

## MES 1244: Orientalism and the Question of Palestine

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Edward Said's ground breaking work, ***Orientalism***, was published in 1978 and soon became a founding moment for the field of postcolonial theory and a pivotal point of return within it. A year later, Said published ***The Question of Palestine***, whose explicit task was to present the Palestinian story and cause to an American and European audience. Said made there a special effort to reach out to Jewish intellectuals. The book made little impression on the audience to which it was intended. The explicit and more tacit relations between the two books and the striking contrast between their receptions will guide in the first part of the seminar (weeks 2-6) into Said's work, reconstructing his position as a public intellectual and a Palestinian cultural hero, and understanding the limits of his critical interventions.

The seminar's first part will enable us to pose – with Said and beyond him – a series of questions about “the Question of Palestine” (week 7). We will get acquainted with some moments from the history of “the question of” as a form intellectual intervention and a politics of discourse that both expresses and takes part in polarized relations of power. We will ask who is authorized to be an author of such a question and who is placed in the position of its problematized object. And we will relate all these questions to the politics of knowledge explored in ***Orientalism***. Of central concern in this context will be the relation between “the Question of Palestine” and “the Jewish Question.”

On this basis, the seminar third part (weeks 8-12) will explore three related paths. We will look for “the question of Palestine” in the work of three contemporary French thinkers, the philosophers Deleuze and Foucault, and the author Jean Genet (weeks 8-9). We will use “the question” as an analytic tool in a critical reading of early Zionist discourse of the least nationalist kind (weeks 10-11), and of some Palestinian thinkers committed to the Palestinian cause (week 12). We will conclude this investigation and celebrate the end of the semester with some works of art and scholarship that seek to imagine Palestine without and beyond “the question.”

### **Pedagogic Framework and Goal**

The Seminar is designed for advanced undergraduate students, but there are no pre-requisites and all are welcome. The course invites students to an intellectual journey along three different paths that cross each other in multiple points: the work of Edward Said, its theoretical and political context; the rhetoric of “the question” as an analytic tool for studying modes of othering, where a discourse constitutes an inferior Other through its “Orientalization,” racialization” (or any other form of binary, hierarchal relations); convergences and divergences between Zionist and Palestinian nationalist discourse. Each of these path be explored for its own sake; by interlacing them the seminar seeks to reflect upon – but also demonstrate – the

work of critical theory, the way it is – or should or might be – localized or displaced, and what its limits are as a form of engaged knowledge.

### **Course Requirements**

Over 14 weeks, students will spend 2.5 hours per week in class (35 hours total). Required reading for the course meetings is expected to take up approximately 7.5 hours per week (95 hours in 13 weeks). In addition, researching for and writing 7 short response papers and one final paper is estimated at total of approximately 55 hours over the course of the term.

**Students' Obligations, Assignments, and Evaluation:** 1) class attendance and participation (20% of final grade); 7 short (1-2 double spaced) response papers (30% of final grade); final 10-15 page paper (50% of final grade).

**Response papers** should be submitted on the night before the seminar and present an idea, an insight, an argument or a question related to on one of the texts from the reading list of that week. Students should be ready to discuss their response in class.

**The Final Paper** is an essay (about 15-20 double spaced pages) focusing on a well framed question, whether historical, hermeneutical, or theoretical. Outlines for final papers are due on March 15th. Outlines will be discussed in private meeting with me. Outlines are not graded. When writing the final paper, however, comments on the outline, as well as on the response papers should be taken into consideration.

**In Class Presentation** – In preparation for the final paper, students may present a work in progress in class, in the form of 20-30 minutes presentation. These presentations are optional and are not graded.

**Students' Reading Suggestions** – Suggestions for additional or alternative texts that fall within the general framework of the seminar are most welcome.

**Group Work** – At several points along the course of the semester students will be asked to collaborate in small groups and present one of the texts for discussion. These presentation are evaluated as part of class participation.

**Reading Materials:** Detailed bibliography is assigned for each meeting. Readings include mostly required and some recommended texts. Instructions for reading will be given weekly and may reflect students' interests and questions that come up in class. Most of the readings will be available online, either through the folders uploaded to the course's website on Canvas, or through links that will be provided before the beginning of the semester.

## **Class Schedule**

### **1 Introduction**

#### **2. Beginnings**

Edward Said, *Beginning: Intention and Method*, chaps 2, 4.

-----, “The Claims of Individuality” and “The Palestinian Experience,” in Bayoumi and Rubin (eds.), *The Edward Said Reader* (Vintage Books 2000).

Robert J. C. Young, “We Belong to Palestine Still: Edward Said and the Challenge of Representation,” in R. Braidotti and P. Gilroy, *Conflicting Humanities* (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2016), 129-142.

**Recommended:** Conor McCarthy, *The Cambridge introduction to Edward Said* (Cambridge UP 2010), pp. 13-94.

#### **3. Orientalism: Colonialism as a Form of Knowledge**

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books 2003 [1978]).

#### **4. Orientalism: Conceptual Tools and Political Intervention**

Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

Daniel Martin Varisco, *Said and the Unsaid* (The University of Washington Press 2007), pp. 93-233.

#### **5. The Question of Palestine**

Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (Vintage Books 1992 [1979]).

Amir R. Mufti, “The Missing Homeland of Edward Said,” *Conflicting Humanities*, pp. 165-182.

Paul Gilroy, “Not Yet Humanism or the Non-Jewish Jew Becomes the Non-Humanistic Humanist” in *Conflicting Humanities*, pp. 95-108.

