

## ENG 366/GIS 366

### WORDS OF WAR AND PEACE: LITERARY GRENADES AND OLIVE BRANCHES IN THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

Spring 2020

TR 10:25-11:40 AM

Blaustein Humanities Center 206

**Professor:** Marie Ostby ([mostby@conncoll.edu](mailto:mostby@conncoll.edu))

**Office Hours:** W 1:30-3:30 PM or by appointment, Blaustein 328

#### **Course Description**

Hebrew writing and Arabic writing go from east to west,

Latin writing, from west to east.

Languages are like cats:

You must not stroke their hair the wrong way.

--Yehuda Amichai, "Temporary Poem of My Time" (1989)



Claude Truong-Ngoc ("Strasbourg manifestation Charlie Hebdo 11 janvier 2015")

From to Turkey's invasion of Syria in October 2019 to the dramatic escalation of US tensions with Iran in January 2020, the Middle East forms the regional centerpiece of our daily news in the U.S.—and all over the world. But we in the U.S. know comparatively little about the art and literature that form the cultural backdrop for these cross-cultural conflicts. This course focuses on the Middle East, North Africa, and to some extent South Asia as a literary space of conflict and negotiation. In climates of political upheaval and diplomatic hostility, how has literature played a role in dividing or uniting people?

#### **Course Objectives**

By the end of our semester, you will:

- Gain a basic introduction to modern Middle Eastern literature by authors from a variety of nations and cultures;
- Engage critical vocabulary with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, and other identity categories as applicable to this literature;
- Produce original close-reading based literary arguments that integrate interdisciplinary research on the Middle East while grounded in literary studies; and
- Develop historically and culturally aware, respectful, and nuanced vocabulary surrounding Islam and the Middle East.

## **Course Requirements**

**Class Participation:** You must come to class fully prepared, having read and thought carefully about all of the assigned material. **For every class, you should come prepared with at least one passage you'd like to discuss or one general thematic question you'd like to raise.** I may call on you at any time to contribute your passage or question. Your regular and active participation in class will be paramount to your overall performance.

**Speaker Reflections:** You must attend and write a 1-2 page reflection about two of the talks listed on the syllabus (you are highly encouraged to attend all four – we will debrief all of them in class!), explaining one of the arguments made by the speaker and relating it to one of the texts on our syllabus. What did you learn from the talk about peace and conflict in the Middle East, and have you seen it expressed in our literary texts? How is the phenomenon you're describing absent/present in literary form? These reflections must be submitted **no later than one week after the event** (see dates below).

**Co-led class discussion:** In several class periods over the course of the semester, one small group (2-3 students) will be responsible for leading class discussion that day. **Please prepare and post three discussion questions to Moodle at least 24 hours in advance of class.** When you meet with your co-leader(s) outside class, please develop a detailed outline based around these questions, including subsidiary questions. Brainstorm and share ideas and questions about the texts to be discussed and about how to generate discussion. Decide on key issues and choose key passages to read out loud and discuss in class. Be creative; feel free to develop your own format. Remember that your job is to question, to prod, and to stimulate discussion, not to deliver a report. A detailed rubric will be provided in advance of the first co-led discussion. **Note that if you co-lead class on Feb 4 or Feb 13, you must attend the Kecia Ali and/or the Maha Nassar talk respectively, so that you are prepared to incorporate a debrief into your lesson plan.**

**Papers:** Over the course of the semester, you will write three papers:

- Paper #1 (4-5 pages, due **Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**)
- Paper #2 (4-5 pages, due **Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>**)
- Final research paper (10-12 pages, due **Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup> (Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> for graduating seniors)**)
  - Final research paper outline (1 page max) due **Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**

Papers #1 and #2 should focus on one literary text each. The final paper can focus on one or more literary text, and will be a research paper, meaning you should use at least **three** secondary sources beyond our required course materials (see <http://conncoll.libguides.com/english> for a helpful introduction to literary research). Your ideas in all papers should reflect an in-depth exploration of **your individual interests beyond what we have discussed together in class.** You should, for example, **not** focus on close reading a passage that we have already closely analyzed as a group. More details will be distributed closer to each assignment deadline.

## **Grade Distribution**

Your final grade for the course will be calculated using the following percentages.

