

English 14A: Arab American Literature Before 9/11

Fall 2010

Bernard 101

MW 4:15 pm – 5:30 pm

Professor: Dr. Therí Pickens
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Phone: 909.607.6213
Office Hours: MWF 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm, Fletcher 102 – 14A If you are unable to meet during my office hours, please send me an email so that we can arrange a time.

Course Overview:

This is a two-part course. The first half explores Arab American writing published prior to September 11, 2001 and the second half (to take place in the spring) explores literature published after 9/11. During this half of the course, you will be introduced to major Arab American authors like Kahlil Gibran, William Peter Blatty and Naomi Shihab Nye. We will explore their contributions to American poetry, fiction and memoir between 1911 and 1999.

Though we will remain aware of Arab American literature as part of the larger umbrella category of American literature, our primary focus will be the literary history and literary concerns of Arab American literature. In other words, how do Arab Americans depict themselves? What are the major literary and extra literary concerns of 20th century Arab American literature? How do historical events influence of shape these texts? These are the guiding questions of the course; however, the nature of our exploration will be, in part, determined by your interests and observations (cf. Teaching Philosophy).

At times, this course may be difficult because it requires a new frame of reference for American literature, history and politics. I encourage you to be patient with yourselves and your classmates as I firmly believe that your continued effort and participation will greatly benefit you.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- identify, describe and analyze the major trends in Arab American literary history.
- further understand and analyze the way Arab American authors define themselves.
- explain the connections between Arab American literary works and other American literary works.
- describe and critique the major arguments in Arab American studies.
- develop your own understanding of how historical events shape or influence literature.

Teaching Philosophy:

Classes work best when students and instructors fulfill their obligations to one another and explore the major questions of the course. As a professor, it is my responsibility to provide you with the foundation you need to explore the course material, and guide you in your exploration of the material. As a student, your responsibility is to come to class prepared, ask questions about the materials, dialogue with each other and myself, complete all assignments to the best of your ability and take intellectual risks. I encourage you to approach me about all issues you feel impact your learning as soon as possible. I expect that all interactions will be governed by the golden rule: *treat others as you would want to be treated*. Your continued presence in this course constitutes an agreement that these are your responsibilities.

Required Texts:

Selected Writings on Sakai
The Prophet; Kahlil Gibran
Which Way to Mecca, Jack?; William Peter Blatty
Sitt Marie Rose; Etel Adnan
Through & Through: Toledo Stories; Joseph Geha
Born Palestinian, Born Black; Suheir Hammad
KOOLAIDS: The Art of War; Rabih Alameddine
Out of Place; Edward Said

Course Requirements & Grade Breakdown:

Midterm Exam 25% - Details regarding the format of the midterm will be announced in the week preceding the test.

Final Paper 40% - You will be required to complete one 10-page paper based on the readings and discussions in the class. Your grade will be based on your original thought, clarity of argument and your usage of one critical article. Your paper must also adhere to MLA format. You must **NOT** write your name on the front of the paper, but on the top right corner of the last page to ensure anonymity. Papers must be stapled. Along with your paper you must turn in the writing center tutor's comments, your peer reviewer's comments, my comments and your initial rough draft. I will not accept a paper I have not reviewed beforehand. Please note that all Wikipedia is not an acceptable source for information. Any outside information must come from a peer-reviewed journal article or reputable publishing house. If you have any questions, please see me.

Participation/Attendance 35% - Your class participation is of the utmost importance. You will be evaluated on the basis of your contributions to the class (reading questions, comments, questions, group work, etc). You are allotted two excused absences for the semester. You will need to have a legitimate reason and documentation. I will determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

Discussion Questions, Surveys, Pop Quizzes, Free Writing Assignments (part of participation grade) – In order to assess whether we are on track to meet our classroom goals (cf. Class Objectives), I will ask you to complete any of the following activities. Your responses must have proper syntax, punctuation and grammar.

Reading your campus email – While not explicitly a part of your participation grade, this does heavily impact your ability to participate. Be sure to check your email and Sakai regularly.

Grading Scale:

A	=	96 – 100
A-	=	90 – 95
B+	=	86 – 89
B	=	83 – 85
B-	=	80 – 82
C+	=	76 – 79
C	=	73 – 75
C-	=	70 – 72
D	=	60 – 69
F	=	59 and below

Late Assignments: Papers are marked down 1/3 of a grade per day late. No exceptions.

Make-up Tests: If you will not be available, you must take the test before the original date. Your reason must meet the criteria of an absence.

Course Evaluation Criteria:

I know that on occasion, it's difficult to figure out what a professor expects of you in order to pass the course or to receive a particular grade. In order to assuage that concern, here is the set of expectations I have of you during this term; please note that they are not listed in order of importance:

- Consistent attendance in class sessions, with you having read the materials, come prepared to discuss the materials, and come prepared to pose any questions that you have.
- Attendance in my office hours whenever you have a question or need help in understanding the materials or issues under discussion;
- Thoughtful reflection on the course materials and issues prior to coming to class, and thoughtful discussion of these materials and issues during class sessions;
- Careful attention to and implementation of all of the principles that motivate this course and the study of this material;
- The diligent pursuit of all assignments, with you committed to doing your best work on each one;

- And, overall, your commitment to doing your best work in every class session and on every assignment.

