GENDER AND ISLAM

POLS384 AND WS384
TUESDAY AND THURSDAY, 3:00PM TO 4:15PM
KUYKENDALL HALL, ROOM 302

COURSE WEBSITE: POLS384.BLOGSPOT.COM

Instructor: Nicole Grove
Office Hours Tuesday 1:00pm to 2:45pm

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About the Course

DESCRIPTION

In this course we will be using a range of media including texts, films, music videos, and comic books to explore the dynamic politics and cultures of gender and sexuality in majority Muslim countries with an emphasis on the Arab world. The first part of the class will introduce the theme of Orientalism as well as a brief overview of the colonial and imperial history of the Middle East. We will then examine some of the common discursive frames that shape American and European imaginings of Islam and gender including ‘the harem’, veiling, the trope of sexual repression, and gendered spatial segregation, and how they have been used to justify the moral crusades underpinning Western military and humanitarian interventions in the region. The section half of the course will focus more broadly on how gendered and sexual imaginings of Islam travel within the Arab world including Muslim feminist readings of the Islamic revival, gender and nationalism, Saudi women’s transgressions in public and political spaces, the politics of sexual harassment in Egypt, and LGBT movements in the Middle East.

BOOKS AND READINGS

There is one required book for this course: Lila Abu-Lughod’s *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* which is available for purchase on Amazon.com (not at the UH bookstore). Please order this book at the start of the course as we will begin discussing it early on and throughout the semester. All other reading materials are available online or will be made accessible on the course website (pols384.blogspot.com).

*Recommended readings are available for download on the course website. These optional readings are meant to give you a deeper understanding of the issues discussed, and to provide you with a wider range of sources to explore topics you’d like more information about.

PRESENTATION ON A READING

This presentation should be 15-20 minutes long. A presentation schedule will be distributed on August 28th and presentations will begin the second week of class. Students will select a reading from the course syllabus and present on the date the reading is assigned. You must speak with the instructor prior to the presentation to go over content and oral present-
ing of the material so as to guarantee effectiveness and relative ease in conveying main ideas.

RESPONSE PAPERS
Students will write 3 five-page response papers on select course readings to be determined. The response papers should discuss the major themes in each text as well as the students own informed, and clearly articulated thoughts on and/or critique of the reading. This paper will be due on the date indicated on the syllabus schedule. NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED, however…

**A note on response papers: All students will be allowed one rewrite of each response paper if they are unhappy with their grade. If you choose to rewrite your paper, please make sure you understand why you received the grade you did and what you should do in terms of edits. If you have questions, please email me. Rewrites are due exactly ONE WEEK from the day papers are returned and must be submitted IN CLASS attached to the original paper. Rewrites turned in later than this will not be considered for a new grade. The rewrite grade is the final grade for the paper, no exceptions.

GRADING
*One presentation on a reading, 10 points
*Reading response papers (6 points each), 18 points
*Class Participation, 15 points
*Midterm Exam, 20 points
*Final Exam, 25 points
*Attendance, 12 points

MIDTERM and FINAL EXAMS
These exams will be closed book and administered in class. Students will receive a set of sample questions that will be similar but not identical to the actual questions two weeks prior to the exams. The exams will have two sections: 1) a section requiring a two to three sentence definition or description of a series of terms; and 2) three questions requiring shorter essay-length responses. Review sessions will be
held on the Tuesday prior to the exams. Please take advantage of these sessions and come to class prepared with questions, requests for points of clarification etc.

CLASS PARTICIPATION
Questions and comments about course material or topics discussed in class allow you to think critically and on your feet. Class participation may also be regarded as an indirect way to critique student presentations and encourage group interaction. Please come to class having done the assigned reading and be prepared to discuss it with your colleagues!

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is critical to class participation. Late arrival to class beyond 10 minutes will be considered the same as being absent. However you would do well to still attend class to keep up with the discussion of course material. One letter grade will be deducted from your final grade if you have more than FOUR unexcused absences.

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CLASS SCHEDULE
Week 1 – Introduction to the Course and Discussion of Orientalism

Week 2 – Orientalism, Feminist Studies and Empire
R Sept 4 – S. Mahmood: Gender, Islam and Empire. and selections from Abu-Lughod, Ch. 3 “Authorizing Moral Crusades” pp. 81-112.

Week 3 – The Colonial Harem
T Sept 9 – Selections from Alloula’s ‘The Colonial Harem’
R Sept 11 – Selections from I. Grewal’ Home and Harem” Nation, Gender Empire and the Cultures of Travel”

Week 4 – The Extant Harem
T Sept 16: Selections from J. Massad, “Desiring Arabs”
R Sept 18 -Dubrofsky, “The Bachelor: Whiteness in the Harem”
Week 5 – The Veil

Week 6 – The Veil cont.
T Sept 30: Lyon and Spini, “Unveiling the Headscarf Debate”

Week 6 - Women and War
T Oct 7– Read George W. Bush statement on women and Afghanistan. Also, C Hirschkind and S. Mahmood: Feminism, the Taliban, and politics of counter-insurgency. In class discussion and selections from Film “Beneath the Veil.”

Week 7 – Iraq and US ‘Sexual Exceptionalism’

Week 8 – Midterm
T Oct 21 – Midterm Review
R Oct 23 – Midterm Exam

Week 9 – Persepolis
T Oct 28 – Watch film in class
R Oct 29 – Discussion of *Persepolis*

Week 10 - Women and the Politics of Islamic Reformation
R Nov 6: Mahmood, cont.

Week 11 – Religious Freedom and Geopolitics
T Nov 11 - Saba Mahmood: “Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East”.
See also [http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/03/05/religious-freedom-minority-rights-and-geopolitics/](http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/03/05/religious-freedom-minority-rights-and-geopolitics/)
Week 12 – Women’s Rights as Human Rights
T Nov 18: Paul Amar: Egypt and Sexual Harassment

Week 13 – Gender Segregation, Wahibism, and Saudi Arabia
T Nov 25 – Le Renard, “A Society of Young Women”, Introduction and Chapter 1 and 2, pp 1-84
R Nov 27 – No Class.

Week 14 – Do Muslim Women Need Saving?

Week 15 - Final Exam Week
T Dec 9 – Final Exam Review and Selections from J. Massad “Re-Orienting Desire: The gay international and the Arab world”
R Dec 11 – Final Exam