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 performative 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:

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:
Marvin Carlson (ed.), *The Arab Oedipus: Four Plays* ISBN: 978-0966615289 (Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications)

Dance:
Lynette Harris, *The Belly Dance Reader* ISBN: 978-0615735597 (Gilded Serpent)

Music (Note: CD selections on Reserve):
Mohammad Reza Azadehfar, Rhythmic Structure in Iranian Music ISBN: 978-9646218925 (Tehran University of Arts)
Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, *Bismillah: 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 (some cost involved)

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; Annmarie 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/](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)


Samar Habib, Female Homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and Representations ISBN: 978-0415956734 (Routledge)


W. M. Thackston, Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi ISBN: 978-1570625329 (Shambala)

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

Sofian Merabet, Queer Beirut ISBN: 978-0292760967 (University of Texas Press)


Extended Course Description:
While this course on occasion focuses on a few key cities, such as Casablanca, Cairo, Istanbul and Kabul, the class primarily provides an overview of multiple urban centers and artistic disciplines across the wide geographic expanse of the Middle East. Performances, productions, and some museum 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. Focus will be on sensing categories of embodiment, exchange, translation, flexibility, body cultivation, and healing.

We will quickly see that the notion of performance is not a consistent category across the cultures that we will study in the Middle East. Neither are theatre, dance, or music consistent artistic disciplines of sensation or experience when examining Middle Eastern cultures. Yet from the Western standpoint the disparate histories of performance, theatre, dance, and music will allow us to grasp experiences and empathy in a way that may make possible an understanding of Middle Eastern cultivated bodily presence as well as bodily impermanence.

Given the devotional commitment toward all aspects of Western art forms, I have found it surprising and even shocking how little information on performance culture in the Middle East is readily available, and how much of what is available is outdated or without necessary detail and context. So in order to find a phenomenology of experience of the cultural sensations within Middle Eastern performance cultures we will have much investigative work to undertake.

The principal focus of the course will allow us to be exposed to as many performances as possible. These performances, even those with minimal relationship to Middle Eastern cultures, will provide a framework for critiquing the information available in the scholarly works we will read.

We will not distinguish between daily life and performance life in cities of the Middle East. Rather we will see how bodily movement and dutiful commitment (the features of daily life) have fostered an historical relationship to feeling, craft, knowledge, and even wisdom. We will consider how many Middle Eastern ideas have become permanent structures within aspects of Western cultures, and how Western categories of art and performance-making build our capacity to understand ritualistic forms of artistic performances in the Middle East. The emphasis is to see how performative bodies form union with other bodies, and with non-bodies, higher bodies, and absent bodies. In addition, we look to see how flexibility and discipline blend together in the transmission and reception of Middle Eastern performance forms. Always nearby is the sense of deeper forms of cultivated healing and how the performative arts imbue distinct levels of resonance and forms of tranquility. We continue to ask whether religious understanding can ever be separated from artistic knowledge.

We will examine these disciplinary concerns by considering contemporary performance culture, as well as the history of performance activities in daily life. Calling upon a diverse range of scholarship from the traditions of many cultures, this course examines the ways in which forms of performance culture are presented to both popular and specified audiences. We consider how aesthetics and religious metaphysics are often conjoined in many Middle Eastern countries. We ponder the relationship of the philosophy of culture to live performance culture.
A few of the antinomies that we will consider throughout the semester are as follows:

- Rumi and Cavafy
- Western philosophic assimilation of Middle Eastern ideas and artistry, and Middle Eastern economic exchange of Western material goods and information
- Image and afterimage
- Ego and sociality
- Deduction and devotion
- Aesthetics and metaphysics
- Labor and cultivation
- Healing and transcendence
- Discrimination and sensation
- Accomplishment and lived experience

Description of the Fordham Department in Middle East Studies

Few parts of our world are more in the news or more vital to the international interests of the United States. Business, mass media, law firms, governmental and non-governmental bodies, philanthropic organizations, relief and aid agencies, human rights groups, graduate and professional schools are all eager to recruit individuals well-versed in the complexities and intricacies of Middle Eastern/North African culture, history, religion, civilization, economics and politics.

Fordham University is one of the few institutions of higher learning in the United States that offers an interdisciplinary, intercampus, undergraduate major in Middle Eastern studies. This program trains and equips students to step into challenging positions related to Middle East affairs. Students begin with language training in modern standard Arabic, which makes them distinctive, possessing a rare asset for life.

The Program

Includes the geographic areas of the Middle East and North Africa from ancient to modern times, from Morocco in the west to Afghanistan in the east, as well as from Turkey in the north to Somalia in the south. The Arabic-speaking world and Israel are the primary focus. We offer courses in history, anthropology, political science, art history, economics, religion, philosophy, and literature. All of these disciplinary areas are necessary to make the Middle East and North Africa come alive with meaning.
Requirements for the Idea Book:

Idea Book: The Idea Book is a form of free writing, that is, writing without grammatical concerns, or subject restrictions (as long as the writing is linked to the work of the class).

- 25 pages typed (14 font and double spaced) or handwritten
- Make sure to paginate each page
- Include Table of Contents as the first page with a list of the trips taken and the corresponding page numbers
- The content is concerned with your individual impressions and interpretations of the required books, class discussions, and the visits to cultural institutions.
- Also consider your reflections on how your academic work is connected to the rest of your life.
- Discuss how the artistic pedagogies and sensibilities you discern in this course relate to the development of your ideas and creativity.
- Writing is stream of consciousness thought process, associational thinking, and not structured, similar to a diary, a journal, or blogging.

Requirements for Research Paper (due March 25):

- 14-15 pages, double spaced, 14 font
- Refer to all the visits to cultural institutions.
- Thesis as part of the introduction.
- Restatement of thesis as part of the concluding paragraph.
- Integrate one quote each from all the books you have read.
- Integrate two scholarly quotes (from outside sources, not from the required books you have read in this course).
- Develop thoughtful transitions between the books and the visits to cultural institutions.
- Note: Quotes should be between one and four sentences long.
- Use MLA Format.
- Work Cited page required.
Oral Presentation Guidelines

-- You must use four quotes from the book you are presenting. All quotes must be four to five sentences in length.

-- You need to have two sentences after each quote which explain what you believe the passage means for the writer, and for your own thesis. These two sentences should give a wider context to the quote.

-- You need two additional quotes for your presentation (also four to five sentences in length) from scholarly sources which help to interpret and contextualize the book and the author, and that help to show the book in a wider, interdisciplinary context.

-- Include a one to two page synopsis of the book (and include a bio of the author linked to those unusual facts that are of particular interest to you).

-- Present a physically embodied and expressive movement sequence response that reveals an important element in the book and codifies the concerns of the book (one to two minutes).

-- You must bring typed copies for everyone in the class plus the instructor.

-- Students who do not have these handouts for all students by the start of the class will forfeit the opportunity to make a presentation on that day. The presentation will instead be given as a late presentation the following week and will receive a grade of at least one grade level lower when the presentation is given.

-- You must bring typed copies for everyone in the class and for the instructor. If students are absent the day of your presentation, please write their names on your extra copies and give them their copies at the subsequent class.
Recommended CDs:

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)

*Because the 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.