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**WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE EAST:  
REPRESENTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS  
(HUM 4000/5000)**

Instructor: Dr. Kari Neely  
Credits: 3  
Office Hours  
Meeting Times:  
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**A. Course Description and Objectives**

This course examines images of Middle Eastern women and their reception in the Middle East and the West. Through an exploration of notable women such as Cleopatra, Mary mother of Jesus and the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, we address how political and social issues have been and are played out upon women. Our knowledge of real Middle Eastern female role models is expanded by discussion of women such as the pharaoh Hatshepsut, neo-Platonist philosopher and mathematician Hypatia, poetess Rabi' the Mystic, Queen Helena of Adiabene and Egyptian feminist Huda Sha'raawi,.

We begin the course learning techniques and methodologies of analyzing the lacunae in texts and how others have "read into" these spaces according to their own historical and cultural positions. For example, we will ask: "How can the story of Eve/Hawwa lead to such varied interpretations?" Later, we will address how our own consumption of these and current images fuels the distance and misunderstandings that exist on all sides. To encourage a meaningful dialogue, guest speakers will present their own analysis of these representations and our perceptions of them.

Throughout the course we will pursue these objectives:

- Survey our own representations of Middle Eastern women and analyze our perceptions of them
- Read texts that illustrate how others have represented and, at times, misrepresented Middle Eastern women
- Broaden our understanding of the various roles that Middle Eastern women play in their own societies, in their own creation of female symbols, and in their own female iconography.
- Examine gender roles in the Middle East through an exploration of alternative representations
- Develop our theoretical vocabulary for analyzing primary texts from various cultural contexts, including those originating within the Middle East
- Understand the issues of translation that complicate the research process

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- Construct a scholarly toolkit for conducting independent research that includes such methods as textual analysis of primary sources, critical readings, database research, and interviews -- use of the library's collection and research databases will be necessary
- Learn the steps involved in participating in scholarly dialogue through the preparation of a conference paper

## **B. Units and Texts:**

The following is a list of Units taught in the course. Texts listed will be modified and supplemented by guest speakers. A full bibliography for the course is provided.

### *In the Beginning: Eve/Hawwa and Lilith*

Genesis 1-5; Cor. 11:3, and I Tim 2:13; Qur'an 2:30-39, 7:11-25, 15:26-42, 17:61-65, 18: 50-51, 20: 110-124, 38: 71-85

Alphabet of Ben-Sira

Milton's Paradise Lost

Mahfouz's Children of the Alley

Pagels, Elaine H. Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. New York: Random House, 1988.

### *Egyptian Queens: Cleopatra and Women of Antiquity*

Francesca T. Royster's Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon

Roehrig, Catharine H., Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller. Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh.

Videos:

Nefertiti Resurrected, documentary

Cleopatra, movie classic

Rome [HBO series]

### *The Temptress: Potiphar's Wife Zulaikha*

Genesis 37, Qur'an Sura 12

Genesis Rabba

Sefer ha-Yashar

al-Ghazali's tafsir

Jami's Yusuf and Zulaikha

Webber's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

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***The Cult of Virginity and Muslim Piety: Pharaoh's wife Asya; Mary/Maryam; Fatima***

Barbara Stowasser's Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation

Mary Clayton's The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England

Amina Wadud's Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective

***Political Woman in Front of and Behind the Scenes***

Hanan Ashrawi's This Side of Peace: A Personal Account

Elinor Burkett's Golda

Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics's Women and Power in the Middle East.

Laura A Liswood. Women World Leaders: Fifteen Great Politicians Tell Their Stories.

Afsaneh Najmabadi. Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity.

Noor's Leap of Faith: Memoirs of an Unexpected Life.

Huda Sharawi's Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)

Maria Dzielska. Hypatia of Alexandria

Videos

The Journey to Golda's Balcony

Hanan Ashrawi A Woman of Her Time

***Wives of the Prophet and Muslim Feminism:***

Lila Abu-Lughod's Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East.

Fatima Mernissi and Mary Jo Lakeland's The Forgotten Queens of Islam.

And Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry.

Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses.

Amina Wadud's Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective.

Videos:

I exist voices from the Middle Eastern lesbian & gay community.

Muslim women talk sex.

In My Own Skin The Complexity of Living As an Arab in America.

