Brief Catalog Description: Performances, museums, and gallery trips will enable students to witness bold artistic works of the Middle East as seen through the lens of the art world of urban New York and Paris.

Course Description: This course examines methods for discussing, analyzing, and understanding urban theatre, dance and music as performed and experienced in several cities across the Middle East. Methods of analysis will be drawn from anthropology, psychology, ethnography and cultural theory: from performance theories of dance, music and theater; primary performance experiences; ethnographies; and from textual studies of devotional poetry. Through these varied disciplinary points of access and modes of analysis we will examine how performance negotiates the spaces between performers and audiences, among gendered, ethnic, and racial identities, between aesthetics and religious metaphysics, and across global cultures, in particular, the “east” and “west.” Through our own embodied encounters with Middle Eastern music, dance, and theater (both live and recorded performances), we will investigate how creative embodied enactments, either public or private, express belief, resist oppression, negotiate the past, create community, and collectively imagine the future.

Course Goals:
1) To experience and envision how bodily movement and dutiful commitment (the features of daily life) have fostered a cultural and historical relationship to feeling, craft, knowledge, devotion and wisdom
2) To articulate how flexibility and discipline blend together in the transmission and reception of Middle Eastern performance forms
3) To see how performative bodies form union with other bodies, non-bodies, higher bodies, and absent bodies
4) To explore whether religious understanding can ever be separated from artistic knowledge, and how aesthetics and religious metaphysics as conveyed through devotional works and ritual/dhikr exercises are often conjoined in many Middle Eastern contexts
5) To consider how Middle Eastern ideas have become permanent structures within aspects of Western cultures, and how Western categories of art, aesthetics and performance-making build our own capacity to understand ritualistic forms of performances in the Middle East

Course Assignments and Grading Criteria:
1) 15-page research paper (40%). Choose a Middle Eastern theatre, dance, or music performance that we have NOT discussed in class and interpret that performance through at least TWO social science theories and at least TWO humanities theories. You must utilize the works of Rumi, Cavafy, and/or Sheikh Muzaffer in your analysis to flesh out the links between aesthetic practice, sound, gesture, display, and religious metaphysics. The paper must touch upon some or all of the following questions: What role does the performance you have chosen play in creating social, cultural, political, or gendered identities? How do performanative bodies interact with other bodies to communicate meaning, devotion, wisdom, beauty, or knowledge in the example you have chosen?
Please note: Late papers will be downgraded one grade per day late. No email submissions. Papers should be proofread for all grammatical and typographic errors before submission. Multiple grammatical errors will lower the overall grade. More than three typographical or grammatical errors on a single page can be graded no higher than a C. Two errors on a single page can be graded no higher than a B.

2) Idea Book (40%): The Idea Book is a form of free writing and expression, that is, writing without grammatical concerns, or subject restrictions (as long as the writing is linked to the work of the class). One Entry per week @ 5 pages typed (25 pages in total). The Idea Book may be supplemented with artistic images, photographs, musical pieces, or recorded performances. The content is concerned with your individual impressions and interpretations of the required books, class discussions, performances, and the visits to cultural institutions. In your expressive contexts, consider how your reflections are connected to other aspects of your life, i.e., how they reflect your own bodily engagements with the world around you. For each of the five entries you submit, you MUST interpret ONE performance through ONE social science theory, ONE humanities theory, and the insights relayed through ONE devotional text (Rumi, Cavafy, Muzaffer).

3) Three individual oral presentations and two group presentations (20%)

Please Note: The oral presentations enable students to articulate ideas in both an informal and formal manner. These class presentations rely upon skills not always utilized in the formal writing process.

Discussion Group Etiquette: Students will be part of Discussion Groups with Presidents and Vice Presidents. If you have forgotten the homework, or are absent, and are not clear on the assignment, you can contact the President or Vice President, or any member of the Discussion Group, as well as anyone else in the class through the President and Vice President of each Discussion Group. In short, your first resource is your colleague sitting next to you. If your questions are not clarified through that means, then feel free to call me by leaving a message at my home number (212) 242-1664. Please be sure to pronounce your phone number on my answering machine since I do not have caller recognition.

Attendance Policies: No more than two absences or you risk failing the course. Tardiness of more than half an hour counts as a full absence. You are requested to drop the course after three absences unless you have the Dean’s written permission. Students are expected to attend all classes. If you expect to miss one or two classes please speak to the instructor in advance.
Readings
The following is a list of books separated by disciplinary categories. Students are free to choose any three from this comprehensive list. During the first week of classes students will be able to select the three texts that are closest to their interests.

Social Sciences Theory:

Humanities Theory:
- Shems Friedlander et al., *Rumi and the Whirling Dervishes* ISBN: 978-0930407599

Textual Studies: The Devotional Writings of Rumi, Sheikh Muzaffar Ozack, and Cavafy
- Jalal al-Din Rumi (choose one of the following translations of Rumi):

- C.P. Cavafy (choose one of the following translations of Cavafy):

Readings (continued)

Performing Arts: Theater, Dance, Music:

Theater:
Sa’dallah Wannous (trans. Marvin Carlson and Safi Mahfouz), Four Plays from Syria ISBN: 978-0984616084 (Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications)
Marvin Carlson (ed.) The Arab Oedipus: Four Plays ISBN: 978-0966615289 (Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications)

Dance:
Ines Aščerić-Todd et. al, Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia: Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society ISBN: 978-9004278219 (Brill)
Lynette Harris, The Belly Dance Reader ISBN: 978-0615735597 (Gilded Serpent)
Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young, Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism, and Harem Fantasy ISBN: 978-1568591834 (Mazda Publishers)

