

NES/WS 463/563: Gender Issues and Women's Literature in the Middle East

Fall 2008 | Department of Near Eastern Studies

MWF 1:00-1:50p.m.

PSYCH 305

Instructor: Maha Nassar

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Course Description:

This course introduces students to Middle Eastern women's issues through a critical reading of literary works written by women in the major languages of the Near East (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish) that are available in translation. These works, which include poetry, short stories, and novels, will be analyzed within their social contexts, and a critical reading of them will help students identify gender differences as expressed by women authors. Other objectives of this course are for students to:

- 1) obtain a foundation of knowledge about Middle Eastern women's issues
- 2) enhance cultural awareness through lectures, readings, and other materials
- 3) think critically about Western perceptions of Middle Eastern women
- 4) improve ability to analyze novels, short stories, and poems and discern the underlying assumptions and ideologies of a literary product

Readings:

The following books are required reading and available for purchase at the University bookstore:

Elif Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*

Sharnush Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night*

Hanan al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*

Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*

Additional required readings will be available through e-reserve (ER).

<http://eres.library.arizona.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=search>

Course Requirements:

1) Paper: Four papers are required. For the length of each paper, see the section on grading criteria. All papers should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around. A full discussion of the required research paper is presented at the end of this syllabus.

2) Oral Presentation: Each student at the 500-level will make two oral presentations to the class of at least 10 but no more than 20 minutes. If there is time, 400-level students may sign up to give an oral presentation for additional points. The first oral presentations should include a short analysis of a portion or all of a novel, short story, or poem. It should address an interpretative problem or an historical issue related to the text. The second presentation will be about the graduate students' research paper.

3) Reading reports: You should hand these in to me at the beginning of each class. Your reports should consist of a response, reaction, or analysis for each day's reading assignment. These should be pithy paragraphs (a few sentences in length). You can keep a copy of these reports to use as the basis of your papers, if you wish. On the top of the page indicate your name, the date of the session, the last name of the author, and the shortened title of the piece of literature.

4) Participation: This course will be part lecture, part colloquium. Because of the condensed nature of parts of the course, class attendance is mandatory, and everyone will have to read the assigned material ahead of class meeting, participate in discussion, and share her or his impressions of the readings with the rest of us. Articles labeled "Graduate reading" are required for graduate students and recommended for undergraduate students. Everyone is thus encouraged to offer questions, criticisms, or any other comments that contribute to the discussions of the readings. Class discussions and notes will also be helpful for your papers.

Course Assignments:

For 400-level course:

Attendance, participation, and reading reports to be submitted in each session:	25%
Paper 1 (Turkish literature, 3-4 pages):	15%
Paper 2 (Persian literature, 3-4pages):	15%
Paper 3 (Arabic literature, 3-4 pages):	15%
Research paper, 10-12 pages):	30%

For 500-level course:

Attendance, participation, and reading reports to be submitted in each session:	20%
2 class presentations:	10%
Paper 1 (Turkish literature, 5-6 pages):	10%
Paper 2 (Persian literature, 5-6 pages):	10%
Paper 3 (Arabic literature, 5-6 pages):	10%
Research paper (16-18 pages):	40%:

Grading Criteria:

A (100-90): Original, well-argued thesis; clear organization; strong analysis; no grammar/spelling mistakes

B (89-80): Thesis clear, but not well argued; some analysis; a few grammar/spelling mistakes

C (79-70): Unclear thesis and/or organization; little or no analysis; grammar/spelling mistakes

D (69-60): No thesis or organization; no analysis; grammar/spelling mistakes; poorly written; does not meet minimum page requirement

F (59 below): Does not fulfill assignment

Note on plagiarism: Plagiarism is a very serious offence. If any part of a paper is plagiarized, you will receive a zero (0) for the assignment. No exceptions. Also note: Wikipedia.com is not an acceptable scholarly resource. Also, be sure to read UA's Code of Academic Integrity at:

<http://web.arizona.edu/~dos/uapolicies/cai1.html#responsibility>

Schedule of Classes:

Week 1: Background

Aug. 25: Introduction to the course

Aug. 27: Women in Islam and Middle Eastern History

ER: Nikki Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: A History*, pp. 9-59

Aug. 29: Western Attitudes towards Women Middle Eastern Women

ER: Arvin Cemil Scheik, "The Women of Turkey as Sexual Personae: Images from Western Literature," in *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"* (pp. 83-99)

ER: Nawar al-Hassan Golley, "Is Feminism Relevant to Arab Women?" *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2004): 521-36

Graduate reading:

ER: Charlotte Weber, "Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950," *Feminist Studies*, 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 125-157

Week 2: Questions of Modernity in the Middle East

Sep. 1: No class - Labor Day

Sep. 3: Modernization and Women in the Middle East

ER: Zohreh T. Sullivan, "Eluding the Feminist, Overthrowing the Modern? Transformations in Twentieth-Century Iran," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998), pp. 215-42.

