

CINEMATIC CULTURE CLASH?: MUSLIMS AND/IN THE WEST

RELI/GSAS 230Z

As of 11/6/2023 – subject to change

What this course is:

- An open-ended exploration of the cinematic portrayal of encounters that some fictional, historical, and contemporary Western and non-Western Muslims have had in and with non-Muslim Westerners.

What this course is not:

- A survey course of all forms or instances of such encounters.
- An endeavor to define the “essence of Islam,” although we will learn about divergent Muslim claims to this.
- An exercise in judging the morality of others’ worldviews and practices. While each of us will inevitably come to our own judgment and at times we must describe the objectionable consequences of some others’ worldviews and practices, as a seminar our first objective is – by listening to and learning about them – to understand how reasonable people can come to very different perspectives that vary from one another and from our own.

Before you commit to this course, please note:

- Among other topics, this seminar explores issues that involve religious, racial, gender, ethnic, and nationalist discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, and persecution (including various forms of violence). We will endeavor to create as safe a space and community as possible to examine these issues, but at times they will undoubtedly be discomfiting for most – if not all – of us, the professor included. This discomfort will not be uniform but specific to our personal, family, and communal experiences.
- Efforts to understand malignant, destructive, and discriminatory ideologies and practices are not the same as justifying them.
- Scholarship and primary sources used in the course derive from various cultures and periods of history, and may or may not accord with the most recent scholarly conventions of appropriate language and punctuation, or they may concur with the specific conventions of one field of study without meeting those of others.
- Most of the scholarship we will read is not written primarily for college students but for professional scholars. As such, it emerges from a discourse that often assumes familiarity with historical injustices without necessarily calling them out as one might expect by news media or other public voices. Hence, a lack of comment on injustices is not necessarily an indication of disinterest or denial about them.

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 CULTURE CLASH? MUSLIMS AND/IN THE WEST

winter 2024

Prof. Peter Gottschalk

Drop-in hours: 5 pm daily & by appointment

RELI/GSAS 230Z

pgottschalk@wesleyan.edu

This is a preliminary syllabus

Our goals:

- (A) Familiarization with cinematically imagined historical and contemporary engagements with Muslims and the West, in the West, and of the West.
- (B) Awareness of the diversity of religious traditions among Muslims and Christians.
- (C) Ability to interpret various religious and secularist traditions using the tools of comparative religious studies.

Please read each day's material in the order indicated and make a journal entry

Preliminary readings & assignments

∞ this syllabus

∞ 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/>

8 January One journal entry due for the "Fear, Inc" reading

Visions of Imperialism & Nationalism

9 January **Kingdom of Heaven** (US, dir: Ridley Scott, 2005. 144 mins)

PowerPoint for literacy quiz: An Entirely Incomplete Introduction to Muslim Practices
(on Moodle)

"Pope Urban II Calls for a Crusade"

Jonathan Riley-Smith, "The Crusades as Christian Holy Wars"

Carole Hillenbrand, from *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*

10 January **Jinnah** (UK/Pakistan, dir: Jamil Dehlavi, screenplay: Akbar S. Ahmed & Jamil Dehlavi, 1998. 110 mins)

Scott Cook, from *Colonial Encounters in Age of High Imperialism*

Benedict Anderson, ch 6 of *Imagined Communities*

Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People (US, dir: Sut Jhally, 2006. 50 min)

11 January **Gandhi** – portions (UK/India, dir: Richard Attenborough, screenplay: John Briley, 1982. 192 mins)

Dean Mahomet & Michael H. Fisher, selections from *The Travels of Dean Mahomet: An Eighteenth-Century Journey through India*
Sayyid Ahmed Khan, selections from *Safarnamah, Musafiran-i Landan*

12 January **Battle for Algiers** (a.k.a. *La battaglia di Algeri, Italy/Algeria, dir: Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966. 121 mins*)

Matthew Connelly, "Rethinking the Cold War and Decolonization: The Grand Strategy of The Algerian War for Independence"

Natalya Vince, "Transgressing Boundaries: Gender, Race, Religion, and 'Françaises Musulmanes' during Algerian War of Independence."

14 January **Short analytic paper no. 1 due at 11.55 pm on TurnItIn**

15 January **Monsieur Ibrahim** (*France 2003, dir: François Dupeyron, 95 mins*)

Mayanthi Fernando, "Reconfiguring Freedom"

Mayanthi Fernando, "Exceptional Citizens"

Jalal Al-e Ahmad, from *Gharbzadegi [Weststruckness]*

Persepolis (*France-US, dir: Marjane Satrapi, Vincent Paronnaud, 2007. 96 mins*)

Visions of Afghanistan & Pakistan

16 January **Zero Dark Thirty** (*US, dir: Kathryn Bigelow, 2012. 157 mins*)

PowerPoint for literacy quiz: An Utterly Insufficient Intro to Christian Traditions (on Moodle)

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 + all appendices

17 January **Khuda Kay Liye** (a.k.a. *In the Name of God, Pakistan, dir. Shoaib Mansoor, 2007. 179 mins*)

Gopal, chs. 1-3, 5-7

18 January **The Beauty Academy of Kabul** (*US, dir: Liz Mermin, 2010. 74 mins*)

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses"

