THE 597 – SPECIAL TOPICS
ARABIC AND MUSLIM DRAMA
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2012
W 4:00 PM-6:30 PM
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER #112

Instructor: Dr. Jim Al-Shamma, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Office Location: Performing Arts Center #130
Office Hours: M 11:00 AM-1:00 PM; T, H 12:30 PM-1:30 PM; W 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
(and by appointment).
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The information presented in this syllabus is subject to change with adequate notification.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Texts:


Course Introduction:

Until about 20 years ago, Arabic and Muslim drama have received scant attention in the West; even now, scholarship in this area is minimal. And yet, the Arab and Muslim worlds are enormously important to the West; most obviously, the Middle East is home to vast reserves of oil, and the United States and its allies have been deeply engaged in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Israeli/Palestinian peace process often occupies center stage in world politics, and Islam is tightly linked to terrorism, as perceived from the West.

And yet, the Arab and Muslim worlds are home to numerous rich cultures. Through drama, we will approach a complex understanding of these cultures. Most Arabic and Muslim drama since the mid-19th century draws upon Western forms, and thus, as well, serves as a perfect discipline within which to examine intercultural issues.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments:

CLASS PARTICIPATION. All students are expected to attend class regularly and should give notice if they cannot attend the session. Furthermore, all students are expected to participate actively in the discussion sections, which will occupy the majority of the time of the seminar. Students who are active in discussion receive credit in this category.

PRESENTATION. Each student will give one 25 to 30 minute class presentation. This will include historical, geographical, and political background on the country or countries under discussion. Also provide biographical background on the playwrights or practitioners under discussion, if available (although in many cases, there may be little to no biographical information available outside of the sources provided by the instructor). Start working on your presentation early, so that there is time to request interlibrary loan material, if necessary.

SHORT PAPER. Write a 5-6 page paper that relates material within a particular class session. Find connections between the different readings. Or you may apply theory studied earlier in class to the readings. No two students will write about the same class session, and sessions will be assigned at the beginning of class. You may not write about the same session as the one during which you give your presentation.

RESEARCH PAPER. Write a 15-25 page research paper, due at the end of the semester. The topic of this paper should be established no later than three weeks after the beginning of the seminar, i.e. by September 19. The topic will be determined in consultation with the instructor. The paper is due Wednesday, December 12, by 5:00 PM. Please submit to my departmental mailbox.

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short paper</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total: 100%

A NOTE ON THE READING. There is considerable reading due for each class meeting. Obviously, this reading should be stretched out over the course of the week in order for the fullest interconnectedness to emerge and to best prepare for your class discussion. The abundance/variety of assignments chosen for the course is intended to make a rich selection of readings on given topics available to you, not to overburden you. It also encompasses much of the material available on Arabic and Muslim drama. Reading assignments will be adjusted and prioritized as necessary based on dialogue with the professor.
TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

WORKING EMAIL REQUIREMENT: It is a course expectation that you have a working email address that you check daily. If you have not already acquired an email address through the university or otherwise, please make arrangements to do so before the next class meeting. There may be times that I need to contact you with important information and email is often the speediest and easiest way of doing so.

DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS: Aside from the textbooks, I hope to distribute all materials electronically. As I write this (August 19), I am still investigating alternatives.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Contacting the instructor:

Please feel free to visit me during my office hours at any time during the semester. I am here to help! If you can’t make my office hours due to a scheduling conflict, please set up an appointment with me. It is not an imposition. If something is occurring that is presenting you with difficulties with this class, let me know. Don’t be intimidated. Talk to me! The easiest and most reliable way to contact me is via email. I check it fairly frequently. Please do not leave a message for me in the main department office.

Student Resources:

Department of Mass Media, Communication and Theatre
Performing Arts Center (PAC) #101
Phone: 903-886-5346 (Main Office)
http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/mmct/default.asp

University Specific Policies and Procedures:

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
James G. Gee Library
Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

*Note: Please be aware that under no circumstances can I implement any disability accommodations without official documentation from the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services at Texas A&M University - Commerce.
COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Tentative Schedule: (subject to change at the discretion of the instructor)

Unless the material is from one of the required texts (which will be noted in parentheses), the material will be distributed electronically. The means of distribution will be announced as soon as it is determined.

Introduction
August 29
Session 1

*Hamlet's Arab Journey* by Margaret Litvin (read the book before class; available in bookstore and on reserve in library)

Theory and Background
September 5
Session 2

Borges, "Averroes' Search" in *Labyrinths*.  
Nancy, Jean-Luc, "Eulogy for the Mêlée."  
Bell, "Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama."  
Reading on Occidentalism: TBA.

Medieval Drama
September 12
Session 3

Rowson, Everett K. "Two Homosexual Narratives from Mamluk Literature: al-Safadi's *Law'at al-shaki* and Ibn Daniyal's *al-Mutayyam*."  

