The 1980s in the Arab World
Thursday 5:00-7:50 pm

Dr. Shabout, She/Her/Hers
Office: Art 215
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:20-3:20, or e-mail me
E-mail: nada.shabout@unt.edu

Welcome to UNT!
As members of the UNT community, we have all made a commitment to be part of an institution that respects and values the identities of the students and employees with whom we interact. UNT does not tolerate identity-based discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. UNT’s full Non-Discrimination Policy can be found in the UNT Policies section of the syllabus.

Course Description:
Arguably because of its iconic pop culture, music, distinctive and easily recognizable aesthetics and fashion, video games and franchises, there seems to be much nostalgia for the 1980s. The decade in the Arab World, however, marked very different expectations. After the euphoria of the 1950s and 1960s, the lingering possibilities of the 1970s, the 1980s terminated any hope for a better life as it ushered in a new wave of disappointments and wars. The Arab diaspora, thus, increased around the world, instigating new relationships and stresses. For the arts, the decade ended with a major shift in production as the modernist aesthetics of the region faced the global contemporary in which it endeavored to find its place. The course will start by understanding the region, terminologies used, its cultures and social nodes, diaspora artists production and reception, issues of Orientalism, postcolonial constructs and strategies of exhibiting their work in “global” exhibitions. The course is designed to draw from and engage directly with the exhibition, A Banquet for Seaweed: Snapshots from the Arab 1980s, at the UNT Gallery (Oct 4, 2022- Jan 28, 2023) and the upcoming conference, “1980s: Representational Pressures, Departures, and Beginnings,” on Nov 3-5, 2022.

Course Material and Requirements:
All required readings are on Canvas, which means you do need to have access to a computer with internet access. You will need to upload and download text and images on Canvas for meetings and assignments. At times you will need a digital camera--your smartphone camera is fine.

Course Objectives:
1. Further develop your critical thinking, speaking, writing and research skills.

2. To develop and practice the skills needed to think critically about relationships between politics and visual production.

3. To develop an understanding of key concepts, methodologies and terminologies for the development of art from West Asia and North Africa, particularly of the 1980s.

4. To provide students with the analytical tools necessary for examining the political underpinnings of visual culture, particularly images representing cross-cultural encounters, Orientalism and the ways in which the discipline of art history has engaged with the conceptual strategies of post-colonial studies.

5. To develop a language through which to engage with contemporary cultural politics.

6. To become familiar with foundations and biases that inform the ways in which artists are represented and exhibitions construct narratives of artistic practice in a global context.

**Course Evaluation:**

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students the ability to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor and department to improve the quality of student experiences in the course.

**Grading System:**

You will be evaluated on your preparedness and performance in the course. You will also be evaluated on the organization, thoughtfulness, and resourcefulness of your writing assignments. Every student is expected to fully participate in the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Component</th>
<th>Weight of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions and Assignments</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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**Course Structure**

This is a course that meets for 3 hours every week Face-to-Face. You are expected to be in class. If you are not able, please notify me to discuss an alternative.

**Assignments**

Designated students as the week’s leaders will be responsible for a reading presentation in class. Following the class presentation, leaders will post their presentation and initiate a discussion thread based on the readings for that week. Your thread should provide a brief outline of the reading’s main arguments and 2 questions for discussion on the thread. Topics for the discussion thread can relate to specific images or the readings. Uploaded related images encouraged!

**Discussion Threads**

For each discussion thread, there will be a guiding topic and/or question. You are required to submit 2-3 entries (100-250 words/per response) that engage with the specific questions and each other’s’ responses. The course discussion thread will be posted on an agreed upon day of the week by the designated students. Your responses will be collectively graded based on their
thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and ability to make connections across course material and each other’s arguments.

Criteria:

- Read the postings submitted by other students. Threaded discussions provide the opportunity for interaction and learning from one another. This requires you to follow the posts of other students in your discussion group.
- Make reference to the relevant material from the text and other assigned readings.
- Make reference to information or ideas expressed by your classmates in their posts.

Final Project and Presentations: You have the option to choose from the below.

1. **Art History Paper**: (10-15 pages): In this paper, you will explore one of the themes of the course through a case study in its historical, cultural, and personal contexts. Papers should be typed, double spaced, with 12 point font and 1” margins.

