Course: ETHN 166/LTEN 179: Arab/Muslim American Identity
Instructor: Dr. Nadeen Kharpulty
Office hours: Mondays 11:15am-1:15pm and by appointment in Social Sciences Building 252
E-mail: nkharput@ucsd.edu

Any changes to this syllabus will be announced via e-mail.

Course description:
We are in a heightened period of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, making knowledge about Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S. more important than ever. While the popular media often discusses these communities in terms of irreconcilable differences with so-called “American” values, this course will examine the way writings and media produced by Arab and Muslim Americans have influenced the cultural, political, and social identities of the U.S.

This class will take you through several important themes that form part of Arab and Muslim American life. We begin with a discussion of the life of Malcolm X, whose mission laid the groundwork for the development of Islam in the modern United States. His influence as a Muslim shaped the formation of hip hop culture among marginalized communities worldwide. We will examine the role of 9/11 in altering the everyday experiences of Arabs and Muslims. And we will explore the moral quandaries in literature by Arab and Muslim Americans. While there is no way to define and narrow “Arab and Muslim American identity,” this course offers a glimpse at the range of ways in which these identities are expressed in the modern U.S.

Ground rules:
We are discussing complex, difficult, and very necessary topics, and while diversity in opinion is expected and welcome, please be sure to voice your responses generously. This is a space where every student has the opportunity to learn in an open and supportive environment, and in order to maintain this co-operative space I expect everyone in this class to be as open-minded and gracious as possible and respect each person’s individual learning trajectory. Personal attacks and hate speech will not be tolerated. Please review the Principles of Community to ensure that you adhere to the expected guidelines (https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html)

Learning outcomes:
By the end of this class you will be able to:

• Identify central arguments in the texts we read and examine them from multiple angles
• Take and defend a particular position while considering the viability of other positions
• Talk about the issues presented in this class in an academic manner and engage in thoughtful, gracious debate with one another
• Apply the concepts and readings we discuss to everyday examples

Class readings:
All required readings will be available at the bookstore or online on TritonEd. Bring the readings of the day with you. Texts for purchase include:
Ayad Akhtar, Disgraced (2012)
Stephen Karam, *Sons of the Prophet* (2011)

**Class etiquette:**
Please devote the 50 minutes of class to listening attentively to everyone in this space. We are covering difficult topics so your full attention is required.

Laptops are permitted for referring to the texts and taking notes only. Any distracting behavior – attempting to text discreetly, browsing through social media, etc. – will be cited and disciplined accordingly. Fiddling with technology is rude and distracting (to me and your peers). When you are not taking notes and listening to your peers, please have your laptop screens down.

**Communication:**
I encourage you to attend office hours whenever you need to talk through ideas and issues, even early on in the quarter.

Please check your e-mail at least once a day to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule. Expect responses to your e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over the weekend. Courteous correspondence is expected—e-mails must begin with a salutation (“Dear/Hello Dr. Kharputly”) and end with your signature (Sincerely/Thanks, [your name]).

**Course requirements and percentage of final grade:**
- *Participation and attendance* 30%
- This includes regular attendance and active participation in class. Your grade relies heavily on participation and attendance, so any absences can quickly take a toll. Please check in with me immediately if you anticipate any difficulties with regular attendance.

- *Weekly question* 20%
- You will submit a discussion question on TritonEd relating to the readings of the week so that I can get a sense for what kinds of themes and ideas are most interesting to you and orient our discussion around that. Questions are due by noon on Tuesday of each week.

- *Midterm paper (due 2/5)* 15%
- A 4-5 page analytical paper in which you respond to a prompt that I will provide in week 4.

- *Final paper (due 3/19)* 25%
- A 8-12 page research paper on a topic of your choice.

- *Self-evaluation* 10%
- At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete a short (500 words) evaluation of your learning outcomes.

**Weekly schedule:**

---

**Week 1:**

**Monday, January 8**
Introduction
Wednesday, January 10
A very brief and very condensed introduction to Arabs and Muslims in the U.S.

