

Traveling Genres: Politics/Poetics of Modern Arabic Prose

COLT 447, 22073, Spring 2018, Mondays and Wednesdays , 2:00-3:20 pm, VKC 202

The objective of this course is to acquaint students with modern Arab cultures by using travel-writing as a complex, exilic and translational, lens. Bringing together important examples of travel writing from the nineteenth-century onwards, we will examine this rich archive of Arabic writing to interrogate the trials and tribulations of modernity in the Arab world. With continual reference to premodern travelogues (*rihlat*) and *maqamat* among others, students will also explore the relation of modern narrative



to earlier autochthonous forms. Specific attention will be paid to the numerous ways in which travel-writing from the nineteenth century, the *Nahda* (the “Arabic Renaissance”), partakes in the reconfiguration and transmission of the Arabic tradition, *al-turath*, in the variety of its genres, and to the entanglement of poetry and prose on the one hand and the aesthetic and the political on the other. All readings are in English translation and include al-Tahtawi, al-Shidyaq, al-Saffar, I. al-Muwaylihi, M. al-Muwaylihi, and others. No prior knowledge of Arabic is necessary.

Professor Veli N. Yashin

veli.yashin@dornsife.usc.edu

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