THE ARABIAN NIGHTS (RS-633)

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Hartford Seminary, Summer course 2020

This course explores from several perspectives the world famous collection of Arabian tales developed within the Muslim Middle East since the ninth century and introduced into Europe in 1704 by the French Antoine Galland. The origins of the *Nights* corpus, the historical, cultural and interreligious contexts in which it evolved, its manuscripts and editions, the key figures of its passage to the West, its major English translations and their challenges, the literary, artistic and other socio-cultural developments it triggered, in Islam, in Europe and in the US, will be among the topics covered. Read in Arabic and/or English, a number of the core tales will be discussed. Great benefit will be drawn from the scholarship of Hartford Seminary’s former professor D. B. Macdonald (d. 1943) and from his *Nights* collection preserved in the Seminary’s library. While being accessible to the general public, the course should be of particular interest to students of Islamic studies (history, societies and, even, religion) as well as to professionals of pastoral care. Isn’t indeed the whole matter about healing a serial killer of women by telling him more and more amazing stories?

**Class will meet during 9 days:** from Tuesday May 26 to Friday June 5 2020, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. Each of these classes will have two parts: A) Lecture; B) Discussion of the required readings. The teacher can be contacted at ymichot@hartsem.edu.

**Course Objectives**

1) Students should be able to find their way around in the major reference works on, and versions of, the *Arabian Nights*.

2) In relation to selected stories read in the Arabic text and various English versions, students will be introduced to translation with its challenges: philological, socio-cultural, religious.
3) Students are expected to gain an acquaintance with the ways the Arabian Nights corpus developed, the historical and cultural contexts in which it evolved, the key figures of its passage to the West, the literary, artistic and other socio-cultural phenomena it crystallized into, in Islam and in the West.
4) They should be able to benefit from the methodological approach adopted in these classes and apply it for their own studies and/or research projects.

**Seminary Learning Outcomes**

To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which a religion’s communities exist (MARS 5). Competence to teach this area in religious communities and academia (PhD 3).

**Course Requirements**

1) It is somehow recommended (but not at all pre-required) that the student arrive at the first class already able to read Arabic. A general knowledge about the religion of Islam, as well as about the history and geography of Muslim peoples would also be useful. They should already have read some of the Arabian Nights tales, especially those included in the required readings. They should also be able to find their way around in the major reference tools for Islamic Studies (Encyclopaedia of Islam, Index Islamicus…).

2) Daily preparations and readings (THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL), class participation, final presentation and paper.

3) Attendance in class is required. If you know that you will be unable to attend a class please inform the professor in advance. Missing two classes will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 30%. Missing three or more classes will result in automatic failure of the course.

4) PhD students are moreover expected to read a book concerning the Nights chosen in consultation with the professor from the general references listed in this syllabus and to use it in their final paper.

**The final grade will be based upon the following:**

1) Active class participation (50%).

2) The presentations during Class IX (June 5). Each student, or group of students, will be responsible for the oral presentation and discussion of a topic related to the Arabian Nights. This oral presentation (30%) will be based on an original written research paper (8 pages maximum, 20%. For PhD students, 15 pages), to be submitted to the teacher, and circulated on paper in the class, before the presentation. The topic should be chosen by the end of class IV in consultation with the professor.

* All written work is to conform to the seminary writing guidelines, which can be found online at: https://www.hartsem.edu/wp-content/uploads/Guidelines-for-Writing-A-Research-Paper2.pdf. It must use the transliteration system given in class I. It must be run through a grammar and spell-check program or read by the writing tutor if necessary before submission. The Hartford Seminary Grading Guidelines will be the standard of evaluation for work in the course.

**IMPORTANT:** Plagiarism, the failure to give proper credit for the words and ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, is strictly prohibited. All written material submitted by students must be their own original work; where the words and ideas of others are used they must be acknowledged. Credit will not be given for work containing plagiarism, and plagiarism will lead to failure of the course.

**General references**

*Encyclopaedia of Islam (EI2), Index Islamicus…*

ELISSEEFF, Nikita, Thèmes et motifs des Mille et Une Nuits. Essai de classification (Beirut: Institut français de Damas, 1949), 244 p.

Web ressources
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Thousand_and_One_Nights
http://expositions.bnf.fr/1001nuits/arret/papl.htm
Class I. Tuesday May 26, 2020. **INTRODUCTION**


**General references:**


**Reading assignments:**


Class II. Wednesday May 27, 2020. *THE ARABIC TEXTS*

Topics: the oldest MS, the literary Arabic witnesses, the Arabic editions, including Mahdi

General references:


Reading assignments:


Class III. Thursday May 28, 2020. **The 19th and 20th Centuries English Translations**

Topics: Lane, Payne, Burton, Dawood, Haddawy, Lyons

General references:


Web resources

http://burtoniana.org/biography/index.html

https://archive.org/details/arabianights01paynooft/page/n6/mode/2up

Reading assignments:
OR
OR
OR
OR

Class IV. Friday May 29, 2020. THE MARDRUS PHENOMENON

Topics: Mardrus

General references:
YOUNES, Mona Saleh, La traduction française des Mille et une nuits par le Dr. J.C. Mardrus d’après son dossier de presse : 1898-1904, in Merveilles & contes, vol. 4/1 (May 1990), p. 5-17.

Reading assignments:

Class V. Monday June 1, 2020. TWO TALES

Topics: A. The Tale of the Trader and the Jinni – reading the tales in Arabic. Link with Ibn Hanbal.
B. The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad – reading excerpts of the story in Arabic and comparing English versions

General references:


Garcin, Jean-Claude, Le conte du porteur et des trois dames de Bagdad, in Pour une lecture historique des Mille et Une Nuits…, p. 62-70.


Reading assignments:


OR

a2. Gaul, Anny, Shahrazad’s pharmacy: women’s bodies of knowledge in “The Tale of the Porter and the Three Ladies”, in Middle Eastern Literatures, 19/2, p. 185-205.


Class VI. Tuesday June 2, 2020. The Nights for Children?

Topics: Ali Baba, Aladdin, Sindbad

General references:


VILLIERS, Alan, Sons of Sindbad. An Account of Sailing with the Arabs in their Dhowis, in the Red Sea, around the Coasts of Arabia, and to Zanzibar and Tanganyika: Pearlimg in the Persian Gulf: and the Life of the Shipmasters, the Mariners and Merchants of Kuwait. Illustrated with Photographs and Charts by the author (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940), xv & 429 p.


Reading assignments:

Class VII. Wednesday June 3, 2020. THE NIGHTS AND ISLAM

Topics: a prism to know Muslims, story-tellers, illustrations in Mss and editions, musique, fetwas, Mernissi

General references:
- BONEBAKKER, Sieger A., Nihil obstat in storytelling?, in Richard G. HOVANNISIAN & Georges SABAGH (eds), The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic literature and society…. p. 56-77.
- MAHFEZ, Najib, Layālī al-fal layla (Cairo, Maktatab Miṣr, 1979), 271 p.
Reading assignments:

Class VIII. Thursday June 4, 2020. *The Nights, East & West*

Topics: Turqueries & Belle époque, illustrated editions & comics, musique, films

General references:


Web ressources
https://1001nightsatbu.wordpress.com/

Reading assignments:


Class IX. Friday June 5, 2020. *Students’ Presentations*