

Gender and Sexuality in Islamic Literature
ENG 4455/5950/WMST 4950
Fall 2015

Dr. CLAUDIA YAGHOOBI

CLASS MEETINGS: M/W 3:30-4:45pm
OFFICE: A&S 3-08

OFFICE HOURS: M/W 2-3:30pm
EMAIL: claudia.yaghoobi@gcsu.edu



Work by Iranian Artist Shirin Neshat

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will examine literary works written by various authors from the Islamic world ranging from Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iran. To contextualize these literary works, we will also read articles and essays on the historical, cultural, social, political and economic backgrounds. In order to approach these literary works in a more effective, useful and nuanced manner, we will also be reading various secondary materials on topics such as, “the significance of sexuality,” “harems and exoticization of harem women in the West,” “same-sex desire and homosexuality,” “female body and construction of female sexuality,” “Masculinity and male sexuality,” “contraception and abortion,” “the institution of marriage and importance of virginity,” “secular vs. Islamic feminisms,” “women’s movements,” “the question of hijab and veiling,” “gay/lesbian underground subcultures,” and “social media as a sexual outlet” in the Islamic world. All readings in this class will be in English.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- Al-Shaykh, Hanan. *Women of Sand and Myrrh*. Trans. Catherine Cobham. New York: Anchor Books, 1992. ISBN 978-0-385-42358-8
- Faqir, Fadia. *Pillars of Salt*. New York: Interlink Books, 2007. ISBN 978-1-566-56253-9
- Mernissi, Fatima. *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. Cambridge: Perseus Press, 1994. ISBN 978-0-201-48937-8

- El-Saadawi, Nawal. *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Zed Books, 2007. ISBN 978-1842778753
- Farrokhzad, Forugh. *Sin: Selected poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*. Trans. Sholeh Wolpe. Fayetteville, The University of Arkansas Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1557289483
- All other readings will be available through GeorgiaVIEW (D2L).



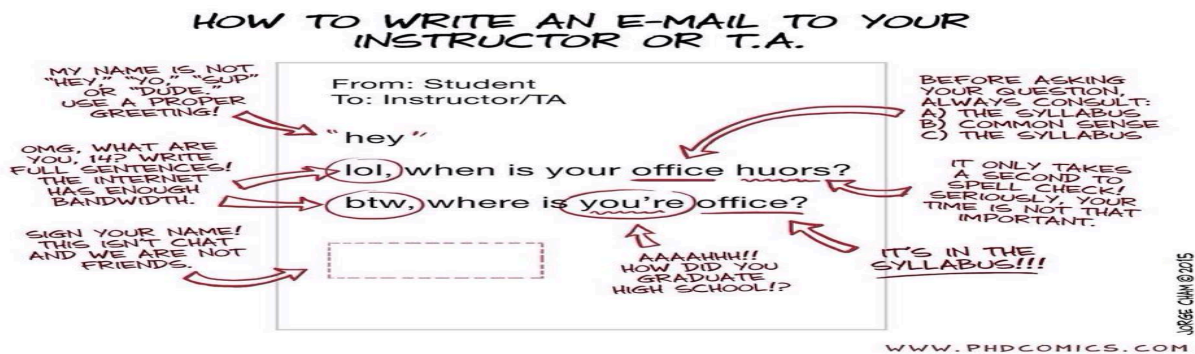
CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Class Participation and attendance (100 points):** class discussions and activities will give you the opportunity to discuss the material. Bring your books and any additional assignment to each class. Keep up with the readings and be ready to discuss the material. Class participation means more than physical attendance. It also means contribution to the discussions of the class. It does not depend on the number of times you contribute, but the quality of your contribution.
- **Discussion Leading – (100 points):** During the semester, each student will be assigned four times to lead discussion on the readings of that day. You will prepare 5 questions to engage the class in discussion. You will be responsible for the discussion of the day and you will be graded based on the quality of the discussion.
- **Blogging (150):** You are required to post your individual comments and/or respond to your peers' comments once for each block. Each block begins after we cover the topic in class and ends before our next class. For example, the first block begins on August 19 and ends on August 24. Your posts should be sophisticated and analytical. I am not looking for your first impressions or how you feel about the material. I look for specific analysis or close reading of passages, relating it to the bigger themes of the class. Here's our blog page:
- **Book/Article Review (150 points):** provide a 2-page critical response paper for each block. Note on Response Papers: Papers should provide an analysis in relationship to the themes or specific dimension of the course. This is not the summary of the book.
- **Community Engaged Book Club (100 points) –** You are free to pick any of the five books in pairs and do library research to present it to an audience from the community