***The Storyteller and Entertainer: Public and Private Spaces***

Husain Haddawy and Muhsin Mahdi's The Arabian Nights = Alf Laylah Wa-Laylah.

Rosemarie Thomson's Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary

Excerpts from Rabi'a the Mystic and her fellow-saints in Islam

Fadwa Tuqa'n's A Mountainous Journey: An Autobiography

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Videos:

Umm Kulthum a voice like Egypt

Persepolis

Sheikhates Blues

Arabian Nights

### C. Activities and Grades:

Students will participate in the following activities:

**Reaction Papers/Responses:** For each unit, all students will be asked to engage with the materials presented in class through writing assignments and activities such as responding to a set of questions, gathering external materials related to the topic, or performing research tasks as assigned by the instructor.

**Presentation:** Students will present one female figure related to one of the units. Students will be assigned a unit during the first week of class.

**Examinations:** Examinations will be take-home essays. Students will have 48 hours to complete each examination.

**Research Papers:** Guidelines for research papers will be distributed the first week of class. Graduate research papers will be a minimum of 20 pages in length, will include an abstract and an annotated bibliography, and will be presented to other graduate students in a mock conference format.

### **Grades:**

Undergraduates:

Option One: Midterm and Final

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Reaction Papers/Activities: 25%

Presentation: 15%

Midterm: 25%

Final: 25%

Option Two: One Exam and Research Paper  
(Research Paper 10-15 pages, topic approved by instructor)

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Attendance and Participation: 10%  
Reaction Papers/Activities: 25%  
Presentation: 15%  
Examination: 25%  
Research Paper: 25%

#### Graduate Students

Attendance and Participation: 10%  
Reaction Papers/Activities: 15%  
Presentation: 15%  
Midterm: 25%  
Research Paper: 35%  
    Abstract: 5%  
    Annotated Bibliography: 5%  
    Conference Application: 5%  
    Conference Presentation: 5%  
    Paper: 80%

#### **D. References and Textbooks**

Course readings will draw from this partial list of works and will be augmented by selections provided by guest speakers:

Abu-Lughod, Lila. Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East. Princeton studies in culture/power/history. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Afzal-Khan, Fawzia. Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out. Northampton, Mass: Olive Branch Press, 2005.

Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, and Abdullah Yusuf Ali. The meaning of the Holy Qurān. Beltsville, Md: Amana Publications, 2001.

Ashby, Ruth, and Deborah Gore Ohrn. Herstory: Women Who Changed the World. New York: Viking, 1995.

Ashrafi, Hana. This Side of Peace: A Personal Account. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Barbosa, Peter, and Garrett Lenoir. I exist voices from the Middle Eastern lesbian & gay community. [United States]: Arab Film Distribution, 2004.

Burkett, Elinor. Golda. New York: Harper, 2008.

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Clayton, Mary. The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England. Cambridge studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 26. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998

Dzielska, Maria. Hypatia of Alexandria. Revealing antiquity, 8. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Essafi, Ali, Gabriel Khoury, M. El-Khoury, Humbert Balsan, Ivan Boccara, Nadia Dalal, and Mathieu Daude. Sheikhates Blues. Women pioneers collection, v. 9. [S.l.] : MISR International Films: Arab Film Distribution, 2004.

Ent, Sophia. Muslim women talk sex. New York, NY: Filmmakers Library, 2000s.

Feldshuh, Tovah, Alec Baldwin, Gérard Issembert, and Aliya Cheskis-Cotel. The Journey to Golda's Balcony. [New York?]: GoldaVision and Issembert Productions, 2004.

Ferne, Elizabeth Warnock, and Basima Qattan Bezirgan. Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak. The Dan Danciger publication series. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977.

Haddawy, Husain, and Muhsin Mahdi. The Arabian Nights = Alf Laylah Wa-Laylah. New York: Norton, 1990.

Hila<sup>l</sup>, Taqi<sup>l</sup> al-Di<sup>l</sup>, Taqi<sup>l</sup> al-Di<sup>l</sup> Hila<sup>l</sup>, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Qurtubi<sup>l</sup>, Muhammad

Muhsin Khan, Isma<sup>l</sup> ibn Umar Ibn Kathi<sup>l</sup>, and Abdul Malik Mujahid. Tafsi<sup>r</sup> ma<sup>l</sup> al-Qur<sup>l</sup> al-kari<sup>m</sup> = Interpretion of the meanings of the Noble Qur<sup>l</sup> in the English language : with comments from Tafsir at-Tabari, Tafsir al-Qurtubi and Tafsir Ibn Kathir and ahadith from Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and other hadith books. Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers, 2000.

