*, Stanford University Press.

Course Requirements for Registered Graduate Students:

The class relies on the intellectual commitment and active participation of all students. It will be run primarily as discussions within a seminar format. In order for the course to be effective, all students must have the reading assignments completed and ready for in-depth discussion for each class. Regular attendance is required. Attendance in class, however, does not constitute participation. You must come to class having carefully read all materials and be prepared to discuss, question, and argue about issues raised in the readings. It will be beneficial for you to take excerpts/notes on any material that you find enlightening, controversial, or objectionable. You should also take notes in class on themes, key terms, and debates we tackle. These note-taking strategies will be crucial when you write your research/term paper. In short:

I. Do all assigned readings (while taking excerpts/notes!) by the date indicated on the syllabus and participate actively in the general class discussion.

II. Regular two 15-minute presentations on the weekly readings to be assigned to students. They are intended to launch the general seminar discussions. The goal of the 15 minutes oral presentations is two-fold: one, identify and explain the argument(s) that the author is making, and two, provide your own take on that argument. Begin with a short summary of the work and then focus on the author's argument(s). Try to be concise in all parts of your analysis. An outline can help to remain focused on your analysis and avoid summary or irrelevant description. Following is a sample outline for your assignment:

1. Introduction (includes the author's and your argument[s]).
2. Short summary of the text (focus on one or two central aspects of the work).
3. Development and substantiation of your critique based on a set of key questions to be submitted to the class for wider discussion.

III. Two to three-page description of the research/term paper (“Project Proposal”) to be shared in class with peers for feedback on **Monday, March 19th**. An updated version will be submitted to me on **Monday, March 26th**.

IV. 10-minute presentations on the respective final research project during the two last meetings of the semester.

V. 15 to 20-page (no more no less!) term paper on any relevant topic dealing with the study of gender and masculinities in the Middle East due on **Friday, May 4th**. Focused topics that raise a central research issue or query are best. Avoid general or overview topics. You **must** include/discuss at least 25% of the previously assigned readings in your paper.

The writing assignment is designed to develop and enhance your critical reading, analytical, and writing skills. Evaluation criteria include: critical and integrative analysis of texts, clarity of thought, ability to synthesize readings and, occasionally, class discussions into your own argument, and ability to formulate a theoretical grounding for it.

Grading Procedure:

- Term paper: 70%.
- General participation and presentations of weekly readings: 20%.
- Presentations of own work (in process as well as final): 10%.

Please note that the instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives.

Reading Schedule: (this schedule is tentative and subject to possible revision)

Week 1: Gender and Masculinity Studies in the Middle East

- Monday, January 23rd Introduction to the seminar

Week 2: Space, Gender, and the Body 1

- Monday, January 30th - “I Normative Images and Shifting Spaces” and “II Rooms and Thresholds: Harems as Spaces, Socialities, and Law” in Booth, Marilyn, ed. (2011) *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Duke University Press, pp. 21-238.

Week 3: Space, Gender, and the Body 2

- Monday, February 6th - “III Harems Envisioned” in Booth, Marilyn, ed. (2011) *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Duke University Press, pp. 239-373.

Week 4: Fictional Writings: The “Harem” in Contemporary Saudi Arabia

- Monday, February 13th - Alsanea, Rajaa (2008) *Girls of Riyadh*, Penguin (Non-Classics).

Week 5: The Female Blogosphere in Egypt

- Monday, February 20th - Abdel Aal, Ghada (2010) *I Want to Get Married! One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights*, University of Texas Press.

Week 6: Law, Literature, and Women’s Rights in Modern Iran

- Monday, February 27th - Motlagh, Amy (2011) *Burying the Beloved: Marriage, Realism, and Reform in Modern Iran*, Stanford University Press.

Week 7: Memoir and Meditation on Political Imprisonment in Iran

- Monday, March 5th - Talebi, Shahla (2011) *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran*, Stanford University Press.

Week 8: **Spring Break**

- Monday, March 12th **No Class!**

Week 9: Migration and Sex Work in Dubai

- Monday, March 19th - Mahdavi, Pardis (2011) *Gridlock: Labor, Migration, and Human Trafficking in Dubai*, Stanford University Press.
Two to three-Page Term Paper “Project Proposal” to be shared with peers in class.

Week 10: Women’s Sociality Between Political Economy and Transformations of Modernity in Oman.

- Monday, March 26th - Limbert, Mandana E. (2010) *In the Time of Oil: Piety, Memory, and Social Life in an Omani Town*, Stanford University Press.
Updated two to three-Page Term Paper “Project Proposal” to be submitted to the instructor.

Week 11: Masculinity and the Choice to Fight on the “Wrong Side” of the War

- Monday, April 2nd - Kanaaneh, Rhoda Ann (2009) *Surrounded: Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military*, Stanford University Press.

Week 12: Fictional Writings: Masculinity, Violence, and Identity in Lebanon

- Monday, April 9th - Khoury, Elias (2008) *Yalo*, Archipelago Books.

Week 13: Gender and (Homo)sexuality Before the Emergence of a Category

- Monday, April 16th - El-Rouayheb, Khaled (2005) *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, University of Chicago Press.

Week 14: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Masculinity in Egypt 1

- Monday, April 23rd - Introduction and Chapters One to Four in Jacob, Wilson C. (2011) *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940*, Duke University Press, pp. 1-124.

Week 15: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Masculinity in Egypt 2

- Monday, April 30th - Chapters Five to Eight in Jacob, Wilson C. (2011) *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940*, Duke University Press, pp. 125-262.

Final Papers due as an email attachment on Friday, May 4th