and have a conversation with them as you would do in a book club. You will need to include PowerPoint, video, audio and/or other interactive or media tools. You should engage with the audience and be able to answer questions. I will be there to support and help you.

- **Final paper and Women’s Studies Symposium Presentation (200 points):** take-home 2500-3000 word paper. For this paper, you are free to pick the topic and the book you would like to write your paper on; however, before you start, you must check with me and obtain my approval. You are required to use 3 articles from our class readings, and 3 outside articles (total 6 articles/books/book chapters) as your secondary sources. This counts as your research. You will present 7-8-pages of this paper at the annual Women’s Studies Symposium in March 2016.

CLASS POLICIES



- Attendance is mandatory, as is punctuality. More than three absences will lower your total grade by half a grade; excused absence allowed in case of serious medical condition if verified by note from physician. More than six absences will result in a failing grade for the semester.
- Late papers or e-mailed assignments will not be accepted.
- If you wish to discuss your grades, please meet with me during my office hours. Grades will not be discussed in class or through e-mail. Feel free to utilize my office hours to discuss papers.
- You are required to bring your books and assigned readings to class. You may also have them on your computer.
- You are not allowed to use Wi-Fi during the class unless otherwise advised. If you use Wi-Fi and are on websites such as Facebook, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Respect others, do not talk when someone else is talking, do not offend others by your language (be mindful that others may be of a different class, gender, religion, race, or ability set than you).
- Homework assignments should be typed, 12 point, Times New Roman font; 1-inch margins; double-spaced; no late assignments.
- You may use e-Books, but for your papers I need you to cite the page number from a paper copy.
- Please turn off your cellphones and store them in your bags or you will be asked to leave the classroom.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday August 17: Islam and Sexuality

- Introductions: How does Islam view sexuality?

Wednesday August 19: Significance of Sexuality in Islam

All the readings are from:

Bouhdiba, Abdelwahab. *Sexuality in Islam*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. London: Saqi Books, 2004.

- "The Quran and the Question of Sexuality" (pp. 7-13)
- "Sexual Prohibition in Islam" (pp. 14-8)
- "In the Kingdom of Mother" (pp. 212-230)
- "Conclusion: The Crisis of Sexuality and the Crisis of Faith in the Arabo-Muslim World Today" (pp. 231-249)

Monday August 24: Masculinity, Male Sexuality, and Homoeroticism

- El-Rouayheb, Khaled. "Pederasts and Pathics." *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 13-51.
- Ze'evi, Dror. "Morality Wars: Orthodoxy, Sufism, and Beardless Youth." *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, pp. 77-98.
- Amar, Paul. "Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourse of "Men in Crisis," Industries of Gender in Revolution." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 7. 3 (Fall 2011): 36-70.

Wednesday August 26: Female Body and Sexuality

All the readings are from:

Khuri, Fuad I. *The Body in Islamic Culture*. London: Saqi Books, 2001.

- "The Pure and the Polluted" (pp. 49- 59)
- "The Impurity of Blood" (pp. 60-68)
- "The Impurity of Semen" (pp. 69-86)



Monday August 31: The Institution of Marriage

- Haeri, Shahla. "Power of Ambiguity: Cultural Improvisations on the Theme of Temporary Marriage." *Iranian Studies* 19. 2 (Spring, 1986): 123-154.
- Haeri, Shahla. "Nikah." *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1989, pp. 33-48.
- Haeri, Shahla. "Mut'a." *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Shi'i Iran*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1989, pp. 49-72.
- Golestan, Ebrahim. "Esmat's Journey." *Stories from Iran: a Chicago Anthology, 1921-1991*. ed. Heshmat Moayyed. Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1991.
- Najmabadi, Afsaneh. "The Morning After": Travail of Sexuality and Love in Modern Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36. 3 (Aug., 2004): 367-385.



