

Course: ETHN 166/LTEN179: Arab/Muslim American Identity

Instructor: Dr. Nadeen Kharputly

Office hours: Mondays 11:15am-1:15pm and by appointment in Social Sciences Building 252

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Any changes to this syllabus will be announced via e-mail.

Course description:

We are in a heightened period of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, making knowledge about Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S. more important than ever. While the popular media often discusses these communities in terms of irreconcilable differences with so-called “American” values, this course will examine the way writings and media produced by Arab and Muslim Americans have influenced the cultural, political, and social identities of the U.S.

This class will take you through several important themes that form part of Arab and Muslim American life. We begin with a discussion of the life of Malcolm X, whose mission laid the groundwork for the development of Islam in the modern United States. His influence as a Muslim shaped the formation of hip hop culture among marginalized communities worldwide. We will examine the role of 9/11 in altering the everyday experiences of Arabs and Muslims. And we will explore the moral quandaries in literature by Arab and Muslim Americans. While there is no way to define and narrow “Arab and Muslim American identity,” this course offers a glimpse at the range of ways in which these identities are expressed in the modern U.S.

Ground rules:

We are discussing complex, difficult, and very necessary topics, and while diversity in opinion is expected and welcome, please be sure to voice your responses generously. This is a space where every student has the opportunity to learn in an open and supportive environment, and in order to maintain this co-operative space I expect everyone in this class to be as open-minded and gracious as possible and respect each person’s individual learning trajectory. Personal attacks and hate speech will not be tolerated. Please review the Principles of Community to ensure that you adhere to the expected guidelines (<https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html>)

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this class you will be able to:

- Identify central arguments in the texts we read and examine them from multiple angles
- Take and defend a particular position while considering the viability of other positions
- Talk about the issues presented in this class in an academic manner and engage in thoughtful, gracious debate with one another
- Apply the concepts and readings we discuss to everyday examples

Class readings:

All required readings will be available at the bookstore or online on TritonEd. Bring the readings of the day with you. Texts for purchase include:

Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965)

Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (2012)

Ayad Akhtar, *The Who and the What* (2014)

Stephen Karam, *Sons of the Prophet* (2011)

Class etiquette:

Please devote the 50 minutes of class to listening attentively to everyone in this space. We are covering difficult topics so your full attention is required

Laptops are permitted for referring to the texts and taking notes only. Any distracting behavior – attempting to text discreetly, browsing through social media, etc. - will be cited and disciplined accordingly. Fiddling with technology is rude and distracting (to me and your peers). When you are not taking notes and listening to your peers, please have your laptop screens down.

Communication:

I encourage you to attend office hours whenever you need to talk through ideas and issues, even early on in the quarter.

Please check your e-mail at least once a day to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule. Expect responses to your e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over the weekend. Courteous correspondence is expected—e-mails must begin with a salutation (“Dear/Hello Dr. Kharputly”) and end with your signature (Sincerely/Thanks, [your name]”).

Course requirements and percentage of final grade:

Participation and attendance 30%

This includes *regular attendance* and *active participation* in class. Your grade relies heavily on participation and attendance, so any absences can quickly take a toll. Please check in with me **immediately** if you anticipate any difficulties with regular attendance.

Weekly question 20%

You will submit a discussion question on TritonEd relating to the readings of the week so that I can get a sense for what kinds of themes and ideas are most interesting to you and orient our discussion around that. Questions are due by noon on Tuesday of each week.

Midterm paper (due 2/5) 15%

A 4-5 page analytical paper in which you respond to a prompt that I will provide in week 4.

Final paper (due 3/19) 25%

A 8-12 page research paper on a topic of your choice.

Self-evaluation 10%

At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete a short (500 words) evaluation of your learning outcomes.

Weekly schedule:

Week 1:

Monday, January 8

Introduction

Wednesday, January 10

A very brief and very condensed introduction to Arabs and Muslims in the U.S.

Friday, January 12

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Preface: Love, Hate, and the Nation State," in *Flagging Patriotism: Crises of Narcissism and Anti-Americanism* (2007)

Week 2: Race and Religion

Monday, January 15

NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Wednesday January 17

Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* chapters 1-5

Friday January 19

Malcolm X chapters 6-12

Week 3: Power, Politics, and Civil Rights

Monday January 22

Malcolm X chapters 13-16

Wednesday January 24

Malcolm X chapters 17 – end (including the Epilogue)

Friday January 26

James Baldwin, "Down at the Cross," from *The Fire Next Time*, in *The Price of the Ticket* (1985)

Week 4: Islam and Hip Hop

Monday January 29

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, "The Loop of Muslim Cool: Black Islam, Hip Hop, and Knowledge of Self," in *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States* (2016)

Spotify hip hop playlist up on TritonEd. Use Genius for lyrics.