Music (Note: CD selections on Reserve):
Hazrat Inayat Khan, The Mysticism of Sound and Music ISBN: 978-1570622311 (Shambala)
Mohammad Reza Azadehfar, Rhythmic Structure in Iranian Music ISBN: 978-9646218925 (Tehran University of Arts)
Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, Hamdulillah: Fes Festival Of World Sacred Music, Vol. II ASIN: B00000DC6U (Sounds True)
Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, B’ismillah: Fes Festival Of World Sacred Music ASIN: B0000037AP (Sounds True Direct)
Khujit Bhamra et. al, Somali Party Southall ASIN: B008E2SGSY (Keda Records)
Oruc Guvenc Tumata, Ocean of Remembrance
Umm Kulthum, “Alf Layla wa Layla”
Performing Arts Events: Plays, dances, performances, museums, and gallery trips TBA

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: INTRODUCTION, PERFORMANCE CULTURE, AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

This week, we will examine a number of specified questions that may be clarified through interdisciplinary work: When is performance prioritized over devotion? Is there a linkage (or dissociation) between popular performance and daily living? Why is high culture often considered not to be a component of popular, lived culture? What constitutes the sociology of performance, and who determines that?

Readings: “The Anthropology of Performance” (Victor Turner, 1987); Saba Mahmood, The Politics of Piety (1-39); William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (Introduction); Film “Reel Bad Arab: How Hollywood Vilifies a People” (directed by Sut Jhally Media Education Foundation); Rumi, Cavafy, Muzaffer selections; Class Field trips: case studies (in the field, in the context of everyday life, in ritual)

Week 2: PHENOMENOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND EXPRESSION

Questions that follow, what is embodied philosophy and “movement” philosophy? How does phenomenology offer a system of perceiving movement commitment within distant societies? When is a body not expressive of higher devotion? What is the relationship of systems of performance to experiential knowledge? How can sensation of ritual be distinguished from performance sensation?

Readings: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception; Anmarie Schimmel, Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam; Excerpts from Jean-Luc Marion, Negative Certainties; Khaled Amine and Marvin Carlson, The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 131-216; Rumi, Cavafy, Muzaffer selections; personal choice Theatre selection

Week 3: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, PERFORMANCE, AND ETHICS

Translation between artistic forms. Translation between artistic and ritualized cultural performance. Translation between language and performance, ethics of performance training, social and individual nervousness and confidence in disciplines of performance.


Week 4: EMBODIMENT, DANCE, MEDITATION

Can we find a way to use Western forms of bodily movement practices to enter the landscape of bodily understanding in the Middle East? Why have Middle Eastern forms of bodily cultivation remained largely outside Western forms of knowledge and perception? What is central to Middle Eastern bodily disciplines that makes them less accessible to the American public? Distinctions between dance viewing, dance making, virtuosic dancing, and the dance of daily, lived movements. How can we distinguish between variegated practices of cultural meditation in North Africa, the Near East, the Middle East, the Gulf States, etc.?
Readings: “The Promise of Sonic Translation: Performing the Festive Sacred in Morocco” (Frank Korom); Excerpts from Shems Friedlander et. al, Rumi and the Whirling Dervishes; William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (Chapter on “Mysticism”; “Religion of Healthy-Mindedness); Deborah Kapchan: Traveling Spirit Masters: Gnawa Trance and Muslim in the Global Marketplace (Wesleyan, 2007), 1-81; Rumi, Cavafy, Muzaffer book selections; Music selection (personal choice); Dance selection (personal choice); Class visit to the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi dhikr (http://nurashkijerrahi.org/); Buck Rowe, Talking Dance

Week 5 GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE MIDDLE EAST
Why has the discourse on sexuality and gender been so difficult to understand within the Western social sphere? How can we sense Middle Eastern female subjectivity? How can elements within Western philosophical discourse help us to find the language of Middle Eastern gender and sexuality?

Course Organization: This course will be run as a seminar, it is expected that students will come prepared with the readings. Active participation is assumed and will be reflected in the grading.

Also note: Electronic devices (iPods, iPads, tablets, cell phones, Kindles, Nooks, texting, laptops, photography, recording devices, etc.) will not be allowed during the seminar.

Policy on Plagiarism: Please read carefully the Fordham policy regarding plagiarism, which can be found on the Fordham website (click on hyperlink) The Academic Integrity Statement follows:

As a student of Fordham University, I recognize that I am part of a community dedicated to the disciplined and rigorous pursuit of knowledge and communication of truth. I therefore commit myself to the University Code of Conduct and upholding the highest standards of academic integrity. Any work that I claim to be my own will be my own; I will give appropriate credit where credit is due; I will be fair and honest in all of my interactions with members of the Fordham community.

Disability Statement:
Please note the following information on disability accommodations:
If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you need to register with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS office at Rose Hill at (718) 817-0655 to arrange services. Staff at ODS can walk you through the process and arrange appointments at the appropriate campus. accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me after class or during office hours if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me.

Please note: This syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor as the semester unfolds. Any changes will be announced.

Further Resources for Research
Hélène Cixous, I Love to You: the Jouissance of Writing ISBN: 978-1861714190 (Crescent Moon Publishing)
Carl Ernst, Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam ISBN: 978-1590308844 (Shambala)
Alex Strick van Linschoten (ed.), Poems of the Taliban ISBN: 978-1849041119 (Hurst)


Françoise Gründ,  *Danses d'ailleurs: la mâle danse : cérémonies masculines en Arabie Saoudite*  (Danser no. 169)