Sep. 5: Nationalism and Women in the Middle East

ER: Beth Baron, "Nationalist Iconography: Egypt as a Woman," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia, 1997).

Graduate reading:

E-book: Valentine Moghadam, "Revolutions, Reforms and 'The Woman Question,'" in *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder; Lynne Rienner, 1993) pp. 79-112

Week 3: Turkish Literature – part 1

Sep. 8: Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, to page 59

ER: Elif Shafak, "Turks Look Forward With Amnesia," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 24, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 29-32

Sep. 10: Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, to page 120

Sep. 12: Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, to page 185

Graduate reading:

E-book: Arat, Yeşim, "The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey" in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

Week 4: Turkish Literature – part 2

Sep. 15: Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, to page 243

Sep. 17: Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, to page 296

Sep. 19: Shafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, to page 357

Graduate reading:

ER: Fatma Mÿge Gŕçek, "Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Massacres and Deportations of 1915," in *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century*, ed. Israel Gershoni, Ann Singer, Hakan Erdem (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2006).

Week 5: Turkish Literature – part 3

Sep. 22: Turkish poetry

ER: Gulden Akin, "Song to an Ageless Woman," "Laughing Stock," "Song of a Dweller in a High-Rise Block;" Sennur Sezer, "Morning Songs;" Melisa Gurpinar, From "Summer Sequence;" G. Akin, "Rust"

Sep. 24: Turkish short stories

ER: Nazli Eray, "Monte Kristo;" Sevim Burak, "The Window;" Selcuk Baran, "Mother;" Leyla Erbil, "The Mirror"

Sep. 26: Excerpts from film, *Yol*

PAPER #1 DUE

Week 6: Persian Literature – part 1

Sep. 29: Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* to page 60

Oct. 1: Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* to page 120

Oct. 3: Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* to page 180

Graduate reading:

ER: Kamran Talattof, "Iranian Women's Literature: From Pre-Revolutionary Social Discourse to Post-Revolutionary Feminism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29, No. 4 (Nov. 1997):531-558

Week 7: Persian Literature – part 2

Oct. 6: Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* to page 240

Oct. 8: Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* to page 300

Oct. 10: Parsipur, *Touba and the Meaning of Night* to page 360

Graduate readings:

ER: Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 257-99 (also available as an e-book).

ER: Anne Donadey and Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, "Why Americans Love Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*," *Signs*, 33, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 623-46.

Week 8: Persian Literature – part 3

Oct. 13: Persian poems

ER: Farrukh Farrokhzad, "Shahrzad," "Born Again," "Leaving;" Khatirah Hijazi, "The Sorrow of Being a Woman;" Firshtah Sari, "The Moment"

Oct. 15: Persian short stories

ER: Simin Daneshvar, "The Accident," "To Whom Can I Say Hello?;" Muniru Ravanipur, "The Sad Story of Love," "Three Pictures;" Simin Behbahani, "The Broken Cup."

Oct. 17: Excerpts from film, *Divorce, Iranian Style*

PAPER #2 DUE

Week 9: Arabic Literature – part 1

Oct. 20: al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, to p. 59

Oct. 22: al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, to p. 108

Oct. 24: al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, to p. 157

Graduate Reading:

ER: Joseph Zeidan, “The Pioneering Generation,” in *Arab Women Novelists* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), pp. 41-89

Week 10: Arabic Literature – part 2

Oct. 27: al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* to p. 236

Oct. 29: al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, to p. 280

Oct. 31: al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* –discussion

Graduate Reading:

ER: Ann Marie Adams, “Writing Self, Writing Nation: Imagined Geographies in the Fiction of Hanan al-Shaykh,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 20, no. 2 (Autumn 2001): 201-216.

