

## Women in the Middle East

Instructor: Anne Marie Butler  
Office: Clemens 704  
Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30pm; W 9:30-11am  
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University at Buffalo Spring 2014  
GGs 234/AS 394 Undergraduate, 3 Credits  
Date/Time MWF 11-11:50  
Final Exam: Monday 5/12 11:45am-2:45pm  
Room Location: CFA 144

### Course Description:

This seminar breaks down the boundaries constructed through the rhetoric of “us” versus “them” by studying questions of displacement, feminism, Orientalism, religion, and identity. We will look at women and/in the Middle East within the larger context of post-independence and globalization politics, and we will look at texts that take up themes of women and gender in the wake of colonialism and political conflict. We will also examine these texts in relation to contemporary, mainstream North American thought, problematizing especially such themes as “the veiled woman,” and “the chaste virgin,” and “the terrorist.”

### Course Materials

Required texts: This course requires two printed items.

Book: *Another World is Possible: Conversations in a Time of Terror*, Glick, Jee, et al. (ISBN 0966646967). Out of print. Students may order a used copy if they wish and chapters will be posted on UBlerns.

Course Reader: Available at Queen City Imaging (3100 Main St, 716-832-8100).

Students should obtain these materials by the start of the second week of classes. (Articles for the first week will be posted on UBlerns).

### About the Instructor

Anne Marie Butler is a PhD student in the Global Gender Studies program, in the Transnational Studies Department at the University at Buffalo. She received her B.A. from Scripps College and her M.A. from New York University. Her academic specializations are Middle Eastern/North African Studies, diaspora studies, post-colonial literature, critical race and gender theories, and visual studies. Anne Marie Butler’s teaching philosophy is heavily grounded in the importance of interconnectedness between disciplines and historical contexts, and in the value of discussion-based learning.

### Assessment and Grading

#### Lexicon and Blog Posts

20% of final grade: Each student must keep a cumulative lexicon of previously unknown terms throughout the semester. As a new term or concept is encountered, the student should record and define it in the lexicon. The portion of the lexicon edited during that week should be brought to class **printed** on Fridays. It will be collected weekly. Additionally, each student is required to submit a bi-weekly blog post (min. 250 words). Students will be broken into groups to post on UBlerns Discussion Forum **by Thursday 8pm** on the day before Friday class. The students responsible for posting are expected to help lead discussion on that Friday and must pose at least one question in their blog post for discussion. The post should be a reflection/brief analysis of the readings/viewings, not a summary. It should contain 1 or 2 questions related to the material for that day and/or that week as a whole. The class should read the new blog posts

in advance of the class meeting.

### **Attendance and Classroom Participation**

20% of final grade: This is a discussion-based class, and as such, attendance and **participation in discussion** is mandatory. You **MUST** contribute to discussion in order to receive an A in this class. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a 30% drop in the participation grade.

Whenever possible, absences must be communicated in advance to the instructor to be excused. Students must produce appropriate documentation for excused absences. Students should come to class prepared for discussion, having read and viewed the assigned materials. **The instructor will conduct random pop quizzes (1-2 questions) to ensure that the assignments are being completed.** The quizzes can raise or lower your participation grade at the end of the semester by as much as 5%. Quizzes will be given promptly at the beginning of class. If you are late you receive a 0 on the quiz.

#### *Professionalism in the Classroom:*

College is not only a time for you to prepare yourself academically for a career; it is also a time when you must begin preparing yourself to be a professional. This means behaving in a professional manner and conducting yourself accordingly in the classroom. Conducting yourself in a professional manner in the classroom includes acting with respect towards your instructor and your peers, not using language unbecoming of a professional setting, and making statements or asking questions in a positive, friendly and respectful manner. Students must adhere to UB's harassment and discrimination policy. Harassment and/or discrimination will not be tolerated in this classroom.

### **Student Presentation and Accompanying Paper**

20% of final grade: Each student must give a 10 minute in-class presentation on women and/in the country of her choice; the specification of the topic beyond this is up to the student (could be a specific woman leader, artist, musician, person in the news, news item of interest to/about women, current political climate as it relates to women, etc). The presentation should include visual aids and will be accompanied by a 5-7 page formal research paper, to be turned in to the instructor on the day that the student presents. Students should seek the advice of the instructor for guidance or if any questions arise.

### **Map Quiz, Midterm Quiz and Final Exam**

40% of final grade: 1. Map quiz: 10% of final grade. The map quiz asks students to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge about the geography of the MENA region. 2. The midterm quiz will be worth 15% of the final grade. It will cover material from the first half of the semester and will be comprised mainly of short answer/multiple choice questions. 3. The final exam will be worth 15% of the final grade. It will be a cumulative, written test, made up of short answer and essay questions. It will ask the student to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the materials examined.

