



Seminars in the Humanities

Co-sponsored with MEMEAC

***Dissections:
Sex, Science, and Medicine in the
Middle East and North Africa***

These seminars aim to provide an opportunity to share empirical research and theoretical framings in order to push forward scholarly debate on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Why “Dissections”? Some of the most exciting work taking place in studies of the MENA region today falls under the rubric of sex, science, and medicine. Interest in these topics has grown out of an ongoing attempt to understand the variant paths of modernity and the relationship of the region to Europe and the United States. American ventures in the broader Middle East in the past decade have further fueled the need to critically examine the history of colonialism and imperialism. Questions arising from these concerns have generated a new body of scholarship on sexuality, development, the history of humanitarianism, the production of social science, colonial medicine, environmental history, and related topics. This scholarship intersects with studies on religion and secularism, providing fresh understandings of the different practices of Islam.

Seminar organizers, Beth Baron and Sara Pursley, have invited a distinguished group of scholars to present current works-in-progress related to these themes. All seminar participants are asked to read the paper in advance of the meeting. The presenter will be given five to ten minutes to

summarize the main points or problems of the paper and contextualize it, after which a discussant will present a ten to fifteen minute comment to help initiate a full discussion.

Participants in the seminar includes a select, interdisciplinary group of junior and senior faculty and graduate students who are engaged or interested in studies on sex, science, and medicine in the Middle East and North Africa.

These lunch seminars meet throughout 2010-2011 on Fridays from 12-3 p.m. at The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue at 34th Street. [www.centerforthehumanitiesgc.org/seminars]

FALL 2010

Friday, September 10, 2010

Presenter: Marcia Inhorn

Paper Title: "Globalization and Gametes: Reproductive 'Tourism' and Islamic Bioethics in the High-tech Middle East"

Marcia C. Inhorn is the William K. Lanman Jr. Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs in the Department of Anthropology and The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University. Inhorn has conducted research on the social impact of infertility and assisted reproductive technologies in Egypt, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Arab America over the past 20 years. She is the author of three books on the subject: *Local Babies, Global Science: Gender, Religion, and In Vitro Fertilization in Egypt* (Routledge, 2003); *Infertility and Patriarchy: The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt* (U Pennsylvania Press, 1996); and *Quest for Conception: Gender, Infertility, and Egyptian Medical Traditions* (U Pennsylvania Press, 1994), which have won the AAA's Eileen Basker Prize and the Diana Forsythe Prize for outstanding feminist anthropological research in the areas of gender, health, science, technology, and biomedicine.

Friday, October 8, 2010

Presenter: Judith Surkis

Paper Title: "Civilization and the Civil Code: The scandal of "child marriage" in French Algeria"

Surkis is Associate professor of history, and of history and literature, at Harvard University. She is the author of *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870–1920* (Cornell University Press, 2006), which examines how masculine sexuality was central to the making of republican citizenship and social order. Her new book project, *Scandalous Subjects: Policing Indecency in France and French Algeria, 1830–1930*, explores how cultural debates about sexual scandals constituted and regulated the distinction between public and private in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century France.

Friday, November 5

Presenter: Alan Mikhail

Paper Title: "Human and Animal in Ottoman Egypt"

Alan Mikhail is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Yale University. He is a historian of the early modern Muslim world, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt whose research and teaching focus mostly on the nature of early modern imperial rule, peasant histories, environmental resource management, and science and medicine. His first book, *Empire by Nature: An Environmental History of Ottoman Egypt* (forthcoming from Cambridge University Press), examines Ottoman history through the lens of water usage and environmental resource management in the empire's most lucrative province of Egypt. He is currently beginning a project on the history of human-animal relations in Ottoman Egypt.

Spring 2011

February 25, 2011

Presenter: Nadia Abu El-Haj

Title: "Right of Return" from The Genealogical Science: Genetics, Jewish Origins, and the Politics of Epistemology

Discussant: Mikhal Dekel (English, CCNY)

Nadia Abu El-Haj is Associate Professor in the Departments of Anthropology at Barnard College and Columbia University, and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Columbia University. She is the author of *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, which won the Middle East Studies Association's Albert Hourani Annual Book Award in 2002. She is also author of the forthcoming book, *The Genealogical Science. Phylogenetics, The Origins of the Jews, and the Politics of Epistemology*. Her paper examines the link between a U.S. based political project to "recognize" Lost Tribes as fellow Jews, Israeli national-religious organizations that seek to "return" Lost Tribes to the Land of Israel, and genetic anthropologists who investigate whether or not particular claims to ancient Judaic descent are plausible, this paper explores a range of political projects borne on the terrain of a distinct and increasingly authoritative biological science.

April 1, 2011

Presenter: Afsaneh Najmabadi

Title: Genus of Sex: How Jins Became Sex in Contemporary Iran

Discussant: Carol Vance (Anthropology, Columbia)

Afsaneh Najmabadi is the Francis Lee Higginson Professor of History and of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. Her last book, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), received the 2005 Joan Kelly Memorial Prize from the

American Historical Association. With Kathryn Babayan, she co-edited *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Middle Eastern Monographs, 2008). She has recently completed *Sex-in-Change: Configurations of Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Iran*.

April 29, 2011

Presenter: Marwa Elshakry

Paper title: Darwin not Marx: Evolutionary Socialism and the Politics of Nature in Egypt, 1900-52

Discussant: Ervand Abrahamian (History, Baruch and GC, CUNY)

Marwa Elshakry is an Associate Professor in the History department of Columbia University. She specializes in the history of science, technology, and medicine in the modern Middle East. Her first book, entitled *Reading Darwin in the Middle East*, is forthcoming in 2011. Among her publications are “The Exegesis of Science in Twentieth Century Arabic Interpretations of the Qur’an,” in Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (eds), *Interpreting Nature and Scripture: History of a Dialogue* (2009), “Knowledge in Motion: The Cultural Politics of Modern Science Translations in Arabic,” *Isis* (December 2008), “Darwinian Conversions: Science and Translation in Egypt and the Levant,” in Anne-Marie Moulin (ed.), *Modernité et modernisation dans l’Empire ottoman du XIXe siècle à nos jours* (2008), and “The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism in Late Ottoman Beirut,” *Past and Present* (August 2007).