Gender Studies 390 / Religious Studies 359
Gender, Sexuality and Islam

Mon-Wed 12.30-1.50 p.m.
Parkes Hall 224

Prof. Evren Savci
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Office Hours
Mon-Wed, 2-3.30 p.m
515 Clark, Room 202
(or by appointment)

In this course we will be using critical texts that span a wide range of disciplines to examine gender and sexuality in the context of predominantly Muslim countries and cultures, as well as the larger transnational discourses that shape the ways in which Islam is imagined in relationship to gender and sexuality. By putting gender and sexuality at the center of our analysis, we will be able to tease out the complex relationships between religion, culture, nation-states and racialization, and think about how particular constructions of gender and sexuality have been central to the production and reproduction of each of these social structures. A critical knowledge of Orientalism, colonialism, and global inequalities is crucial for a careful and nuanced understanding of the different roles gender and sexuality have played, and continue to play in representations of Islam, and Muslims. This also underlines the current place of Islam not only as a world religion, or a set of beliefs and practices, but also as a "signifer." We will spend some time at the beginning of the course on the impact of processes such as on Middle East and Africa, and how they complicate the discussions of "Muslim cultures" as such. At the end of this course you will have developed a historical understanding of many contemporary discussions around Islam and what gets referred to as "Muslim cultures" and should be able to critically engage with and complicate the terms/issues such as "cultural difference," "women's and LGBT rights," "modernity/civilization" that are widely and easily deployed in current political and moral discourses around the Middle East and Islam.

Required Readings
Coursepack (at Norris Bookstore)

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi.

A Field Guide for Female Interrogators by Coco Fusco.
**Course Assignments**

* Weekly Blog Posts 20%

Every Sunday by 5 p.m. you are required to post two to three paragraphs on the course blog reflecting on the upcoming week's readings. You are very welcome to incorporate things you might have read in the news, or other sources not assigned in the course, if they help you think about, question and complicate the issues brought up in the week's readings. But this is ok only as long as you are demonstrating a deep understanding of and engagement with the course material. Everyone is required to have a look at other student-blogger's posts before they come to class on Monday, and we will do our best to incorporate your thoughts and questions into our discussion.

* Group Memos 15%

Every student is required to sign up for two class sessions to be part of the memo group for that day. Memo groups will consist of 3-4 students and every group will meet in person outside of the class sessions to discuss the readings for the day, and prepare a one-page memo with:

- A couple of paragraphs summarizing the central questions asked and the main arguments developed in the readings, in your own words.

- 3-4 discussion questions about the readings.

- 1-2 "quotable quotes." (These will also help you think about what is quote-worthy when you are working on your papers.)

* Midterm Paper 20%

The midterm is a 5-6 page analysis of the readings covered until the due date of the paper indicated on your syllabus. There will be three different prompts to choose from and you are required to put at least 3 different authors in conversation while composing your responses.

* Final Paper 30%

There is no final exam for this course. Instead, you are required to write a 10-12 page research paper. You will be submitting a one-page proposal for your research paper approximately three weeks before the due date and will get feedback on it. You are always very welcome to come to my office hours to discuss your research ideas and/or brainstorm about a research topic. Your papers will be combining the research you have conducted about the topic you selected with the course materials we covered throughout the quarter.
All written work is to be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, with standard margin sizes. Please do not turn in unstapled work.

It is crucial that you take great care in putting together and articulating your ideas. In all your writing, I expect you to be elaborate, precise, analytically clear, very well organized and sophisticated thinkers of gender, sexuality and power.

* Attendance and Participation %15

Attendance in this course is mandatory, and it is crucial that you come to class prepared to discuss the material. The weekly blog posts and memos are there to prepare you for participation in class discussions, and if you do not read the material and do a good job with those exercises it will be very hard for you to participate in the discussion. You should think of the lecture and the readings in no way as mimicking each other – the lectures are not a summary of the readings; they rather will be going hand in hand and complement each other in various ways.

