Topics in Comparative Politics: Women, Gender, and the Middle East

Instructor: Nermin Allam
Email: nermin.allam@rutgers.edu
Weekly optional scheduled synchronous zoom meeting at: https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/99241713040

COURSE FORMAT:
This is an asynchronous class. There will be an optional scheduled synchronous session every Friday from 2:30pm to 4:00pm: https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/99241713040

The sessions will be recorded and posted for students on blackboard.

Office Hours: Fridays from 4:15pm to 6:00pm
https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/3285137973?pwd=OGJnTS94emhDamdqTG10WDJ6Yk5VUT09

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The status of women in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies continues to figure squarely in policy discussions and cultural debates. It often functions as a tool to measure progress or as an example of all that is wrong with the Middle East region. Central in these debates is the figure of the Middle Eastern Woman—which is often conflated with the Muslim Woman. The figure serves as an instrumental symbol within various political programs and functions as a site for cultural demarcation. In this course, we will survey different images of the Middle Eastern Woman. We will pay special attention to how these figures are constructed and used to justify certain political projects and discourses and the role that women have played in either shaping or challenging these images.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
The main objective of the course is to supply students with knowledge on women, gender, and politics in the Middle East. After completing this course, students will gain:

- knowledge of the key debates and theoretical approaches in the field of Gender and Women's Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies;
- knowledge of the various experiences of Middle Eastern women in their societies and in the West;
- familiarity with historical and current women's movements in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies;
• understanding of the socio-economic divisions, state policies, and colonial projects that shaped modern and historical gendered relations in the region.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION
Movie Presentation: 15%  
Research Paper Proposal: 10%  
Take-home Midterm Exam 30%  
Book Review: 20%  
Research Paper: 25%

Movie Presentation: A mini recorded presentation is due on September 25. Students will pick one of the following movies to review in their presentation:
  - Disney Aladdin (2019)
  - Disney Aladdin (1992)
  - A Hologram for the King (2016)
Students will create a mini recorded presentation (approx. 10 - 20 minutes) on one of the assigned movies and submit it via blackboard. The presentation will be shared with your colleagues. Be creative, resourceful, this is your project and your space to show off all these acquired TikTok skills! Presentations must include the following components: 1) a brief summary of the movie; 2) how Middle Eastern women were represented in the movie; 3) what tropes were used in the representation of women and the Middle East; 4) Your reaction and critical reflection.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of external resources and readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Take-home Midterm Exam: A take-home midterm exam will take place on October 23. The questions will be posted on October 23 at 8:00 am EST and students have until October 23 at 11:00 pm EST to submit their answers. The midterm will include materials covered in the first half of the course—Week 1 to Week 7. A review session will be held the week prior to the exam. The exam will cover lectures, documentaries, presentations, and readings. It will consist of essay questions.

Book Review: A book review of (approx. 2000 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman font size 12) on one of the following novels is due on November 06. Students are expected to read and review one of the assigned novels. The library carries copies of the assigned novels; the novels can also be accessed and/or purchased online. The assigned novels are:

Book review must include the following components: 1) author's brief biography; 2) summary of the novel, its chapters, and the main plot; 3) discussion of the images, representations, and tropes that were used and evoked in the novel; 4) discussion of some of your favourite quotes; 5) how the novel ties to class readings

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<tr>
<th>Grading Scheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the novel</td>
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<td>Representation of women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bringing in class readings</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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**Research Paper Proposal:** A research paper proposal (approx. 250 words, double-spaced, *Times New Roman* font size 12) is due on **October 16**. Proposals should be submitted through the Blackboard. The proposal should include:

- The topic and the country/countries you wish to write your paper on.
- Preliminary sources (including a minimum of 2 books and 2 academic journal articles).
- A brief statement describing what in particular you wish to address.

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<tr>
<th>Grading Scheme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic Outline</td>
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<td>Citations and Bibliography</td>
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<td>Total Grade</td>
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**Research paper:** A research paper (approx. 2000 words, double-spaced, *Times New Roman* font size 12) is due on **December 04**. Papers should be submitted through blackboard. The research question must address one of the major themes of the course. Please pay attention to the following points:

- This assignment requires a critical evaluation of the themes discussed in the course and students are expected to incorporate some of the course material in their papers.
- You may choose to examine case studies or focus on theoretical concepts related to the course. In either case, the paper must provide a critical analysis of the subject of investigation.
- Make sure to state a clear main argument (thesis statement) in the introductory paragraph of your paper. In the body of the paper, you must support your thesis, cite and briefly discuss contrary views, and develop your own arguments and positions. End the paper with a summary of the main arguments.
- You may use the Chicago Manual of Style, MLA Style, or another citation system. Please make sure you consistently use one system of citation for your references.
Include a bibliography listing all sources used in the essay. Do not pad the bibliography with items you did not actually use.

