Representing the Middle East

Monday 5:00-7:50pm in ART 280

Dr. Shabout
Office: Art 215
Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 4-5 pm
E-mail: nada.shabout@unt.edu

Course Description:
In the post-9/11 and US-led invasion of Iraq era, continuous political upheaval in the Middle East and complicated current political environment in the USA, representations centered on the Arab/Islamic world remain in the forefront. These representations vary from the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed that initiated a series of destructive confrontations between “West” and “East,” to exhibitions of the arts of the region. Within an increasing global discourse demanding the decolonization of art history and museums, these representations gain an added dimension.

Representing the “Orient,” however, is nothing new. In 1978 the literary critic Edward W. Said (1935-2003) published his by now classic book *Orientalism* about Western conceptions of “the Orient.” *Orientalism* has been translated into more than 30 languages and launched a complete reconfiguration of how we think about representations of “the other” throughout a number of disciplines in the Humanities—from art history and anthropology to postcolonial studies. Most of today’s colonial and postcolonial studies initially emerged from engagements with, and elaborations of, Said’s book. The course begins with an introduction into the work of Said with a close reading of *Orientalism* and its reception. With a specific focus on Orientalist conventions in art, film, and scholarship, this seminar examines how politics and ideology has and do inform the construction and reproduction of knowledge and representation.

The more recent calls for decolonization ask us to further explore the achievements and failures of postcolonialism. How does decolonization differ than postcolonialism? Some have argued that postcolonialist methodologies and knowledge have been based on the Western tradition of knowledge which “is grounded in positivism, the notion that research is an objective and value-free activity that can make sense of human and natural realities. Method is important as it represents a set of conventions on how knowledge is gathered and codified.”

With that in mind, we will examine a series of case studies to identify strategies of representing “the other,” “speaking back,” and engaging “with the other.” In the process, we will address the ways in which notions of exoticism, cultural difference, authenticity, and native authority intersect with constructions of gender, race, religion, and ethnicity. We will analyze particular events, exhibitions, texts, projects, and images that have been influential in shaping Western representations of and Western attitudes towards the “Orient.” We will investigate how revisionist and modernist "Orientals" similarly appropriate culture and history in constructing
their national identities. And will end with the contemporary critical issues of post-colonial identity, the need for decolonization, exile, diversity, and hybridity that are influencing how we see, represent, and react to the world around us today.

The discussions will be informed by the recent literature which challenge both traditional Orientalist and nationalist narratives, ad at time postcolonial critique as well. The objective of the seminar is to help the participants gain a historically grounded awareness of the complexities of cultural identities, always contesting and sometimes subverting the representations that claim to realistically depict and define them.

The course includes weekly reading, writing assignments and presentations, and requires active participation in discussions. A final exhibition project is to be presented in class and submitted at the end of the term. Topics and themes should be decided in consultation with the professor.

**Required Text:**
All required reading can be found on Canvas, through web links, or on reserve at the Willis Library.

**Online Resources:**

**Aramco**: Founded in 1949, *Aramco World* became *Saudi Aramco World* in 2000; it was renamed *AramcoWorld* in 2015: [https://www.aramcoworld.com/Home](https://www.aramcoworld.com/Home)

**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)

**art21**: Documentaries and information about contemporary art: [www.art21.org](http://www.art21.org)

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

**Grove Art Online**: in-depth encyclopedia article on any aspect of art. Grove Art Online is constantly being updated with the latest entries about the contemporary art world and contains extensive image links and bibliographic information. Access through UNT Library: [http://guides.library.unt.edu/c.php?g=69642&p=451124](http://guides.library.unt.edu/c.php?g=69642&p=451124)

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

**Jadaliyya**: provides a unique source of insight and critical analysis that combines local knowledge, scholarship, and advocacy with an eye to audiences in the United States, the Middle East, and beyond. The site currently publishes posts in Arabic, French, English, and Turkish. Other languages may appear on Jadaliyya. [https://www.jadaliyya.com](https://www.jadaliyya.com)

