

COLT 1814D-16705
EAST-WEST ENCOUNTERS: POLITICS AND FICTIONS OF ORIENTALISM

Fall 2017
Monday 3:00-5:30
Sayles Hall 205

Ourida Mostefai
Professor of French Studies & Comparative Literature
Rochambeau House, 84 Prospect Street, Room 201
Ourida_Mostefai@brown.edu



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

- 11 Introduction: The vogue of the orient in the West. What is Orientalism? Paul Valéry, “*Oriente versus*” (1938); Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction (1978).
- 18 Sex, desire and violence: The prologue, frame, and narration of *Alf laylah wa-laylah*.
- 25 Famous Stories from the *Nights*: Ali Baba, Sinbad and Aladdin.

OCTOBER

- 2 The Politics of the Orient: Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (1721).
- 9 **No class** (Brown Indigenous Day)
- 16 **Paper #1 due.** The Oriental Tale in France: Voltaire, *Zadig, or Destiny, an Oriental Tale* (1748).
- 23 The Oriental Tale in England: Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759).
- 30 The Oriental Gothic: William Beckford, *Vathek, an Arabian Tale* (1786).

NOVEMBER

- 6 The Fabulous and the Fantastic Orient: Horace Walpole, “A New Arabian Night’s Entertainment” (*Hieroglyphic Tales*, 1785); Edgar Allan Poe, “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade” (1850); Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “The Tale of the 672nd Night” (1895).
- 13 **Paper #2 due.** Orientalism in Western Film: Hollywood to Disney.
- 20 Harem Fantasies in Orientalist Paintings: Eugène Delacroix’s “Women of Algiers” (1834) to Pablo Picasso’s “The Women of Algiers” (1955). Assia Djébar, “Forbidden Gaze, Severed Sound.”
- 27 Revisiting the *Arabian Nights*: from the story of the three apples to Assia Djébar’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)

- 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

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.