

**TENTATIVE SYLLABUS**  
**Spring 2023**  
**MLA Proseminar: Comparative Histories of Sexuality**  
**ENGL 5980.640**  
**COML 5980/GSWs 5980**  
Thursday 5:15-8:15pm at FBH 201  
Dr. Abdulhamit Arvas

**Description and Goals**

This seminar will be cruising in different locations and periods in search of connected histories of sexuality within a global context. Through an exploration of various queer historical methods and approaches (comparative, contrapuntal, intersectional, interdisciplinary, etc.) this seminar will mainly examine, in two parts, 1. the history of sexuality in the Islamic world, 2. representations of Islam and Muslims on the Renaissance English stage. The first part of the class will trace the histories of sexuality in the contexts of Arab-Islamic world, Ottoman Turkey, Iran, and North Africa to comparatively explore representations of sexuality in these regions. Once students become familiar with sexual histories in these contexts, we will then shift our focus to England to explore how English travelogues and playwrights represent or misrepresent Islamic sexualities. Reading early modern dramatic literature together with travelogues, ethnographic writings, chronicles, maps, and histories, the class will study the sexualization of “the other” to understand the influence of cross-cultural encounters and racialization in producing sexualities in England, and in Europe in general. While our historical focus will mostly be on early modernity, we will ultimately aim to address genealogies of contemporary crossings of sexuality revealing continuities, ruptures, dissonances, and interrelations between discourses and practices in the past and the present. Our investigation of comparative methods in queer and history of sexuality studies therefore will include comparisons not only between the so-called western and non-western contexts, but also between sexuality and other critical issues such as race, religion, empire, and class.

**Course Materials**

Sahar Amer, *Crossing Borders: Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures*;

Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and Beloved in the Early Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*;

Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab Islamic World*;

Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*;

Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs*;

Shakespeare, *Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*;

Marlowe, *Edward II*;

Vitkus, ed. *Turk Plays*.