Class participation.....	20%
Guest speaker reflections (1-2 pages).....	5% x 2 = 10%
Co-led class discussion.....	15%
Paper #1 (4-5 pages).....	15%
Paper #2 (4-5 pages) .....	15%
Final research paper (10-12 pages).....	25%
Outline: 10% of assignment	
Final paper: 90% of assignment	

## **Required Materials**

The following coursebooks are available for purchase at the bookstore and on reserve at Shain Library. You may purchase and read books on a laptop, e-reader, etc. if you wish, as long as you feel comfortable navigating the text on your chosen platform in class discussion.

- Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk* (1956)
- Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966)
- Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (1988)
- Hoda Barakat, *Tiller of Waters* (2001)
- Orhan Pamuk, *Snow* (2002)
- Solmaz Sharif, *Look* (2016)
- Hala Alyan, *Salt Houses* (2017)
- Sinan Antoon, *The Book of Collateral Damage* (2019)

Additionally, several required texts listed below will be available on the course Moodle site.

## **Content Warning and Class Climate:**

Our course readings and classroom discussions will sometimes focus on mature, difficult, and challenging topics. As with any course that deals with modern and contemporary literature, course content is often political and personal. Readings, films, online content, assignments, and discussions may trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the class; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers’ understanding of course content; all of us are responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous, respectful, and inclusive. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities, resources, and experiences position us in the classroom. As your professor I am responsible for classroom management and the pedagogical approaches used during the semester that are based on my expertise.

If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so you are prepared in advance. You can approach me ahead of time if you would like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to

keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center (adapted from the GSWS @ Pitt 2017 website with permission).

### **Course Policies**

- **Attendance Policy:** Students may miss without penalty the equivalent of one week's worth of class (i.e. **two unexcused absence days**, no questions asked). **Students who miss more than one week's worth of class will lower their course participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional absence.** (For example, if a student who would otherwise get a B+ participation grade missed three meetings, their participation grade would be a B.) Absences for medical or family reasons may be counted as excused, but **must be discussed with me in advance of the missed class.** Just send me an email letting me know what is going on. If you will miss any classes because of athletic commitments, you must give me at the beginning of the semester a full list of the dates you will be absent.
- **Late Policy:** Tardiness is a significant distraction and hampers our ability to have productive discussions. **You are allowed to be late to class *twice* during the semester. After that, each time you are late will be marked as an absence.**
- **Religious Holidays:** You will not be penalized for missing class, including any in-class assignments or quizzes, as a result of your observation of a religious holiday. Please let me know as far in advance as possible if a religious holiday or custom you observe conflicts with class requirements.
- **Deadlines and Extensions:** You are required to submit your papers and post your discussion questions online via Moodle by the deadlines. If you need an extension on a paper, you must ask me **at least 48 hours before** the paper is due. I will be generous about giving extensions so long as you come and talk to me about it in advance so that we can figure out a timeline that works for both of us. ***Late assignments will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24-hour period after they are due. After 10 days, an unexcused late paper will receive a zero.***
- **Drafts and Rewrites:** As a rule, **I do not allow for rewrites** of papers and other assignments after grades have been assigned. You should, however, feel free to send me full or partial drafts (or outlines, thesis statements, etc.) **at least 48 hours in advance of the assignment due date**, and I will be happy to provide feedback in writing or in person.
- **Office Hours:** Office hours provide students with additional opportunities to review or ask questions about the class discussions and assignments. Connecticut College faculty encourage students to go to office hours so they might learn about your interests, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to talking about class material and assignments, you may find you share common interests, such as music, books, hobbies, and movies. If a professor knows your interest, they may inform you about campus programs and activities or other opportunities like fellowships and scholarships. Most importantly, a professor who knows their students writes better letters of recommendation. All Connecticut College faculty are required to have office hours on their syllabus and posted on their office door. If you cannot make your professor's scheduled office hours, contact your professor to set up an appointment. **My office hours are Wednesdays 1:30-3:30, and I'm always happy to set up an appointment to meet with you at another time as needed. Come say hello!**

- **Credit Hour Definition:** A semester course is normally equivalent to four credit hours. Connecticut College complies with federal regulations defining the credit hour. For each credit hour awarded, a course will provide an average of at least one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction (class meetings, labs, review sessions, field trips, office hours, film screenings, tutorials, training, rehearsals, etc.) and at least two hours of out-of-class work (homework, preparatory work, practice, rehearsals, etc.) per week. Since our class meets for 2.5 hours each week, this means that **you should plan to devote about 9-10 hours of your own time to work for this class each week.**
- **Cell Phones, Laptops, iPads, and Food:** Research shows that we are better readers off our screens and that we retain information better when we write things down longhand. With this in mind, **I ask you not to use laptops during class.** I welcome reading e-books and/or taking notes longhand with a stylus on a tablet, but please try this out: I believe discussion will be better if we aren't all sitting behind our computer screens. I will make exceptions if your learning needs require you to use a computer for reading or writing—please come and talk to me if this policy causes problems for you. Cell phone use is not permitted during class.

