The oriental vogue in the 18th century: coffee drinking

We will explore the myth of the East that develops in Europe during the Enlightenment in the wake of the extremely popular and influential translations and adaptations of *the Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf Layla wa Layla*) in the early eighteenth century. We will focus on narratives of the encounter between East and West, on the discovery and construction of the Oriental “Other,” and on its representation in the literary and visual culture of the Enlightenment. Particular attention will be paid to the figure of Shahrazad and the theme of the harem. We will also study some modern versions of the Arabian Nights.
Syllabus
(preliminary and subject to change)

September


18 Sex, desire and violence: The prologue, frame, and narration of Alī laylah wa-laylah.

25 Famous Stories from the Nights: Ali Baba, Sinbad and Aladdin.

October


9 No class (Brown Indigenous Day)

16 Paper #1 due. The Oriental Tale in France: Voltaire, Zadig, or Destiny, an Oriental Tale (1748).


November


13 Paper #2 due. Orientalism in Western Film: Hollywood to Disney.


27 Revisiting the Arabian Nights: from the story of the three apples to Assia Djebar’s The woman in pieces.

December

4 Scheherazade feminist? Taha Hussein, The Dreams of Scheherazade (Ahlam Scheherazad, 1943); Fatema Mernissi, Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems (2001)

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18 Final Paper due.
Grading:

• 10% class participation and discussion
• 20% oral report (10 min.)
• 40% 2 short papers (4-5 pages) (20% each)
• 30% final paper (8 pages)

Requirements:

• Attendance is required: unexcused absences will lower your grade.
• Class participation is expected. Reading assignments are to be completed ahead of class meetings.
• The oral reports will be scheduled after the second week of September.
• Please note the due dates for the papers.

Readings:

Texts to be purchased:

• Montesquieu, Persian Letters.
• Voltaire, Zadig, or Destiny, an Oriental Tale
• Johnson, Samuel. The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia
• Beckford, William. Vathek, an Arabian Tale

All other materials will be available on Canvas

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Accessibility and Accommodations:

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.

Academic Code:

The Academic Code of Conduct of Brown University states that “academic achievement is evaluated on the basis of work that a student produces independently. A student who obtains credit for work, words, or ideas that are not the products of his or her own effort is dishonest and in violation of Brown’s Academic Code.” Accordingly, students must provide full and proper attribution of all sources cited. For assignments written in French, students must not use translation programs (but the use of Antidote or a similar grammar check program is acceptable). Students are also expected to complete all reading assignments in the original French. In addition, they must not share their own or anyone else’s course work with other students. Failure to respect any of these stipulations is a violation of the Academic Code. Students who are unfamiliar with citation conventions or have questions about the Academic Code should consult their instructor.