

Syllabus/Programme

Othering, Social Taboo, and Ethnicity: Representations of the Margin in Arab Contemporary Fiction

Adel Dashela and Safwan Yahya Al-Showaiter

When & Where:	Wednesdays, 14:00 CET	Off University Moodle
--------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Hosted by:	Bremen University with 3 ECTS Certification*
-------------------	--

Department	Institute of Anthropology and Cultural Research
-------------------	---

***How to count your Off University course towards credit?**

Successful completion of a course at Off University is certified by the host university. This means that you are able to use these credits at any university in the EHEA in a programme you are enrolled in, or you may count this as previous knowledge in a future study programme. In order to be sure that you can transfer the credits, we suggest you get written confirmation by your home university's students' office. And if you are not enrolled in any university program, you are welcome to join! All our courses are free of charge and open to anyone: students, scholars, and activists.

Description:

This course is a thematic navigation of othering, social taboos, and ethnicity in Arab contemporary fiction, focusing on how marginalized ethnic communities are represented within novels. Contemporary Arab writers often engage with social norms, religious constraints, and political landscapes, exposing the tensions that shape identities on the periphery. We will use an interdisciplinary approach to analyse the chosen texts. Through multiple fields like anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, and cultural studies, We will thus examine these themes from various perspectives and gain a more comprehensive understanding of them. We will explore how marginalized individuals - particularly those who are different - are positioned in contrast to dominant social groups. The "othering" of ethnicities highlights the creation and regulation of social boundaries, emphasizing the role of taboos in reinforcing exclusion.

By comparing and contrasting the human condition across diverse cultural contexts, we can acquire knowledge of experiences, challenge stereotypes, and identify ingrained attitudes, considering the thin line between the universal truth and specific contexts. The course also investigates how these narratives reflect broader struggles with diversity, difference, and power, offering nuanced critiques of Arab societies. Moreover, it sheds light on how literature becomes a site for negotiating identity, challenging hegemonic norms, and providing insight into how social realities could be constructed.

Digital Self Defense

Our platform is dedicated to spread knowledge threatened by authoritarian and right-wing populist regimes and to put measures in place that enable people to practice digital self-defense.

We encourage all users to sign up for the platform anonymously and respect others' preferences for staying anonymous. **Please do not force anyone to share personal information or take screenshots of others without their knowledge.**

The courses take place on Off University's Moodle. The platform includes an encrypted video-call option, cloud storage, as well as a messaging system. We would like to remind all users that communication with other users outside of the platform (i.e. e-mail, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, or other video conferencing tools) may put them at risk.

To find out more about digital security and ways for digital care, approach the learning designer of the seminar.

Timeline of the Course Schedule

Week 1	9 April 2025	Warming up and familiarizing with basic notions about the course.
Week 2	16 April 2025	Introduction to Othering, Social, Political Taboos, The Unspoken Taboos, Ethnicity: Representations of the Margin in Arab Contemporary Fiction.
Week 3	23 April 2025	Social Exclusion in Ali Al-Muqri's <i>Black Taste, Black Odour</i> (2008).
Week 4	30 April 2025	Ethnic Cleansing, Stigmatization and Self Struggle in <i>Sangar's Virgin</i> (2023) by Ward Badr al-Salim.
Week 5	7 May 2025	Nubian Question in Idris Ali's <i>Dongola: A Novel of Nubia</i> . (Translated by Peter Theroux, February 1999).
Week 6	14 May 2025	Breaking Taboos: Identity and Belonging in <i>The Druze of Belgrade</i> (2012) by Rabee Jaber
Week 7	21 May 2025	Layla Qasrani's <i>The Blind Birds</i> and Armenian Genocide
Week 8	28 May 2025	<i>Attila: The Last Lover</i> (2019). Imagined History and the Kurdish Agony
Week 9	4 June 2025	The Making of Tuareg Canon: Ibrahim Al-Koni and Fiction of the Desert
Week 10	11 June 2025	Circassian People and the Arab Landscape in <i>The Exodus from Sosruqa</i> (1993): A Novel of Circassian Diaspora by Zahra Omar

