

HUNTER COLLEGE, SPRING 2013

Arab American Literature

Asian American 220.04/ English 251.83

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 4:10-5:30pm

Location: C114

Professor Z. Saed

Office Hours: Tuesday 3pm, or by appointment

Office Location 1336 HW

Email: zsaed@hunter.cuny.edu

Required texts:

Abu-Jaber, Diana. *Arabian Jazz*. (Norton, 2003)

Bayoumi, Moustafa. *How Does it Feel to be a Problem: Being Young and Arab in America*. (Penguin Books, 2009)

Hammad, Suheir. *Born Palestinian, Born Black & the Gaza Suite*. (Upset Press, 2010)

Jarar, Randa. *A Map of Home: A Novel*. (Penguin, 2009)

Charara, Hayan. *Inclined to Speak: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Poetry*. (University of Arkansas Press, 2008)

Matar, Hisham. *Anatomy of a Disappearance* (Dial Press Trade, 2012)

Reading Excerpts from: Edward Said, Etel Adnan, Philip Metres, Khalil Gibran, Ameer Rihani, and critical texts on the topic of Arab American literature and history.

Learning Goals:

- Increased ability to interpret meaning in literary texts by paying close attention to an author's choices of detail, vocabulary, and style
- A deeper understanding of Arab American history and literature
- Ability to discuss the relationship between different genres of literary texts and the multicultural environments from which they spring
- Increased confidence in offering a critical evaluation and appreciation of a literary work's strengths and limitations
- Increased confidence in the oral presentation of ideas
- Increased ability to write a critical essay employing a strong thesis statement, appropriate textual citations, and contextual and intertextual evidence for your ideas

Attendance Policy:

Departmental policy states that after four absences a student is to be dropped from the class roster. If you do need to miss a class, please let me know in advance.

Lateness: If you are more than ten minutes late for a class, you will receive half an absence (two latenesses is equal to one absence). Sleeping in class will also count as an absence.

Notes on Preparation for Class:

All reading and writing assignments are to be completed on time. Be sure to get the phone numbers/ email addresses of at least two of your classmates; then, if you must be absent, you can call or email someone and get the assignment. You may also, of course, email me. For the next session you are responsible for all work and must always come to class prepared.

All reading assignments must be BROUGHT TO CLASS as they will be referred to for discussion. You are expected to be **active participants** in all class discussions and activities.

Course Requirements:

1. **One essay paper** (3pp) on readings to be assigned.

2. **Mid-Term Examination (5pp)**
3. **Final Examination (5pp)**
4. Each paper is to be **typed** and **double-spaced**, and done in **multiple drafts**. Each paper will present an argument, have a strong thesis, and use correct internal documentation. The due dates for each of your papers will be stipulated on each of your assignment sheets when you receive them.
5. **Group Presentation** Begin after Spring Break.
6. **Additional Writing:** in-class writing exercises, responses to your own work, peer evaluations and group work.
7. **Active participation** in all class activities, **including the class blackboard (both posting and commenting).**
8. **Regular attendance** and **preparation** for class.

Activities in Class:

1. **Blackboard:** A lot of the writing and conversations that occur in this class, will continue outside of class on our course blackboard page.
2. **In-Class Writing:** Occasional assignments and workshops to discuss writing techniques and strategies.
3. **Group Presentations:** Each student will teach some aspect of an assigned topic to the class in a group format. This may involve dramatic readings, critical commentary, and the presentation of online materials.
4. **Formal Writing:** Each of you will write two comparison/contrast papers during the semester. To receive full credit, these papers must be revised (not just corrected) after receiving criticism from me. The final paper is a research paper, which will not be revised.
5. **Self-Critique: Don't throw any of your papers out.** At the end of the semester, you will submit a final 2-page reflection on your progress this semester, based on your success in revising (not just correcting) your papers, on your oral presentation (and rehearsal), and on your blackboard participation.

Evaluation & Grading Policy:

First Essay: 3pp (20%)

Group Presentation: 15-20min (20%)

Mid-Term Examination: 4pp (20%)

Final Examination: 5pp (25%)

Participation and Preparation for class (15%)

(includes attendance, quizzes, blackboard posts/comments, quality of responses, etc.)

Academic Honesty:

The English Department fully supports Hunter College's policy on Academic Honesty, which states, in part:

"Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Cheating, forgery, plagiarism and collusion in dishonest acts undermine the college's educational mission and the students' personal and intellectual growth. Baruch students are expected to bear individual responsibility for their work, to learn the rules and definitions that underlie the practice of academic integrity, and to uphold its ideals. Ignorance of the rules is not an acceptable excuse for disobeying them. Any student who attempts to compromise or devalue the academic process will be sanctioned." **In this class, any evidence of plagiarism, however minute it may be, will earn you an F grade on the work in question and will result in your being formally reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.**

Week One

Tuesday, January 28

Introduction to Class. Suheir Hammad poetry books distributed.

Thursday, January 30

Palestinian American Female Voice

Reading to be Discussed: *Born Palestinian, Born Black & the Gaza Suite*

Group Work

Week Two

Tuesday, February 5

Screening: *Salt of this Sea* directed by Annemarie Jacir (2010)

Thursday, February 7

Screening: *Salt of this Sea* directed by Annemarie Jacir (2010)

Reading: "I wanted this Story to be Told: Interview with Annemarie Jacir" by Ferial Ghazoul, Moustafa Bayoumi and Hamid Dabashi (PDF).