Please courteously avoid causing distractions—feel free to bring food or drinks to class, but avoid any distracting noise or spills, etc.

- **Classroom Recording:** With the exception of those granted accommodations through the Office of Student Accessibility Services, students are prohibited from audio, video, or photographic recording during class periods or out-of-class meetings with the instructor without explicit permission from the instructor. Recordings approved in this manner may not be shared in any form without permission of the instructor. Violations of this policy shall be considered an Honor Code violation.
- **Honor Code and Plagiarism:** Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in maintaining the high standards of scholarship in our community. Academic dishonesty is considered to be a serious offense against the community and represents a significant breach of trust between the professor, the classmates, and the student. There are many forms of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, falsifying data, misrepresenting class attendance, submitting the same work in two courses without prior approval, unauthorized discussion or distribution of exams or assignments, and offering or receiving unauthorized aid on exams or graded assignments. Students violating the Honor Code may be referred to the college's Honor Council for resolution.  
**TL/DR: Plagiarized work is usually extremely easy to identify, and the time you think you'll save will *never* be worth the consequences. A poorly written paper of your own is always immeasurably better than a beautifully written plagiarized paper. Just don't do it.**
- **Academic Resource Center:** The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support your academic work such as study skills workshops, time management, coaching and tutoring. Please visit the ARC on the second floor of Shain Library or call [860-439-5294](tel:860-439-5294) for more information or to schedule an appointment.

- **Student Accessibility Services:** Connecticut College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have a documented disability and have been approved for academic accommodations, please have your Faculty Notification Letter emailed to me through the Student Accessibility online management system (AIM) and schedule a meeting during my office hours as early as possible in the semester so that we can discuss the logistics of your accommodations. If you are not approved for accommodations, but have a disability requiring academic accommodations, or have questions about applying for accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services at 860-439-5428 or [sas@conncoll.edu](mailto:sas@conncoll.edu).
- **Writing Center:** The Roth Writing Center provides one-on-one peer tutoring (free of charge) to help student writers of all abilities during all stages of the writing process. To make an appointment, call 860-439-2173 or stop by the second floor of Shain Library, where we are co-located with the Academic Resource Center. If you're a confident, experienced writer the Center can help you to push your ideas and polish your style; if you're a relatively inexperienced and not-so-confident writer it can also help you, by working on grammar or organization or whatever you need. Writing Center tutors are trained to help you to discover what you think through writing. Working with a tutor gives you the opportunity to share your work-in-progress with an actual reader, so that you can get useful feedback on that work *before* you have to turn it in for a final grade. For further information, visit the Writing Center web page at <http://write.conncoll.edu/>.
- **Gender-Inclusive Language:** I aspire to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, and thus encourage gender-inclusive and non-sexist language. This goal reaffirms Connecticut College's commitment to full participation by fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment where intellectual dialogue can flourish.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive and non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (e.g. first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind). It also affirms non-binary gender identities, and recognizes the difference between assigned sex and gender identity. I will ask students to share their pronouns and names at the beginning of the semester and all gender identities should be affirmed and respected by everyone in the course. If, at any point during this class, you would like me to use a different name or pronoun in addressing, please email me. (adapted from GSWS @ Pitt accessed 12/29/2017 with permission).

- **Title IX Reporting:** As a faculty member, I am deeply invested in the well-being of each student I teach. I am here to assist you with your work in this course. If you come to me with other non-course-related concerns, I will do my best to help.

It is important for you to know that all faculty members are trained and required to report any incidents of gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. This means that I cannot keep information confidential about sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, or other forms of gender-based discrimination. Rachel Stewart, the Director of Sexual Violence

Prevention and Advocacy, can advise you confidentially as can Counseling Services and any of the College chaplains. Rachel can also help you access other resources on campus and in the local community. You can reach Rachel at 860-439-2219 or [rstewart1@conncoll.edu](mailto:rstewart1@conncoll.edu), and her office is in Cro 222.

