WMNS 300: GENDER AND SPIRITUALITY

Women and Gender in Islam: Representation, Gender, and Identity

Professor Anna Mansson McGinty

The course begins by exploring the discourse of Orientalism, problematizing Western representations of “the Orient,” the encounter between “West” and “East,” as well as the categories themselves. We will analyze Western visual and written representations of Muslim women from the period of European colonialism to present day. This allows the students to self-critically reflect upon their own “knowledge” on Islam and Muslim women and the historical and political background to this understanding. The class also discusses the different views of women, family, and gender roles in Islam as well as the identities and lived experiences of Muslim women living in the West. We will focus on different culturally and religiously constructed ideas on gender relations and the *hijab*, Islamic feminism, as well as how Muslim women in the West negotiate race, class and gender. With respect to Islamophobia and the political rhetoric of “war on terror” and “clash of civilizations,” significant issues concern the gap between media representation, on one hand, and self-representation, on the other hand, and how Muslim women are making sense of their own lives and identities drawing on different messages and discourses.

In order to gain a better understanding of the constructed category and representation of the so-called “Other,” the course readings also concern social and cultural theory, the debate on postmodernism versus modernism, relativism, and the “position of the subject.”

Overall, the class deals with three major themes:

I. The discourse(s) of Orientalism, Western representations and images of the Orient and the female “Other” then and now. We will analyze colonial representations of the Muslim woman in letters, postcards, and photographs as well as representations from contemporary mainstream pop culture, media, and films.

II. Gender and Women in Islam. We will discuss different understandings and interpretations of the role of the woman, gender relations, and the *hijab*, the Muslim headscarf.

III. The identities and experiences of Muslim women living in the West.

**Course grading and requirements**

Class attendance, participation, and facilitation (student-lead discussion): 20%

Medical or legal emergencies, religious observations, and university sponsored activities are legitimate absences, all of which need written documentation. I will take attendance each time we meet as a class and your attendance will count toward your participation grade. More than two absences will result in lowered final grade. Attendance and participation constitute a significant part of your grade; it promotes engaged discussion and each student’s participation and reflections are salient. For each class students should **bring at least one question or problem** regarding the reading to share with the rest of the class. Many of the classes will have **student-lead discussion** which means that one student will serve as a facilitator, problematizing the readings and posing questions to the class.
2 in-class assignments: 20% (10% each)
Four unannounced assignments, or response papers, will be given out during the semester, which will cover documentaries and/or readings due that day and/or the lecture from previous week. There will be NO make-up quizzes.

3 essays: 60% (20 % each) of final grade.
Each paper should be approximately 6 pages long. All assignments must be handed in by the date stated in class or in the syllabus. Extensions will only be granted for emergency situations and must be arranged prior to the due date. Late papers will be downgraded by one point/day (for example from A to A-, from A- to B+, from B+ to B etc.). You'll be given instructions for the paper two weeks before the due date.

Course policies

Academic Misconduct
Make sure you properly cite all sources used in a written assignment. Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and will be prosecuted in accordance with university policies and procedures as set out in UWS Chapter 14 and UWM Faculty Document #1686. The standard penalty for plagiarism in this course will be a failing grade in the course and a written report to be placed in your file.

Disability Information
If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, you should also contact the Student Accessibility Center at 229-6287.

Accommodation for Religious Observances
Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a religious observance.

For further information on university policies, refer to http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf or see attached sheet in the back.
Textbooks:


Articles (available on e-reserve):


Alloula, Malek 1986 *The Colonial Harem*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Chapter 1, 2, 3)


Bernstein, Matthew & Studlar, Gaylyn (eds.) 1997 *Visions of the East. Orientalism in Film*. Rutgers University Press. (“Introduction” and “Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema”)


Lewis, Reina 1996 *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation*. London & New York: Routledge.(Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 4)


Moghissi, Haideh 1999 *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism. The Limits of Postmodern Analysis.* Zed Books. (Introduction, Chapter 1, 2, 3, 7)

Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley 1993 *Turkish Embassy Letters.* London: William Pickering. (pp. 57-72, 82-91, 102-120)


Shiraz, Faegheh 2001 *The Veil Unveiled: Hijab in Modern Cultures.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida. (Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2)

Wadud, Amina 2006 *Inside the Gender Jihad. Women’s Reform in Islam.* Oxford: Oneworld. (Chapter 6, 7, Conclusion)

I. Orientalism, Culture, and Representations.
Representations of the female “Other.” Theoretical approaches to culture and the study of “the other.”