The Ta'zieh of Iran and the Jari Gan of Bangladesh
September 19
Session 4

Readings on Ta'zieh, TBA.
TA’ZIEH PLAYS:
- The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain
- "Martyrdom of Husain"
- "Conversion of a Christian Lady to the Muhammadan Faith"
- "Conversion and Murder of the Ambassador from Europe"

The Kargoz and Turkish Theatre, and Traditional Theatre in Indonesia
September 26
Session 5

Kargoz and Turkish

PLAYS:
- Orta Oiunu, *The Sorcery*
- Meddah, *The Seven Dull-Hearing Ones*
- Karagoz, *The Bloody Poplar*
- Tecer, *The Neighborhood* (1947)

Traditional Theatre in Indonesia

PLAY: *Irawan’s Wedding* (oral tradition, written down 1960; in *On Thrones of Gold*).

Theatre in the Islamic World, 1900-1960
October 3
Session 6


PLAYS:
- Tagore, Rabindranath, *The Post Office* (India, today Bangladesh, 1911).

We will read these plays, if I am able to obtain copies:
Egyptian Drama, 1960-Present
October 10
Session 7
Amin, Dina, “Alfred Farag and Political Commitment,” from Alfred Farag and Egyptian Theatre, Chapter 1.
Selections from Allen, Critical Perspectives on Yusuf Idris, TBA.
Carlson, Marvin, Roundtable discussion on Contemporary Theatre in Egypt, CUNY Graduate Center, 1999. (In Contemporary Theatre in Egypt, 9-32.)

PLAYS:
Al-Hakim, Tawfiq, Ya Tali al-Shajarah (The Tree Climber, 1962).
Farag, Alfred, The Last Walk. (In Contemporary Theatre in Egypt.)
Maqsoud, Gamal. The Absent One. (In Contemporary Theatre in Egypt.)

Modern Syria and Lebanon
October 17
Session 8

PLAYS:
Mafuz, Isam, The China Tree (Lebanon, 1968) (in Modern Arabic Drama).
Wannus, Sa'dallah, The King is the King (Syria, 1974) (in Modern Arabic Drama).
Ikhlas, Walid, The Path (in Modern Arabic Drama).
Jbara, Raymond, The Traveler, (in Short Arabic Plays).
Saneh, Lina and Rabih Mroué, Biokhraphia (Lebanon, 2002).

The Maghreb
October 24
Session 9
Carlson, Marvin, “Introduction” to Four Plays from North Africa. (Course text.)
Amine and Carlson, "Al-halqa in Arabic Theatre: An Emerging Site of Hybridity."

PLAYS: (the first four are in Four Plays from North Africa)
Alloula, Abdelkader, The Veil (Algeria, 1987)
Baccar, Jalila, Araberlin (Tunisia, 2002)
Gallaire, Fatima, House of Wives (Algeria, 1990)
Saddiki, Tayeb, The Foliés Berbers (Morocco, 1993)
Al-Fagih, *The Singing of the Stars* (Libya) (in *Short Arabic Plays*).

**Modern Iran**

October 31  
Session 10

Floor, Willem, selections from *The History of Theatre in Iran* (Washington, 2005).  

PLAYS:  

**Modern Iraq**

November 7  
Session 11

Al-Azraki and Al-Shamma, Introduction to *Theatre of War: Six Contemporary Plays from Iraq* (work in progress)  
Holderness, “Arab Shakespeare.”  
Salaam, "The People’s Theatre of Yusuf al-Ani.”

PLAYS:  
---, *Baghdadi Bath* (Iraq, 2006).  
Myers, Robert, *Blood on Both Hands* (about Baghdad Bath)  
Al-Ani, Yusuf, *The Key* (Iraq, 1968), (in *Modern Arabic Drama*).  
---, *Where the Power Lies*, (in *Short Arabic Plays*).  
Al-Azraki, Amir, *Waiting for Gilgamesh*  
Fadhil, Rasha, *Ishtar in Baghdad*  

**Palestine**

November 14  
Session 12

Articles about The Freedom Theatre, Jenin, assassination and political activities, TBA.  

**PLAYS:**
Azzam and others, *Ansar*, (in *Short Arabic Plays*).
Azzam, *Baggage*, (in *Short Arabic Plays*).
Bakri, *The Alley*, (in *Short Arabic Plays*).
Gyourh, "Mueen Bsissu: Palestinian Playwright."
Zuabi, Amir Nizar, *I am Yusuf and This is My Brother* (2010).

**November 21: No Class**

**Pakistan, The Sudan, Kuwait, and Indonesia**

November 28
Session 13

**Pakistan**

Introduction to *Shahid Nadeem: Selected Plays*.

**PLAYS:**
By Nadeem, Shahid (Pakistan)
*The Third Knock* (1970)
*Bulha* (2001)
*Burqavaganza* (2007)

**The Sudan**

Mustafa, Khalid, "Sudan" from Banham, *Theatre in Africa*.

**Kuwait**

Al-Surayyi, Abd Al-Aziz, *The Bird Has Flown* (Kuwait, 1972), (in *Modern Arabic Drama*).

**Indonesia**


Zurbuchen, “Images of Culture and National Development in Indonesia: The Cockroach Opera.”


**PLAYS:**
Works written in English
December 5
Session 14
  Hassan, Baghdad Wedding.
  Raffo, Nine Parts of Desire.
  Hartman, Gum.
  Joseph, Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo.
  Karam, Sons of the Prophet.

Research paper due: Wednesday, December 12, 5:00 PM, in my departmental mailbox.