2. **Exhibition Projects**: (5-7 pages): You may choose to complete an exhibition project in lieu of the Research Paper. You will still have to submit an abstract by the dates listed. You could choose to work with a partner. You are to curate an exhibition that explores the meaning and politics of abstraction in art from the MENA region or its diaspora. You will need to include at least 15 works of art in your exhibition and develop accompanying “label/wall text”—name of artist, date, media, dimensions, etc. In some cases, and for certain works, you might need to provide extended labels contextualizing the work. You will also submit a 5–7-page paper outlining the premise of your exhibition, its major themes, its historical context/s, a list of its included artworks, and its value to the art historical community. You will need to include bios of your artists and reasons why you chose them, you will then present your exhibition in class. How you chose to organize the exhibition and the presentation is up to you as long as it is coherent and well communicated. **Be creative!**

3. **Studio Project**: (5-7 pages): MFA students may choose to complete a studio project in lieu of the Research Paper. You will still have to choose and provide an abstract by the dates listed above. For the studio project you will investigate the course topic by producing a work of art that explores an aspect of a chosen theme. This can be interpreted in many different ways and you are encouraged to be creative. You will then write a 5-page paper outlining the arguments and motivations behind your created work. Check class schedule for dates and deadlines.

Technical Assistance

**UNT IT Help Desk**
Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
Live Chat: https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk/chatsupport
Phone: 940-565-2324
In Person: Sage Hall, Room 330
Hours and Availability: Visit https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk for up-to-date hours and availability
For additional support, visit Canvas Technical Help (https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328)

**Course Useful Resources:**

**Aramco World:** We produce *Aramco World* to increase cross-cultural understanding by broadening knowledge of the histories, cultures and geography of the Arab and Muslim worlds and their global interconnections, past and present. In print, *Aramco World* is distributed six times a year, without charge, to a limited number of interested readers; online, it is published on this site and available in tablet and mobile editions using the *Aramco World* app. Back issues from 1960 are searchable, and texts are available in full; photographs from archival articles are online from 2004 to the present.

**Artsy:** features the world’s leading galleries, museum collections, foundations, artist estates, art fairs, and benefit auctions, all in one place. Our growing database of 800,000 images of art, architecture, and design by 70,000 artists spans historical, modern, and contemporary works, and includes the largest online database of contemporary art. Artsy is used by art lovers, museum-goers, patrons, collectors, students, and educators to discover, learn about, and collect art. [https://www.artsy.net/artists](https://www.artsy.net/artists).

**CULTURUNNERS:** an independent arts organisation which supports artists journeys and production across physical and ideological borders: [http://culturunners.com/#](http://culturunners.com/#)

**e-flux:** Announcements about contemporary art exhibitions, events, and publications: [www.eflux.com](http://www.eflux.com).

**Hyperallergic:** a daily online art publication on art and the art world: [http://hyperallergic.com](http://hyperallergic.com)

**Ibraaz:** Initiated by the Kamel Lazaar Foundation in 2011, *Ibraaz* is the leading critical forum on visual culture in North Africa and the Middle East. We publish an annual online platform – consisting of essays, interviews, artists’ projects, and platform responses – that focuses on research questions conceived through a network of editorial contributors based in the Middle East and beyond. Our key editorial aim is to publish, alongside work by internationally renowned writers, academics, curators, activists, and filmmakers, emerging writers and artists: [https://www.ibraaz.org](https://www.ibraaz.org).

**The Mathaf Encyclopedia of Modernism and the Arab World:** The bilingual Mathaf Encyclopedia is a free online scholarly resource providing basic facts and in depth information on modern art of the Arab world: [http://www.encyclopedia.mathaf.org.qa/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.mathaf.org.qa/en/Pages/default.aspx)

**Nafas Art Magazine:** Nafas was developed by Universes in Universe - Worlds of Art (UiU) commissioned by the ifa, and published since March 2003 as one of the first online magazines for contemporary art from the Maghreb to the Middle East, from Central to Southeast Asia: [http://u-in-u.com/nafas/](http://u-in-u.com/nafas/).

**Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism:** An accessible and intuitive online platform, Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism brings together a wealth of interdisciplinary content about the Modernist period, and is the ideal starting point for any research in modernism. Access through UNT Library: [https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:4199](https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:4199)

Course Policies

**Attendance**
Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with me and your reading partner prior to being absent, so we can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform me if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 ([https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

**Policy on Quality of Written Work:**
Translating visual signs into verbal language is not an easy task. Thus, in the visual and subjective realm of art history, clarity of presented ideas is vital. Therefore, your written work will be evaluated in terms of proper grammar, syntax, and spelling, as well as the clear and logical presentation of ideas and argument. If you make errors in any of these areas consistently, your grade will be lowered. Any student needing or desiring certain kinds of assistance or general support in matters of writing should visit the University Writing Center.