Week 11: Arabic Literature – part 3

Nov. 3: Arabic poetry

ER: Nazik al-Malaika, “Insignificant Women,” “My silence,” “Washing off Disgrace;” May Sayigh, “Elegy for Imm Ali;” Salma Khadra al-Jayyusi, “Dearest,” “A Tale,” Shudan, “Encounter,” “Economics;” Hanan Mikhail, “Demonstration;” Fadwa Tuqan, “Labor Pains,” “Gone are Those We Love;” N. Saudi, “To A man;” Khalid, “Mother's Inheritance,” “Tattoo Writing;” A. Arnaout, Five short poems

Nov. 5: Arabic short stories

ER: al-Idlibi, “The Women's Baths;” G. Samman, “Street Walder;” N. Khayyat, “Had I been Male;” M. Badran, “A Girl Called Apple;” Ulayyan, “I will Not Return;” S. Azzam, “Bread of Sacrifice”

Nov. 7: Excerpts from film, *The Yacoubian Building*

PAPER #3 DUE

Week 12: Hebrew Literature

Nov. 10: Hebrew short stories

ER: Dahlia Ravikovitch, “A Slight Delay;” Ruth Almog, “Dora’s Secret;” Dvora Baron, “Sunbeams;” Nechama Pukhachevsky, “Aphia's Plight”

Nov. 12: Hebrew short stories

ER: Shulamit Lapid, “Male and Female;” Amalia Kahana-Carmon, “Bridal Veil;” Leah Aini, “Until the Entire Guard Has Passed;”

Nov. 14: Hebrew poetry

ER: Leah Goldberg, "From My Mother's Home," "These Autumn Days;" Rachel, "Expression," "A Woman;" Dahila Ravikovitch, "Clockwork Doll," "Requiem," "Hovering At A Low Altitude," "You Can't Kill A Baby Twice;" Shlomit Cohen, "Drawing of a Woman;" Nurit Zarchi, "Furtively;"

Graduate readings:

ER: Anita Norich, "Jewish Literatures and Feminist Criticism: An Introduction to Gender and Text," in *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*

ER: Yael Feldman, "Introduction," in *No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women's Fiction* (New York: Columbia UP, 1999), pp. 1-20.

Week 13: Palestinian Literature

Nov. 17: Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*

Nov. 19: Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*

Nov. 21: Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*

Graduate Readings:

ER: Suha Sabbagh, "Palestinian Women Writers and the Intifada," *Social Text*, no. 22 (Spring 1989): 62-78.

ER: Sheila Katz, "Adam and Adama, 'Ird and Ard: En-gendering Political Conflict and Identity in Early Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms" in *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 85-105.

Week 14: Women and Gender in Israeli film

Nov. 24: Film, *Song of a Siren*

Nov. 26: No class

Nov. 28: No class – Thanksgiving

Week 15: Graduate Student Presentations

Dec. 1: Finish *Song of a Siren*

Dec. 3: 3 graduate presentations

Dec. 5: 3 graduate presentations

Week 16: Wrap-Up

Dec. 8: 3 graduate presentations

Dec. 10: Final thoughts and conclusions

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16TH AT 5:00P.M.

Papers and Deadlines

Your papers may reflect your personal response to women's literary enunciation of issues related to male-female relationships, challenges to archetypal social values, patriarchy, violence against women, male power in general patterns of dominance and submission, cultural change, or any other gender-related concern. You may also address aesthetic aspects of the literary works that distinguish them from the common literary practices of these otherwise male-dominated literary communities. To do this, you need to define that aspect well and then argue a case for the meaning, ideology, conflicts in one or more texts. You need to establish a precise focus and a related interpretive problem within the text(s) you have chosen. Your point (or argument), the proof of the validity of your argument will constitute the investigative explanations the focus and the problem you chose in the beginning. The title of your paper should reflect the interpretive problem you intend to discuss and your *argument*. The reaction, interpretive problem, and the argument **must be** your own. If you find in the process that you oppose or agree with other views, those views should be acknowledged as well.

To demonstrate your thoughts and reaction to your chosen text(s), you should include evidence and examples from the same text(s). You may also use background readings, other texts about the historical conditions referred to in the text you are examining, literary criticism, and literary conventions. You may find some of these additional texts among the reading for the course, among the suggested additional readings, or among sources found elsewhere to contextualize your perception of the literary work(s) you are discussing. For this reason, and in order to provide proof for your case or claims against other interpretations, you have to draw evidence of your own or of others of the same text.

You may take up any approach or methodology in your reading of the texts, however, in dealing with the works of literature, you should find out the following aspects and qualities of the text: its choice of point of view; structural design, characterization; its approach and style (romanticism, realism, magical realism, naturalism, historical, etc.); form (prose, poetry, novel, etc.). Then state how any of these aspects may be relevant to your argument.

Use the MLA style of notation and documentation (Works Cited list at the end) and use it correctly and consistently. It is beneficial to assume that your reader has read the text and therefore you do not need to summarize the text; you only need **very little** summary and spend the available space on the above issues.

