

ISLAM AND POPULAR CULTURE

“The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.” Guy Debord

Instructor: Michael Vicente Perez
Email: mvperez@uw.edu
Class Day/Time: T/TH 1:30–3:20
Class Location: KNE 110
Office: DEN 239
Office Hours: Monday 2-3pm

Teaching Asst. Stephanie Maher
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Office Hours: Thursday 12-1pm

Teaching Asst. Kenny Robinson
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Office Hours: Friday 2-3pm



Course Description:

In recent decades, representations of Islam and Muslims have become a more prominent feature of global popular culture. From Five Percenter hip-hop to the creation of Mecca Cola, Muslims have participated in the growing market of popular culture both as consumers and producers. This course takes a critical approach to popular culture with a focus on representations of Islam and Muslims. We will examine the meanings of Islam within popular culture and consider how issues of power, identity (gender, race, ethnicity, religious, class), and politics intersect within these representations. In this course, we will also examine how Muslims and others (non-Muslims) use popular cultural forms to represent, express, and contest the meaning of Islam and the status of its adherents. Our sources will include documentary and fiction films, television programs, music, visual texts (comic books/graphic novels), comedy, poetry, and fiction novels.

*Students are not required to have any previous studies in Islam for this course.

Course Goals:

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Understand the meaning of popular culture
2. Understand key analytical approaches to the study of popular culture
3. Understand relationship between identity, politics, and popular culture
4. Identify key issues in Islam and popular culture

Course Requirements:

I. Course Texts:

1. Alsultany, Evelyn. 2012. *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation After 9/11*. New York University Press.
2. Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2013. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*. Harvard University Press.
3. Van Nieuwkerk, Karin. 2011. *Muslim Rap, Halal Soaps, and Revolutionary Theater: Artistic Developments in the Muslim World*. University of Texas Press.
4. Wilson, G. Willow. 2012. *Alif the Unseen*. Grove Press.

II. Participation and Etiquette:

- Policies on participation: Come to every class on time and prepared to participate. Keep up with the readings.
- Policies on etiquette: Be respectful. Express yourself freely but with consideration for others in the classroom. We will agree to some ground rules on the first day of class. You're expected to follow the ground rules.
- Policies on cell phones: No cell phones in class (turn them off and don't text).
- Policies on computers: No computers in class unless there is a verifiable need.

III. Assignments:

All assignments must be turned in on time. No late work will be accepted (without penalty). If you have an emergency, please notify immediately in writing/email. You must type your assignments. I will not accept assignments sent by email nor will I accept any assignments in my office or mailbox.

1. Participation (5pts.): This course is designed to critically assess representations of Islam and Muslims in popular culture. Our goals as instructors will be to facilitate productive discussions and critical thinking about the readings. Your participation is therefore essential for the success of this course. Students are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, and come prepared. **Your participation will be evaluated according to your willingness to play an active role in class discussions.** We will occasionally call on students to answer questions concerning course topics and readings so be ready to contribute.
2. Quizzes (5pts.): I will assign **five short quizzes** in class (lecture/quiz section) throughout the quarter. The quizzes will be based on the readings, lectures, and/or class materials and will be used to measure your engagement with the course topics and issues. **No make-up quizzes will be permitted without written documentation (medical emergency).**
3. Short Reflection Papers (50pts.): You will prepare **ten short reflection papers** discussing in-class materials. These assignments will be **no more than one page long (1.5 spacing)** and will be due on select dates on Canvas. I will provide the writing prompts on the day of each assignment and will post it on the course

website thereafter. Reflection assignments will require an analytical engagement with course materials that develops a concise analytical argument. The prompts will clarify all writing instructions.

4. Reading Response Papers (20pts.): You will prepare **two short reading response papers** during the quarter. Each response paper will be no more than 2 pages long (double-spaced) and will cover particular topics from our texts (readings). You will be provided with a set of guidelines for the response papers prior to the assigned readings and I will post it on the course website thereafter. Each paper is worth 10 pts.

5. Final Analytical Paper (20pts.): You will prepare **one final analytical paper** during the quarter. The paper will be **no more than 4 pages long** (double-spaced) and will cover a particular theme in the course using outside class examples (films, television shows, music, etc.). The paper will be critical and analytical: you will have to identify and examine some popular cultural artifact in terms of the concepts learned in the course. I will provide a set of guidelines for the final paper and you will have one week to complete the assignment.

IV. Important Dates:

Reflection Paper:

- #1 April 3
- #2 April 10
- #3 April 15
- #4 April 29
- #5 May 6
- #6 May 8
- #7 May 20
- #8 May 22
- #9 May 26
- #10 June 3

Critical Response Paper:

- #1 April 22
- #2 May 13

Final Paper:

Monday, June 9

V. Course Evaluation:

100-99	4.0	A	75	2.4	C+
98-97	3.9		74	2.3	
96-95	3.8	A-	73	2.2	
94	3.7		72	2.1	C
93-92	3.6		71	2.0	
91-90	3.5		70	1.9	
89	3.4	B+	69	1.8	C-
88-87	3.3		68	1.7	
86	3.2		67	1.6	
85-84	3.1	B	66	1.5	
83-82	3.0		65	1.4	D+
81-80	2.9		64	1.3	

79	2.8	B-	63	1.2	
78	2.7		62	1.1	D
77	2.6		61	1.0	
76	2.5		60	0.9	

VI. Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism and cheating constitute academic misconduct and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the use of other people's words, thoughts, and/or ideas without properly citing their source. Plagiarism may involve any of the following: 1) blatant copying of other's words including your classmates; 2) paraphrasing the words or ideas of another without acknowledging the source; 3) using other's theories or ideas without acknowledging the source; 4) utilizing any fact that is not already common knowledge; 5) turning in another's work as your own.