Week 11	18 June 2025	Cosmopolitan City and Ethnic Identity in Arab Fiction
Week 12	25 June 2025	Hybrid Culture: The Greek Experience in Egypt
Week 13	2 July 2025	Is it Class or Ethnicity Consciousness? Social Struggle and Ethnic Marginalization in <i>The Jungo: Stakes of the Earth</i>
Week 14	09 July 2025	Ethnicity and Dual Identity in <i>The Bamboo Stalk</i>

Aimed Outcomes

By the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Familiarize with related key concepts such as ethnicity, race, nationalism, othering processes, social taboo, and the intersections amid all of them.
- Analyze Literary Representations of Marginalization:
 - Identify and critically analyze the portrayal of marginalized ethnic groups in contemporary Arab fiction.
 - Understand the role of language and narrative in shaping perceptions of the "other."
- Examine the Impact of Social Taboos:
 - Investigate the influence of cultural and religious taboos on the lives of marginalized individuals.
 - Analyze how taboos maintain social hierarchies and marginalize specific groups.
- Understand the Interplay of Ethnicity and Identity:
 - Examine the complex relationship between ethnicity, nationality, and individual identity.
 - Analyze the impact of historical and political factors on the formation of ethnic identities.
 - Explore how marginalized ethnic groups resist dominant narratives and assert their own cultural heritage.
- Apply Interdisciplinary Perspectives:
 - Utilize concepts from anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, and cultural studies to analyze the literary texts.
 - Develop a nuanced understanding of the social, cultural, and political contexts that shape the experiences of marginalized individuals.
 - Apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the representations of marginalized groups in contemporary Arab fiction.

Course components

The methodology includes:

- Online Lectures
- Readings
- Participation
- Presentations
- Assignments

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- Participation 20%
- Presentation 20% (Students are free to choose their topics. It can be a recording or podcast).
- Final Assignments (5 pages max.) 60% (Book reviews or close reading of a work of fiction relevant to the course themes are acceptable).

Organization of the course

Focus/Topic of the week & Reading List

Week 1: Warming up and familiarizing with basic notions about the course

The first lecture is an orientation with basic notions that will be useful throughout the course. It will be interactive to warm-up students for the upcoming lectures. The lecture will focus on the most important points and themes, allowing for a better understanding of the processes the course will examine in detail later when talking about ethnicity and othering in Arab contemporary fiction. The lecture is participatory in nature and thus aims to address the emerging issues surrounding the subject matter of this course as comprehensively as possible.

Week 2: Introduction to Othering, Social, Political Taboos, The Unspoken Taboos, Ethnicity: Representations of the Margin in Arab Contemporary Fiction.

The second lecture will be an introduction to the course title. In general, concepts of ethnicity, race, nationalism, and collective identity are crucial to go further in this course. It will also contain an elaboration on the related key terms of the course, such as othering, taboos, or marginalized identities in the Arab world. Moreover, a brief introduction will be about the historical and socio-political context of the Arab world, highlighting key factors that contribute to the formation and perpetuation of othering and taboos. A theoretical framework is required to investigate representations of ethnicities. For such purpose, we have to define othering and discuss different theoretical perspectives on othering (e.g., sociological, psychological, postcolonial) in addition to exploring the mechanisms of

othering: categorization, stereotyping, dehumanization, and exclusion. Explicit and implicit taboos are another area to cover in this lecture.

The lecture Objectives are as follows;

- To understand the concept of othering and its manifestations in Arab societies.
- To analyze the role of social and political taboos in shaping individual and collective identities.
- To explore how Arab contemporary fiction represents marginalized ethnicities and their experiences.
- To critically examine the power dynamics and social inequalities embedded within these representations.

Reading Materials

- Ansell, Amy E. *Race and Ethnicity*. Routledge. 2013.
- Erikson, Thomas Hylland. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. Pluto Press. 1994.
- Fought, Carmen. *Language and Ethnicity*. Cambridge University Press. 2006.
- Jackson II, Roland L. *Encyclopedia of Identity*. Vol.1. Sage. 2010. (Some related entries)
- Jones, Sia. *Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*. Routledge. 1997.
- Malesevic, Sinisa. *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Palgrave Macmillan 2006.

Further readings

- Mernissi, Fatima. *Beyond the Veil, Revised Edition: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* 1987.
- Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" (2015)
- Bhaba, Homi. *Nation and Narration* (1990)
- Devin, Fred. *Discourses of Othering*. (2016)
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (2003).
- Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)
- Freud, Sigmund. *Taboo and Totem* (1913)
- Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997)
- Lentricchia, Frank and Thomas McLaughlin (Eds.). *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (1995).

