

Race in the Middle East and North Africa
HIST 72500 / ANTH 73900

Professors Beth Baron (bbaron@ccny.cuny.edu)
Mandana Limbert (mlimbert@qc.cuny.edu)
Kristina Richardson (krichardson@qc.cuny.edu)

Room 3309
Thursdays 2:00pm – 4:00pm

DESCRIPTION: This seminar explores how notions of race (*jins* or *'unsur* and similar terms in Turkish, Persian, and other Middle Eastern languages) have been examined, experienced, and deployed in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In particular, and in dialogue with scholarship on the United States, the Americas, and the Atlantic, the course addresses practices, policies, and beliefs of hierarchy and power, “blood,” biology, and marriage, appearance and regulation, exclusion and inclusion. Rather than presuming either the stability of the notion of “race” or its “irrelevance” (as it is often argued) for the MENA region, this seminar highlights the specific, differing, and changing ways that race has been understood, used, and reproduced in the Middle East and North Africa.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS: A seminar is a collaborative endeavor. We expect all students to contribute actively to our conversations and to foster an atmosphere of open and constructive debate and discussion. We recognize that some students may already be familiar with some of these works, while others will be encountering them for the first time. A willingness to grapple with ideas openly in a collaborative spirit is more highly valued than a virtuosic performance of mastery. Critical perspectives are welcome, but we ask you to try to meet each piece on its own terms. This means approaching the readings with curiosity and a genuine effort to understand the stakes, concerns, and influences that shaped them at the time of their writing.

RESPONSE COMMENTARIES: Over the course of the semester each student will submit 10 brief commentaries on the Discussion forum of Blackboard. Commentaries are short informal responses to the readings assigned for that week intended to facilitate class discussions. Please use them for initial, exploratory reflections on the readings: you may raise questions, draw connections between readings, or point out a passage, quote, or argument that you find productive, significant, or problematic. While brief, these statements should be well written. They will form an important part of your grade, and should help you as well as develop your own thinking and preparation for your papers. Comments should be 1 page long and should be posted on Blackboard no later than 12 a.m. the night before class.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER: This paper will be an opportunity to reflect on how the readings for class are incorporated into your own research projects. Deadlines: Abstract of 150 words maximum (Sept.30); Annotated bibliography (Oct.21); Outline (Nov.4); First draft (Nov. 18); and Final paper, circa 15-20 pages (Dec.16).

August 26. Opening reading.

Ali, Idris. 1999 [1993] *Dongola*, trans. Peter Theroux, Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.

[Note: A new translation is imminent: Ali, Idris. 2021 [1993] *Dongola*, trans. Elliott Colla, Cairo: AUC Press.]

Hicks, Dan. 2020. "[A Theory of Taking](#)" In *The Brutish Museums*, London: Pluto Press, pp. 18-24.

Sept 2. Coming to Terms

Wade, Peter. 2010. "[The Meaning of 'Race' and 'Ethnicity'](#)" In *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, New York: Pluto Press, pp. 4-23.

Glassman, Jonathon. 2019. "[Ethnicity and Race in African Thought](#)" In *A Companion to African History*, edited by William Worger, Charles Ambler, and Nwando Achebe, New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, pp.

Hall, Stuart. 2019 [2000]. "[The Multicultural Question](#)," *Essential Essays, Volume 2: Identity and Diasporas*, Durham: Duke University Press, 95-133.

Recommended:

Banton, Michael. 1987. *Racial Theories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2009. "[Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism](#)" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35(1): 21-42.

Fields, Karen and Barbara Fields. 2012. *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, New York: Verso Books.

Roberts, Dorothy. 2011. *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: The New Press.

Stocking, George. 1968. *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Visweswaran, Kamala. 1988. "[Race and the Culture of Anthropology](#)," *American Anthropologist*, 100(1): 70-83.

Sept 9. Colonialism

Wekker, Gloria. 2016. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Stoler, Ann. 2016. "Racial Regimes of Truth" In *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Time*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 237-265.

Stoler, Ann. 1992. "[Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia](#)," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(3): 514-551.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2020. "Introduction" In *Neither Settler nor Native: the making and unmaking of permanent minorities*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Recommended:

Glassman, Jonathan. 2011. *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Cooper, Frederick. 1997. *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sept 16 (GC closed)

Sept 23. Race, Contracts, and Legal Kinship

Ali, Kecia. 2010. *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Hardy, Paul-A. 2002. “[Medieval Muslim Philosophers on Race](#)” In *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, Ed. Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. pp. 38-62.

