

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
Fall 2013 – Undergraduate Studies

**UGS 303 “DIFFICULT DIALOGUES”:  
GENDER IN THE CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM WORLD**

Unique	Day	Time	Location
<u>65435</u>	TTH	11:00 - 12:30	CLA 0.106

Instructor: **Sofian Merabet** (sofian.merabet@austin.utexas.edu)  
Office Hours: Thursday 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
or by appointment in SAC 5.164

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary “Difficult Dialogues” class examines the use of textual material in debates about gender, sexuality, and morality and explores the interplay of cultural, social, political and economic factors in shaping women’s and men’s lives in the Muslim world. The perspective in this course will be primarily anthropological, although special attention will be paid to the historical processes associated with colonialism and nation-building. We will work to grasp the sexual politics of everyday life in specific locales, as these are shaped by the power of representations mobilized in a global world. We will also consider local feminist movements, including Islamist, human-rights-, and LGBTQ-based, that have developed to address issues of gender and sexuality.

By looking at ethnographic material that discusses ordinary women’s grassroots movements, the course will assess how a consideration of current debates about religion in the Muslim world helps us understand the conceptual relationship between bodily form and the ways it appropriates and challenges circulating discourses of human/women’s rights.

Information Literacy: Throughout the semester we will visit and discuss the use of archives and various online resources. Included are assignments to prepare students for and offer feedback on their research strategies. We will utilize the Librarian-created resources for “Difficult Dialogues” classes including the assignments “Creating a Research Plan” and “Compare a Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Article” as well as the tutorials and guides “Find Articles” and “Local Information.”

Gems of the University: The course will incorporate the internationally-connected UT Libraries, visits to the Gender and Sexuality Center, Career Services, and the Blanton Museum.

University Lecture Series: With prior consultation of the instructor/TA, students are required to attend at least one lecture organized by the **Fall 2013 University Lecture**

**Series** (<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/uls>) and write a **one-page report** on it. The series will be held over three evenings from 7:00-8:00pm, October 1-3, in Hogg Auditorium, and will feature evenings dedicated to healthcare (Oct 1), arts and humanities (Oct 2), and research happening in various labs across the 40 Acres (Oct 3). Speakers confirmed for this event are:

**In Pursuit of Health, Tuesday, October 1**

Pat Carter, PhD, School of Nursing  
Pat Davis, PhD, College of Pharmacy  
Kavita Radhakrishnan, PhD, School of Nursing

**In the Creative Mind, Wednesday, October 2**

Dean Young, MFA, College of Liberal Arts  
Tom Staley, PhD, College of Liberal Arts  
Mike Starbird, PhD, College of Natural Sciences

**In the Lab, Thursday, October 3**

Grant Willson, PhD, College of Natural Sciences  
Bruce Pennycook, PhD, College of Fine Arts  
Kim Fromme, PhD, College of Liberal Arts

Alternatively, students can attend a lecture (and report on it) organized by either the UT Center for Middle Eastern Studies or the UT Center for Women's and Gender Studies and write a one-page report on it (for more information, look at the CMES and CWGS websites: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/mes/center/cmes.php> and <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/cwgs/>). Lectures that are organized by other UT Centers or Departments, but which address the topic of gender in the Muslim world, do qualify as well.

**Required Texts:**

Books (listed alphabetically by the author and ordered at the *University Co-Op*, [www.universitycoop.com](http://www.universitycoop.com), 2246 Guadalupe St, Austin, (512) 476-7211):

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Abdel Aal, Ghada | <i>I Want to Get Married! One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights</i> , University of Texas Press, ISBN: 978-0-292-72397-9, 2010 |
| Alsanea, Rajaa   | <i>Girls of Riyadh</i> , Penguin (Non-Classics), ISBN-13: 978-0143113478, 2008   |

- Gaudio, Rudolf Pell                      *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*, ISBN-978-1-4051-5252-5, 2009
- Maznavi, Nura and  
Mattu, Ayesha (eds.)                      *Love, InshAllah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women*, Soft Skull Press; Original edition, ISBN-10: 1593764286, ISBN-13: 978-1593764289, 2012
- Whitaker, Brian                              *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, University of California Press, ISBN-13-978-0-520-25017-8, 2006

Additional readings on Blackboard (listed alphabetically by the author/institution's name):

- Deeb, Lara and Harb, Mona (2011) "Sanctioned Pleasures: Youth Negotiations of Leisure Sites and Morality in al-Dahiya" in Khalaf, Samir and Saad Khalaf, Roseanne, eds. (2011) *Arab Youth/Social Mobilisation in Times of Risk*, Saqi Press, pp. 303-18
- Meem (2009) "Introduction" and following stories in *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories*, pp. 1-134
- Schick, Irvin Cemil (2010) "The Harem as Gendered Space and the Spatial Reproduction of Gender" in Booth, Marilyn, ed. (2010) *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Duke University Press, pp. 69-84
- Yamani, Mai (2011) "Saudi Youth: Initiative and Inertia" in Khalaf, Samir and Saad Khalaf, Roseanne, eds. (2011) *Arab Youth/Social Mobilisation in Times of Risk*, Saqi Press, pp. 112-26

Documentary:

*A Jihad for Love* (2007) documentary by Parvez Sharma (director) and Sandi DuBowski (producer)

**Course Requirements for Registered Students:**

This course relies on the intellectual commitment and active participation of all students. In order for the class to be effective, all students must have the reading assignments completed and ready for in-depth discussion before each meeting.

