

Middle East Conflicts in Fiction and Film

SIS 419-004 & SIS 619-029

Spring 2009

Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone

Office Hour: Mondays 4:30-5:30

SIS 206

fsimone@american.edu

202-9667698

Course Description

This course will explore the Middle East conflicts through literature and film . We examine social, cultural and political significance of the Middle East conflicts as portrayed in literary tradition and film , focusing on ideological connection between masculinity and war , the issue of representation of the other as ‘enemy’ , relationship between violence against women and war, myth and popular images of war , and how literature and film can perpetuate or contest them . The course provides an engaging way to gain historical literacy and critical thinking about politics of war , the significance of race, religion, ethnicity , class , and gender in the writing of literature , and how the Middle East conflicts shape the production of literature and its themes . The course materials include novels ,short stories , and essays about Israel-Palestine conflict , Lebanese civil war , Iranian revolution, Iran-Iraq war, the 1991 Gulf war and the ongoing war in Iraq and the country’s troubled political transition . Themes such as orientalism and representation of the ‘other’ , colonialism , nationalism , struggle and resistance , war and occupation will be explored as well as ethnicity ,religion and response to development and globalization . There will be screening of several films related to these themes in the local /global context in which they are produced . The course aim is to engage students in thoughtful discussion and analysis of selected literary works and films , to provide a framework to investigate how film and fiction deal with issues of suffering, violence, group identity , sacrifice, and dehumanization of the ‘other’ as enemy . We engage in cultural analysis and written expression and challenge our ideas about war and global justice.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

1-Regular and prepared class participation is essential . Students are expected to attend all classes , having completed reading and viewing assignments . Since there is significant amount of reading , plan the week beyond class time for reading/viewing and other course work. The class will be conducted as part lecture ,part seminar in which each person assumes responsibility for sustaining discussion and contribute

constructively to an environment of mutual learning. Those who are not comfortable talking in class should make an effort to do so. It is crucial that you come to class well prepared having read/ viewed and thought about the assigned texts and films and participate in class discussion. Your class participation grade will be based on your preparation and contributions to class discussions and is evaluated by the quality of your comments and questions. **20 % of final grade.** Lack of participation and absence will lower your overall grade.

2- Film Review- Most films will be viewed outside of class in the library and they will be on reserve for the semester. You may obtain the film for viewing or watch the film at the Sunday afternoon screening at the library. There will be three film analysis (2-3 pages) with emphasis on the work's cultural/political significance, the central perspective in the film about conflicts, the plot, and what it reveals about attitude, intention, goal and message or fabrication reflecting deliberate choices that reinforce or challenge accepted norm. **. 15% of final grade .**

3-Oral Presentation- Every week one or two students make 15-20 minutes power point presentation based on the week's assigned film and reading, introduce background information such as history of the country, biography of the author, etc. and initiate discussion of the text, commenting on and connecting the ideas and arguments raised in the text /film and generate a list of questions and answers for the class to focus on. The purpose of oral report is to allow you to share your material and insight with the class. The presentation should have a clear focus, explaining the point of views and **not** reading from the notes. **20% of final grade .**

4- Quiz questions – There will be three brief, short answer quizzes on required readings and films. **15% of final grade.**

5-Written assignment – Well written essays characterized by focused, clear and purposeful textual analysis (about 10-12 pages each) of two of the following novels : *Cities of Salts, Siren of Baghdad, Little Mountain, Wild thorns*, exploring a particular issue or theme with clearly defined central concepts, terms and ideas. You can comment on and interpret as well as give information with clear direction and come to some conclusion where possible. We will be reading whole or parts of these novels for the purpose of class discussion throughout the semester. You will need to read the rest of the novels on your own for the written assignment **30% of final grade .**

1st essay due March 23

2d essay due April 27

Required Books

Ghassan Kanafani, *Men Under the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories.*
Yasmina Khadra, *The Attack.*
Etel Adnan, *Sitt Marie Rose.*
Riverbend, *Baghdad Burning, Girl Blog from Iraq.*
Abdolrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt.*

Recommended Books

Elias Khoury , *Little Mountain* .
Sahar Khalifeh , *Wild Thorns* .
David Grossman, *The Yellow Wind* .
Yasmina Khader, *Sirens of Baghdad*.
Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*.(optional)