Sept 30. Narrating Enslavement

Troutt Powell, Eve M. 2012. *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Recommended:

Baron, Beth. 2012. “Liberated Bodies and Saved Souls: Freed African Slave Girls and Missionaries in Egypt,” in *African Communities in Asia and the Mediterranean: Identities between Integration and Conflict*, ed. Ehud R. Toledano. Berlin: Max Plank Institute and Africa World Press, 215-35. [available on Blackboard]
Toledano, Ehud. 2007. *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Oct 7. Zayla (Somaliland)

Loiseau, Julien. 2019. “[Abyssinia at al-Azhar: Muslim Students from the Horn of Africa in Late Medieval Cairo](#)” *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1: 61-84.
Szombathy, Zoltán. 2013. “Premodern Ethnography: A Cushitic Custom Described and Explained by Mediaeval Arab Observers” *The Arabist. Budapest Studies in Arabic*, vol. 32: 35-60. [available on Blackboard]
Moorthy Kloss, Magdalena. 2021. “Eunuchs at the Service of Yemen’s Rasūlid Dynasty (626-858/1229-1454)” *Der Islam*, vol. 98, no. 1: 6-26. [available on Blackboard]

Oct 14. Plantation Slavery and Racial Capitalism

Reilly, Benjamin. 2015. *Slavery, Agriculture, and Malaria in the Arabian Peninsula*, Athens: Ohio University Press.
Robinson, Cedric and Robin D. G. Kelley. 2000. “Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalism Development” In *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 9-28.

Recommended:

Forand, Paul. 1971. “[The Status of the Land and Inhabitants of the Sawad during the First Two Centuries of Islām](#)” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 14, no. 1: 25-37.

Oct 21. Indian Ocean slave trade

Hopper, Matthew S. 2015. *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Oct 28. TBD.

Nov 4. Nationalism and Race in Morocco. Moyagaye Leverett

Hamel, Chouki El. *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Chapters 2, 3, 4.

Goodman, R. David. “[Expediency, Ambivalence, and Inaction: The French Protectorate and Domestic Slavery in Morocco, 1912-1956.](#)” *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 1 (2013): 101–31.

Hoffman, Katherine E. “[Purity and Contamination: Language Ideologies in French Colonial Native Policy in Morocco.](#)” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (2008): 724–52.

Recommended:

Hoffman, Katherine E. “The Local Dimensions of Transnational Berberism: Racial Politics, Land Rights, and Cultural Activism in Southeastern Morocco.” In *Berbers and Others: Shifting Parameters of Ethnicity in the Contemporary Maghrib*, edited by Susan Gilson Miller and Katherine E. Hoffman. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Schroeter, Daniel J. “In Search of Jewish Farmers: Jews, Agriculture, and the Land in Rural Morocco.” In *The Divergence of Judaism and Islam: Interdependence, Modernity, and Political Turmoil*, 143–59. University Press of Florida, 2011.

Burke III, Edmund. “[The Creation of the Moroccan Colonial Archive, 1880–1930.](#)” *History and Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 1–9.

Jacques-Meunié, D. “Hiérarchie Sociale au Maroc Présaharien.” *Hespéris* 45, no. 3–4 (1958): 239–70.

Nov 11. Borderlands and Erasures: Nubia

Mahmoud Hussein, Naglaa F. 2014. “Identity Politics of Color, Nation, and Land in the Literature of Nubian Egyptians” In *Who Defines Me: Negotiating Identity in Language and Literature*, ed. Eid Mohamed and Yasser Fouad, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. [available on Blackboard]

Janmyr, Maja. 2016. “[Nubians in Contemporary Egypt: Mobilizing Return to Ancestral Lands.](#)” *Middle East Critique*, 25(2): 127-146.

Smith, Elizabeth. 2006. “Place, Class, and Race in the Barabra Café: Nubians in Egyptian Media,” In *Cairo Cosmopolitans: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East*, ed. Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, Cairo: American University Press, pp. 399-413.

Nov 18. Science, Genes, Nations

Burton, Elise. 2021. *Genetic Crossroads: The Middle East and the Science of Human Heredity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

The book conversation is on MEMEAC’s YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HwWw6vxDpA>

Recommended:

Abu El-Haj, Nadia. 2007. "[The Genetic Reinscription of Race](#)" *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 283-300.

Nelson, Alondra. 2013. "[DNA Ethnicity as Black Social Action?](#)" *Cultural Anthropology*, 28(3): 527-536.

Nov 25. (GC closed)

Dec 2. Oil and the world of company towns

Vitalis, Robert. 2007. [America's Kingdom: mythmaking on the Saudi oil frontier](#), Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dec 9. Concluding Conversation