Jajeh, Jennifer, Nikki Byrd, D.J. Matamassik, and Johny Farraj. In My Own Skin The Complexity of Living As an Arab in America. Seattle, WA: Arab Film Distribution, 2001.

Ja<sup>l</sup>mi<sup>l</sup>, and David Pendlebury. Yusuf and Zulaikha: An Allegorical Romance. London: Octagon Press, 1980.

Jewish Publication Society. [Tanakh] = JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh : the Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation--Second Edition. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Joseph, Suad, and Susan Slyomovics. Women and Power in the Middle East. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Josephus, Flavius, William Whiston, and Syvert Haverkamp. Complete Works of

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- Josephus. Antiquities of the Jews; The Wars of the Jews against Apion, Etc. New York: Bigelow, Brown.
- Kohlenberger, John R. The Precise Parallel New Testament: Greek Text, King James Version, Rheims New Testament, Amplified Bible, New International Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Bible, New American Standard Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Liswood, Laura A. Women World Leaders: Fifteen Great Politicians Tell Their Stories. London: Pandora, 1995. (Tansu Penbe Çiller)
- Lloyd Webber, Andrew, Tim Rice, David Mallet, Steven Pimlott, Donny Osmond, Maria Friedman, Richard Attenborough, Robert Torti, and Joan Collins. Joseph and the amazing technicolor dreamcoat. Universal City, CA: Universal, 2000.
- Maḥfuḳz, Najiḳb, and Peter Theroux. Children of the Alley. New York: Doubleday, 1996.
- Mankiewicz, Joseph L., Walter Wanger, Ranald MacDougall, Sidney Buchman, Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, and Rex Harrison. Cleopatra. Five star collection. Beverly Hills, Calif: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2001.
- Masri, Mai. Hanan Ashrawi A Woman of Her Time. Seattle, WA: Arab Film Distribution, 1995.
- Mernissi, Fatima, and Mary Jo Lakeland. The Forgotten Queens of Islam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Mernissi, Fatima, and Mary Jo Lakeland. Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Milton, John, John Milton, John Milton, and John Milton. English Minor Poems. Paradise Lost. Samson Agonistes. Areopagitica. Great books of the Western World, v. 32. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1955.
- Najmabadi, Afsaneh. Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Noor. Leap of Faith: Memoirs of an Unexpected Life. New York: Miramax Books, 2003.
- Pagels, Elaine H. Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. New York: Random House, 1988.
- Papazian, Robert A., et al. Rome. The complete second season. [New York]: HBO Home Video, 2007.
- Rigault, Xavier, et. Al. Persepolis. Culver City, Calif: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2008.

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- Roehrig, Catharine H., Renée Dreyfus, and Cathleen A. Keller. Hatshepsut, from Queen to Pharaoh. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005.
- Royster, Francesca T. Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Roded, Ruth. Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader. London: I.B. Tauris, 1999.
- Rushdie, Salman. The Satanic Verses. New York, N.Y.: Viking, 1989.
- Sefer ha-Yashar. The Book of Jasher. Philadelphia: Bible Corp. of America, 1954.
- Shalaby, Huda', and Margot Badran. Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924). New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987.
- Stern, David, and Mark Mirsky. Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990.
- Stowasser, Barbara Freyer. Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Tabari, John Cooper, Wilferd Madelung, and Alan Jones. The Commentary on the Qur'an. Oxford [Oxfordshire]: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Trevisick, Shaun, Matthew Wortman, J. Fletcher, Tamara Tunie, Kate Winslet, and Lisa Harney. Nefertiti Resurrected. Discover Channel quest. Santa Monica, CA: Artisan Home Entertainment, 2003.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- Tuqan, Fadwa', Olive E. Kenny, and Naomi Shihab Nye. A Mountainous Journey: An Autobiography. St. Paul, Minn: Graywolf Press, 1990.
- Umm Kulthum, Kamal Abd Al-Aziz, Michal Goldman, Omar Sharif, and Virginia Danielson. Umm Kulthum a voice like Egypt. [Cairo]: Arab Film Distribution, 2006.
- Wadud, Amina. Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.