
Women in the Arab World: Beyond Stereotypes

Dr. Rana Zaher

Course Number: 702.2374

Class Time: TBA

Class Location: TBA

E-Mail: ranazaher@gmail.com

*“There is another possibility for realizing our pursuit rather than defeat, since we are determined not to die before we try to live” (Ashour, R., 2013, p. 393).**

Course Objective:

This course brings the case of women in the Arab world to the forefront of the academic discussion, yet from a non-Orientalist angle that defies the overgeneralizations and dichotomizations that usually characterize discussions about Arab women. Arab women may share many issues and challenges in common, ethnographically speaking, but they may also differ in their choice of struggle and resistance to oppression in accordance with the difference in their political, social, and cultural context.

The course will expose the students to the different realities of Arab women in different contexts, embarking on different fronts, and will re-define certain classical concepts such as *feminism* and *struggle* to better reflect the dynamics of these women’s solution-seeking patterns. The main topics that will be discussed in class include Orientalism, different forms of Feminisms: Islamic feminism vs. Arab secular feminism, resistance and empowerment from within, Arab Spring’s effect on women, Arab women’s political representation, and patterns of change among Arab women.

The course is based on multiple learning resources: academic material, films, and guest speakers when possible.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is obligatory for at least 80% of the classes, and active participation in classes is expected. All relevant material and articles can be found in and downloaded from the course Moodle website. All exams are open-book.

*The opening quote: Athqal min Radwa: Maqati‘ min Sira Thatiyya [Heavier than Radwa: Excerpts from an autobiography]. Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk.

Course Evaluation:

Midterm exam: 40 %

Final exam: 40%

Essay: 20%

Bibliography by topic:

Week 1+2:

Introduction

- Valentine M. Moghadam (2004) Towards gender equality in the Arab/Middle East region: Islam, Culture and Feminist Activism. United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report Office, Occasional paper, Background paper for HDR 2004

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2004_valentine_moghadam.pdf

Week 3+4:

Orientalism

- Said, E. (1978), Orientalism, An excerpt from the "Introduction" (New York: Random House, 1978) pp.1-9.
- Maryam Khalid, (2011) Gender, orientalism and representations of the 'Other' in the War on Terror, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 23:1, PP. 15-29

Optional

- Mohammad Samiei, (2010) Neo-Orientalism? The relationship between the West and Islam in our globalized world, *Third World Quarterly*, 31:7, 1145-116

Week 5:

Secular Feminism:

- Nawar Al-Hassan Golley, (2004) Is feminism relevant to Arab women? *Third World Quarterly*, 25:3, 521-536
- Badran, M. (2005) Between secular and Islamic Feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond. *Journal of Middle East Women Studies*. Volume 1, number 1, pp. 6-28

Week 6+7:

Islamic Feminism

- Iman Hashim (1999) Reconciling Islam and feminism, *Gender and Development* 7:1, PP. 7-14

- Moghadam, M.,V. (2002). Islamic Feminism and its Discontent: Toward a Resolution of the Debate, Signs, volume 27, number 4, pp. 1135-1171, The University of Chicago press

Optional:

- Margot Badran. (2001) Locating feminisms: The collapse of secular and religious discourses in the Mashriq, *Agenda*, 16:50, 41-57

Week 7:

Midterm

Week 8+9:

Patterns of Change and Resistance

- Kedem-Friedrich, P., & Al-Atawneh, M. (2004). Does modernity lead to greater well-being? bedouin women undergoing a socio-cultural transition. *Social Indicators Research*, 67(3), 19-333.
- Gottlieb, N. (2008). Reconstruction: The voices of bedouin-arab women on the demolition of their homes in the unrecognized villages of the Negev1. *Hagar*, 8(2), 47-64,255.
- Maryam, Khalid (2015). The Peripheries of Gender and Sexuality in the Arab Spring. *Journal of Mediterranean Politics* ,Volume 20-,Issue 2, pp. 161-177

Weeks 10+11:

Arab Spring – Gender Spring?

- Andrea Khalil (2014) Tunisia's women: partners in revolution, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19:2, 186-199
- Sherwood, L. F. (2012). Women at a crossroads: Sudanese women and political transformation. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(5), 77-90
- Valentine M. Moghadam (2014) Modernizing women and democratization after the Arab Spring, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19:2, 137-142

Optional

- Lucia Sorbera (2014) Challenges of thinking feminism and revolution in Egypt between 2011 and 2014, *Postcolonial Studies*, 17:1, 63-75

Week 12:

Final Exam

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the lecturer.