Some warnings and guidelines: Be sure and proofread for spelling and grammar errors! If you have problems with your writing, feel free to seek out help from the University Writing Center. The Writing Center is located in Rm 105 of the Auditorium Building. The services are open to all students, free of charge. M-F 8am to 5pm. 565-2563. [www.unt.edu/writinglab/](http://www.unt.edu/writinglab/).

Papers must be formatted in 12-point font with 1” margins.

Save all work. That means save soft on your computer and on a back-up of your choice. Also, save hard copies. We will not accept excuses for lost work, printers out of cartridges or computers crash. Always plan for the worst and hope for the best when it comes to your technology. Always save your paper on a disc, and save often!! That way, if you have a problem with a hard drive or printer, you can go immediately to another computer to finish your work.

Not all computers are created equal. To guarantee success, use computers in the computer lab in the Art Building and not in your dorm, the library, Student Center, or even your own at home unless you are sure of its capability.

**UNT Policies**

**Academic Integrity Policy**
Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and
sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

**Cheating and Plagiarism Policy:**
Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and violate UNT’s Code of Student Conduct. Any suspected act of dishonesty will result in a grade of “F” in the course. Further, the professor will write a letter to the Dean of the School of Visual Arts and the Dean of Students, who will pursue disciplinary actions at their discretion. Cheating includes looking at another student’s test for any reason.

According to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, plagiarism is defined as “the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words or statements of another person as one’s own without acknowledgement” (www.unt.edu/csrr). Copying material from any source without providing a citation (footnote or endnote) is a form of plagiarism. Likewise, if you paraphrase another author’s words or ideas, you must credit that person with a citation. While most incidents of plagiarism at the graduate level are unintentional, it is your responsibility to ensure that you accurately indicate which words and ideas are those of others.

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**ADA Policy**
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (https://disability.unt.edu/).

**Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)**
The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures**
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety
emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student’s records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University’s policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

**Rules of Engagement**

Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors. Here are some general guidelines:

- While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in any communication online or face-to-face, even when their opinion differs from your own.
- Ask for and use the correct name and pronouns for your instructor and classmates.
- Speak from personal experiences. Use “I” statements to share thoughts and feelings. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or other individual’s experiences.
- Use your critical thinking skills to challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.
- Avoid using all caps while communicating digitally. This may be interpreted as “YELLING!”
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm in emails or discussion posts as tone can be difficult to interpret digitally.
- Avoid using “text-talk” unless explicitly permitted by your instructor.
- Proofread and fact-check your sources.
- Keep in mind that online posts can be permanent, so think first before you type.

See these Engagement Guidelines (https://clear.unt.edu/online-communication-tips) for more information.

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether
the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT’s Code of Student Conduct (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) to learn more.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect

Students’ access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student’s Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail Eagle Connect (https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect).

Disclaimers

Content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. The College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, and it is not the college’s practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who might feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should withdraw at the start of the term and seek another course.

The professors reserve the right to alter this syllabus if and when necessary

Course Outline:

For the latest news on culture and politics always consult

http://www.merip.org
http://www.jadaliyya.com

1- September 1st

Introduction and Terminologies

Review of Syllabus and Introduction to topic

Read:


Watch:

Inside the Middle East > Pioneers, https://discover.library.unt.edu/catalog/b6206118
Inside the Middle East > Artistic firsts, https://discover.library.unt.edu/catalog/b6206104
Inside the Middle East > Artistic revolutionaries, https://discover.library.unt.edu/catalog/b6206101
Resources:

“Timeline” in Imperfect Chronology: Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary: Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation, 242-255.