Week 3: Social Exclusion in Ali Al-Muqri's *Black Taste, Black Odour* (2008).

This lecture introduces the writer, the socio-cultural background of the Yemeni society, and the ethnicity in Yemen in which Akhdam (Afro-Yemeni people) represent the outcast marginalized group. It delves into the poignant exploration of social exclusion in Ali Al-Muqri's novel *Black Taste, Black Odour* (2008). It also examines how Al-Muqri portrays the multifaceted experiences of marginalization and discrimination faced by characters within the novel's socio-political landscape. Through close readings of key passages and character analyses, the lecture investigates:

- The multifaceted nature of social exclusion: How race, class, and gender create complex and overlapping forms of marginalization.
- The psychological and emotional impact of social exclusion: How characters experience feelings of isolation, alienation, and dehumanization as a result of their marginalized status.
- The role of language and representation in perpetuating social exclusion: How discriminatory language and stereotypes contribute to the marginalization of certain groups.

A short bio of the author

Ali Al-Muqri is a Yemeni novelist. Born in Yemen in 1966, Al-Muqri had already gained important recognition for his literature that focused on exile and identity, representing the intricateness of today's Arab world. His work perfectly blends high-pitched narration and a sharp, critical look at social injustices. Al-Muqri won numerous awards for his contribution to literature and continues to be a main driving force within the Arabic literary scene.

A Summary of the Novel

Black Taste, Black Odour describes social exclusion via the lives of marginal personas in contemporary Arab society. Therein, a problem of identity, discrimination, and struggle for acceptance is widely exposed to the deeply hurt effects of these prejudices surrounding them. Thus, in the process, through the character's experiences, Al-Muqri points to the social structures of exclusion and alienation with which to critique general social hierarchies to move to the higher plane of understanding human dignity and the need for inclusivity within society. It is a powerful narrative through which to examine the broader ripples of injustice and the desire for belonging in an increasingly divided world.

Reading Materials

- Jordi, Estivill. *Concepts and Strategies for Combating Social Exclusion: An Overview*, (2003).
- Byrne, David. *Social exclusion*. McGraw-Hill Education (2005).

Further readings

- Kipling, Williams (ed) *The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection, and Bullying*.

- Chakravarty, Satya R., and Conchita D'Ambrosio. "The measurement of social exclusion." *Review of Income and wealth* 52.3 (2006).
- Agulnik, Phil. *Understanding social exclusion*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2002.
- Unit, Social Exclusion, and Great Britain. *Preventing social exclusion*. London: Cabinet Office, 2001.

Week 4: Ethnic Cleansing, Stigmatization, and Self Struggle in *Singar's Virgin* (2023) by Ward Badr Al-Salim

This lecture introduces the Yazidis, a mainly Kurdish-speaking religious minority in northern Iraq. It also highlights the tragedy of the Yazidis in Iraq. In August 2014, an estimated 600 Yazidi men and boys were killed, while all the women and girls were taken into slavery. After taking their areas in northwestern Iraq, ISIS made a concerted effort to exterminate the local Yazidi population, killing men and boys. They also kidnapped thousands of women and girls, about 3,000 of whom remain missing. More than 5,000 men were killed; around seventy mass graves have been found until today. More than 7,000 Yazidi girls and women were enslaved... (Kothe 212).

Based on the previous background, the novel *Singar's Virgin* (2023) by the Iraqi writer Ward Badr Al-Salim narrates the story of the horrible genocide against the Yazidi community. The lecture sheds light on the narration and its real context, focusing on how Yazidis have suffered throughout history from ethnic cleansing and discrimination. Gender othering and gender-based violence are also two practices of social exclusion imposed on the marginalized body. The lecture probes these issues to understand the intersections of othering with gender and ethnicity.

A short bio of the author

Ward Badr al-Salim (1956) is an Iraqi writer and academic known for his astute stories that delve into the intricacies of social problems in the Arab world.