Need writing support? Visit the University Writing Center for writing workshops and one-on-one tutoring services at: https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center. Another excellent resource for writing support is Rutgers Learning Center at: http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc

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<tr>
<th>Grading Scheme</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Argumentation</td>
<td>/10</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Depth of Research (use of sources)</td>
<td>/10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity of Organization, Grammar/Writing Quality</td>
<td>/5</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total Grade</td>
<td>/25</td>
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**GRADING SCHEME**

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<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grades Scored Between</th>
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<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 - 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good Good</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 and less than 90</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 and less than 87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 and less than 80</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 and less than 77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>65 and less than 70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 and less than 65</td>
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**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK ACADEMIC POLICIES**

**Completion of Requirements**: You should complete all the requirements of the course. If you do not submit an assignment, you will automatically fail the course.

**Late Assignments**: It is your responsibility to inform your professor as soon as it becomes clear that your assignment will be late. Late assignments will receive a *penalty of 5% per day* including weekends. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted.
Make-Ups for Exams: Students will not be allowed to take the mid-term exam on another date unless the absence was documented and excused in accordance with the University policy.

Academic Integrity and Honesty: Rutgers University is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the academic integrity code at: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/ and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Important Semester Dates: Important Semester Dates are found at https://registrar.newark.rutgers.edu/office-registrar-academic-calender

Email Communication: The primary method of communication will be via emails, sent either directly or via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that your Rutgers email ID is operational to receive my emails and announcements. Contact the Technology Help Desk immediately if you experience problems in receiving emails from me. If you are still reading the syllabus at this point, email me at the address listed above with a cute kitten picture and you will be able to secure a two-day extension on the final course paper.

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

Religious Holiday Policy and Accommodations: Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule. The Division of Student Affairs is available to verify absences for religious observance, as needed: (973) 353-5063 or DeanofStudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

Students with Temporary Conditions/Injuries: Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury that is adversely affecting their ability to fully participate in their courses should submit a request for assistance at: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

Students Who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: Students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, should know that help and support are available. To report an incident, contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. To submit an incident report: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. To speak with a staff member who is confidential and does NOT have a reporting responsibility,
contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: (973) 353-1918 or run.vpva@rutgers.edu.

**Disability Services:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must complete and submit the Registration Form, schedule and complete an intake meeting, and submit appropriate documentation. If your request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privately to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations are not retroactive and are effective only upon submission of the LOA to the instructor. Please begin the process by completing and submitting the Registration Form, Applying for Services, which is available at the website below.

- **Applying for Services:** [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services)
- **Documentation Guidelines:** [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines)
- **Letter of Accommodations (LOA):** [https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations](https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations)
- **Office of Disability Services (ODS)**
  Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center
  (973) 353-5375
  odsnewark@rutgers.edu

**FEELING OVERWHELMED?**
The Student Wellness Program (SWP) is a free and confidential counseling service which helps students deal effectively with stressors and pressures.

- Call to schedule an appointment: (973) 353-5805
- Drop off at: Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall,
- Visit website for more information at: or [http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/](http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/)

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS**
The readings will draw on a variety of disciplines, from political science and sociology to history and anthropology. I understand that students are often required to purchase several textbooks for each course which places an undue financial hardship on them. I have thus assigned only one textbook for this course. It can be purchased from the University Bookstore:


In addition to the course text, the majority of the assigned readings will be in the form of academic journal articles, book chapters, newspaper pieces, and blog entries. These readings are accessible online through the library databases at Rutgers and available on the Blackboard.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings, Media, and In-class Activities</th>
<th>Assignments and Exams Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>09/04</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>No Required Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate |                                |
• The Battle of Algiers Documentary. Available at: [https://bit.ly/2UwaKYM](https://bit.ly/2UwaKYM) | Movie Presentation Due date |
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• Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject. Conversation with the author Saba Mahmood. Available at: [http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-myth-of-the-secular-part-3-1.3154810](http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-myth-of-the-secular-part-3-1.3154810) |
<p>| 7 | 10/16 | Women, Gender and Political Islam: The Empowered Muslim Women | • Rochelle Terman, “The Piety of Public Participation: The Revolutionary Muslim Woman in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” <em>Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions</em> 11, no. 3–4 |
|   |   |   |   | Research Paper Proposal Due |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM</td>
<td>The questions will be posted on October 23 at 8:00 am EST and students have until October 23 at 11:00 pm EST to submit their answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/06</td>
<td>Women, Gender, and the War on Terrorism: Are Muslim Women Weak Or Are They Dangerous?</td>
<td>Hadiya Abdelrahman, “Are We Weak Or Are We Terrorists? Here’s How Muslim Women Are Caught In The Web Of Violent Stereotypes,” Book Review Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Everyday Feminism, October 30, 2017, Available at: https://everydayfeminism.com/2017/10/muslim-women-stereotypes/.


11 11/13 Gender Politics in Gulf Monarchies: The Revival of State Sponsored Feminism


12 11/20 Gender Politics post the Arab Uprisings: Female Activists

• Sherine Hafez, “No Longer a Bargain: Women, Masculinity, and the Egyptian Uprising,”
13 11/27 No Class

14 12/04 Conclusion and Course Reflection

- No Required Readings

Research Paper due