2 – September 8th

Read:

Orientalism


History of Modern Art in the Arab World


3 – September 13th instead of the 15th

Read:

Review Exhibition Catalogue, Cartier and Islamic Art: In Search of Modernity
The influence of Islamic art on Cartier’s high-end jewelry, [https://thefrontierpost.com/the-influence-of-islamic-art-on-cartiers-high-end-jewelry/](https://thefrontierpost.com/the-influence-of-islamic-art-on-cartiers-high-end-jewelry/)

Trip Instructions:

- **UNT students travel to/from Denton to DMA on the 13th**
  - **4:30 pm** bus pick-up at the Mulberry St. entrance (contact person to connect with the bus company?)
  - **5:30 pm** arrival at DMA address
  - **5:30-6 pm** Angela to get headcount of students and check-in at DMA
  - **6-6:45 pm** exhibition viewing
  - **7-8 pm** public program and Q&A with exhibition curator Sarah Schleuning and author and jewelry specialist Marion Fasel. The program will focus on the creation of jewelry on view in the exhibit, from the inspiration sources, sketches, formal drawings, plaster models, selection of stones, and the final construction.
  - **8:15 pm** bus on standby and returns students to Denton campus

**Assignment**: Write a critical review of the exhibition *Cartier and The Islamic World* (not a description), highlighting what you think worked successfully and where you perceived problems in presentation and argument. Consider last week’s reading and orientalist strategies. Did the exhibition represent the Islamic World as an equal?

**4 – September 22nd**

**Curating The Arab World**

Meet at UNT Gallery for a behind the scene review of *A Banquet for Seaweed: Snapshots from the Arab 1980s*

**Read:**


Anna Wallace-Thompson, “Curators of Middle Eastern Art III,” *Canvas*, 94-103.


**Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World, 1950s-1980s**


**Reflections: contemporary art of the Middle East and North Africa**


**Here and Elsewhere**


**Out of Beirut**


**Iran Modern**


**Listen:**


**Watch:**


“Reflections: contemporary art of the Middle East and North Africa - Curator’s introduction”, *British Museum Events* (2021), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_waAl7tEj0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_waAl7tEj0).

“‘Here and Elsewhere’ at the New Museum,” *New Museum* (2014), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EX_a0ivy-VU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EX_a0ivy-VU).

A Banquet for Seaweed: Snapshots from the Arab 1980s

Read:


Artist Highlights

Final Selections Exhibition Packet

Shakir Hassan Al Said


Ali Jabri


Suleiman Mansour
• “Suleiman Mansour,” Barjeel Art Foundation, [https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/artist/palestine/suleiman-mansour/](https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/artist/palestine/suleiman-mansour/).

Adam Henein
• Myrna Ayad, “Remembering Adam Henein: ‘All that he ever looked for and channelled, it was Egypt,’” *The National News* (2020), [https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/remembering-adam-henein-all-that-he-ever-looked-for-and-channelled-it-was-egypt-1.1028985](https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/remembering-adam-henein-all-that-he-ever-looked-for-and-channelled-it-was-egypt-1.1028985).

Mohamed Melehi


Sami Mohammed


6 – October 6th Art of the Arab World

Read:


Watch:

Understanding Arab Art: A Collector’s Perspective
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iw4puzBrhR0
7 – October 13th

Diaspora

Read:


8 – October 20th

The 1980s in the Arab World

Read:


United States: Rise of Reagan, Neo-Pop, and MTV


Europe: Today’s Beginnings?

Lebanon: Civil War

Egypt: First international Cairo Biennale

Palestine: Aftermath of the Six Day War

Iraq: Iraq-Iran War and The Four Artists Group

**Tunisia: The Bread Riots**


**Turkey: How Did We Get Here?**


**9– October 27th Performance Art in the 1980s**

Read:


**10 – November 3rd Conference**

**1980s: Representational Pressures, Departures, and Beginnings**
Read:


Salwa Mikdadi Nashashibi, “Gender and Politics in Contemporary Art: Arab Women Empower the Image”.


Silvia Naef, “‘Painting in Arabic’: Etel Adnan and the Invention of a New Language,” Manazir Journal 1 (2019), https://www.academia.edu/41535965/_Painting_in_Arabic_Etel_Adnan_and_the_Invention_of_a_New_Language


Read:


Yunzhi Pan, “Artwork Spotlight: Rachid Koraïchi’s “Sans toi, ni moi, ou l’hallucination nostalgique (Without You, or Me, or the Nostalgic Hallucination)” and “Cet espace incrusté de nos destins (This Space is Inlaid with Our Destinies)” on Grey Art Gallery website; https://greyartgallery.nyu.edu/2020/04/artwork-spotlight-rachid-koraichi/
Watch:

Taking Shape Webinar Session 2: Arab Abstraction and Arabic Letterforms
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUqs2nBUXeY&t=1721s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUqs2nBUXeY&t=1721s)

13 – November 24th

14 – December 1st

15 – December 8th