

Islamic Literature and Civilization

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| Haverford College Religion/CompLit 262 | Islamic Literature and Civilization |
| Monday-Wednesday 12:30-2:00 | Gest 103 |
| Michael Sells, ex. 1027, msells@haverford.edu | Gest 201, Office Hours |

This course begins with *pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and the Qur'an* the wellsprings of Arabic literature and much of subsequent literature in the Islamic world. The discussion of the *Qur'an* will focus upon its character as a text, the performative nature of its textuality as embodied in calligraphy and traditions of recitation; its non-linear or anti-linear character; and literary approaches to the Islamic notion that there is something about it that is "inimitable." Special attention will be paid to the relationship of the Qur'an to Islamic theology, Islamic philosophy, Arabo-Islamic music, and other forms of Islamic culture. In the area of Islamic philosophy, we will read the influential philosophical novel of Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*.

We then follow the *poetic tradition*, especially love lyric, through manifestations in later Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Urdu traditions, exploring poems that are considered secular, those that are considered religious or mystical, and most often, those that inhabit an ambiguous space between secular and religious. *Arabesque*, a term for artistic patterns in the Arabic and Islamic world, will be examined from both literary and architectural points of view, with a discussion of the issue of iconoclasm (the rejection of images in art and literature), non-linear aesthetics, and various interpretations of the role of arabesque aesthetics in Islamic cultures. The final section of the course is dedicated to *modern writings* in prose and poetry from the world of Islam, with works by Lila Abu Lughod, Mahshid Amirshahi, Tayeb Saleh, and Naguib Mahfuz, with a focus on those works that explore the tension between the tradition world of local Islam and modern colonial and post-colonial cultures.

The class will be primarily a discussion class, based upon the readings and the questions and issues posed by the students on those readings at the beginning of each session. Occasionally short background lectures will be given to fill in the historical and cultural context of areas that are seen in need of clarification.

Requirements: 2 short papers, class presentations, consistent attendance and participation, midterm, final paper. No extensions are given except for serious illness or family emergency on request from the dean. Late work will be penalized.

Required Readings:

- Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*
- Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness* (selected passages will be read)
- Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, Lenn Goodman Translation (selected passages will be read)
- Tayeb Saleh, *Season of Migration to the North*
- Tayeb Saleh, *The Wedding of Zein and Other Stories*
- Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism (EIM)* (selected sections will be read intensively)
- Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an* (Qur'anic Translations and Commentary, bound manuscript)
- Reading Packet: *Islamic Lyrical Poetry*

Section 1

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| 8/31 | Introduction | | |
| 9/2 | Early Islamic Literature and the Qur'an | Film: The Power of the Word EIM 5-36 | |
| 9/7 | Introduction to Poetry, Hadith, and Sira | EIM 36-74 | |
| 9/9 | The Classical Qasida | EIM 56-74. Golden Ode (r) Labid (p) | Student Presentation: 10 Minutes |
| 9/14 | The Classical Qasida 2 | Ka`b ibn Zuhayr (p); Muraqqish the Younger (p) | Student Presentation |
| 9/16 | Elegy and Qur'an I | Hassan ibn Thabit's Elegy to Muhammad; Qur'anic Recitations | Student Presentation |
| 9/21 | Qur'an II | Approaching the Qur'an | Student Presentation |
| 9/23 | Qur'an III | Suras of the Isra', Cave and Mary (p) | Student Presentation |
| 9/28 | Qur'anic Theology | EIM: 304-320 Shahrastani | Student Presentation |
| 9/30 | Islamic Philosophy | Hayy ibn Yaqzan (selection) | 5 page paper due |
| 10/5 | Islamic Philosophy | Hayy ibn Yaqzan (selection) | Student Presentation |
| 10/7 | Sufi Qur'an Interpretation | EIM 75-96 | Student Presentation |
| 10/14 | Sufism: Qushayri and Rabia | EIM 97-170 | Student Presentation |
| 10/15 | Midterm due: 4:00PM Gest | Take Home/ Essay Questions | 90 Minutes, Timed |

Section II

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| 10/19 | Arabic and Hebrew Love Lyric | The Mid East Love Lyric, Frances Pritchett, <i>Nets of Awareness</i> | (selected reading) |
| 10/21 | Persian Love Lyric | The Mid East Love Lyric, <i>Nets of Awareness</i> | (selected reading) |
| 10/26 | Ottoman and Urdu Love Lyric | The Mid East Love Lyric, <i>Nets of Awareness</i> | (selected reading)&127; &127; |
| 10/28 | Bedouin Women's Lyric | Lila Abu Lughod, <i>Veiled Sentiments</i> | |
| 11/2 | Bedouin Women's Lyric | <i>Veiled Sentiments</i> | 6 page paper due |
| 11/4 | Modern Literature and Shi`ism | "Martyrdom of Husayn" (p), Mahshid Amirshahi, "End of the Passion Play" (p) | |
| 11/9 | Traditional World of Islam | Films, <i>Patters of Beauty, Man and Nature</i> | |
| 11/11 | Modern Arabic/Islamic Fiction | Naguib Mahfuz, "Zaabalawi," Tayeb Saleh, "Doom Tree of Wad Hamid" | |
| 11/16 | Modern Arabic Fiction | <i>The Wedding of Zein</i> , "A Handful of Dates," "Doom Tree" | |
| 11/18 | Modern Arabic Fiction | Ghassan Kanafani, <i>Men in the Sun</i> | |
| 11/23 | Islamic Art and Architecture | <i>Mosque, Islam and Muslim Art</i> | |
| 11/25 | Modern Lyric [Begin Season of | Film: Umm Kulthum, <i>A Voice Like Egypt</i> | |

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| | Migration] | | |
| 11/30 | Modern Islamic Fiction II | Tayeb Saleh, <i>Season of Migration to the North</i> | |
| 12/2 | American Islamic Literature [Bring Red Poetry Packet as well] | Malcolm X, "Hajj" / Film, Seemi Bushra Ghazi, Urdu Love Lyric | 45 minute take home essay exam, due 12/7 |
| 12/7 | A Satire on a Stereotype | Dr. Seuss, <i>Pontoffel Pok Where Are You</i> | Final Paper Draft due (optional). |
| 12/17 | Final Paper Due | 15 Pages | |