

COURSE PROSPECTUS & SYLLABUS

ARTH 0500

Beyond Mapping the Land: An Introduction to Landscapes of the Middle East

Course Description

- What is a landscape painting or photograph? How do landscapes, as visual interpretations of the outside world, reveal a broad spectrum of relationships between nature, humans, the divine, territorial possessions, and power struggles? In this course, while reading foundational texts in landscape studies, our focus is on painterly and photographic representations of landscape in the Middle East from the 19th through the late 20th century, spanning regions such as Lebanon, Egypt, and Iran. We explore how the interpretation of nature functions as a domain for symbolic expressions of control over land, resources, and humans across the Middle East. For example, we examine how Orientalist landscapes created fictive geographies that portrayed the East as inferior to the West, thereby legitimizing Western dominance. Additionally, we investigate how some Middle Eastern artists disavowed ideological implications of representing landscape, instead exploring nature through imaginative, sensory, and intuitive lenses. We visit museums to practice visually analyzing landscapes and we learn to integrate our visual analysis with insights into historical and geopolitical contexts to create a critical framework.
- ARTH 0500 is open to all first-year students regardless of their academic background.

Course Structure and Materials

- ARTH 0500 will be fully conducted in-person. The seminar will meet on **Mondays 1:45-4:45 pm**.
- Please note that some sessions will be held off-campus, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- Most sessions will involve group discussions on the assigned readings, with minimal lecturing from me. Please expect to read around 30 pages per week. The assigned readings will be available in electronic format. The only required book for this class is a short novel: Hidāyat, Ṣādiq. *The Blind Owl and Other Stories*. Translated by D. P Costello and Deborah Miller Mostaghel. London: Calder, 2017.
- Alongside scholarly texts (articles, book chapters, and primary historical documents such as artist manifestos in translation) we will also engage with some films in the seminar.

Course Assignments and Grading

- Evaluation will be as follows: The course requires your active class participation and one-paragraph response to the readings, submitted the night before each class on the discussion board. These weekly responses are informal and provide space for you to focus on your thoughts, helping you prepare for discussions (%22).
- The course requires a 2-page visual analysis paper (%16); we will develop visual analysis skills (the practice of closely looking at artworks) in class to prepare for this assignment.
- You will also complete a 7-8 page final research paper on a topic selected in consultation with me (%40). We will work on this paper in stages throughout the semester.
- A short 1-2 page museum visit writing assignment is also required (%10).
- You will present your final paper's research findings to the class during the final week (%12).

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at: athari@sas.upenn.edu

Week One: Wednesday, January 15: Introduction

- Please bring to class an image of a landscape you like. It could be a photo you took, the cover of a favorite music album, an image you found online, a scene from a movie you like, a travel destination, a painting that resonated with you, a family picture, a photograph you saw in a book, or any other picture of a landscape that captivates you. Bring just one landscape image to class.
- Basics of Visual Analysis—in class free writing practice.

Week Two: NO CLASS: Monday January 20, Martin Luther King Day

Week Three: Monday, January 27: What is a Landscape?

- Excerpts from: Clark, Kenneth. *Landscape into Art*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Tim Ingold. "The Temporality of Landscape." *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (October 1993).

Week Four: Monday February 3: Where is the Middle East?

- Adelson, Roger. "British and U.S. Use and Misuse of the Term "Middle East." In *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*. Edited by Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, 36-55. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Bonine, Michael E. "Of Maps and Regions: Where Is the Geographer's Middle East?" In *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*. Edited by Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, 56-99. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Week Five: Monday February 10: A Critical Framework

- Excerpts from: Mitchell, W. J. T. *Landscape and Power*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Excerpts from: Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books: A division of Random House, 2003.

Week Six: Monday February 17: Orientalist Landscapes

- Excerpts from: Beaulieu, Jill, and Mary Roberts. *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting Architecture Photography*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Excerpts from: Behdad, Ali, and Luke Gartlan. *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013.

Week Seven: Monday March 3: Museum Visit and Peer Writing Workshop.

Week Eight: NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK!

Week Nine: Monday March 17: Landscape in Mandate Lebanon and After

- Excerpts from Scheid Kirsten. *Fantasmic Objects: Art and Sociality from Lebanon 1920-1950*. Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Kaelen, Wilson-Goldie. "Abstracted: Land for Art in Lebanon." In Takesh Suheyla. *Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World 1950s-1980s*. New York New York Munich Germany: Grey Art Gallery New York University, 2020.

Visual Analysis Paper DUE

Week Ten: Monday March 24:

The Landscape of Revolution, and Free Landscapes of Fantasy in Egypt

- Raynolds, Nancy. "City of the High Dam: Aswan and the Promise of Postcolonialism in Egypt." *City & Society* 29, no. 1 (April 2017).
- Very short primary texts from: Lenssen, Anneka, Sarah A Rogers and Nada M Shabout. *Modern Art in the Arab World*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2018.
- Excerpts from Bardaouil, Sam. *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.

Week Eleven: Monday March 31: Remaking of Landscape as Occupied Territory

- Excerpts from: Weizman Eyal. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. Brooklyn NY, 2017.
- Film screening.

Week Twelve: Monday April 7:

Moving Away from the Territorial Markers: A Phenomenological Approach

- Excerpts from Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Sense and Non-Sense*. Translated by Hubert L Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- We revisit Wylie's article that we read in the third week: Wylie, John. *Landscape*. Abingdon Oxon: Routledge, 2007.
- Short Excerpts from: Bachelard, Gaston. *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983.

Museum Visit Report DUE

Week Thirteen: Monday April 14:

Reveries and Landscapes: Phenomenological Approach through Case Studies (Iran)

- Excerpts from: Bachelard, Gaston. *Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Dallas: Institute of Humanities and Culture, 2002.
- Hidāyat, Šādiq. *The Blind Owl and Other Stories*. Translated by D. P Costello and Deborah Miller Mostaghel. London: Calder, 2017.

Case study: Hossein Kazemi's paintings

Week Fourteen: Monday April 21: Continue: Reveries and Landscapes through Case Studies (Iran)

- Yektaï Manoucher and Karma (New York N.Y.). *Manoucher Yektaï*. New York: Karma, 2022.

Case study: Manoucher Yektaï paintings

Visual analysis: in-class individual free writing practice

Week Fifteen: Monday April 28:

Conclusion, Imaginative Mappings

Your Presentations

- Short text from the exhibition catalog: Hatoum, Mona, Edward W Said, Sheena Wagstaff and Tate Britain (Gallery). *Mona Hatoum: The Entire World as a Foreign Land*. London: Tate Gallery, 2000.
- You present your research to class

Week Sixteen:

Research Paper DUE