

Seminar in Humanistic Inquiry

Arabs and Turks: History and Theory

GESM 120, 35327R, Summer 2016, Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, 1:00-3:50 pm, GFS 220

What is the relation between the Arab and the Turk? If, owing to a certain geographical and cultural proximity, such a relationship is often taken for granted, the connection remains to be historically studied and critically engaged. What are the modern processes that led to the emergence of the Arab and the Turk as distinct—at times diametrically opposed—identities? Focusing on a series of moments from the nineteenth century onwards, we will interrogate in this interdisciplinary seminar the political, legal, cultural, and historical processes in and through which the difference between the Arab and the Turk is constituted and naturalized. By exploring the political and cultural logic of the Ottoman reform, the Tanzimat, we will consider how these moments partake of constructions and uses of the past. We will also attend to the contemporary dimensions of the issue by thinking critically about Arab-Turkish relations today and the limitations of the gendered logic in the approach to a possible rapprochement. Themes include Orientalism, Occidentalism, colonialism, nationalism, reform and empire, and the politics of friendship. There are no prerequisites. No prior knowledge of Arabic or Turkish necessary.

This course satisfies the university's general education requirement (GE-B, Humanistic Inquiry).

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