Friday, January 12

---

**Week 2: Race and Religion**

Monday, January 15
NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Wednesday January 17

Friday January 19
Malcolm X chapters 6-12

---

**Week 3: Power, Politics, and Civil Rights**

Monday January 22
Malcolm X chapters 13-16

Wednesday January 24
Malcolm X chapters 17 – end (including the Epilogue)

Friday January 26
Malcolm X conclusions

---

**Week 4: Islam and Hip Hop**

Monday January 29

Wednesday January 31
**Spotify hip hop playlist up on TritonEd. Use Genius for lyrics.**

Take a look at Daulatzai’s online exhibit, Return of the Mecca (2014)
[www.returnofthemecca.com](http://www.returnofthemecca.com)
Friday February 2

suheir hammad, “First Writing Since (Poem on Crisis of Terror),” in *In Motion Magazine* (2001)

---

Monday February 5

Wednesday February 7

Friday February 9
Lori Peek, Chapter 5, “Repercussions,” in *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans After 9/11* (2010)

Sharon Otterman, “Obscuring a Muslim Name, and an American’s Sacrifice,” in the *New York Times*, January 2012

---

Week 6: Responsibility

Monday February 12
https://player.fm/series/see-something-say-something/episode-1-saying-nah (or wherever you listen to podcasts)

Wednesday February 14
Stephen Karam, *Sons of the Prophet* (2011)

Friday February 16
*Sons of the Prophet* continued

---

Week 7: Shame

Monday February 19
NO CLASS - President’s Day

Wednesday February 21
Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (2012)

**Friday February 23**
*Disgraced* continued

http://www.americantheatre.org/2014/10/30/the-personal-is-political-in-ayad-akhtars-disgraced/

----------

**Week 8: Freedom and Controversy**

**Monday February 26**
*Disgraced* continued
“A Contrarian View: Race, Representation, and Islamophobia in Ayad Akhtar’s *Disgraced*,” November 2015

**Wednesday February 28**

**Friday March 2**
*The Who and the What* continued

----------

**Week 9: The Burdens of Representation**

**Monday March 5**
Podcast: #*Good Muslim/Bad Muslim*, Episode 1: “How Muslim Are You?”
http://www.goodmuslimbadmuslim.com/podcast/2015/1/10/001-how-muslim-are-you
(or wherever you listen to podcasts)


**Wednesday March 7**
In class screening of Aziz Ansari’s *Master of None*, episode 3: “Religion” (2017)

**Friday March 9**
*Master of None* discussion
Aymann Ismail, “The Most Radical Thing About *Master of None*’s Islam Episode Is That It Isn’t About Religion,” in *Slate*, May 2017
http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2017/05/22/master_of_none_s_religion_episode_isn_t_about_islam.html
Week 10: The Big Sick and conclusions

Monday March 12
Kumail Nanjiani, *The Big Sick* (2017) [available on Reserves]


Wednesday March 14
*The Big Sick* continued

Friday March 16
Conclusion

Final papers due on Monday, March 19 by 11:59pm.

Additional information:
The university’s statement on academic integrity must be reviewed before turning in any assignments: http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2.
Plagiarism consists of but is not limited to the following: presenting another person’s ideas or language as if they were your own, copying (words AND ideas) from the Internet, and failure to acknowledge and properly cite the sources of the ideas presented. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please check in with me ahead of time.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you need accommodation for disability purposes or religious reasons so that we may make alternate arrangements ahead of time. It is best to get accommodation from the Office for Students with Disabilities (located behind Center Hall, 858-534-4382) as soon as possible so that we can work together to ensure that your needs are met in the event of an emergency.

Majoring or minoring in Ethnic Studies:
Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a university or college requirement. Students have taken three or four classes out of interest yet have no information about the major or minor and don’t realize how close they are
to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, education, public health, social work, non-profit work and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Monica Rodriquez, Ethnic Studies Program Advisor, via email at ethnicstudies@ucsd.edu