A short summary of the Novel

In *Singar's Virgin*, Al-Salim focuses on ethnic cleansing, stigma, and self-struggle. The novel elaborates on the trauma faced by characters struggling through the violence and displacement conflicts that underline the psychological and social impact of violence. The book examines, through individual stories, how ethnic identity and the stigma of society shape people's lives in one way or another to eventually support resilience and the reclaiming of identity amidst adversity.

Reading Materials

Murad, Nadia. *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity and My Fight Against the Islamic State*. The Duggan Books. 2017.

Khalaf, Frida. *The Girl Who Escaped ISIS*. Atria Books.

Further readings

- Cheterian, Vicken. "ISIS genocide against the Yazidis and mass violence in the Middle East." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48.4 (2021).
- Sannes, Ely. "The Status of the Yazidis: Eight years on from the ISIS genocide." *Washington Kurdish Institute* (2022).
- Usman, Shakir Muhammad, Khobar Al Jawharah, and Saudi Arabia. "History of Yazidi Genocides, Mass Atrocities, Forced Conversions and Persecutions in the Middle East." *Journal of Kurdistan for Strategic Studies* (2022).
- Mann, Michael. *The dark side of democracy: Explaining ethnic cleansing*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Walling, Carrie Booth. "2 The History and Politics of Ethnic Cleansing." *The Kosovo Tragedy*. Routledge, 2012.

Week 5: Nubian Question in Idris Ali's *Dongola: A Novel of Nubia*. (Translated by Peter Theroux, February 1999).

After introducing Nubia, this lecture delves into the complex "Nubian Question" as explored in Idris Ali's novel, *Dongola: A Novel of Nubia*. The lecture also examines how Ali, through the lens of fiction, grapples with the historical and contemporary challenges faced by the Nubian people. Three main themes of the novel will be analyzed:

- 1- The portrayal of displacement and Loss as a devastating impact of the construction of the Aswan High Dam on the Nubian homeland, forcing mass displacement and the submergence of ancient cultural sites.
- 2- The Political and Social Marginalization: The novel highlights the struggles of the Nubian people for recognition, land rights, and cultural autonomy within the modern states of Egypt and Sudan.
- 3- Cultural Identity: *Dongola* explores the enduring strength of Nubian culture amidst adversity.

A short bio of the author

Idris Ali (1940 – 2010) is an Egyptian novelist. His works explore social and cultural issues in Sudan and reflect the complex relations between identity, history, and the socio-political landscape of the region, making him an important figure in contemporary Sudanese literature.

A novel's summary

Dongola is about the Nubian identity within the vortex of change brought about by the building of the Aswan Dam, which submerged Nubian lands and made communities relocate. The novel narrates a young man's journey into nostalgia for lost traditions and the struggle to hold on to cultural roots in a rapidly changing world. Ali weaves together personal tales with historical issues, pointing to the emotional uprooting that has taken place and the

strengths of the Nubian people. Finally, *Dongola* is turned into a powerful tribute to the beauty of Nubian culture and the struggle for recognition.

Reading Materials

- Hillelson, Sigmar. "Nubian origins." Sudan Notes and Records 13.1 (1930).

Further readings

- Adams, William Yewdale. *The coming of Nubian speakers to the Nile Valley*. University of California Press, 1982.
- Groucutt, Huw S. "Culture and convergence: The curious case of the Nubian Complex." *Culture history and convergent evolution: Can we detect populations in prehistory?* (2020).

Week 6: Breaking Taboos: Identity and Belonging in *The Druze of Belgrade* (2012) by Rabee Jaber.

This lecture will explore the complex themes of identity and belonging in the experiences of the Arab Druze community in Serbia, as represented in *The Druze of Belgrade*. The novel explores the historical and political factors that have shaped the Druze diaspora, including the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan Wars, and the Yugoslav conflicts. Furthermore, the novel presents the history, culture, and internal diversity of the Druze, a religious minority often shrouded in secrecy, and how oversimplification of the other generates stereotyping. Moreover, the lecture analyses how the novel deals with the dynamics of diaspora as the Druze of Belgrade represents a marginalized community living in a foreign land. Issues of integration, discrimination, and preserving their cultural heritage are also examined.

A short bio of the Writer

Rabee Jaber (1972) is a Lebanese novelist. Some of his works discuss regional social dynamics, attempting to reflect how history and culture impact individual experiences.

Summary of the novel

In this novel, the writer attempts to show the struggles of the Druze to reconcile their traditions with urban realities through intimate narratives.