**Option for juniors and seniors:** If any juniors or seniors are interested in preparing a writing sample and presentation for grad school application or for individual development, a 15-20 page paper and 20 minute presentation will be substituted for the following required components: 10 minute presentation and 5 page paper, and midterm and final exams, making this component worth 50% of the overall grade. This route requires multiple assignments such as a formal paper proposal, outline, drafts, and final paper and presentation. Students must commit to this route by the beginning of the second week of class.

**Extra Credit**

Extra participation credit will be offered occasionally for attendance at GGS and related events. Extra course credit is offered through participation in the reading group (see end of syllabus regarding suggested reading/viewing).

**Grading Scale**

A 95-100 A- 90-94 B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 C 73-76 C- 70-72 D+ 67-69 D 63-66 D- 60-62 F 0-59

**How to read the readings:** Read each assigned reading carefully, noticing several things: the structure of the text, the genre of the text, the year the text was published, the author of the text, and the main themes of the text. Write down a brief summary of the text that includes the author's main points. Then go back through and determine which specific details of the text spoke to you, and which you would like to discuss more in class. Record in your lexicon as you read.

**How to view the AV materials:** It is extremely important that you complete the viewing assignments as you would the reading assignments: carefully and attentively. You should take notes with keywords, key people, and key concepts, filling in information and relating it to the other assignments for the week. Look for specific examples to relate to the themes of the course and your lexicon.

**Schedule****Week 1: Orienting Orientalism**

1/27: Introduction: What is the Middle East?

1/28: 1). "Introduction" from *Orientalism*, Edward Said

1/31: 1). Chapter 1: "The Orient as Stereotype and Phantasm," from *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula (1986)  
2). Assia Djebar, "Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound," from *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment*

**Week 2: Transnational and Arab Feminist Theory**

2/3: Mini-Lecture: Transnational/Post-Colonial/Arab Feminisms

1). "Decolonizing Culture: Beyond Orientalist and Anti-Orientalist Feminisms," by Nadine Naber, from *Arab and Arab-American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, Rabab Abdulhad, Evelyn Alsultany, Nadine Naber eds.

2/5: 1). "Under Western Eyes" from *Feminism Without Borders*, Chandra T. Mohanty

2/7: Group A blog due

1). "The Pity Committee and the Careful Reader," by Mohja Kahf, from Abdulhadi/Alsultany/Naber

2). "Tear off your Western Veil!" Azizah Al-Hibri, from *Food for Our Grandmothers*

**Week 3: Transnational and Arab Feminist Theory part 2**

2/10: 1). "Transnationalism, Feminism, and Fundamentalism," from *Between Woman and Nation*, Moallem, Mino

2/12: 1). "Feminisms in Egypt," from *Women, Islamisms, and the State*, Azza Karam

2/14: Group B blog due

- 1). "Afghan Women and Transnational Feminism," Moghadam, V. From "Middle East Women's Studies Review"

#### **Week 4: Modern Media Representation**

2/17: In class: Map Quiz, 30 minutes

Mini-Lecture: Arab Women in Western Media

2/19: 1). *Reel Bad Arabs* (Documentary, Shaheen) (available on YouTube)

- 2). "The Arab Woman in US Popular Culture" Marsha Hamilton, from *Food for Our Grandmothers*

2/21: Group A blog due

- 1). "Disorienting Cleopatra" from *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, Ella Shohat

#### **Week 5: Colonialism and Women in MENA**

2/24: Lecture: A brief "Discourse on Colonialism" and a longer history of colonialism

- 1). *Another World is Possible* (hereafter abbreviated "Glick et al"): Introduction

2/26: 1). Introduction, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat/Stam

2/28: Midterm Quiz

#### **Week 6: Colonialism and Women in MENA part 2**

Student Presentations Begin

3/3: 1). Glick et al, Chapter 1: Not in my Name

- 2). Abu-Lughod "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"

3/5: 1). Glick et al. Chapter 2: Some that Matter

- 2). "Representing Biometrics" Shoshana Magnet

3/7: Group B blog due

- 1). "Algeria Unveiled," Frantz Fanon
- 2). *The Battle of Algiers* (film, 1966) (available on YouTube)

#### **Week 7: Identity and Difference**

3/10: Mini-Lecture: Arab Identities

- 1). "Not you/Like you: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference," Minh-ha, T. From *Inscriptions*.

3/12: 1). Glick et al, Chapter 3: Blowback

- 2). Nawal El Saadawi "Why Keep Asking Me About My Identity?" from *The Nawal el Saadawi Reader*.

3/14: Group A blog due

- 1). Glick et al, Chapter 4 Unnecessary Evils
- 2). "Boundaries: Arab/American" Majaj, from *Food for our Grandmothers*

#### **Week 8**

3/17-3/21: No Class, Spring Break

#### **Week 9: Religion**

3/24: Mini-Lecture: Islam and/in the Arab World

- 1). Glick et al- Chapter 5: Collateral Damages
- 2). Judith Butler, "The Charge of Anti-Semitism" from *Precarious Life*

3/26: 1). "Islamic Feminism: Perils and Promises," Tohidi, Nayereh.