While I encourage students to work and study together, all of the work you submit for this class must be in your own words or properly acknowledged. Plagiarized work will result in a "0" for the assignment. If you have any questions concerning this issue, please see me immediately and/or visit the following website:

<http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/plag.html>

VII. Course Schedule and Readings:

Readings listed under Tuesday are to be read for the following Thursday class meeting. Readings listed under Thursday are to be read for the following Tuesday class meeting.

WEEK 1: Islam, Muslims, and American Orientalism March 31-April 4

Tuesday:

*Edward Said: Covering Islam: Islam as News (pgs. 3-35)

Film: ABC Town Hall Debate: Should Americans Fear Islam? & The Doha Debates: Extremism

Thursday:

Elsultany: Introduction & Chapter 1 Challenging the Terrorist Stereotype (pgs. 1-46)

Film: Orientalism (selections) & What is Said about Arabs and Terrorism (selections)

Reflection Paper 1 Due

WEEK 2: Muslim Threats, Muslim Victims April 7-11

Tuesday:

Elsultany: Chapter 3 Evoking Sympathy for the Muslim Woman (pgs. 71-99)

Film: Homeland Season 1 Episodes 1 and 2

Thursday:

Elsultany: Chapter 4 Regulating Sympathy for the Muslim Man (pgs. 100-131)

Abu-Lughod: Introduction: Rights and Lives (pgs. 1-26)

Film: Paradise Now

Reflection Paper 2 Due

WEEK 3: The Muslim American

April 14-18

Tuesday:

Elsultany: Chapter 5 Selling Muslim American Identity (pgs. 132-161)

Film: Aliens in America (selections) and Little Mosque on the Prairie (selections)

Reflection Paper 3 Due

Thursday:

Abu-Lughod: Chapter 1 Do Muslim Women (Still) Need Saving? (pgs. 27-53)

Films: Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football and the American Dream

WEEK 4: The Muslim Woman and Man

April 21-25

Tuesday:

Abu-Lughod: Chapter 2 The New Common Sense

Film: Law and Order SVU Season 2(2) "Honor"

Critical Response 1 Due

Thursday:

Abu-Lughod: Chapter 3 Authorizing Moral Crusades (pgs. 54-112)

Film: Persepolis

WEEK 5: The Muslim Woman and Man

April 28 – May 2

Tuesday:

Abu-Lughod: Chapter 4 The Seduction of the "Honor Crime" (pgs. 113-142)

Film: Wadjda

Reflection Paper 4 Due

Thursday:

*Khabeer: Rep that *Islam*: The Rhyme and Reason of American Islamic Hip Hop

*Mohaiemen: Fear of a Muslim Planet: Hip Hop's Hidden History

*Swedenburg: Islam in the Mix: Lessons of the Five Percent

Film: A Separation

WEEK 6: Islamic and Hip Hop

May 5-9

Tuesday:

Van Nieuwkerk: Chapter 1 Hardcore Muslims: Islamic Themes in Turkish Rap Between Diaspora and Homeland (pgs. 27-54)

Film: Malcolm X (selections) and The Black Power Mixtape (selections)

Reflection Paper 5 Due

Thursday:

Van Nieuwkerk: Chapter 2 Contesting Islamic Concepts of Morality: Heavy Metal in Istanbul (pgs. 55-84) and Chapter 3 Iranian Popular Music in Los Angeles: A Transnational Public beyond The Islamic State (pgs. 85-114)

Film: I Love Hip Hop in Morocco

Guest Lecture: Adil Eit Hamd (Lecturer and Musician, UW)

Reflection Paper 6 Due

WEEK 7: Islam and Hip Hop and Islam and Rock

May 12-16

Tuesday:

Van Nieuwkerk: Chapter 4 Ritual as Strategic Action: The Social Logic of Musical Silence in Canadian Islam (pgs. 115-148)

Film: Slingshot Hip Hop

Critical Response Paper 2 Due

Thursday:

Willow Wilson: Chapters Zero-Four (pgs. 1-89)

Film: No One Knows About Persian Cats

WEEK 8: Muslims are Funny

May 19-23

Tuesday:

Willow Wilson: Chapters Five-Seven (pgs. 90-171)

Film: Taqwacores: The Birth of Punk Islam

Reflection Paper 7 Due

Thursday:
Willow Wilson: Chapters Eight-Eleven (pgs. 172-298)

Film: Allah Made Me Funny (selections) and The Muslims are Coming

Reflection Paper 8 Due

WEEK 9: Muslims Tell Stories May 26-30

Tuesday:
Willow Wilson: Chapters Twelve-Thirteen (pgs. 299-352)

Film: Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World

Reflection Paper 9 Due

Thursday:
Willow Wilson: Chapters Fourteen-Fifteen (pgs. 353-404)

Film: Bronx Princess and A Son's Sacrifice
Skype Lecture: Musa Syeed

WEEK 10: June 2-6

Tuesday:
Willow Wilson: Chapters Sixteen-Seventeen (pgs. 405-431)

Film: These Birds Walk

Reflection Paper 10 Due

Thursday:

Guest Lecture: G. Willow Wilson (Author and Poet)

Classes End

Final Papers Due Monday, June 9 on Canvas by 1:30pm