**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)
Selections: is a quarterly magazine with high quality content on all subjects related to Art, Culture, Design, and Style. Full of world-leading artworks, exquisite brand imagery, original creative illustrations and insightful written articles, Selections provides readers with inspiring cultural information about art, design, fashion and the pleasures of living well. https://selectionsarts.com

Course Objectives:
The following are the objectives and outcomes of this course:

- To familiarize the student with the history of art outside the historically dominant “Western” centers, as ones that are written and constructed by individuals, groups, and institutions within specific socio-cultural frameworks.
- Further develop your critical thinking, speaking, writing and research skills.
- Achieve a better understanding of a culture that is exceedingly in the daily headlines.
- To provide students with the analytical tools necessary for examining the political underpinnings of visual culture, particularly images representing cross-cultural encounters.
- To develop a language through which to engage with contemporary cultural politics.
- To become familiar with foundations and biases that inform the ways in which exhibitions construct narratives of artistic practice in a global context.

Course Structure:
This class meets for three hours once each week during the semester. All readings are to be done the week before class, to be discussed on the day assigned. It is most important to come to class prepared to contribute to the discussion. These discussions provide opportunities for each of you to pose questions and to compare responses and observations.

Requirements and Grading System:
The course is divided into lectures, group presentations, and assignments. Class time will be dedicated to lectures, discussions and group presentations. You will be evaluated on your preparedness for each class, regardless if your group is presenting that day or not. You should bring your readings, notes, and questions to class. You will also be evaluated on the organization, thoughtfulness, and resourcefulness of your writing assignments. Every student is expected to fully participate in the preparation and execution of group presentations and any accompanying written materials.

Check Canvas regularly—at least twice a week—for announcements and syllabus updates. If I email you, please reply within 3 days and I will do the same.

Class Participation and Attendance: You are expected to complete the assigned readings, as well as attend and participate in each and every class. You are also required to attend 3 out of class lectures or community event. Some lectures and events are prompted in the course schedule. However, it is your responsibility to locate alternatives if these don’t fit your schedule.
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentations (8)</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibition Review</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exhibition Project</td>
<td>40 points (paper + Presentation)</td>
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**Group Response Presentations:** the class will be divided into groups. Each week, groups will be assigned certain essays to read. You will be asked to present in class the essay they read, and lead discussion based on the reading. This will count as part of the class participation and as prompted on the schedule below.

**Response Papers:** When asked, you will submit a paper in response to specific prompts provided in the schedule below. Papers should be 2 double-spaced pages.

**Out of class lectures or community events:** For each lecture or event, submit a paragraph that states your name, the lecture’s/event’s title, date, location and the topic it covered/its main argument.

**Exhibition Project:** You will work with your group to create an exhibition that would engage with the Middle East and express your negotiation of topics introduced in class in relation to the Middle East and decolonized exhibitions. You will need to include at least 10 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 as a group one 5 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. **Individually,** each member of the group will write a contextual analysis on one, chosen in collaboration with the rest of the group to avoid repetition of the same, work of art. Each group will have one exhibition, one collective paper and individual visual analyses of different works from the exhibition. You will then present your exhibition at the end of the semester. 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!**

**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.

**Attendance Policy:**

You have 1 free absence, use it wisely. Thereafter, each absence will result in lowering your final grade ten points. In the case of emergency or other university-sanctioned absence, please alert me by email and provide me with proof of absence by the next class time.

**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 in this class includes not participating in your group assignments. Each group will have a group leader to ensure participation. It will be the group’s leader responsibility to inform the professor of unproductive members.

You cannot use a paper or project from another class or from this class in another without consulting both professors.

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.

Suspected plagiarized papers and essays will be uploaded and checked on http://www.turnitin.com

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 Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities 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. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, Assault:
UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

American Disabilities Act:
The College of Visual Arts and Design is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. In keeping with this commitment and in order to facilitate equality of educational access, faculty members in the College will make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with a disability, such as appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies when doing so does not fundamentally alter the course.