3/28: Group B blog due

- 1). "Fundamentalism: Old Friend, New Enemy," from *The Nawal El-Saadawi Reader*

### **Week 10: The Veil and the Harem, part 1**

3/31: Mini-Lecture: The Veil, to Veil, Veiling

- 1). Preface to *Veil*, Reina Lewis
- 2). "Visibility, Violence, and Voice?" Allison Donell

4/2: 1). Ahmed, Leila. "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem"

4/4: Group A blog due

- 1). Ch 9: "Oriental Sapphism," from *The Colonial Harem*
- 2). Ch 10: "Images of a Suberoticism," from *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula (1986)

### **Week 11: The Veil and the Harem, part 2**

4/7: 1). "Behind the Veil," Entekhabi-Fard, C. From *Mother Jones*.

- 2). "Quandaries of Representation" by Mona El-Ghobashy from Abdulhadi/Alsultany/Naber

4/9: 1). Ch. 5 "Women's Veil and Unveil" from *Women with Moustaches and Men without Beards*, Afsaneh Najmabadi

4/11: Group B blog due

- 1). Ch 6: "Figures of the Harem" from *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula (1986)
- 2). "Disrupting the Odalisque," Essaydi

### **Week 12: Sexuality**

4/14: Mini-Lecture:

- 1). "Sexuality and Sexual Politics: Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary women in the Middle East," Accad, Evelyne from *Sexuality and War*

4/16: 1). "Power and Sexuality in the Middle East," Bruce Dunne

4/18: Group A blog due

- 1). "Epilogue" from *Women with Moustaches and Men without Beards*, Afsaneh Najmabadi

### **Week 13: The Nation and Revolution**

4/21: Mini-Lecture: Nation and Nationalism in the Arab World

- 1). "The Demobilization of a Palestinian Women's Movement: From Empowered Active Militants to Powerless and Stateless 'Citizens,'" Islah Jad, from *Women's Movements in the Global Era*

4/23: 1). "Women's Activism in the Middle East: A Historical Perspective," Graham-Brown, Sarah, from *Women and Power in the Middle East*

4/25: Group B blog due

- 1). Ch. 3 "Nationalisms, Gender, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" from *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Simona Sharoni.

### **Week 14 The Nation and Revolution part 2**

4/28: 1). "The Women's Movement and Feminism in Iran: A Global Perspective," Nayereh Tohidi, from *Women's Movements in the Global Era*

4/30: Long Student Presentations and/or reading TBA

- 1). Reading due: Glick et al- Chapter 6: Where do we go from here?

5/2: Long Student Presentations and/or reading TBA

**Week 15:****5/12: Final Exam: 11:45am-2:45pm****Student Responsibilities**

1. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor regarding absences, problems with assignments, or any other issues that may affect the student's full participation in the course. Communication by email or in person during office hours or scheduled appointments is encouraged, both to raise issues or concerns, but also to discuss course work or class materials.
2. It is the student's responsibility to comply with all course assignments and due dates. Assignments not meeting the requirements or due date are graded (or not) with penalties.
3. If the student finds that she or he is unable to meet the requirements of the course, it is the student's responsibility to drop or resign the class.
4. It is the student's responsibility to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy. The instructor requests that the student visits the Academic Integrity Policy website for UB (<http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.shtml>) and hereby indicates that the student has been informed of all potential repercussions of academic dishonesty.
5. It is the student's responsibility to ASK QUESTIONS if anything in the syllabus, class discussion, assignments, or course material is unclear at any time.

**Suggested Cultural Reading/Viewing***Woman at Point Zero*, Lit, El Saadawi (Egypt)*In Search of Fatima*, Lit, Karmi (Palestine)*The May Lady*, Film (Iran)*Circumstance*, Film (Iran)*Women Without Men*, Parispur, Lit, or Neshat, Film (Iran)*Silent Waters*, Film (Pakistan)*Unveiled (Fremde Haute)*, Maccarone, Film (Iran/Germany)*Silences of the Palace*, Film, Moufida Tlatli*Pillars of Salt*, Lit, Faqir*Arranged*, Film, Schaefer/Crespo*The Proof of the Honey*, Lit, Al Neimi*A Border Passage: From Cairo to America- A Woman's Story*, Lit, Ahmed

A reading group will meet bi-weekly to discuss texts and films selected from the list above, and/or others. To participate for extra credit, students must sign on to a mailing list, and come prepared to the meetings having read/viewed the materials, ready to participate in discussion. Students will receive 2 points added to their overall grade for each meeting they attend *and contribute* to the discussion. Extra credit will not be offered for reading group during the last 3 weeks of class of the semester.