Scholars have argued that since the “fall” of Byzantine Constantinople to the Ottomans in the fifteenth century, Western European intellectuals have framed cultural difference in terms of the “East” and the “West”: Renaissance humanists, for example, resorted to the ancient and medieval texts to create a religiously and culturally defined “other”—the “Ottoman Turks.” Their writings then spread around Europe and generated problematic conceptualizations of what the West ought to be, as different from the East. This is by no means an isolated case; political matters have always informed different forms cultural representation. In the nineteenth century, for example, we begin encountering systematic categorizations of peoples imbued with discourses of civilizations. Critic Edward Said identifies such problematic representations of the so-called East as “Orientalism” and offers a productive category to analyze how such representations have informed power relations and policies.

This course will examine a wide variety of cultural representations pertaining to the modern Middle East that have contributed to the "East/West" divide conceptualized as Orientalism. In that light, we will explore politics of cultural representation in different fields such as cinema, literature, visual culture, political economy and humanitarianism. Some questions we will address include: What are the politics of cultural representation over (at least) the last two centuries that have marked modern day politics? How do such representations lend themselves to problematic interpretations of the East/West in general, and the Middle East in particular? What are the racial, historical, and cultural implications of these representations and the policies that they inform?

*The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class.*

*The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.*

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.
Course requirements consist of regular reading responses, a presentation, and a final paper.

Required Books (not available at the bookstore, you can buy them online)

Orhan Pamuk, *The White Castle.*
Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of the Suburbia.*
Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza.*

Films (links through stream.nyu.edu are provided on the blog)

Zack Snyder, *300.*
Faruk Aksoy, *Fetih 1453 (The Conquest 1453).*
Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers.*

Recommended:

### The rest of the readings will be provided electronically through our course blog:

Please note that you will need to get permission to have access to this blog; it is set up as private. So please make sure you have been granted access to both the blog and the google drive so that when you click on the links to the readings and movies provided on the blog, you can access the course materials.

All the weekly readings will be listed on the blog. When applicable, they will be url-linked to the pdf files provided on the tabs of the day. The readings are subject to change (but NOT the required books) to allow us more flexibility, but in all cases, you will always be notified on the blog’s tab for that day.

Your reading response comments will also be posted on the blog, under the designated area of each tab with the date of that day.

The blog address is: http://orientalismnyu.blogspot.com/

There are additional helpful resources posted on the resource tab. Please make sure you check them.

### Course Format and Procedures:

We will be following the course planner that will be posted on the blog. If there are changes to the planner, you will be notified both in class and electronically—via email. Please come to class having done the readings assigned for that day.

Everybody is expected to actively engage with the material and contribute to the class. This course’s objectives are: 1) to introduce students to various cultural and historical framings of the East/West; 2) to identify the repertoires that shape these framings and the politics they inform, and 3) to synthesize these modes of cultural representation and 4) to identify how these repertoires still

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inform politics today. Thus, the focus of the course’s activities is on intensive student engagement with the materials in readings and discussions, and on a reflection of this in student participation in classroom discussion.

Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to attend the class and more than two unexcused absences will start affecting your grade negatively, this includes the final grade, by bringing the grade down one notch.

Please make sure you have all the readings assigned for that day with you.

Finally, please keep in mind that computer (or ipad and the like) use is restricted in this class: you can use your electronic devices to follow the electronic class readings, but if you use them for any other purposes (such as email, chat programs, or social media such as Facebook or Twitter, etc) your participation grade will be affected negatively. Cell phones should be switched off at all times.

Grading:

**Blog Reading Responses:** Every week, you will post on the blog a response to the readings assigned for that week. You will receive feedback on these responses.

Unless marked otherwise, the entry should include: 1) A very brief (one or two sentences) summary of the argument of the reading of choice (no, you do NOT have to engage all the readings). If the reading material is fictional (film or novel), try to make a statement about what you think the main point of the book/film is. 2) A very brief example as to how the author/filmmaker engages this argument; i.e., how does the author build his/her argument? (Or if other kinds of texts—how does the author try to make his/her points come across? Are they convincing?) How are the ideas engaged? Do they work? 3) Strong points of the reading. 4) A new paragraph: Weaknesses and pitfalls of the reading—possibly with examples from your area of interest, to discuss the applicability of the concept for your own work.

And once you are done with this, in a new paragraph, write questions, and ask the main discussion questions that you think came up from your readings for that week. These questions should be more open and if possible, address all the readings. Try to keep it short, minimum 250 and no more than 400 (at most 450) words.

You have 10 reading responses to post, and each post is worth 3 points. When grading, I consider the effort put into engaging the piece at hand (% 30 of final grade).

PLEASE NOTE: several times this semester, you may simply be asked to answer a question related to the material assigned for that week. When answering, focus on the readings and build your answer as an argument drawn from these readings.

**Mid-semester Essay:**
On February 24th, instead of posting your reading response on the blog, I will ask you to bring a longer essay (minimum 500-maximum 650 words) to class, in hard copy. You will be asked a specific question to answer, and you are fully expected to answer with examples drawn from course readings.