Films (On reserve at the library)

- *Lawrence of Arabia* ,1962,dir., David Lean .
- *Battle of Algiers*,1967,dir.,Gillo Pontecorvo.
- *Al-Nakba*,1998,dir.,Benny Brunner.
- *West Beirut*,1998,dir.,Ziad Doueri
- *Persepolis*,2007,dir.,Marjan Strapi,Vincent Parannaud .
- *Paradise Now*,2005,dir.,Hany Abu-Assad.
- *Three Kings*1999 dir.David Russell,
- *Waltz With Bashir* 2008 ,dir., Ari Folman
- *No End Insight*,2007.dir.,Charles Ferguson
- *Wedding in Galilee*,1988 dir.,Michel Khleifi

Course Outline

Week 1

January 12 **Introduction to the course:** Introducing the Middle East issues, themes , and topics in the Middle East history.

Video :Palestine the Issue

- Watch : Lawrence of Arabia
- Read : Munif , *Cities of Salt*

WEEK 2

January 26

Oil and the Kingdom

- Ella Shohat, " *Orientalism and Cinema*"
- Discussion of Lawrence of Arabia
- Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom* ,pp1-26
- Abdulrahman Munif ,*Cities of Salt* 1-374

Week 3

February 2

History and Collective Memory : 1948 and Palestinian –Israeli Conflict

- Rashid Khaledi , " The Palestinian and 1948" in Rogan and Avi Shlaim ,eds., *The War for Palestine :Rewriting the History of 1948*.pp.12-37.
- Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun* and *the Land of Sad Oranges*
- Film : Al-Nakba

Week 4

February 9

Chronicle of Life in War and Occupation

- Sahar Khalifeh , *Wild Thorns*
- David Grossman, Excerpts from *The Yellow Wind* (pp.65-76 & 197-222)

- Film : Wedding in Galilee

Week 5

February 16 Confrontation and Violence

- Yasmina Khadre , *The Attack*
- Film : Paradise Now

Week 6

February 23 Nationalism and Anti-Colonial Resistance

- Marnia Lazreg , *The Eloquence of Silence* ,chp.7
- Film : The Battle of Algiers

Week 7

March 2 Lebanon and Civil War

- Miriam Cooke, “ Danse Macabre” in *War’s Other Voices*
- Etel Adnan, *Sitt Marie Rose*
- Film : West Beirut

Spring Break

Week 8

March 16 Civil War and Israeli Invasion of Lebanon

- Edward Said ,“Permission to Narrate” , *Edward Said Reader* , Bayoumi & Rubin pp.243-266.
- Elias Khoury, *Little Mountain*
- Film: Waltz with Bashir

Week 9 Iran : Religion , Revolution and War

March 23

- Ervand abrahamian, “ The Islamic Republic” from *A History of Modern Iran*, pp.155-195.
- Hushang Golshiri, “The Victory Chronicle of the Magi”, from *Strange Times ‘ My Dear* ,eds., Mazaffari& Karimi Hakkak,pp.9-36 .
- Film: Persepolis

Week 10 Iran –Iraq War

March 30

- Ahmad Mahmud, “Scorched Earth”,from *Strange Times’ My Dear* ,pp.38-59.
- Roxanne Varzi, Excerpts from *Warrior Souls*
- Film: Plastic Flowers Never Die

Week 11 America’s War in Iraq

April 6

- Edward Said ,Excerpts from *Orientalism* , 2003 Introduction
- Larry Everest, *Oil,Power and Empire* ,chaps 4&5 .
- George Packer, *The Assassins’ Gate* , prologue &chap.1 .
- Film: Three Kings

Week 12 US Occupation and Fall of Baghdad

April 13

- Riverbend, Baghdad Burning : Girl Blog from Iraq

- Nadine Sinno, “ Deconstructing the Myth of Liberation” Feminism and War ,Mohanty& Riley eds., pp.131-142
- Film : No End In Sight

Week 13 Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War

April 20

- Yasmina Khadra , *The Sirens of Baghdad*

Week 14 Question of Responsibility : Media and War

April 27

- Samanta Power, “ War and Never Having to Say You’re Sorry” , *New York Times*, 14 December 2003
- Rajiv Chandrasekaran , *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* (optional)
- Film : Control Room (excerpts in class)
- Paper Due