Wednesday September 2: Contraception and Abortion

- Musallam, B. F. "Contraception and the Right of Women." *Sex and Society in Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 28-38.
- Afary, Janet. "Birth Control, Female Sexual Awakening, and the Gay Lifestyle." *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 323-359.
- <http://www.al-islam.org/marriage-and-morals-islam-sayyid-muhammad-rizvi/chapter-four-contraceptives-abortion>



Wednesday September 9: Social Media as a Sexual Outlet

Guest Lecture: Leva Zand, Iranian-American Women's Rights Activist

- Zand, Leva. "My Body, My Blog: Female Body Image and Sexuality in the Iranian 'Weblogestan.'" <http://www.ibiblio.org/nmediac/fall2010/Zand.html>
- Amir-Ebrahimi, Masserat. "Blogging from Qom, behind Walls and Veils." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28.2 (2008): 235-249.

- Amir-Ebrahimi, Masserat. "Transgression in Narration: The Lives of Iranian Women in Cyberspace." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4.3 (2008): 89-118.

Monday September 14: LGBTQ Underground Subcultures

- Amer, Sahar. "Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18. 2 (MAY 2009): 215-236.
- Afary, Janet. "Conclusion: Toward a New Muslim-Iranian Sexuality for the 21st Century." *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 360-373.
- Shakhari, Sima. "From Homoerotics of Exile to Homopolitics of Diaspora." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 8.3 (2012): 14-40.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Di3PPmSEZxU>

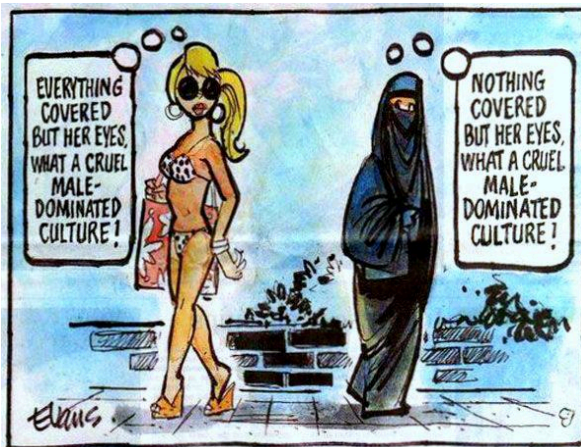
Wednesday September 16: Women's Movements

- Ahmed, Leila. "Divergent Voices." *Women and Gender in Islam*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1992, pp. 189-207.
- Afary, Janet. "On the Origins of Feminism in Early 20th-century Iran." *Journal of Women's History* 1.2 (Fall 1989): 65-87.

Monday September 21: Secular vs. Islamic Feminisms

- Golley, Nawar al-Hassan. "Is Feminism relevant to Arab women?" *Third World Quarterly* 25. 3 (2004): 521-536.
- Badran, Margot. "Between Secular and Islamic Feminism(s): Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond." *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*. Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2009, pp. 300-322.

Wednesday September 23: The Question of Hijab and Veiling



- Yaghoobi, Claudia. "Shifting Sexual Ideology and Women's Responses: Iran between 1850-2010." *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Restrictions and Resistance*. Eds. Homa Hoodfar and Anissa Lucas-Helie. Zed Books, 2012, pp. 52-80.
- Sadr, Shadi. "Veiled Transcripts: the Private Debate on Public Veiling in Iran." *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Restrictions and Resistance*. Eds. Homa Hoodfar and Anissa Lucas-Helie. Zed Books, 2012, pp. 182-207.