***The use of laptops or all other electronic devices is strictly prohibited!***

Regular attendance is required, and so is active participation. Students are encouraged to ask questions and contribute to the discussion during all meetings as well as during the various visits to academic units across campus. Again, you must come to class having carefully read all materials and be prepared to discuss, question, and argue about issues raised in the readings. It will be beneficial for you to take excerpts/notes on any material that you find enlightening, controversial, or objectionable. You should also take notes in class on themes, key terms, and debates we discuss. These note-taking strategies will be crucial when you write your various assignments. In short:

- Attend all classes (including the various visits across campus).
- Do all assigned readings (while taking excerpts/notes!) by the date indicated on the syllabus and participate actively in the discussion.
- Three written **Take-Home-Exams** to be handed in **in class** on **Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**, **Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>**, and **Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>** that cover a theoretical question based on the assigned readings [exactly 3-pages (double-spaced/12 point font)]. Assignments will be posted on blackboard on the previous Friday.

***THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP EXAMS!***

- One one-page Report (**to be handed in anytime before the Thanksgiving break!**) based on the attendance of a lecture organized by either the Fall 2013 University Lecture Series, the UT Center for Middle Eastern Studies, or by another UT Center/Department (e.g. the South Asia Institute, the Law School, the Gender and Sexuality Center, etc.), but which address the topic of either gender or the Muslim world.
- One Four-page paper based on a short group research project to be provided to the instructor/TA on **Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup>**. **Each group should have 5 students.**
- A preliminary one-page research outline will have to be handed in on **Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>**. The Project will be based on a topic that focuses on some aspect of gender in the Muslim world. It can include the discussion of a written text (e.g. a novel, an ethnography, or a blog), a movie, a photography collection, an art installation, etc. All projects need to first be discussed with and approved by the instructor/TA.
- 15-minute group presentations on the respective final paper projects during the last week of classes. They are intended to give general feedback (by the instructor/TA and fellow students) to be incorporated in the final version of the written paper.

All writing assignments are designed to develop critical reading, analytical, and writing skills. Evaluation criteria include: critical and integrative analysis of texts, clarity of thought, ability to synthesize readings and class discussions into your own argument, and ability to formulate a theoretical grounding for it. Students will receive extensive feedback by the instructor/TA and, on occasion, by their peers. They will have the opportunity to revise some of their submissions.

**The new Student Honor Code states: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”**

### **PLAGIARISM:**

**Anyone plagiarizing will first be given an “F” (Fail) and a report will be forwarded to the appropriate university authorities.**

#### **Notice regarding academic dishonesty (e.g. Plagiarism)**

- Honor Code or statement of ethics.
  - **University of Texas Honor Code:** Each member of the university is expected to uphold The University of Texas Honor Code through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to “plagiarize” means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own.
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source.
- to commit literary theft.
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

#### ***All of the following are considered plagiarism:***

- turning in someone else's work as your own.
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit.
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks.
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation.
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit.
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules).

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your readers with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

- Web site for more information:
- <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism>

### **Grading Procedure:**

Grading Breakdown:

1. Attendance and Participation: 5%
2. Three Three-page Take-Home Exams: 60% (20% each)
3. One one-page Lecture Report: 10%
4. 10-minute Presentation on the Final Paper Project: 5%
5. Four-page Final Paper: 20%

### **Grading Distribution (Letter Grade: Points):**

A: 100-95 A-: 94-90 B+: 89-87 B: 86-83 B-: 82-80 C+: 79-77 C: 76-73  
C-: 72-70 D+: 69-67 D: 66-63 D-: 62-60 F: 59 and below.

### **Documented Disability Statement:**

- Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>. Students need to inform the instructor and the teaching assistant(s) about their disability right at the beginning of the semester.

*Please note that the instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives.*

**Reading Schedule:** (this schedule is tentative and subject to possible revision)

Week 1: Gender in the Contemporary Muslim World

- Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup> Introduction and Orientation

Week 2: The Female Blogosphere in Egypt (1)

- Tuesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> Abdel Aal, Ghada (2010) *I Want to Get Married! One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights*, University of Texas Press, pp. 1-49
- Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup> Abdel Aal, Ghada (2010) *I Want to Get Married! One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights*, University of Texas Press, pp. 50-100

Week 3: The Female Blogosphere in Egypt (2)

- Tuesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> Abdel Aal, Ghada (2010) *I Want to Get Married! One Wannabe Bride's Misadventures with Handsome Houdinis, Technicolor Grooms, Morality Police, and Other Mr. Not Quite Rights*, University of Texas Press, pp. 101-159
- Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup> **Visit to the Writing Center**