Wednesday January 31

Sohail Daulatzai, "Return of the Mecca: Public Enemies, Reaganism, and the Birth of Hip Hop," in *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America* (2012)

Take a look at Daulatzai's online exhibit, Return of the Mecca (2014)

(www.returnofthemecca.com)

Friday February 2

suheir hammad, "First Writing Since (Poem on Crisis of Terror)," in *In Motion Magazine* (2001)

Week 5: 9/11

Monday February 5

Evelyn Alsultany, "Introduction," in *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* (2012)

Wednesday February 7

Nadine Naber, "Introduction: Arab Americans and U.S. Racial Formations" in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds. (2008).

Friday February 9

Lori Peek, Chapter 5, "Repercussions," in *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans After 9/11* (2010)

Sharon Otterman, "Obscuring a Muslim Name, and an American's Sacrifice," in the *New York Times*, January 2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/02/nyregion/sept-11-memorial-obscures-a-police-cadets-bravery.html>

Week 6: Responsibility

Monday February 12

Podcast: Ahmed Ali Akbar, *See Something, Say Something*, Episode 1: "Saying 'Nah'" <https://player.fm/series/see-something-say-something/episode-1-saying-nah> (or wherever you listen to podcasts)

Wednesday February 14

Stephen Karam, *Sons of the Prophet* (2011)

Friday February 16

Sons of the Prophet continued

Week 7: Shame

Monday February 19

NO CLASS - President's Day

Wednesday February 21

Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (2012)

Friday February 23

Disgraced continued

Madani Younis, "The Personal is Political in Ayad Akhtar's 'Disgraced,'" in *American Theatre*, (2014)

<http://www.americantheatre.org/2014/10/30/the-personal-is-political-in-ayad-akhtars-disgraced/>

Week 8: Freedom and Controversy

Monday February 26

Disgraced continued

"A Contrarian View: Race, Representation, and Islamophobia in Ayad Akhtar's *Disgraced*," November 2015

<http://www.silkroadrising.org/news/a-contrarian-view-race-representation-and-islamophobia-in-ayad-akhtars-disgraced>

Wednesday February 28

Ayad Akhtar, *The Who and the What* (2014)

Friday March 2

The Who and the What continued

Week 9: The Burdens of Representation

Monday March 5

Podcast: #Good Muslim/Bad Muslim, Episode 1: "How Muslim Are You?"

<http://www.goodmuslimbadmuslim.com/podcast/2015/1/10/001-how-muslim-are-you>
(or wherever you listen to podcasts)

Lila Abu-Lughod. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," in *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783-90.

Wednesday March 7

In class screening of Aziz Ansari's *Master of None*, episode 3: "Religion" (2017)

Friday March 9

Master of None discussion

Ayman Ismail, "The Most Radical Thing About *Master of None*'s Islam Episode Is That It Isn't About Religion," in *Slate*, May 2017

http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2017/05/22/master_of_none_s_religion_episode_isn_t_about_islam.html

Timothy Gutmann, “The ‘Religion’ Episode: Aziz Ansari and the Cultural Politics of Muslim Self-Representation,” in *Religion Dispatches*, June 2017

<http://religiondispatches.org/the-religion-episode-aziz-ansari-and-the-cultural-politics-of-muslim-self-representation/>

Week 10: The Big Sick and conclusions

Monday March 12

Kumail Nanjiani, *The Big Sick* (2017) [[available on Reserves](#)]

Sopan Deb, “‘The Big Sick,’ South Asian Identity and Me,” in *The New York Times*, July 2017

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/23/movies/the-big-sick-south-asian-identity-and-marriage.html?_r=0&mtrref=www.google.com

Aditi Natasha Kini, “I’m Tired of Watching Brown Men Fall in Love With White Women Onscreen,” in *Jezebel*, July 2017

<https://themuse.jezebel.com/i-m-tired-of-watching-brown-men-fall-in-love-with-white-1796522590>

Wednesday March 14

The Big Sick continued

Friday March 16

Conclusion

Final papers due on Monday, March 19 by 11:59pm.

Additional information:

The university’s statement on academic integrity must be reviewed before turning in any assignments: <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2>. Plagiarism consists of but is not limited to the following: presenting another person’s ideas or language as if they were your own, copying (words AND ideas) from the Internet, and failure to acknowledge and properly cite the sources of the ideas presented. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please check in with me ahead of time.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you need accommodation for disability purposes or religious reasons so that we may make alternate arrangements ahead of time. It is best to get accommodation from the Office for Students with Disabilities (located behind Center Hall, 858-534-4382) as soon as possible so that we can work together to ensure that your needs are met in the event of an emergency.

Majoring or minoring in Ethnic Studies:

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a university or college requirement. Students have taken three or four classes out of *interest* yet have no information about the major or minor and don’t realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for

a career in law, public policy, education, public health, social work, non-profit work and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Monica Rodriguez, Ethnic Studies Program Advisor, via email at ethnicstudies@ucsd.edu