Forugh Farrokhzad

Monday September 28

Farrokhzad, "Earthly Verses" (53-6)

Farrokhzad, "Green Phantasm" (63-5)

Wednesday September 30

Farrokhzad, "Inaugurating the Garden" (67-8)

Farrokhzad, "My Lover" (69-70)

Monday October 5: Community Meeting

Suggested Readings:

Milani, Farzaneh. "Love and Sexuality in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzad: A Reconsideration." *Iranian Studies* 15. 1/4, Literature and Society in Iran (1982): 117-128.

Darznik, Jasmin. "Essay: Forugh Farrokhzad: Her Poetry, Life, and Legacy." *The Women's Review of Books* 23. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2006): 21-23.

Tikku, Girdhari. "Forugh-i Farrukhzad: A New Direction in Persian Poetry." *Studia Islamica* 26 (1967): 149-173.

Darznik, Jasmin. "Forough Goes West: The Legacy of Forough Farrokhzad in Iranian Diasporic Art and Literature." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 6. 1 (Winter 2010): 103-116.

Hannan Al-Shaykh

Wednesday October 7

Al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (3-97)

Wednesday October 14

Al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (98-185)

Monday October 19

Al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (186-280)

Wednesday October 21: Community Meeting

Suggested Readings:

Driss, Hager Ben. "Women Narrating the Gulf: A Gulf of Their Own." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 36. 2 (2005): 152-171.

Joseph, Suad. "Patriarchy and Development in the Arab World." *Gender and Development* 4. 2 (Jun., 1996): 14-19.

Larson, Charles R. "The Fiction of Hanan Al-Shaykh, Reluctant Feminist." *World Literature Today* 65. 1 (Winter, 1991): 14-17.

Adams, Ann Marie. "Writing Self, Writing Nation: Imagined Geographies in the Fiction of Hanan al-Shaykh." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 20. 2, Women Writing Across the World (Autumn, 2001): 201-216.

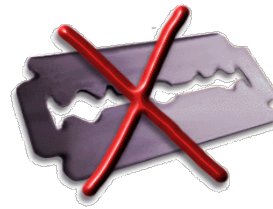
Nawal El-Saadawi

Monday October 26

El-Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*: (386pp)

Wednesday October 28

El-Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*:
(386pp)



Hands off!

*Stop female genital
Mutilation!*

Monday November 2

El-Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*: (386pp)

Wednesday November 4: Community Meeting

Suggested Readings:

Saiti, Ramzi and Ramzi M. Salti. "Paradise, Heaven, and Other Oppressive Spaces: A Critical Examination of the Life and Works of Nawal el-Saadawi." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 25. 2 (Jul., 1994): 152-174.

Dunton, Chris. "This Rape Is Political: The Siting of Women's Experience in Novels by Aidoo, Ngugi, Farah and El Saadawi." *English in Africa* 27. 1 (May, 2000): 1-35.

Harlow, Barbara. "From the Women's Prison: Third World Women's Narratives of Prison." *Feminist Studies* 12. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 501-524.

Johnson, Angela, and Nawal El-Saadawi. "Interview: Speaking at Point Zero: "oob" Talks with Nawal El-Saadawi." *Off Our Backs* 22. 3, 1992: When will it end? (march 1992): 1, 6-7.

<http://janetafary.com/news/there-are-no-real-virgins-in-tehran/>

<http://janetafary.com/news/women's-rights-in-iran-part-ii-of-the-dialogue-with-nawal-el-saadawi/>

Fadia Faqir

Monday November 9

Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (1-72)

Wednesday November 11

Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (73-151)

Monday November 16

Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (152-227)

**SISTERS,
SAVE YOURSELVES
FOR ONE MAN.
NOT EVERY
MAN.**

Wednesday November 18: Community Meeting

Suggested Readings:

Sharoni, Simona. "Women and Gender in Middle East Studies: Trends, Prospects and Challenges." *Middle East Report* 205, Middle East Studies Networks: The Politics of a Field (Oct. - Dec., 1997): 27-29.

