

Orientalism: Western Perceptions of Near Eastern Culture and Values

LSHV-512-01

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Course Description: Ever since human beings differentiated between those of their own community and others, the possibility of misperceiving the “other” has existed. That possibility expanded greatly during the period of European exploration, colonization, and imperialism. With European exploration of the lands to the east, called the “Near East” or “Middle East,” came description, analysis, interpretation of those lands and their people. Those who studied and wrote on these topics became known as “orientalists,” and their subject “orientalism.” The complex cultural, political, and economic interchanges between West and East over the last two centuries have added layers of connotation. Is “orientalism” in part imperialist, racist, or anti-Semitic? Today these questions and this topic take on the highest importance, as the Middle East is a focal point of confrontation between religions, cultures, and values. This course explores European perceptions of Near Eastern culture as expressed in literature, music, and the visual arts. It addresses these topics in a political and social context, asking also whether and how the humanities can shape and alter such perceptions. We will hope to discover possibilities for being more fully responsive to cultural complexities in today’s global environment.

Class Reports: Each student will give an in-class report, to be submitted in note form. This report consists of 10 minutes of formal presentation on a subject related to the week's topic. At the end, two discussion questions will generate additional discussion, for which the presenter is responsible.

Tips on Giving Reports:

- Narrow your subject. In ten minutes you will be far more comfortable doing a detailed analysis of one work by Richard Wagner, revealing a few of his central artistic strategies and objectives, than you will doing "The Life and Work of Richard Wagner."
- Use notes, rather than reading a full text. Any and all appropriate media may be used as part of the presentation.
- Limit your report to 10 minutes. I will "call time" if you go over.
- Focus on creating good discussion questions. They are essential to the success of your report.
- Be prepared to lead the discussion.

Written Work: Each student will also submit a project paper proposal in writing by Jan. 31. Projects will normally be research papers, including *annotated* bibliography with

citations in Turabian format. Non-traditional projects will be considered. Expected scale: 19 to 22 pages. Students will give brief informal presentations of their projects during the last class meeting. All project papers must be submitted by April 24.

Evaluation: Class report, 30%; participation, 20%; project, including presentation, 50%.

Class Schedule

The Idea of Orientalism

Jan. 17 Introduction: *The Idea of Orientalism* (Kaplan, Prologue and Part I; Macfie, Introduction and Parts I, II, and III)

Jan. 24 Concepts and Controversies. Macfie: Parts IV through VI, and Part X.

Orientalism and Empire

Jan. 31 Images of Power and Pleasure: Gericault, Delacroix, Matisse.

Feb. 7 T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Macfie, Parts VII through IX.

Feb. 14 *The Arabists* (Kaplan); music tba.

Orientalism and Idyll

Feb. 28 *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, tr. Edward FitzGerald

March 27 Images of Idyll: Gerome, Alma-Tadema, Ingres.

Orientalism and Soul

April 3 *The Arabian Nights*, tr. Richard Burton

April 10 E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*. Macfie, Part XI.

April 17 Music tba. Macfie, Parts XII through XIV.

April 24 Project presentations.

Book List

Burton, Richard, tr. *The Arabian Nights*
Modern Library Classics
FitzGerald, Edward, tr. *The Rubaiyat of Omar*
Khayyam Cosimo Classics
Forster, E. M. *A Passage to India* (any
edition)

Kaplan, Robert. *The Arabists* Free Press
Lawrence, T. E. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*
Anchor
Macfie, Alexander Lyon. *Orientalism: A*
Reader New York U P

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