If you have a disability, it is your responsibility to obtain verifying information from the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) and to inform me of your need for an accommodation. Requests for accommodation must be given to me no later than the first week of classes for
students registered with the ODA as of the beginning of the current semester. If you register with
the ODA after the first week of classes, your accommodation requests will be considered after
this deadline.

Grades assigned before an accommodation is provided will not be changed. Information about
how to obtain academic accommodations can be found in UNT Policy 18.1.14, at
www.unt.edu/oda, and by visiting the ODA in Room 321 of the University Union. You also may
call the ODA at 940.565.4323.

Course Risk Factor:
According to University Policy, this course is classified as a category one course. Students
enrolled in this course will not be exposed to any significant hazards and are not likely to suffer
any bodily injury. Students will be informed of any potential health hazards or potential bodily
injury connected with the use of any materials and/or processes and will be instructed how to
proceed without danger to themselves and others.

Center for Students Rights and Responsibilities:
Each student at UNT is entitled to certain rights associated with higher education institutions.
See www.unt.edu/csrr for further information.

Evacuation Plan:
In case of emergency (alarm will sound), please follow the building evacuation plans posted on
each floor of your building and proceed to the nearest parking lot. In case of tornado (campus
sirens will sound) or other weather related threat, please go to the nearest hallway or room on
your floor without exterior windows and remain there until an all clear signal is sounded. Follow
the instructions of your teachers and act accordingly.

A Final Disclaimer:
The professors reserve the right to alter this syllabus if and when necessary

Course Outline

1 –August 26th  Said and Orientalism

Review of Syllabus, class requirement, group formation and introduction to the
topic.

Readings
Mitter, Partha. “Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde from the
2- September 2\textsuperscript{nd} \hspace{1cm} Labor Day-No Class

3- September 9\textsuperscript{th} \hspace{1cm} Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism

**Readings**


**Assignment 1:** What is Orientalism? Based on the reading of Said, form a definition of Orientalism and come to class prepared to discuss the topic. Bring 1 example of what you perceive as Orientalism in art, film, song, TV, or literature to present in class.

4- September 16\textsuperscript{th} \hspace{1cm} Museum Visit-No Class

Visit the Keir Collection of Islamic Art Gallery at the Dallas Museum of Art: https://dma.org

**Exhibition Review-Individual Response paper:** Write a review of the exhibition with a specific focus on its politics of representation. How does the exhibition speak of the cultures, peoples and times it represent? How does it engage with contemporary issues surrounding representation of Islam or Islamic arts and peoples? Site specific examples to support your argument. **Due Date Sep 30\textsuperscript{th}**.

5- September 23\textsuperscript{rd} \hspace{1cm} Visual Orientalism

**Readings**


Group Response 2: groups are to read the assigned essay and presents an analysis of the argument made by the author and lead class discussion. Based on your very close reading of the article, what is the main argument? How does the author deploy Said’s definition of Orientalism as a disciplinary intervention in art history? Does Orientalism within modernism have a different strategy than its nineteenth century counterpart? If so, how can we account for the difference?

6- September 30th

Readings


Group Response 3: groups are to read the assigned essay and presents an analysis of the argument made by the author and lead class discussion. Based on your very close reading of the article, what is the main argument? What is the relationship between constructing tradition in the postcolonial age and Orientalism? Drawing on the readings and art works presented in them, discuss the ways in which a contemporary engagements with Orientalism represent both strategies of resistance and further consolidations of non-western otherness.

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Edgar Heap of Birds

Monday, September 30, 2019 at 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Bio:
Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds is an artist and an advocate for indigenous communities worldwide. His text-based work includes multidisciplinary forms of public art messages, large-scale drawings, paintings, prints, works in glass, and monumental porcelain enamel on steel outdoor sculpture. His most recent works address injustices and current views of Native American people, illuminating the struggles within the lives of Native Americans, as well as acknowledging Native Americans’ cultural differences through coupling positive and negatives, the past and the present through language.