I know that you have other responsibilities or interests you have to attend to, and I am sympathetic to the various pulls on your time. However, you should note that I take very seriously what you do in this course, and I expect that your continued presence in this course will mean that you too take that seriously.

Keep in mind that I do not expect perfection from any of you. The issues we will discuss here are difficult and will most likely be new to you, and the assignments and questions I will pose to you will be challenging (and probably ones you've never been asked before). What I am looking for is a good faith sign that you are doing the best work you are capable of doing. I will take this and push on it; I will challenge you to do even better work; and I will help you achieve your potential in this course. But I can't do that if you're not trying your hardest.

Other Resources

Because your success in this course is tied to your writing, some students may want to utilize The Writing Center. The Writing Center provides students with assistance and is located in Mead Hall 131. Their telephone number is 909-607-4321. Drop-in hours are posted at the beginning of each semester. Writing tutors, including faculty and student staff, are available by appointment or visit http://www.pitzer.edu/offices/writing_center. In addition, students may meet with me to discuss concerns about their writing assignments. Another resource that students can purchase is *Write On: A Concise Composition Handbook for Students*. You will be required to use the writing center for your final paper.

Special Needs: For those students with disabilities, please make sure that you indicate this to me at the beginning of the course so that I can reasonably accommodate you. If you need to request accommodations or need additional assistance, contact the Pitzer Academic Support Services Office, Associate Dean Rochelle Brown at 607-3553 or your respective college's academic support office.

Honor Code Statement

All papers, tests, examinations, and other exercises in this course are subject to the Pitzer College Code of Student Conduct, as outlined in the Student Handbook. So, all submitted work must be the product of your own efforts, unless credit is given with proper footnoting and bibliographic techniques. For more information on the Code, your rights and responsibilities, and other relevant topics (e.g., how to distinguish between plagiarism and statements of common knowledge), please consult: http://www.pitzer.edu/academics/curriculum/pdf/07_Course_Catalog.pdf.

Class Decorum

I encourage each of you to express your views freely and openly; but keep in mind that insults and/or abusive commentary are not allowed. In addition, if your abusive commentary persists, you will be asked to leave the classroom. In

order to re-enter the classroom, you will need to set up an appointment with me to discuss your last class session. Some material may support or challenge your beliefs and values. Your grades are based upon your critical engagement with the readings and classroom discussion rather than personal opinion. It is my hope that this course will assist in discrediting misinformation while also acknowledging that it is not necessary to blame ourselves or others for any misinformation we may have learned about members of our own or other social groups.

Given the nature of topics covered, some course materials will include explicit images and language, which some class members may find offensive.

In addition, confidentiality is also of utmost importance. Therefore, if you do not wish for your comments to be repeated outside the classroom, you can preface your remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat said remarks. Lastly, if you are disruptive during class time (e.g. reading a newspaper or other inappropriate material, talking, text messaging, snoring, getting up and walking around, leaving early, and any other behavior that is disruptive to me or other students), you will be dropped from the class if this occurs on a repeated basis. If for any reason you need to leave early, please let me know before the beginning of class.

Please note:

- Cell phones need to be “OFF” (not “VIBRATE”) during the class session.
- During exams, all book bags, backpacks, cases, and purses must be placed at the front of class. All electronic media should be left at home.
- No laptops, or other electronic devices are allowed. Please make use of a paper and pen/pencil to take notes.

Course Schedule:

Introduction

W 9/1 Introduction

Ar-rabitah Al-Qalamiyyah

M 9/6 Ameen Rihani; The Book of Khalid; Book the First
W 9/8

M 9/13 Kahlil Gibran; The Prophet
W 9/15

Second Generation Writers

M 9/20 Vance Bourjaily; Confessions of a Spent Youth; “The Fractional Man”

W 9/22

M 9/27
W 9/29

Selected Poetry

M 10/4
W 10/6

William Peter Blatty; Which Way to Mecca, Jack?

M 10/11
W 10/13

In-class Midterm

M 10/18
W 10/20

NO CLASS
Etel Adnan; Sitt Marie Rose

M 10/25
W 10/27

Selected Anthology Introductions

Arab American Literary "Boom"

M 11/1
W 11/3

Joseph Geha; Through and Through

M 11/8
W 11/10

Selected Poetry

M 11/15
W 11/17

Suheir Hammad; Born Palestinian, Born Black

M 11/22
W 11/24

Rabih Alameddine; KOOLAIDS: The Art of War

M 11/29
W 12/1

Edward Said; Out of Place

M 12/6
W 12/8
F 12/10

Drafts of Papers due in class
Conclusion
Papers due by 5 pm