

The Contemporary Arab Novel
42.401
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Spring 2012

Michael Millner
michael_millner@uml.edu
office: 418 O'Leary Library
office hrs: M 11-12:30, W 12-1:30
& by appointment (email me)

This seminar is about the recent Arab novel (in English translation). We read novels from Egypt, Palestine (the Palestinian territories), Jordan, and Sudan, and I have here focused on some of the best known novels written originally in Arabic over the last half century. (That said, I would be cautious about understanding this course as a comprehensive “survey” of the Arabic novel: it is more accurately a “sampling.”) As you will note from the syllabus, we also read a fair bit of scholarship about these authors and, more generally, recent Arab fiction. The course will provide us with the opportunity of discussing some of the most important issues and key concept of the modern world: colonialism and post-colonialism, globalization, occupation and liberation, religion v. secularization, orientalism, Islam and the West, feminism and Islam. Because these books and their cultures are fairly unfamiliar, we will move slowly through them, taking time to reflect on our own process of reading. I have chosen five novels for the course, and they have all be order by the bookstore (and are available on Amazon). Most of the readings will be posted on our class wiki site.

Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, New York Review of Books,
ISBN 1590173023, 1969.

Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in Sun & Other Palestinian Stories*, Rienner Publishers
ISBN 0894108573, Trans1989.

Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*, Random House,
ISBN 9780394755267, 1984, Trans1989.

Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk*, Doubleday,
ISBN 9780307947109, 1956, Trans1990.

Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*, Interlink Publishing Group,
ISBN 1566563364, Trans1999.

Evaluations: Your performance in this class is determined by your class participation, daily quizzes, two tests, and two papers/project. The final-grade weighting of these assignments is included in the “Rules” section of this syllabus.

Important Dates:

Jan. 27	Last day to add without a permission number
Feb. 3	Last day to add with a permission number, last day to drop without record
April 10	Last day for students to withdraw from course with a “W”

In accordance with University policy and the ADA, I will provide accommodation for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services: McGauvran 363 (978-934-4338) as soon as possible. They will contact me regarding effective accommodations. In order to speed up this process, you can also let me know in person or via email. This documentation is confidential.

Course Rules and Requirements

1. **Class participation** makes possible a dynamic, collaborative learning community -- the possibility that we as a community produce knowledge. For this reason, class participation is part of your final grade. In order to participate you must, of course, come to class well prepared. Don't just do the reading, but write down questions you have and begin to develop opinions about the reading. Always bring the assigned texts and materials with you to class: every class discussion will involve us in some close analysis of specific passages and images. I will often provide handouts with study questions, and you should come to class having considered those questions in depth. You should also come to each class with at least one marked passage or image and/or one well-considered question or observation to launch discussion. The less assertive need not fear: class participation is not measured by how much you talk; rather, it is the degree of your involvement with and attentiveness in the class, your ability to listen to and respond to your peers, your willingness to share your thoughts in a constructive way.
2. You will write two **formal papers/projects** in this course. I will distribute a handout detailing requirements, due dates, and procedures. All assignments is due **AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS** and must be typed. Late assignments lose half a letter grade for each class period late. **Only hard copies of written work will be accepted.**
3. **Plagiarism or cheating** of any sort will result in failure of the course. For a discussion of plagiarism see the plagiarism handout.
4. This course has two **tests**. Tests may only be taken late under extraordinary circumstances, and the student must provide a note from a doctor or a dean. In such situations, the request to take the test late must be made at least 24 hours in advance. Failure to follow these rules will result in a zero on the test.
5. **You are required to attend class.** Also, you must have prepared whatever material the assignment requires. An absence will affect your participation grade. And prolonged absences will lead to failure of the course. If you miss class more than three times I will expect you to see me in my office to discuss your future in the course and possible withdrawal. If you miss five classes you will fail the course.
6. If you come to class **excessively or repeatedly late**, it will affect your grade. Also, please refrain from getting up and leaving the room during class unless it's an emergency.
7. You may drink in class, **but you may not eat**. Please silence your phone (vibrate is not silence), and please refrain from messaging during class. If your phone is in way used in class, I will immediately confiscate it and call my close friend who runs a gambling ring in Turkmenistan.
8. Your **final grade** is comprised of your grades on the papers/final projects (40% of total), your grade on the two tests (20% each of total), and your grade on daily quizzes and class participation (together 20% of total).
9. In the event of a **class cancellation** because of snow or my absence, please stay current with the syllabus.
10. Please feel free to drop by my office hours to discuss the class or the reading/writing assignments. Of course, I will be happy to make appointments at other times if my office hours conflict with your schedule. **You can best reach me by email.**
11. You are responsible for checking your **UNIVERSITY email account**.

Syllabus

Week (1) of Jan. 23

M: Course Introduction

W: *Season of Migration*, 1-37; and Denys Johnson-Davies very short “Introduction” to *The Anchor Book of Modern Arabic Fiction* (available on books.google.com)

Week (2) of Jan. 30

M: *Season of Migration*, 38-73

W: *Season of Migration*, 74-110

Week (3) of Feb. 6

M: *Season of Migration*, 111-139 (end)

W: **Saree S. Makdisi, “The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present,” in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, Summer, 1992. (on website)

Week (4) of Feb. 13

M: **Edward W. Said, “Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948,” in Said’s *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. (on website)

W: *Men in the Sun*, 9-44

Week (5) of Feb. 20

M: NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS DAY

W: *Men in the Sun*, 44-102

Week (6) of Feb. 27

M: *Men in the Sun*, 103-115; and **Ellen McLarney, “‘Empire of the Machine’: Oil in the Arabic Novel,” in *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture*, 2009 Summer; 36 (2): 177-198.

W: *Wild Thorns*, 5-43

Week (7) of March 5

M: *Wild Thorns*, 44-85

W: **First Paper Due**

Week (8) of March 12 SPRING BREAK – but do note that we have an especially heavy reading load for Monday after break.

Week (9) of March 19

M: *Wild Thorns*, 86-end (207)

W: **Barbara Harlow, “Partitions and Precedents: Sahar Khalifeh and Palestinian Political Geography.” In *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women’s Novels*, ed. Lisa Suhair Majaj, Paula W. Sunderman, and Therese Saliba.

Week (10) of March 26

M: *Cities of Salt*, 1-122

W: *Cities of Salt*, 123-205

Week (11) of April 2

M: *Cities of Salt*, 206-333

W: *Cities of Salt*, 334-412

Week (12) of April 9

M: *Cities of Salt*, 413-535

W: *Cities of Salt*, 536-end (627)

Week (13) of April 16

M: NO CLASS: PATRIOTS DAY

W: *Palace Walk*, 1-120

Week (14) of April 23

M: *Palace Walk*, 121-217

W: *Palace Walk*, 218-300

Week (15) of April 30

M: *Palace Walk*, 301-418

W: *Palace Walk*, 419-498 OPTIONAL CRITICAL ESSAY: **Ronald AT Judy, "Some Thoughts on Naguib Mahfouz in the Spirit of Secular Criticism," *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture*, 2007 Summer; 34 (2): 21-54.

Week (16) of May 7

M: **FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE**; LAST DAY OF CLASS: Reflections

Final Test during exam period.

Week (9) of March 19

M:
W:

Week (10) of March 26

M:

W:

Week (11) of April 2

M:

W:

Week (12) of April 9

M:

W:

Week (13) of April 16

M: NO CLASS: Patriots Day

W:

Week (14) of April 23

M: **FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE**

W:

Week (15) of April 30

M:
W:

Week (16) of May 7

M: **LAST DAY OF CLASS: Reflections**

Final Test during exam period.