Week 4: Social Mobilization among Youth in the Contemporary Arab world

- Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> - Deeb, Lara and Harb, Mona “Sanctioned Pleasures: Youth Negotiations of Leisure Sites and Morality in al-Dahiya” in Khalaf, Samir and Saad Khalaf, Roseanne, eds. (2011) *Arab Youth/Social Mobilisation in Times of Risk*, Saqi Press, pp. 303-18 and ***1<sup>st</sup> Take-Home Exam to be handed in!***
- Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> - Yamani, Mai “Saudi Youth: Initiative and Inertia” in Khalaf, Samir and Saad Khalaf, Roseanne, eds. (2011) *Arab Youth/Social Mobilisation in Times of Risk*, Saqi Press, pp. 112-26

### Week 5: Women's Tales of Dating, Longing, and Sex

- Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup> “*Allahu Alim: In Search of the Beloved*” in Maznavi, Nura and Mattu, Ayesha (eds.) [2012] *Love, InshAllah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women*, Soft Skull Press; Original edition, pp. 3-73
- Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup> “International *Habibty: Love Overseas*” in Maznavi, Nura and Mattu, Ayesha (eds.) [2012] *Love, InshAllah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women*, Soft Skull Press; Original edition, pp. 131-87

### Week 6: Space and Gender: The Harem Between Fantasy and Reality

- Tuesday, October 1<sup>st</sup> - Schick, Irvin Cemil “The Harem as Gendered Space and the Spatial Reproduction of Gender” in Booth, Marilyn, ed. (2010) *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, Duke University Press, pp. 69-84
- Thursday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> **Visit of the Gender and Sexuality Center, Student Activity Center, Room 2.112 (2201 Speedway)**

### Week 7: “The Muslim Woman” as Celebrity Author (1)

- Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> - Alsanea, Rajaa (2008) *Girls of Riyadh*, Penguin (Non-Classics)  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Take-Home Exam to be handed in!**
- Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup> - Alsanea, Rajaa (2008) *Girls of Riyadh*, Penguin (Non-Classics)

### Week 8: “The Muslim Woman” as Celebrity Author (2)

- Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup> - Alsanea, Rajaa (2008) *Girls of Riyadh*, Penguin (Non-Classics)
- Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> **Visit of the Perry Castañeda Library (PCL 1.339)**

### Week 9: Male Homosexuality in the Arab World (1)

- Tuesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> - “1. A Question of Honour” and “2. In Search of a Rainbow” in Whitaker, Brian (2006) *Unspeakable Love:*



*Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, University of California Press, pp. 17-64

- Thursday, October 24<sup>th</sup> - “3. Images and Realities” and “4. Rights and Wrongs” in Whitaker, Brian (2006) *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, University of California Press, pp. 65-142

Week 10: Male Homosexuality in the Arab World (2)

- Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> - “5. Should I Kill Myself?”, “6. Sex and Sensibility,” and “7. Paths to Reform” in Whitaker, Brian (2006) *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, University of California Press, pp. 143-224  
**One-page Outline of the Final Research Project due!**
- Thursday, October 31<sup>st</sup> **Visit of the Sanger Learning Center, School of Undergraduate Studies, Beauford H Jester Center, JES A115, 201 E. 21st St., Austin, TX 78705-5695**

Week 11: Female Homosexuality in the Arab World (1)

- Tuesday, October 26<sup>th</sup> - “Introduction,” “Sou7aqiyyeh,” and “Shabb Walla Binit?” in Meem (2009) *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories*, pp. 1-39
- Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup> - “Gay Rights and Human Rights too” and following stories in Meem (2009) *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories*, pp. 40-73

Week 12: Female Homosexuality in the Arab World (2)

- Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> - “Wetness” and following stories in Meem (2009) *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories*, pp. 74-105
- Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup> - “My Quest to Find Lesbians” and following stories in Meem (2009) *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories*, pp. 106-134

Week 13: Queer Muslim Life in Sub-Saharan Africa (1)

- Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup> - “1. Introducing ‘Yan Daudu’” in Gaudio, Rudolf Pell (2009) *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*, pp. 1-28  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Take-Home Exam to be handed in!**

- Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup>    **Visit to the Blanton Museum**

Week 14: Queer Muslim Life in Sub-Saharan Africa (2)

- Tuesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>    - “2. People of the Bariki” in Gaudio, Rudolf Pell (2009) *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*, pp. 29-60

- Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup>    - *A Jihad for Love* (2007) documentary by Parvez Sharma (director) and Sandi DuBowski (producer)

Week 15: Queer Muslim Life in Sub-Saharan Africa (3)

- Tuesday, November 26<sup>th</sup>    - “3. Out in the Open” in Gaudio, Rudolf Pell (2009) *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*, pp. 61-88

- Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup>    **Thanksgiving**

Week 16: Student Presentations

- Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>    - Final Group Project Presentations

- Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup>    - Final Group Project Presentations

**Paper version of the final Group Project due after class on Thursday, December 5th!**