Participation in class discussions will also help you articulate your questions and your ideas in a friendly setting. You should never be discouraged to talk, but also remember that ideas informed by the readings and by the lectures are formulated into much better statements. Also, you learn much better when you verbalize what you know. I want you to feel that we are all working as a team, with each other rather than against each other competing for grades. Think of this course as a collaborative intellectual project where we help each other to think and learn. I am hoping you will learn from me as well as from each other.

Course Rules, Etiquette and Student Responsibilities

You are responsible for knowing any information on the syllabus and on class handouts. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and to get any relevant notes from peers and handouts. It is your responsibility to hand your assignments in to me on time. It is your responsibility to make sure all assignments are returned to you with a grade (i.e., if you miss class, you need to find out if papers were returned. If you are in class, but you don’t get your paper back, you need to find out why). It is your responsibility to contact me before the due date if you are not handing an assignment in on time. If you are asked to re-do any assignment, it is your responsibility to return the assignment by the set date. If you qualify for a note-taker, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Services and Programs and notify me at the beginning of the quarter so that I can ask for a volunteer note-taker.

When we are having a discussion, please be respectful of everyone else’s right to speak. Not everybody is equally comfortable with talking in a big group. Hence, especially if you are comfortable and talk often, please watch for others who might want to talk, but
might need a short break before they can get into discussion. So, do not dominate discussion, but make sure your opinion is heard every session.

When you are composing a blog post, or a paper, make sure every sentence you write that is not your own is cited properly. *Everything you read anywhere, including websites, wikipedia, the newspaper, or a book has to be cited.*

Attendance is mandatory in the course, and I will be taking attendance every session. The only excused absences are if you bring a note from a doctor, or if you are traveling for the university in some capacity. I will need proof of those as soon as you have paperwork showing you missed class due to health reasons, a university competition etc.

Course Schedule

Week 1

January 3rd:

Introductions and Intro to the Course: Why study Gender and Sexuality in Relation to Islam?


January 4th:

Framing the Course: Orientalism, Representation, Knowledge and Power


Week 2:

January 9th:

Framing the Course: Imperialism, Representation, Knowledge, Power, and Sexuality


January 11th:

Feminism and Islam: Feminist Correctives to Islamic Knowledge from Within


Week 3

January 16th

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day -no class.

January 18th

Feminism and Islam: Islamic Feminisms


Movie: Divorce Iranian Style

Week 4

January 23rd

Feminism and Islam. Critiquing Western Feminisms I: Colonialism, Feminism and Islam


**January 25th**

Feminism and Islam. Critiquing Western Feminisms I (cont.): *Colonialism, Feminism, and Islam*


**Week 5**

**January 30th**

Feminism and Islam: Critiquing Western Feminisms II: *Modernity, Emancipation and the Western Liberal Subject*


**February 1st**

**MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

Islam and Masculinities


**Week 6**

**February 6th**

Islam and Femininities


**February 8th**

Islam, Girlhood, Class and Representation


**Week 7**

**February 13th**

The History of Sexuality and Islam: Sexual Epistemologies


**February 15th**

The History of Sexuality and Islam: Sexual Epistemologies (cont.)


Movie: Jihad for Love

Week 8

February 20th

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE.

Islam, Nation and the State


February 22nd

Islam, Nation and the State (continued)


**Week 9**

**February 27th**

Contemporary Implications of Gendered/Sexualized Imaginings of Islam

Readings: 


**February 29th**

Contemporary Implications of Gendered/Sexualized Imaginings of Islam (cont.): Abu Ghraib as a Case Study

Readings: 


**Week 10**

**March 5th**

Contemporary Implications of Gendered/Sexualized Imaginings of Islam (cont.): Homonationalism, Pink-washing -Moving the Debate to Other Imperial Centers
Readings:


March 7th

Reading Day!

FINAL EXAM DUE: MONDAY, MARCH 12TH by noon, in Kresge 2-321 (Gender Studies Office).