Irena Makarushka, "Women Spoken For: Images Displaced Desire"

Wadjda (*Saudi Arabia, dir: Haifaa al-Mansour, 2012. 98 mins*)

Visions of America

19 January **Malcolm X** (*US, dir: Spike Lee, screenplay: Arnold Perl, Spike Lee, & Alex Haley 1992. 202 mins*)

James Cone, selections from *Martin & Malcolm & America*

20 January **Short analytic paper no. 2 due at 11.55 pm on TurnItIn**

22 January **The Taqwacores** (US, dir: Eyad Zahra, screenplay: Michael Muhammad Knight & Eyad Zahra, 2010. 83 mins)

GhaneaBassiri, ch 7

Daniel Burke, "How Muslims flipped Hollywood's script"

Taqwacore: The Birth of Punk Islam (US, dir: Omar Majeed, 2009, 80 mins)

Ms. Marvel: season 1, episode 1 (US, dir: Adil El Arbi & Bilall Fallah)

Wednesday, 24 January • 11.55 pm • Short analytic paper no. 3 paper due on TurnItIn

To be purchased at the bookstore or found on the online eReserve system:

James Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*. 1570759790

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 link on Moodle • •

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. PG asks that students who plan to miss class due to a religious holiday notify him at least a week in advance.

Should you be ill and (wisely) remain home, you may arrange with a classmate to use their laptop to Zoom into class.

*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 have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021 or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

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

Title IX Resources:

If trauma inhibits your ability to fully participate in class, please contact Debbie Colucci, Title IX Coordinator, at dcolucci@wesleyan.edu, or your class dean. Additionally, and if you are comfortable, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements.

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.

Quizzes

Two literacy quizzes will be given during the seminar to encourage you to develop a command of key Christian & Islamic terms and concepts.

Critical reading journal

Each student once a day 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)**. These will be submitted on Moodle and assessed according to the seriousness and intention given to them.

1-2: The first two sentences will offer **an analytic observation about the reading**.

3. 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?”)

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.

All written work must:

- **be your original work, created by you (not your AI pal) 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).** Use citations for all borrowed material, whether quoted or not.

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 or via the link on our Moodle page.

The Purdue Writing Lab is another amazing resource: <https://owl.purdue.edu>.

Short analytic paper assignments

The **three short analytic paper assignments** allow students the opportunity to fuse their class study with analysis of various sources while refining the ability to write succinctly. Students choose from a selection of topics for each paper. Each paper must be **only** three pages long.

Your grade will be determined by (a) your ability to use class readings and lectures to make original, insightful comments about the sources you find, (b) your understanding of the class readings and themes mentioned in the prompt, (c) the quality of your sources and the specificity of your references to them, and (d) the quality of the writing.

Basis of grade

The following elements comprise each student's grade: attendance, participation – 10%; daily journal – 10%; each literacy quiz – 5%; and each analytic paper assignment – 20%.

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/>

Curmudgeonly notice

The use of computers, tablets, and cell phones is not allowed in the classroom except for those with a documented need for accommodation. If you have read the day's readings on a digital source, then **please take extensive notes to use in class** during discussion. While I appreciate that some students may find it easier to type than write, the unfortunately inevitable web surfing, Instagramming, and texting by a few students distracts the rest, and the prof. Plus, if you've seen Westworld, Battlestar Galactica, Terminator, Ex Machina, or any number of Star Trek episodes, I think you'll agree with me that we don't want to bring computers into our classrooms and make them any smarter than they already are.

The use of artificial intelligence is limited to spell- and grammar-checking. Its use otherwise is akin to having a machine help lift weights while weight-training. Our minds need exercise and development to facilitate learning and creativity. For this course, artificial supplements would be counterproductive to our ends. Mental training, like physical training, can be trying at the outset but through practice one learns patterns of behavior that make creative and analytic thinking more reflexive. Meanwhile, **AI engines such as ChatGPT produce their own views and voice, so using their products in whole or part is plagiarism** and will be referred to the Honor Board. If you're tempted to use AI to jumpstart a project, then please turn to your prof and/or seminar mates for help instead, since this is in keeping with our community of learning model.

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/honor-code.html>

Religious/spiritual observance resources

If you anticipate that your religious/spiritual observance may conflict with academic obligations such as attending class, taking examinations, or submitting assignments, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements. Should you require additional support or guidance, please feel free to reach out to any of the chaplains in the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/index.html>.

Tips for Better Writing

Before you write anything, you should know **who your audience is** and what style best suits their expectations. Unless instructed otherwise, you should assume that university papers need to be formal. Avoid a conversational style. Do not use contractions (“I’ve,” “it’s,” “they’re”).

Introduce your essay with a **single paragraph** within which you **succinctly describe your thesis in a single sentence.**

The key to successful writing is **SIMPLICITY** and **DIVERSITY**. Clearly express yourself in ways that makes reading enjoyable.

Before you write anything, you should know **who your audience is** and what style best suits their expectations.

Introduce your essay with a **single paragraph** within which you succinctly describe your thesis in a single sentence.

Spellcheck is not enough. You must **proofread** your work and can best accomplish this by reading aloud to yourself. Your ear often picks up mistakes that your eye will not.