Reading Materials

Hitti, Philip. *The Origins of the Druze People and Religion*. Columbia University Press. 1928.

Further readings

- Hussein, Sahar Risan. "The Formation of Tragedy and the Violence of History-A reading in the Novel 'The Druze of Belgrade-The Tale of Hanna Yacoub' by Rabie Jaber." *Journal Dawat* 10.38 (2023).
- Hussein, Sahar Risan. "The Tragic Dimension in Rabee Jaber's Novel Druze of Belgrade-The Life of Hanna Jacob." *JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL & CULTURAL STUDIES an academic magazine* 9.30 (2017).
- Sallam, Maha. "Trauma, Narrative, and History in Rabee Jaber's Yusef the Englishman and The Druze of Belgrade." *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University* 44.April-June (c (2016).

Week 7: Layla Qasrani's *The Blind Birds* and Armenian Genocide

Armenian ethnicity settled in different Arab countries to escape the genocide executed on them by the Ottomans. The lecture discusses *The Blind Birds* (2016) by Layla Qasrani, a historical fiction about the Armenian genocide. It explores themes of memory, silence, and the search for identity. It examines the profound and lasting impact of the collective trauma on subsequent generations of Armenian families. The lecture demonstrates the importance of literature as a tool for historical memory. It highlights the Intergenerational Trauma and Identity. It also focuses on the preservation of Identity within Integration.

Introduction to Layla Qasrani and Her Novel *The Blind Birds*

Layla Qasrani (1967) is an Assyrian Iraqi novelist. In this novel, the writer narrates the events going on in an imaginary village a day's drive from Diyarbakir, located in southeastern Turkey, where its Armenian villagers were displaced in 1915. Some of them died in the wilderness, some fled to Mosul, and others reached the Levant. The novel weaves personal and historical tales of loss, resilience, and struggle for identity in the shadow of trauma. Qasrani poignantly shed light, on how genocide can have long-lasting effects on later generations and spoke to remembrance and understanding of that painful chapter of history.

Reading Materials

Dadrian, Vahakn N. *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*. Berghahn Books. 1995.

Further readings

- Balakian, Peter. *Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir*. Basic Books. 2019.
- Haroutyunian, Sona. "Echoes of the Armenian Genocide in literature and cinema." *Annali di Ca'Foscari. Serie orientale* (2015).
- Maśko, Adrianna. "Memory of Mass Persecution of Armenians and Assyrians in Four Recent Iraqi Novels." *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 74.1 (2021): 58-94.
- Galip, Özlem Belçim. "The Armenian genocide and Armenian identity in modern Turkish novels." *Turkish Studies* 20.1 (2019).

Week 8: *Attila: The Last Lover* (2019): Imagined History and the Kurdish Agony

This lecture explores *Attila: The Last Lover* (2019) by the Kurdish writer Serdar Abdullah, examining how it employs “the imagined history” to describe the complex Kurdish experience. This lecture shows how the novel narrates the history of the Kurdish revolution, addresses social, sectarian, and national conflicts, and culminates in the martyrdom of an Arab fighter in the ranks of the Kurdish revolution. It offers a comprehensive narrative that spans generations and explores the multifaceted challenges faced by the Kurdish people.

Introduction to Sardar Abdullah and His Novel

Sardar Abdullah is a Kurdish writer, politician, and former candidate for the presidency of Iraq. After spending years in the mountains of Kurdistan as part of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, he chaired the editorial board of several Kurdish magazines and newspapers. He has several publications in Kurdish and Arabic. The novel chronicles the Kurdish revolution and delves into the intricate dynamics of social, sectarian, and national conflicts that have shaped the region.

Reading Materials:

Chliand, Gerard. *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*. Olive Branch Press. 1993

Lawrence, Quil. *Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East*. Walker Books. 2009.

Further readings

- Edmonds, Cecil J. "Kurdish nationalism." *Journal of Contemporary History* 6.1 (1971).
- MacDonald, Charles G. "The Kurds." *Journal of Political Science* 19.1 (1991): 9.
- Omar, Ameena Abdulqader. *The Iraqi Kurdish Novel, 1970-201: A Genetic Structuralist Approach*. University of Exeter (United Kingdom), 2016.
- Ahmadzadeh, Hashem. "In search of a Kurdish novel that tells us who the Kurds are." *Iranian Studies* 40.5 (2007).
- Gayle Tzemach Lemmon. *The Daughters of Kobani: A Story of Rebellion, Courage, and Justice*. Penguin Books. 2021.