You are encouraged to discuss your topics, methodology, and outline of each paper with me as early as possible to get the most feedback possible. The outline of the paper may be submitted at any time during the section. If necessary, you may submit the first draft of each paper at least one week prior to the deadline to me (or to the editors in Writing Center; see the handouts) for a reading and suggestions toward the final draft. Papers that require substantial revision may receive an extension of four days and may require a second revision. Graduate students will have to include additional readings from the suggested bibliography and write longer papers. They will be required to address some of the theoretical issues presented in the additional reading materials.

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND OPTIONAL READINGS

Women in the Middle East and Feminist Theories:

- Afshar, Haleh, ed. *Women in the Middle East: Perceptions, Realities and Struggles for Liberation*. Houndmills, Eng.: Macmillan Press Inc., 1993.
- Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1992.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Nicholson, Linda. *Gender and History*. NY: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Arab Women's Literature:

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999, 1986.
- Abouzeid, Leila. *Year of the Elephant*. tr. Barbara Parmenter. Austin: Univ. of Texas at Austin Press, 1989.
- Accad, Evelyne. *Veil of Shame: The Role of Women in the Contemporary Fiction of North Africa and the Arab world*. Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada : Naaman, 1978
- Arebi, Saddeka. *Women and Words in Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Literary Discourse*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Badawi, M.M. *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Cohen-Mor, Dahlia. *An Arabian Mosaic: Short stories by Arab Women Writers*. Potomac, MD: Sheba Press, 1993.
- Cooke, Miriam. *Women and the War Story*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Denys Johnson-Davies, tr. *Modern Arabic Short Stories*. London: Oxford, 1967.
- Gorkin, Michael. *Three Mothers, Three Daughters: Palestinian Women's Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Kadi, Joanna. *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994.
- Malti-Douglas, Fedwa. *Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Manzalaoui, Mahmoud, ed. *Arabic Short Stories 1945-1965*. Cairo: AUC Press, 1985.
- Tucker, Judith, ed. *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers*. Indianapolis: Indiana U Press, 1993.
- Zeidan, Joseph T., *Arab women Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Israeli Women's Literature:

- Aschkenasy, Nehama. *Eve's Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.
- Fuchs, Esther, *Israeli Mythogynies: Women in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Feldman, Yael. *No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women's Fiction*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.
- Gluzman, Michael. "The Exclusion of Women from Hebrew Literary History." *Prooftexts* 11 (1991): 259-278.
- Hareven, Shulamith. *Thirst: The Desert Trilogy*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1996.

Hebrew Women Writers. Ramat Gan: Inst. for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 1994.
Medini, Yael. "Savta and Not Undelighted." *Midstream* (1985).
Sokoloff, Naomi B., Anne Lapidus Lerner, and Anita Norich, eds. *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Cambridge, Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1992.
VanderKam, James. *No one Spoke Ill of Her: Essays on Judith*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.

Iranian Women's Literature:

Afkhami, Mahnaz. *In the Eye of the Storm*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994.
Danishvar, Simin. *Playhouse*. Washington, D.C., Mage Publication, 1989.
Keshavarz, Fatemeh. *Jasmine and Stars: Reading More Than Lolita in Tehran* Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2007.
Milani, Farzaneh. *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voice of Iranian Women Writers*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1992.
Ravanipur, Muniru. *Satan's Stones*, Austin, Texas University Press, 1996.
Schaub, Diana J., *Erotic Liberalism: Women and Revolution in Montesquieu's Persian Letters*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.
Stories by Iranian Women Since the Revolution. Austin, Tex.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1991.
Talattof, Kamran. "Iranian Women's Literature: From Pre-revolutionary Social Discourse to Postrevolutionary Feminism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29, no. 4, (November, 1997), 531-558.
----. *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000.

Turkish Women's Literature:

Arat, Yesim. "Women's Movement of the 1980s in Turkey: Radical Outcome of Liberal Kemalism?"
Capan, Cevat. "Turkey" in Robin Ostle. ed. *Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East 1850-1970*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.
Codrescu, Andrei, *The Blood Countess*. Andrei Codrescu. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
Gun, Guneli. "The Woman in the Darkroom: Contemporary Women Writers in Turkey" *World Literature Today* 60 (Spring 86): 275-9.
Kalyoncu, Gungor Dilmen. *I, Anatolia: a Play for One Actress*. 1991.
Chmielowska, Danuta. La femme turque dans l'oeuvre de Nabi, Vehbi et Vasif. Edition: 1, Varsovie: Editions Scientifiques de Pologne, 1986.
Reddy, Nilufer Mizanoglu, trans. *Twenty Stories by Turkish Women Writers*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1988).
Sirman, Nukhet. "Feminism in Turkey: A Short History." *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 3, 1 (Fall 1989): 1-35.
Tekeli, Sirin, ed., *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*. London; Atlantic Heights, N.J.: Zed Books, 1995.