Week 1
Introduction

Week 2
Said, “Introduction” in *Orientalism*.
*Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil, Ch. 1*

(Suggested readings: “Introduction” and “Race-femininity-representation” in *Gendering Orientalism*)

*Turkish Embassy Letters,* Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*
*Alloula, The Colonial Harem*

FACILITATOR:

(Suggested readings: “Only women should go to Turkey” in *Gendering Orientalism*)

Week 3 – Instructions for paper #1 will be handed out
El Guindi, “Ideological Roots to Ethnocentrism”*
Documentary: *Hollywood Harems*

Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim women really need saving?”*
“Introduction” in *Writing Women’s Worlds*

FACILITATOR:

(Suggested readings: “Introduction” in *Writing Culture*)
Week 4

“Introduction” and “Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema” in *Visions of the East*

FACILITATOR:

Shiraz, “Introduction,” Ch. 1 & 2 in *The Veil Unveiled*

Falah “The Visual Representation of Muslim/Arab Women in Daily Newspapers in the United States”

FACILITATOR:

II. Women and Gender in Islam.

*Gender relations, hijab, and Islamic feminism.*

Week 5 - Deadline for paper # I (submit in class on Wednesday, Feb. 20)

El-Solh & Mabro, “Introduction: Islam and Muslim Women”*

Documentary: *Women and Islam. Islam Unveiled. Part I*

Ahmed, Ch. 3 & 4

FACILITATOR:

Week 6

Mernissi, Ch. 5 and 7

FACILITATOR:

*Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil, Ch. 4*

FACILITATOR:

Week 7

FILM with Leila Ahmed, *Women and Islam*

Ahmed, Ch. 8, 9, 10

FACILITATOR:

Week 8

*Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil, Ch. 3*

Documentary: *Veiled Revolution*

*Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil, Introduction, Ch. 2*

FACILITATOR:

*SPRING BREAK!*

(WEEK 9)
Week 10 – Instructions for paper #2 will be handed out
Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil, Ch. 5 and Conclusion.
FACILITATOR:
Moghissi, Intro, Ch. 1, 2, 3,
FACILITATOR:

Week 11
Moghissi, Ch. 7
FACILITATOR:
Badran,* Mansson McGinty*
FACILITATOR:
(Suggested readings: cooke*)

III. Muslim Women in the West.
The experiences and life stories of Muslim Women.

Week 12 - Deadline for paper #2 (submit in class on Wednesday, April 9)
American Muslim Women
FACILITATOR:
American Muslim Women
FACILITATOR:

Week 13 – Instructions for paper #3 will be handed out
American Muslim Women
Becoming Muslim, Part I
FACILITATOR:

Week 14
Becoming Muslim, Part II
FACILITATOR:
Becoming Muslim, part III
FACILITATOR:

Week 15
Amina Wadud*
FACILITATOR:
Documentary: The Nobel Struggle of Amina Wadud

Week 16
Presentation of last research paper
C. University Policies

1. Students with disabilities. Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate materials and test accommodations can be found at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf

2. Religious observances. Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm

3. Students called to active military duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty should be noted.  
   http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm

4. Incompletes. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf

5. Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment). Definitions of discrimination. Harassment, abuse of power, and the reporting requirements of discriminatory conduct are found at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf

6. Academic misconduct. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html

7. Complaint procedures. Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%Badmin_policies/S49.7.htm

8. Grade appeal procedures. Procedures for student grade appeal appear at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm

9. Final examination policy. Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following:  
   http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm