

**Department of Religion**

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*Where is the life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*  
— T. S. Eliot

## **Cinematic Encounters: Muslims and/in/of the West**

winter 2021

RELI 230

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Zoom drop-in hours: 1:00-1:30pm daily

### **Our goals:**

- (A) Familiarity with some of the basic teachings and practices that Muslims often associate with “Islam.”
- (B) Awareness of the diversity of religious traditions among Muslims.
- (C) Ability to interpret Islamic traditions using the tools of comparative religious studies.

**Please read each day’s material in the order indicated, prepare a response to the focus question, and (once a week) provide a journal entry**

### **Preliminary readings & assignments**

- ∞ this syllabus
- ∞ each film listed below as well as *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (US, dir.: Jeremy Earp & Sut Jhally, 2006)
- ∞ Online: Center for American Progress, “Fear, Inc” (pp. 1-10, 27-51, 97-103, 109-120) (more if you like, but at least this)  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/religion/reports/2011/08/26/10165/fear-inc/>
- ∞ Moodle: Echo360: An Entirely Incomplete Introduction to Muslim Practices
- ∞ Moodle: Echo360: An Utterly Insufficient Intro to Christian Traditions

2 January      One journal entry due for the “Fear, Inc” reading and the *Reel Bad Arabs* film

4 January      One two-page paper comparing any two of the films

### **Our class**

5 January      **Kingdom of Heaven** (US, dir: *Ridley Scott, 2005*)  
Moodle: “Pope Urban II Calls for a Crusade”

Moodle: Jonathan Riley-Smith, "The Crusades as Christian Holy Wars"  
Moodle: Carole Hillenbrand, from *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*

- 6 January **Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India (*India, dir: Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001*)**  
Online: Philip Lutgendorf, "Lagaan": <https://uiowa.edu/indiancinema/lagaan>  
Moodle: Scott Cook, from *Colonial Encounters in Age of High Imperialism*  
Moodle: Anderson, ch 6
- 7 January **Battle for Algiers (*La battaglia di Algeri, Italy/Algeria, dir: Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966*)**  
Moodle: Matthew Connelly, "Rethinking the Cold War and Decolonization:  
The Grand Strategy of The Algerian War for Independence"  
Moodle: Natalya Vince, "Transgressing Boundaries: Gender, Race, Religion,  
and 'Françaises Musulmanes' during Algerian War of Independence."
- 8 January **Lone Survivor (*US, dir: Peter Berg, 2013*)**  
Gopal, chs. 1-3
- 10 January **Analytic paper due at 11.55 pm on TurnItIn**
- 11 January **Zero Dark Thirty (*US, dir: Kathryn Bigelow, 2012*)**  
Online: George W. Bush: Axis of Evil speech  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>  
Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, chs 3-5
- 12 January **Khuda Kay Liye ("In the Name of God," *Pakistan, dir. Shoaib Mansoor, 2007*)**  
Gopal, chs. 5-7
- 13 January **The Beauty Academy of Kabul (*US, dir: Liz Mermin, 2010*)**  
Moodle: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist  
Scholarship and Colonial Discourses"  
Moodle: Irena Makarushka, "Women Spoken For: Images Displaced Desire"
- 14 January **Malcolm X (*US, dir: Spike Lee, 1992*)**  
Moodle: James Cone, from *Martin & Malcolm & America*
- 15 January **My Name Is Khan (*India, dir: Karan Johar, 2010*)**  
Moodle: GhaneaBassiri, ch 7
- 18 January **AmericanEast (*US, dir: Hesham Issawi, 2008*)**  
Moodle: Daniel Burke, "How Muslims flipped Hollywood's script"  
Moodle: Axis of Evil Comedy Tour  
**11.55 p.m. RAW paper outline, thesis statement, and annotated bibliography due**

**Friday, 25 January • 11.55 pm • RAW paper due on TurnItIn**

**To be purchased or found on the online eReserve system:**

Anand Gopal, *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War through Afghan Eyes*. 1250069262

Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11*. 0226482030

- • All of the texts above are also on eReserve in the library: Use

<http://eres.wesleyan.edu.ezproxy.wesleyan.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?&page=instr>

Reading material not included in the books above can be found in:

- Reader available at Cardinal Print and Copy (order through WesPortal) – this is preferable for those on campus and able to purchase it
- On Moodle

**Helpful reference sources**

1. Index Islamicus (online thru library site).
2. Lindsay Jones, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (online thru library site).
3. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, John Esposito, ed.
4. *Cultural Atlas of Islam*. Isma'il and Lois Al-Faruqi.
5. *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. Cyril Glasse.

**Our learning community**

We endeavor to create a **learning community** in which you discuss the issues that are of concern to you and hear those of others, even as we all share our questions. **Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to be punctual and participate** in discussions with their **cameras on (if possible)**. In addition, each student will participate in one small group discussion with the professor every two weeks. Students who plan to miss class due to a religious holiday must notify the professor at least a week in advance.

*Your participation grade relies heavily on your **familiarity with the readings & your insightful, critical engagement with them & the other content shared in the seminar.***

**Accessibility resources**

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#), located in North College, rooms 021/022, or call 860-685-5581 to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

PLEASE! Once you have obtained documentation, don't hesitate to discuss with me your needs for accommodation.

### Classroom etiquette

Our time together is **an opportunity to forge an environment and community of learning**. The more focused and respectful we are of that time and place, the more intense our experience and the greater the possibilities for discovery. To that end, please observe the following courtesies during class:

- **Disagree** with your classmates and professor, but **do not disrespect** anyone.
- Have **no communication with anyone outside** of class during class.
- Go to the **bathroom before class or on the break**: folks coming and going disrupt others.
- If you're loquacious, **be mindful** of allowing others the chance to speak; if you're the strong silent type, **rise to the occasion** of helping carry the conversation.

### Guidelines for online learning

Creating a learning community when none of us are in the same room has its **challenges, and advantages**. These are good ideas for any online interaction since the difficulty of protracted staring at a screen and listening to folks over tinny speakers can contribute to Zoom fatigue.

Here are the **expectations** for everyone:

- **Cameras remain on throughout class**, except during the break. If you have technological or other reasons for not being able to do so, that's fine but please tell me.
- **Do not communicate with anyone else during class**, check email, surf the web, or play Pokémon or Resident Evil. It's obvious and distracting, and disrespectful. Save it for the break.

Here are **suggestions**, offered with the recognition that different folks have different limitations:

- **Choose your setting**. Check how your image appears onscreen. For instance, sitting with your back to a window will likely make you hard to see, if not blind others.
- **Use a virtual background** (but not an animated one, please). You can express your inner world, show your favorite pic of the day, and hide the dirty laundry.
- **Use headphones if you can** so you are less distracted if there is ambient noise.
- **Use a microphone if you can** to improve the sound your classmates will hear.
- If you need equipment and cannot procure it, please see me.

### Critical reading journal

Each student once a week will submit **by 10 am the day of class** three sentences regarding that day's reading **that references specific parts of the reading (include page numbers)**. The first two sentences will offer an **analytic observation about the reading**. The third will be a **significant question regarding the reading itself** or **what the reading describes that is**

**possible for us to answer in class** (e.g., NOT “Will Star Trek ever have a Muslim character?”) These will be submitted on Moodle and assessed according to the seriousness and intention given to them.

One critical reading journal will be due on 2 January, before our class meets.

**Grades are as follows:** 0 – not completed; 1- insufficient effort or unclear meaning; 2- sufficient; 3 – demonstrative of refined critical and/or integrative thinking.

**Note: Critical analysis is not just the act of criticizing (although it can lead to this). Rather, it is the methodical application of theoretical tools in order to see more in a text than the text explicitly states.**

### Contemporary example exercise

Each student will choose a reading **from a current news source** (in the past two years) or **website of a Muslim organization** for which ze will bring to class an example of the current reference either to the main person, the specific culture, or to the use of the text under consideration in class that day. **If the reading is specifically about a particular nation(s), then the sources must originate from those nation(s).** Please be certain to **send to the professor a one-sentence description of the example by 10 am** on the day of the class. You might begin to follow a news source from a Muslim-majority nation.

- **A strongly recommended resource:** <http://www.worldpress.org/gateway.htm>

### All written work must:

- *be your original work, created only for this seminar*
- *be double-spaced and printed in 12-point font*
- *have the page numbers noted for all references to class readings*
- *be submitted in either PDF or Word format (NOT GoogleDocs)*
- *be submitted to TurnItIn.com (accessed through your portfolio)*
- *not feature your name anywhere on the paper or in the document's name at all. Please just list your student number at the top of the first page & in the file's name.*
- *include no more than one quote of full sentence length per page (quoting words or short phrases is fine).*

**Note:** Our Research Librarian is Kendall Hobbs. He's a stellar resource to help you research papers. Contact him at 860 685-3962 or [khobbs@wesleyan.edu](mailto:khobbs@wesleyan.edu) or via the link on our Moodle page.

The **Writing Workshop** is an astounding resource and offers tutors to help you with your writing. Find them as <https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/writingworkshop/index.html>.

### Initial film comparison assignment

The **Initial film comparison assignment** allows students the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about any two films from the syllabus by placing them in comparison with one another. The result will not be a simple contrast but an effort to provide critical insights into

each of the films by exploring significant set of similarities and differences and drawing meaningful conclusions. The paper must be **only** two pages long.

*Your grade will be determined by (a) the applicability of the sources to the question, (b) the analysis of the sources through (c) the successful application of the class readings and lectures, and (d) the writing quality.*

### Second film analysis paper

For the second half of the class, each student will choose one or two films (but no more than two) that we have viewed during that part of the seminar and write a four-page essay that offers critical insights into it based on class readings. Class readings must be cited but no quotes are allowed, except brief ones from the film. While these materials will play a role in the analysis, the student's insights about the film(s) must be original and not derive directly from either seminar readings or discussion. No outside sources are allowed and please do not offer plot summaries. The paper must be **only** four pages long.

*Your grade will be determined by (a) the applicability of the sources to the question, (b) the analysis of the sources through (c) the successful application of the class readings and lectures, and (d) the writing quality.*

### RAW Paper

One research, analysis, and writing (RAW) paper (10-12 pages) on any approved topic that examines issues of religion and cultural engagements **in a specific culture** as portrayed in films. Neither the specific culture nor films chosen can have been considered in depth in class. The paper must include analysis based in part on at least **one of the analytic themes** (e.g., myth, social constructions, modernity, nationalism) discussed in class. The thesis statement must include reference to the films explored. **Papers must focus on Muslims**, not on the attitudes of non-Muslims toward them, although this might be considered. Papers allow you an opportunity to explore personal interests and develop writing skills. These papers must be entirely original with ALL borrowed material cited and a bibliography included. The **outline, thesis statement, and annotated** bibliography of the paper are **due by 11.55 p.m. on Monday, 18 January. Completed papers are due by 11.55 pm on Monday, 25 January.** BE SURE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE RULES of PLAGIARISM EXPLAINED BELOW. PLAGIARISM CAN RESULT IN AN IMMEDIATE FAILING GRADE and AN HONOR BOARD HEARING. Please observe all guidelines provided on the handout.

*Your grade will be determined by (a) the depth of the research, (b) the range of your resources, (c) the sharpness of the analysis, (d) the successful application of analytic skills and concepts developed in the seminar, and (e) the quality of the writing.*

### Basis of grade

The following elements comprise each student's grade: attendance & participation – 10%; contemporary review presentation – 10%; journal – 10%; the comparison film analysis paper – 20 %; second film analysis paper assignment – 20%; and the RAW paper – 30%.

Overall, grading follows Wesleyan's stated rubric:

A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, passing but unsatisfactory; E, failure; and F, bad failure.

<https://catalog.wesleyan.edu/academic-regulations/academic-standing/>

### **Honor System**

Students are expected to abide by the Honor System in regard to all work and participation in this class. For details, see

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/index.html>