Week 9: The Making of Tuareg Canon: Ibrahim Al-Koni and Fiction of the Desert

Tuareg people mainly inhabit the desert of North Africa. In Ibrahim Al-Koni's novels, we can find a whole fictional world of Tuareg culture. In his fiction, Al-Koni transcends traditional portrayals of the desert as a barren wasteland, depicting it as a vibrant and

dynamic space filled with life, history, and spiritual significance. This lecture describes how Al-Koni's fiction challenges Western stereotypes about the desert and its inhabitants, offering a deep and insightful perspective on life in the Sahara. His works seamlessly blend traditional Tuareg myths and legends with contemporary realities, creating a unique and captivating narrative style so we can observe how space can shape the community formation of an ethnic group like Tuareg in which the place – the desert in this case- is a character in its own right. It can also be a symbol, representing broader themes like identity and worldview.

Introduction to the Author

Ibrahim Al-Koni was born in 1948 in the desert of the Tuareg, Libya. He grew up there, not learning to read or write Arabic until he was 12 years old. He studied comparative literature at the Gorky Institute in Moscow and was a journalist in Moscow and Warsaw. He has lived in Switzerland since 1993 and has written over 60 novels, short stories, poems, and aphorisms, all inspired by the desert. Some works have been translated into 35 languages, including eight into German and six into French. (International Prize for Arabic Fiction website).

Reading Materials

- Mera, Jeffrey Herlihy. The Role of Place in Literature. Chapter 2 in *In Paris or Paname*
- *Hemingway's Expatriate Nationalism*. Brill. 2010.
- Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature*, Syracuse: NY, 1984.

Further readings

- Al-Koni, Ibrahim. *A Sleepless Eye: Aphorisms from the Sahara*. Syracuse University Press, 2014.
- Naji, Ahmed Khashea, and Mohamad Fleih Hassan. "Desert Narratives in Ibrahim Al-Koni's *The Bleeding of the Stone* in Light of Augé's Theorization of 'Place' and 'Non-Place.'" *Nasdaq* 43.4 (2024).
- Caserta, Silvia. "Narratives of the Desert: Reconfiguring Movement Across the Sahara." *Narratives of Mediterranean Spaces: Literature and Art across Land and Sea*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. 2022.
- Aubuchon, Jeffrey William. *Sahara as Symbol in Later Twentieth-Century North African Literature: An Introductory Essay and Three Stories of the Desert*. Diss. 2017.

Week 10: Circassian People and the Arab Landscape in *The Exodus from Sosruqa* (1993): A Novel of Circassian Diaspora by Zahra Omar

This lecture explores the intricate relationship between the Circassian people and the Arab landscape as depicted in Zahra Omar's *The Exodus from Sosruqa* (1993). The lecture examines how the novel portrays the Circassian Experience in the Arab World. The novel

probes into the historical and contemporary experiences of the Circassian diaspora in the Arab world, exploring their displacement, integration, and cultural adaptation. The lecture also Investigates the cultural exchange and hybridity portrayed in the novel and how the cultural exchange and hybridity emerged from the interaction between Circassian and Arab cultures. *The Exodus from Sosruqa* likely reveals the role of memory and history in shaping the Circassian identity in the Arab world, examining how they remember their past while navigating their present realities.

A short bio of the author

Zahra Omar Al-Maani Abshatseh was born in 1933 in Amman, Jordan. She started writing early and worked on educating herself. Her literary works: "The Exodus from Sosruqa," a novel, Azmina House, Amman, 1993. "Sosroqa Behind the Fog", a novel, Azmina House, Amman, 2001. 2nd ed., Ministry of Culture, Amman, 2010.

Reading materials

Thibdeau, Kelsey Marie. *Becoming Diaspora: A Performative History of Circassian-Jordanian Culture and Politics*. Diss. University of Colorado at Boulder, 2020.