Week Three

Tuesday, February 12

NO CLASS

Thursday, February 14

Arab Americans After 9/11

Reading to be Discussed: *How does it Feel to be a Problem: Being Young and Arab in America* "Preface"; "Rasha" (15-44)

Week Four

Tuesday, February 19

How does it Feel to be a Problem: Being Young and Arab in America
"Sami" (47-80); "Yasmin" (83-114); "Akram" (117-148)

Class Visit: Yasmin

Thursday, February 21

How does it Feel to be a Problem: Being Young and Arab in America
"Lina" (151-185); "Rami" (221-257); and "Afterward" (259-270)

Week Five

Tuesday, February 26

Representations of Arab Masculinity

Short Film Screenings: *A Ball of Wool* dir. Fatma Zohra Zamoum (French/Algerian, 2006); *Broadway Bound* dir. by Bandar Albuliwa (Palestinian American, 2009); *The Kitchen* dir. by Andre Degas (Egyptian American, 2002)

First Paper Topic Handed Out

Thursday, February 28

Film Screening with filmmaker Bandar Albuliwa

Week Six

Tuesday, March 5

Reading to be discussed: *Arabian Jazz* by Diana Abu Jaber (Chapters 1-22);
Screening (excerpt): *Towelhead* dir. Alan Ball (2007)

Thursday, March 7

Reading to be discussed: *Arabian Jazz* by Diana Abu Jaber (finish novel);
"Arabian Jazz and the Need for Improvising Arab Identity in the U.S." Mazen Naous (PDF);
"Beyond Stereotypes: Representational Dilemmas in *Arabian Jazz*" Pauline Kaldas (PDF).

Week Seven

Tuesday, March 12

Reading to be discussed: *Anatomy of a Disappearance* by Hisham Matar

Listen to Interview with Hisham Matar: <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/08/140223701/a-libyan-son-mourns-his-fathers-disappearance> ; "The Disappeared" by Maya Jaggi (The Daily Beast): <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/08/14/hisham-matar-s-anatomy-of-a-disappearance.html>

Thursday, March 14

Reading to be discussed: *Anatomy of a Disappearance* by Hisham Matar;

Essays by Matar: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2011/aug/26/libya-death-izz-al-arab-matar>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/nov/07/short-story-hisham-matar>; <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/books/hisham-matar-on-libyas-awakening>

First Paper Due

Week Eight

Tuesday, March 19

Reading to be discussed: *A Map of Home* by Randa Jarrar (1-106)

Thursday, March 21

Reading to be discussed: *A Map of Home* by Randa Jarrar (finish novel);

“Performing Sheherazade: Arab American Women’s Contestation of Identity” Somaya Sami Sabry (PDF);

Screening: Excerpts of Arab American Comedy

Midterm Exam Questions Handed Out

****Spring Recess from March 25-April 2****

Week Nine

Thursday, April 4

The Arab Pen League: Early 20th Century Arab American Poetry

Reading to be discussed: *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry* (PDF)

Week Ten

Tuesday, April 9

Reading to be discussed: *Syrian Yankee* by Salom Rizk (PDF)
(Critical Texts TBA)

Midterm Exams Due

Thursday, April 11

Reading to be discussed: *Syrian Yankee* by Salom Rizk (PDF)

Week Eleven

Tuesday, April 16

Poetry as Self-Making

Reading to be discussed: *Inclined to Speak: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Poetry* Ed. Hayan Charara.

Thursday, April 18

Reading to be discussed: *Inclined to Speak: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Poetry* Ed. Hayan Charara.

Week Eleven

Tuesday, April 23

Performing Whiteness: Racial Segregation and Early Arab Migration to the U.S.

Reading to be discussed: “Not Quite White” by Helen Samhan (PDF);

“Performing Whiteness: Naturalization Litigation and the Construction of Racial Identity in the U.S.” John Tehranian (PDF);

Selective Racialization http://johntehranian.com/index_files/Page412.htm Reading to be discussed:

Thursday, April 25

Orientalism & Arab Representations in Media

Readings to be discussed: Excerpts from Edward Said Reader Ed. Moustafa Bayoumi (PDF); Hamid Naficy (PDF); Jack Shaheen (PDF)

Screening of Shorts: *Hollywood Harems*; *Planet of the Arabs*

Week Eleven

Tuesday, April 30

Arab Representations in Media

Reading to be discussed: John Eisele (PDF); Melanie McAlister (PDF); and Ella Shohat (PDF)

Case Studies TBA

Thursday, May 2

Arab American Experimental Literature/Video Art

Reading to be discussed: *Sitt Marie Rose* by Etel Adnan (PDF); Poetry by Etel Adnan (PDF)

Video Art TBA

Week Twelve

Tuesday, May 7

Film Screening (Independent Filmmaker TBA)

Thursday, May 9

Student Group Presentations

Week Thirteen

Tuesday, May 14

Student Group Presentations

Review for Final

Final Paper Questions Handed Out