The student sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, and non-discrimination policies are in the Student Handbook, which can be found on CamelWeb, in the “Documents/Policies” section, under the Student Life section. There you will find the policies, definitions, procedures, and resources. If you need to report an incident or have any questions about the policy, you can contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Inclusion at 860-439-2035 or Unity House.

## **Reading Schedule**

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus is intended to give you guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, I reserve the right to modify, supplement, and make minor changes as new course needs and/or current events arise.

### **Unit 1: Introduction**

- Jan 21: Introduction
- Jan 23: Syllabus review, *Orientalism*, *Palace Walk*, Chapters 1-13
  - Introduction, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Moodle)

### **Unit 2: Colonialism and Nationalism**

- Jan 28: *Palace Walk*, Chapters 14-36
  - “Introduction: Rights and Lives,” Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (ebook available through library website)

**Tue Jan 28, 4:30 PM, Chu Room: GIS roundtable, “Islam and the Politics of Neocolonialism” (reflection paper due Feb 4)**

- Jan 30: *Palace Walk*, Chapters 37-54
  - Chapter 1, Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics in Islam* (Moodle)

**Mon Feb 3, 5:00 PM, Chu Room: Kecia Ali talk, “Women and Islam” (reflection paper due Feb 10)**

- Feb 4: **(CO-LED CLASS DISCUSSION #1):** *Palace Walk*, Chapters 55-71 & Kecia Ali debrief

### **Unit 3: Histories of Statelessness**

- Feb 6: *The Salt Houses*, pp. 1-76
- Feb 11: *The Salt Houses*, pp. 77-201
  - Excerpt from Maha Nassar, *Brothers Apart* (Moodle)

**Tue Feb 11, 4:30 PM, Ernst: Maha Nassar talk (reflection paper due Feb 18)**

- Feb 13 (**CO-LED CLASS DISCUSSION #2**): *The Salt Houses*, pp. 202-310 & Maha Nassar debrief
- Feb 18: Poems by Mahmoud Darwish and Yehuda Amichai (Moodle)

**Unit 4: Orientalism and Violence**

- Feb 20: *Season of Migration to the North*, pp. 3-50
  - Frantz Fanon, excerpt from *A Dying Colonialism* (Moodle)

**Feb 24: Paper #1 due**

- Feb 25: *Season of Migration to the North*, pp. 51-139

**Unit 5: Memory and Trauma**

- Feb 27: Barakat, *Tiller of Waters* part 1

**Thu Feb 27, details TBD: Sultan Doughan talk (reflection paper due Mar 5)**

- Mar 3: Barakat, *Tiller of Waters* part 2
  - Fayad, “Reinscribing Identity: Nation and Community in Arab Women's Writing”
- Mar 5: Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad, Simin Behbahani, Roger Sedarat (Moodle)

**Mar 10, 12, 17, 19: Happy Spring Break!**

**Unit 6: Islam, Magical Realism, and Multiculturalism**

- Mar 24: *The Satanic Verses* part 1
  - Criticism TBD
- Mar 26: *The Satanic Verses*, part 2

**Mar 30: Paper #2 due**

- Mar 31: *The Satanic Verses*, part 3
- Apr 2: (**CO-LED CLASS DISCUSSION #3**): *The Satanic Verses* part 4

**Unit 7: Globalization and Extremism**

- Apr 7: *Snow*, part 1
  - Criticism TBD
- Apr 9: *Snow*, part 2
- Apr 14: *Snow*, part 3
- Apr 16: (**CO-LED CLASS DISCUSSION #4**): *Snow*, part 4

**Unit 8: Endless Wars, Scattered Lives**

- Apr 21: *Look*, part 1
  - Amy Malek, “Subjunctive Nostalgia of Postmemorial Art” (Moodle)
- Apr 23: *Look*, part 2
  - Kaveh Akbar, “The Palace” (Moodle)
- Apr 28: *The Book of Collateral Damage*, part 1
  - Criticism TBD

**Apr 29: Final research paper outline (1 page max) due**

- Apr 30: *The Book of Collateral Damage*, part 2
  - Poems by Phil Metres, Aria Aber, and Mohja Kahf TBD
- May 5: *The Book of Collateral Damage*, part 3
  - Criticism TBD