Orientalism and Representation

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Course Description
With a specific focus on orientalist conventions in architecture, art, and scholarship, this seminar examines how politics and ideology inform the construction and reproduction of knowledge. Adopting a flexible historical framework, we will explore selected cases of cultural encounters between Europe and the "Orient" from Antiquity to the present. We will analyze particular events, texts, projects, and images that have been influential in shaping Western representations of and Western attitudes towards the "Orient." We will investigate how revisionist and modernist "Orientals" similarly appropriate culture and history in constructing their national identities. And, at the end, we will touch upon the contemporary critical issues of post-colonial identity, exile, multiculturalism, and hybridity that are influencing how we see, represent, and react to the world around us today.

The discussions will be informed by the recent literature in post-colonial studies and cultural criticism and the growing interest in hybridity and multiculturalism which challenge both traditional orientalist and nationalist narratives. Our chief guide will be Edward Said’s classic Orientalism and its followers, reviewers, and detractors. The objective of the seminar is to help the participants gain a historically grounded awareness of the complexities of cultural identities, always contesting and sometimes subverting the representations that claim to realistically depict and define them.

Introduction
Aims and mechanics of the course
Theoretical and historiographical sources: Foucault, Said, and post-colonial theorists
The East/West Problematique: A brief history.
Festival of Islam Film: "Orient/Occident"

Theoretical and Critical Foundations:
The relationship between the post-structural and post-colonial theories

Reading

- Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of knowledge (New York, 1972), Intro: 3-17.
- Edward Saïd, Orientalism, Introduction and chapter 1, 1-110.

A Rhetoric of Otherness: Classical and Medieval Encounters
Mutual perceptions and misconceptions from Antiquity to the Middle Ages
The Greek construction of otherness
The Crusades and cultural exchanges
Reading

- Thierry Hentsch, Imagining the Middle East, (New York, 1992) Chptr. 1 and 3.

Background Reading


From the Age of Discovery to Colonialism:
 Enlightenment culture and the discovery of distant lands
 Exoticism
 Cultural politics of proto-colonialism: La description de l’Égypte 19th century European Colonial Adventure
 Reading

- Hentsch, Imagining the Middle East Chptrs. 2 and 4.

Background Reading

Orientalist Painting and Literature:
Orientalist painting: Ingres, Delacroix, Gerome, Matisse, etc
Orientalist literature: Goethe, Flaubert, Nerval, Lamartine, etc.

Reading

- John M. MacKenzie, Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts (Manchester, 1995), chapter 3,

Background Reading

- Rana Kabbani, Europe Myths of Orient(Bloomington, Ind., 1986).
- Francis Steegmuller, Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour (Boston, 1972).

Expositions Universelles: Islamic Architecture in the West:
Islamic architecture in the West: Pavilions, pleasure gardens, great expositions, cemeteries Neo-Islamic Renaissance in art and architecture: Romanticizing a depoliticized past.

Reading

- Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, Chapters 1, 1-33.

Background Reading

Reinvention of Tradition: the Case of Egypt
The Napoleonic Expedition and the Contact with Europe.
Modernization project of Muhammad Ali.
Neo-Islamic Renaissance in art and architecture

Reading
Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, Chapters 2-3, 34-94.

Background Reading:

Architectural Expressions of National Identity:
Post-Colonial/National Architecture.
The Aga Khan Awards and the politics of the enterprise.

Reading
The Critique of Orientalism
The debate around Edward Said

Reading

- Hentsch, Imagining the Middle East, Chptr. 5.

Background Reading

Post-Orientalism? Hybrid Identities
Immigrant experiences in Europe and America

Registers of hybridity in art, architecture, film, literature, critical writing
Film: "Tales from Arab Detroit."

Reading

- Hentsch, Imagining the Middle East, Chptrs 6 and 7
- Ali A. Mazrui, Pretender to Universalism: Western Culture in a Globalizing Age," in Hassan and Dadi, eds., Unpacking Europe, 96-111.

Background Reading

- Hanif Kureishi, Buddha of Suburbia