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7- October 7th

Decolonizing Representations
**Readings**


**Groups 5:** What does it mean to decolonize a museum? https://www.museumnext.com/article/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-a-museum/.

**Group Response 4:** groups are to read the assigned essay and presents an analysis of the argument made by the author and lead class discussion. Based on your very close reading of the article, what is the main argument? bring an example of a recent act that is a manifestation of the calls for decolonizing the art world. You will present and discuss in class. Please form an educated opinion with examples and references.

**Assignment 5:** Global culture is best represented through foodways. Foodways often refer to the intersection of food in culture, traditions, and history. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines Foodways as "the eating habits and culinary practices of a people, region, or historical period." These habits would necessarily carry much significance and would inform other aspects including the visual. Your assignment should you choose to accept it (and frankly you must!) is to either experience a different cultural food at a restaurant of your choice or find a recipe, cook and eat the dish you make. This would be more fun experienced as a group. In both cases, write a review that reflects your experience. What did you learn about the culture whose dish or food you enjoyed and how do you think it would reflect on a global visual experience. **Bring a photo to class. Presentation in class on Oct 28th.**

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8- October 14th

**Representations and Exhibitions**

**Guest Speakers: Dr. Sam Bardaouil and Dr. Till Fellrath**

*Bring your Final Exhibition Ideas to Class to Discuss. Submit a short abstract and outline of your exhibition in class.*

**Readings**

**TBA**
9- October 21st  World’s Fairs and Biennale Culture

Readings


Group Response 6: groups are to read the assigned essay and presents an analysis of the argument made by the author and lead class discussion. Based on your very close reading of the article, what is the main argument? What are the goals of the biennales and exhibitions? How do they accomplish them? You will present and discuss in class. Please form an educated opinion with examples and references.

10- October 28th Curatorial Practices

Readings


**Group Response 7:** groups are to read the assigned essay and presents an analysis of the argument made by the author and lead class discussion. Based on your very close reading of the article, what is the main argument? Think about the role of museums in representing cultures and how do the politics of representation intersect with the discourse of Orientalism?

**Presentation of Foodway assignment 5 in class.**

**11- November 4th Exhibiting Islam**

**Readings**

**Projects**


The long read: the politics of displaying Islamic art are up for discussion at Abu Dhabi event: [http://www.thenational.ae/arts-life/the-review/the-long-read-the-politics-of-displaying-islamic-art-are-up-for-discussion-at-abu-dhabi-event#full](http://www.thenational.ae/arts-life/the-review/the-long-read-the-politics-of-displaying-islamic-art-are-up-for-discussion-at-abu-dhabi-event#full)

Victoria & Albert: [http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/galleries/level-1/room-42-islamic-art/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/galleries/level-1/room-42-islamic-art/)


**Group Assignment 8:** Each group chooses one of the collections/museums listed in the Global Guide to Islamic Art or another of there choice. Do your own research and Present a review of your choice in class with appropriate images. Discuss the mission, vision, policies and ideologies used and the message they convey. Group choices declared in class on Oct 21st.

**Final Exhibition ideas revisited. ReSubmit a short abstract and outline of your exhibition in class.**
12- November 11th

Contemporary Art

Inside the Middle East, Contemporary Arab art scene, MEDIA ONLINE RESOURCES

13- November 18th

Contextualizing Islamic Displays

Guest Speaker: Dr. Heather Ecker

Readings


14- November 25th

Exhibition Project Presentations

Each group will have 30 mins to present. Please bring your exhibition on a Flashdrive to be transferred (visual of your exhibition and accompanying paper).

15-December 2nd

Exhibition Project Presentations

Each group will have 30 mins to present. Please bring your exhibition on a Flashdrive to be transferred (visual of your exhibition and accompanying paper).

16-December 9th

Wrap up
STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I ________________________________ (print) acknowledge that I have read the course syllabus. I understand the course structure, grading and attendance policies as well as the risk factor rating. I hereby agree to the syllabus and its provisions.

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