#### **Recommended**

Michael Walzer and Edward Said, “An Exchange,” *Grand Street* 5:4 (1986), 246–259.

*The Question of Palestine and the United Nation* (an official, anonymous UN document), The United Nations New York 2008. <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/DPI2499.pdf>

## 6. Orientalism, Palestine, Post-Colonialism

Ann Stoler, "Raw Cuts: Palestine, Israel, and PostColonial Studies, in Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in our Time* (Duke UP 2016), chap. 2.

Timothy Brennan, "The illusion of a Future: Orientalism as Traveling Theory." *Critical Theory*, Vol. 26 Issue 3 (Spring 2000), pp 558-583.

Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Columbia UP 1998), chap. 4

## 7. The Question of "the Question"

Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question,"  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>

Carlyle, Thomas (1849). "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question", *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Vol. XL, pp. 670–679.  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000080778727;view=1up;seq=690>

Mill, John Stuart (1850). "The Negro Question". *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*. Vol. XLI, pp. 25–31.  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044092641992;view=1up;seq=33>

Holly Case, "The "Social Question," 1820-1920", *Modern Intellectual History* 13/3 (2016), pp. 747-775.

## Recommended

Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Revisiting the Jewish Question* (Polity Press), Introduction, chaps. 3-4, 7

## 8 "French Theory" and the Question

Gilles Deleuze, and Elias Sanbar, "The Indians of Palestine," *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*: Vol. 20:3 (1998).

Michel Foucault, "What the Iranians Are Dreaming About" *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 16-22, 1978 <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/007863.html>

Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (The University of Minnesota Press 2016), chaps. 2-3, 5, Conclusion

## 9 Without Question: The Commitment of Jean Genet

Jean Genet, *Prisoners of Love* (The New York Review of Books 2003).

Edmund White, "Genet's Prisoner of Love: The Evolution of a Muslim Saint," *The Yale Review*, vol. 100:1 (2012).

## 10. Palestine as a "Hidden" Zionist Question

Yitzhak Epstein. "The Hidden Question," **The Balfour Project**,  
<http://www.balfourproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Yitzhak-Epstein.pdf>

Ahad Ha-Am, "The Truth from the Land of Israel,"

Hayyim Ben-Kiki, "European Culture in the East," and "On the Question of All Questions Concerning the Settling of the Land," in M. Behar and Z Ben Dor Benite (eds.), *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought* (Brandeis UP 2013).

Eliyahu Eliachar, "A Jew of Palestine before the Royal Commission," in M. Behar and Z Ben Dor Benite (eds.), *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought* (Brandeis UP 2013).

Hans Kohn, "Nationalism," in *The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal Der Jude, 1916-1928*. Edited by Arthur A. Cohen, 19-30. U. of Alabama Press 1980

Martin Buber, *A Land for Two People: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs* (Chicago University Press 2005), Selection

Zeev Jabotinsky – "The Iron Wall", <http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>

### Recommended

Judith Butler, "Version of Binationalism in Said and Buber," *Conflicting Humanities*, 185-210.

Noam Pianko, *Zionism: The Roads not Taken: Rawdowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Indiana UP 2010), chap. 5.

## 11. The Case of Hannah Arendt

Hannah Arendt, "The Jewish Question," *The Jewish Writing*, ed. J. Kohn and R. H. Feldman, Schocken Books 2007, 42-45

----- "Antisemitism," *The Jewish Writing*, 46-78.

-----, "Peace or Armistice in the Newar East," in *The Jewish Writing*, 423-450

-----, "Zionism Reconsidered," "The Jewish State: 50 Years After," To Save the Jewish Homeland," in *The Jewish Writing*, 343-401

Judith Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (Columbia UP 2012), chaps 5-6.

**Recommended:** Shmuel Lederman, "Making the Desert Bloom: Hannah Arendt and Zionist Discourse," *The European Legacy*\_Vol. 21:4 (2016).

## **12 Is "the Question of Palestine" a Palestinian Question?**

Albert Hourani, "The Case against a Jewish State in Palestine: Statement to the Anglo-American Commission 1946," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2005), pp. 80-90.

Mahmud Darwish, Selected Poems from *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone* (Archipelago Books 2006) and *In the Presence of Absence* (Archipelago Books 2011).

Azmi Bishara, "Reflections of the Tension between Religion and Politics in the Middle Eastern Context," *Theoria ve-Bikoret* vol. 1 (1991), pp. 105-142.

Raif Zreik, "When Does a Settler Become a Native (With Apologies to Mahmud Mamdani)," *Constellations* Volume 23, No 3, (2016), pp. 351-364.

Beshara Doumani, Beshara Doumani, B. (2007). "Palestine versus the Palestinians? The iron laws and ironies of a people denied." *Journal of Palestine studies*, 36(4), 49-64.

## **13 Beyond "the Question": Re-Imagining Palestine, Re-Inventing Israel**

Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Alliance*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktRVPsZaZHM>

Yael Bartana, **And Europe Will Be Stunned: *The Polish Trilogy***

Ariella Azoulay, "Where am I Supposed to go Now?" *Conflicting Humanities*, pp. 143-163.

-----, "Palestine as a Symptom, Palestine as Hope: Revising Human Rights Discourse", *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 40:4 (Summer 2014), 332-364.

Marcelo Svirksi, *After Israel: Towards Cultural Transformation* (Zed Books 2014), Introduction, chap. 1.

## **14 Students' Presentations**