Further readings

- Abu Assab, Nour. Narratives of ethnicity and nationalism: A case study of Circassians in Jordan. Diss. University of Warwick, 2011.
- Akbulat, Emir Fatih. "Syrian Circassians in the context of the Syrian refugees' issue: Nature of the problem on the basis of the international community in Turkey and Russia and suggested solutions." *Central European Journal of Politics* 3.1 (2017).
- Obeid, Ahmad Kazem Shawkat. *Circassian Language Revitalization Efforts in Jordan*. Diss. Middle East University, 2024.
- Iliushina, Milana. "The Origins of the Circassian Mamluks a Subject of Myth-Making." *Higher School of Economics Research Paper No. WP BRP 64* (2014).

Week 11: Cosmopolitan City and Ethnic Identity in Arab Fiction

In fiction, cosmopolitan cities and ethnicity often intertwine to create rich narratives that explore themes of identity, belonging, and cultural exchange. Cosmopolitan cities are often depicted as "melting pots" where people from diverse ethnic backgrounds blend their cultures to create a unique, hybrid identity. Cosmopolitan cities can also be sites of tension and conflict between different ethnic groups. Moreover, characters in cosmopolitan settings often grapple with navigating multiple identities, such as their ethnic heritage and their adopted city identity. Fiction can challenge stereotypes associated with certain ethnic groups in cosmopolitan settings, which can also be settings for stories that confront racism and prejudice. By exploring these themes in a number of selected novels, we can gain insights into the complexities of cosmopolitanism and ethnicity in the modern world.

Reading materials

- Starr, Deborah. *Remembering cosmopolitan Egypt: Literature, Culture, and Empire*. Routledge, 2009.
- Singerman, Diane, and Paul Amar, eds. *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*. IB Tauris, 2009.

Further readings

- Zubaida, Sami. "Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East." *Cosmopolitanism, identity, and Authenticity in the Middle East*. Routledge, 2014.
- Hanley, Will. "Grieving cosmopolitanism in Middle East studies." *History Compass* 6.5 (2008).
- Seidman, Steven. "The politics of cosmopolitan Beirut: From the stranger to the other." *Theory, Culture & Society* 29.2 (2012).

Week 12: Hybrid Culture: The Greek Experience in Egypt

In a riveting tale spanning over a century, Ghada Al-Absi delves into the chronicles of the Kozzika distillery, once a prominent fixture in Egypt's Tura district. The narrative unfolds through the lens of the Kozzika family, Greek immigrants who found themselves ensnared in the tumultuous tapestry of Egypt's past. This family saga narrates the story of Theokhari Kozzika as he journeys from Greece to Alexandria, bearing witness to the city's infamous massacre and the ensuing British occupation. With his brother Polychronic as his steadfast companion, Theokhari pioneers the Middle East's first alcohol distillery, later expanding his empire to include a brewery. *Kozzika* (2011) by Ghada Al-Absi is historical fiction that offers a poignant exploration of the Kozzika family's experiences, intertwining their personal journey with the broader socio-political landscape of Egypt, the story of the Greek immigrants and their experience as a minor community in a different cultural location.

Reading materials

- Kitroeff, Alexander. *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt*. The American University in Cairo Press (2019).
- Dalachanis, Alexander. *The Greek Exodus from Egypt: Diaspora Politics and Emigration, 1937-1962*. New York: Berghahn Books. 2017.

Further readings

- Kazamias, Alexander. "Between language, land, and empire: Humanist and Orientalist perspectives on Egyptian-Greek identity." *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700* (2009).
- McWilliams, Susan. "Hybridity in herodotus." *Political Research Quarterly* 66.4 (2013).
- Papakyriacou, Marios. *Formulation and definitions of the Greek national ideology in colonial Egypt (1856-1919)*. Diss. 2015.

Week 13: Is it Class or Ethnicity Consciousness? Social Struggle and Ethnic Marginalization in *The Jungo: Stakes of the Earth*

The Jungo: Stakes of the Earth (2009) by the Sudanese novelist Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, is the masterpiece of contemporary Sudanese literature. The Jungo, a marginalized and forgotten segment of seasonal agricultural workers in the Sudanese-Ethiopian-Eritrean border region, represents a specific ethnic and social class. Their lives are marked by hardship, reflecting the realities of their interactions with the diverse mix of local populations in this exceptional place, which is highly distinctive in terms of its people, society, culture, and language. Despite their significant contribution to the production of Sudanese wealth, they remain largely invisible to the central government, facing exploitation and neglect.

Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin was born and grew up in Kassala, eastern Sudan, a region bordering Eritrea, but his family originally hailed from Darfur in western Sudan. Sakin left Sudan after the final banning of his writings, in 2012, and currently lives in Austria. Sakin's publications include, in addition to his 11 novels to date, four short story collections. This novel won the Arab sphere's most prestigious literary prize in 2011, among several major awards as a key example of contemporary Arabic literature. Like all his other writings, it was banned work in northern Sudan, Sakin's country of birth. The banning decree actually came soon after *The Jungo* won the Arab sphere's most prestigious literary prize in 2011. (*Litnet, African Library website*)

Reading materials

Ahuja, Amit. *Mobilizing Marginalized Citizens: Ethnic Parties Without Ethnic Movements*. Diss. 2008.

David, Eric John Ramos, ed. *Internalized oppression: The psychology of marginalized groups*. Springer Publishing Company, 2013.

Further readings

- Chehade, Michael, ed. *Equality and justice: An engaged generation, a troubled world*. Parlor Press LLC, 2020.
- Quijada, David Alberto. "Marginalization, identity formation, and empowerment: Youth's struggles for self and social justice." *Youth moves*. Routledge, 2008.
- Singharoy, Debal K. "Marginalization and the Marginalized: reflections on the relational-Cumulative Dynamics." *Surviving against Odds: The Marginalized in a Globalizing World*. Manohar Publishers and Distributors: New Delhi (2010).

Week 14: Ethnicity and Dual Identity in *The Bamboo Stalk*

The Bamboo Stalk (2013) by Kuwaiti author Saud Alsanousi explores the complex issues of ethnicity through the story of Jose, a young man born to a Filipina mother and a Kuwaiti father. Jose struggles with his dual identity throughout the novel. He was raised in the Philippines but yearns to connect with his father's homeland, Kuwait. However, upon arriving in Kuwait, he faces discrimination due to his Filipino heritage. The novel explores the social hierarchy of Kuwait, where ethnicity plays a significant role. The story confronts the challenges faced by foreign workers in Arab countries and the deeply rooted prejudices around ethnicity.

Introduction to Saud Alsanousi: Exploring Identity in *The Bamboo Stalk*

"Saud Alsanousi is a Kuwaiti novelist and journalist, born in 1981. His work has appeared in a number of Kuwaiti publications, including *Al-Watan* newspaper and *Al-Arabi*, *Al-Kuwait* and *Al-Abwab* magazines and he currently writes for *Al-Qabas* newspaper. *The Bamboo Stalk* is a daring work which looks objectively at the phenomenon of foreign workers in Arab countries and deals with the problem of identity through the life of a young man of mixed race who returns to Kuwait, the 'dream' or 'heaven' which his mother had described to him since he was a child." (International Prize for Arabic Fiction).

Reading materials

Spencer, Stephen. *Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity and Representation*. Routledge. 2006.

Josselson, Ruthellen (ed). *Navigating Multiple Identities: Race, Gender, Culture, Nationality, and Roles*. Oxford University Press. 2012.

Further readings

- Chapman, Adam. "Breath and bamboo: Diasporic Lao identity and the Lao mouth-organ." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26.1-2 (2005).
- Al-Hawtali, Ahmed M., Ahmed A. Al-Sakkaf, and Ali Y. Atti. "Home is Exile: Identity Quest in Saud Al-Sanousi's *Saq Al-Bamboo*: A Post-modern Study." *المجلة العلمية لجامعة سيئون* 4.1 (2023)..
- Al-Mutairi, Reham. "Reconciling two opposing cultures: The *Bamboo Stalk* and the Arabic bildungsroman." *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 7* (2016).
- Mohamed, Samar Sayed. "An Intersectional Study of Saud Al-Sanousi's Novel *The Bamboostal*." 165-137: (2021) *مجلة كلية الآداب و العلوم الإنسانية جامعة قناة السويس*.
- Belkhasher, Khalid Y. "Third Space Identities: Hybridity in Saud Alsanousi's *Saq Al-Bamboo*." 10.12816/0031071. *مجلة الأندلس للعلوم الإنسانية و الاجتماعية* 3.10 (2016).