Faqir, Fadia. "Engendering Democracy and Islam in the Arab World." *Third World Quarterly*

18. 1 (Mar., 1997): 165-174.
Faqir, Fadia. "Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan." *Third World Quarterly* 22. 1 (Feb., 2001): 65-82.

Fatima Mernissi

Monday November 23

Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass* (1-122)

Monday November 30

Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass* (125-242)

Wednesday December 2: Community Meeting

Suggested Readings:

Abdo, Diya. "Uncovering the Harem in the Classroom: Tania Kamal-Eldin's "Covered: The Hejab in Cairo, Egypt" and "Hollywood Harems" within the Context of a Course on Arab Women Writers." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 30. 1/2, Looking Across the Lens: Women's Studies and Film (Spring - Summer, 2002): 227-238.



Mernissi, Fatima. "Muslim Women and Fundamentalism." *Middle East Report* 153, Islam and the State (Jul. - Aug., 1988): 8-11+50.

Mernissi, Fatima. "Women, Saints, and Sanctuaries." *Signs* 3. 1, Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change (Autumn, 1977): 101-112.

Matthes, Melissa, and Esilim Sitam. "Shahrazad's Sisters: Storytelling and Politics in the Memoirs of Mernissi, El Saadawi and Ashrawi." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 19, Gender and Knowledge: Contribution of Gender Perspectives to Intellectual Formations (1999): 68-96.

Final Papers Due: Monday December 7

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

➤ Religious Observance Policy

Students are permitted to miss class in observance of religious holidays and other activities observed by a religious group of which the student is a member without academic penalty. Exercising of one's rights under this policy is subject to the GC Honor Code. Students who miss class in observance of a religious holiday or event are required to make up the coursework missed as a result from the absence. The nature of the make-up assignments and the deadline for completion of such assignments are at the sole discretion of the instructor. Failure to follow the prescribed procedures voids all student rights under this policy.

➤ **Assistance for Student Needs Related to Disability**

If you have a disability as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, you may be eligible to receive accommodations to assist in programmatic and physical accessibility. Disability Services, a unit of GCSU Office of Institutional Equality and Diversity, can assist you in formulating a reasonable accommodation plan and in providing support in developing appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to all GCSU programs and facilities. Course requirements will not be waived, but accommodations may assist you in meeting the requirements. For documentation requirements and for additional information, we recommend that you contact Disability Services located in Maxwell Student Union at 478-445-5931 or 478-455-4233.

➤ **Student Opinion Survey Statement**

Given the technological sophistication of Georgia College students, the student opinion survey is being delivered through an online process. Your constructive feedback plays an indispensable role in shaping quality education at Georgia College. All responses are completely confidential and your name is not stored with your responses in any way. In addition, instructors will not see any results of the opinion survey until after final grades are submitted to the university. An invitation to complete the online opinion survey is distributed to students near the end of the semester. Your participation in this very important process is greatly appreciated.

➤ **Academic Honesty**

The integrity of students and their written and oral work is a critical component of the academic process. The submission of another's work as one's own is plagiarism and will be dealt with using the procedures outlined in the GC Catalog.

<http://catalog.gcsu.edu/ugrad/student-academic-dishonesty.htm>

Remember that allowing another student to copy one's own work violates the standards of academic integrity.

<http://catalog.gcsu.edu/grad/student-academic-dishonesty.htm>

Also see the student Honor Code at the website below:

<http://www.gcsu.edu/studentlife/handbook/code.htm>

➤ **Fire Drills**

Fire drills will be conducted annually. In the event of a fire alarm, students will exit the building quickly in a quick and orderly manner through the nearest hallway exit. Learn the floor plan and exits of the building. Do not use elevators. If you encounter heavy smoke, crawl on the floor so as to gain fresh air. Assist disabled persons and others if possible without endangering your own life. Assemble for a head count on the front lawn of main campus or other designated assembly area. For more information on other emergencies, please visit: <http://www.gcsu.edu/emergency/actionplanmain.htm>