*The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class.*
*The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.*

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.
Everything you say should be supported with what you have read. The quotes from the texts, etc are your evidence, and they need to be used to support your argument (i.e., answer to the question). If limited space does not allow you to give lengthy quotes, just bring in page numbers where those quotes can be found. I will check the accuracy of citation. This essay will be graded and returned to you in class, on March 2nd, 2016. (13%)

**Participation:** Please note that you are required to actively participate in the class. If you have a quiet classroom persona, please speak with me immediately. You can use computers but if you are going to chat on the net or engage other activity unrelated to the course, it will have a direct impact on your participation. Please switch off all phones and keep them in your bag during class. Continuous late arrival will have an impact on your participation grade (15% of final grade)

**Final Paper:** Please write an analytical paper (min 7—maximum 12 pages). I will provide you with a variety of questions as possible paper topics. (35% of final grade; 10% of this will be the effort you put into the first draft)

**Final Paper Workshop:** On the last day of the class, you will workshop each other’s paper. The genuine effort put into reading and offering constructive criticism to the papers that will be part of the workshop will constitute your grade. (7% of final grade.) The feedback guidelines will be available on the blog.

The first draft of your final paper is due on Wednesday April 27th by 6pm (via email).
The final paper is due on Friday May 13th by 10pm (via email)

Final Grade Breakdown:

Blog/Weekly Responses: 30%
Mid-semester Essay: 13%
Participation: 15%
Final Paper (with 10% of this grade allocated to your first draft): 35%.
Final Paper Workshop: 7%.

Final Grade Scale:

http://www.nyu.edu/registrar/transcripts-certification/grades-information.html

**Writing and Intellectual Responsibility**

Writing is an important part of this class. All essays should have a clear argument—thesis statement—supported with evidence from our readings/other course materials or sources. You are fully and directly responsible for everything submitted under your name as your own work. This means that if you paraphrase, take direct quotations from, or even are inspired by any other source (texts, cultural products, internet sources, or other people) you would have to cite them in your papers. Any conduct that doesn’t comply with this rule will be considered plagiarism and would have serious consequences including failing the course. For more on this, please consult:

http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity

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**The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class.**
The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.
The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10 pm, the day before our class.

The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10 pm via email.

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.
Where and When is the Orient?

WEEK 2
January 30
"East-West" and Historical Representation of Difference

Watch the films 300 [based on Frank Miller's comic book] and 1453: The Conquest [of Istanbul]

Nancy Bisaha, Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and Ottoman Turks. 1-93.


Recommended:

WEEK 3
February 10
Visual Culture and Orientalism


WEEK 4
February 17
The Uncanny and the Orient

Orhan Pamuk, The White Castle.


Recommended:

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The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.

**WEEK 5**
**February 24**
**Race, Colonialism and The Exotic**

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of the Suburbia*, first half of the novel


**No reading response today. Please bring a hard copy of your mid-semester essay (minimum 500, maximum 650 words) to class.**

**WEEK 6**
**March 2**
**Race, Sexuality, and the Exotic**


Mid-semester essay graded and returned in class.

**WEEK 7**
**March 9**
**Race, Eugenics, and Civilizations:**
**Situating the Oriental**


Selections from Norwegian Mass Killer Anders Breivik’s *European Declaration of Independence: 2083*.


*The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class.*

*The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.*

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.

WEEK 8  
March 16  
Spring Break

WEEK 9  
March 23  
Eurocentrism and its Discontents: Violence, History, and Race Politics


Watch: Gillo Pontecorvo, The Battle of Algiers

Final paper questions/options will be discussed in class and posted on the blog today.

WEEK 10  
March 30  
Humanitarianism, Violence, and Eurocentrism


WEEK 11  
April 6  
The Question of Rights and the Culture of Commodity

David Harvey, “Introduction”; “Freedom is Another Word” and “Uneven Geographic Developments.” A Brief Introduction to Neoliberalism. 1-38; 87-119.

The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class. The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.


Recommended:
John Chalcraft, Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East.
(Selections TBA; the book is forthcoming in March 2016)

WEEK 12
April 13
Branding the Orient and Image Wars

Melissa Aronczyk, Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity (book available online through our library; login through library.nyu.edu and you can read it). pp. 1-33.


Eli Avraham, "Spinning Liabilities into Assets in Place Branding: Toward a New Typology"


Youtube videos: Istanbul commercial: "Timeless City" and Egypt commercial: "Where it All Begins."
(try to read the comments underneath if you have time).


WEEK 13
April 20

The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class.
The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.
The Image of Humanitarianism and War

Eyal Weizman, The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence From Gaza to Arendt

WEEK 14
April 27
Review Session
First Draft of Final Papers Due Today.

WEEK 15
May 4
Final Paper Workshop

The reading responses should be posted on the blog by 10pm, the day before our class.
The final paper is due on Friday May 13th, by 10pm via email.

In order to provide flexibility in our class, the electronically provided readings are subject to change. In the case of a change, you will be notified both in class and on the blog.