

THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

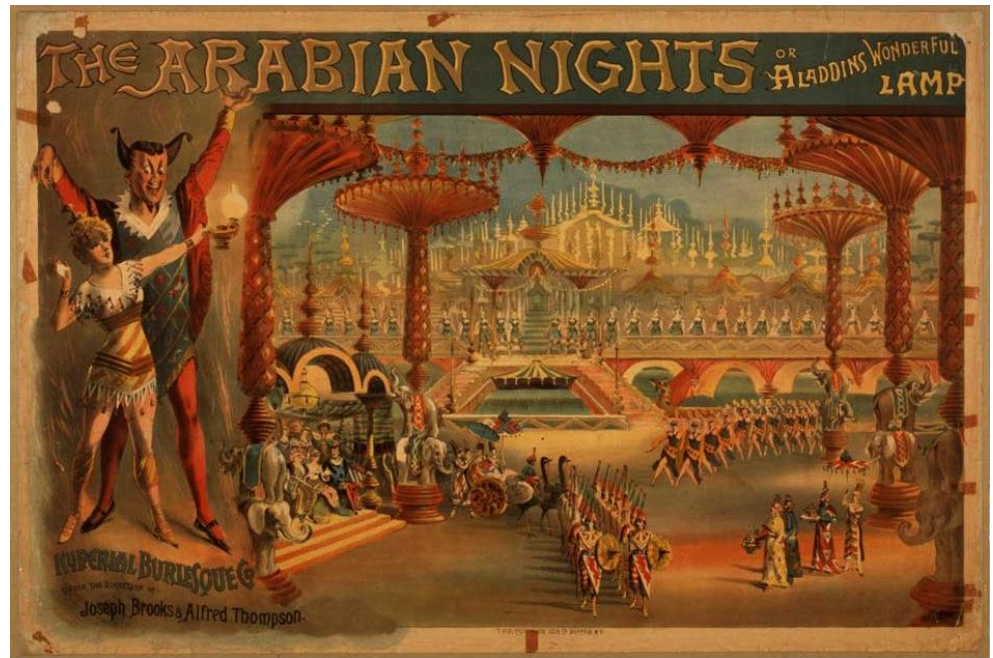
Comparative Literature 0510K | Spring 2014 | Tue/Thu 2:30-3:50

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Course Description:

This course explores the origins, performance, reception, adaptation, and translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, one of the most beloved and influential story collections in world literature. We will spend the semester in the company of genies, princes, liars, slaves, mass murderers, orientalist, and Walt Disney, and will consider the *Nights* in the context of its various literary, artistic, and cinematic afterlives.

In addition to exploring the magical universe of Scheherazade, Sindbad, and Ali Baba, the course will also delve into the very real history of this mesmerizing text and its eccentric interpreters, translators, and readers. Where did it come from? Who “wrote” it? What is the source of its enchantment, after so many centuries? And what does it reveal about the Islamic world and Western engagement therewith?

Assigned texts:

The following books are on sale at the Brown Bookstore. All other readings will be made available on the course website. Students who have reading knowledge of Arabic are welcome to read texts in the Mahdy edition of the text, which is on reserve at Rockefeller Library.

1. Husain Haddawy (translator), *The Arabian Nights* (Norton Critical Editions) (Norton, 2009).
2. Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (Tauris, 2004).
3. Muhsin Mahdi (editor) and Husain Haddawy (translator), *Sindbad: And Other Stories from the Arabian Nights* (Norton, 2008).
4. Jason Grote, *1001* (Samuel French).
5. Elias Khoury, *The Journey of Little Gandhi* (Picador).

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and participation: 20% – While this is not a seminar, consistent and engaged participation is essential in this class. You are invited to read each session's assigned readings carefully and critically, and to come to class with something to say about them. Attendance is taken at every session; you are permitted two absences.

2. Response papers (one-page): 20% – Most weeks, you will be asked to write a brief response paper reflecting on the previous week's readings. The papers must be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the days they are due. Papers that are late due to printing mishaps, hungry dogs, or messy roommates will not be accepted.

3. Midterm exam: 30% – To be held in class, the exam will consist of IDs of key figures and concepts from the first half of the course, along with an essay or two.

4. Final paper (3,000 words): 30% – You will have a choice of several prompts for your final paper (announced on April 1). If you would prefer to come up with your own topic, you will need to discuss it with me in advance.

5. Academic honesty: Students are expected to abide by the tenets of Brown University's Academic Code. If you have any questions about issues of citation, collaboration, or the use of source materials, please do not hesitate to consult me or a teaching assistant.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require some modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588, or by email at SEAS@brown.edu.

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Course Schedule

WEEK 1: THE *NIGHTS* AS WORLD LITERATURE

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| Thu. Jan. 23 | • Introduction to the course |
| Tue. Jan. 28 | • <i>Arabian Nights</i> , "King Shahrayar & Shahrazad," "The Ox & the Donkey," "The Merchant & His Wife," "The Merchant & the Demon," "The First Old Man's Tale," "The Second Old Man's Tale" (5-30) |
| Thu. Jan. 30 | • <i>Arabian Nights</i> , "The Fisherman & the Demon," "King Hunan & the Sage Duban," "The Husband & the Parrot," "The King's Son & the She-Ghoul" (30-56)
• Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "A Thousand and One Nights," in <i>Arabian Nights</i> , 381-86.
• <i>No response paper due this week</i> |

WEEK 2: ORIGINS & HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION

- Tue. Feb. 4
- *Arabian Nights*, “The Enchanted King” (56-66)
 - Irwin, *Companion*, “The Book Without Authors” (42-62)
 - “Early Witnesses,” in *Arabian Nights* (353-55)
- Thu. Feb. 6
- *Arabian Nights*, “The Porter & the Three Ladies (66-85)
 - Josef Horowitz, “The Origins of *The Arabian Nights*,” in *Arabian Nights* (386-409)
 - *Response paper due*

WEEK 3: DESIRE & SEXUALITY

- Tue. Feb. 11
- *Arabian Nights*, “The First Dervish’s Tale,” “The Second Dervish’s Tale,” “The Envious & the Envied” (85-113)
 - Irwin, *Companion*, “Sexual Fictions” (159-77)
- Thu. Feb. 13
- *Arabian Nights*, “The Third Dervish’s Tale,” “The First Lady, the Mistress of the House,” “The Second Lady, the Flogged One” (113-48)
 - *Response paper due*

WEEK 4: MARVELS & MAGIC

- Tue. Feb. 18
- *Arabian Nights*, “The Two Viziers, Nur al-Din Ali al-Misri and Badr al-Din Hasan al-Bastri” (155-202)
- Thu. Feb. 20
- Irwin, *Companion*, “The Universe of Marvels” (178-213)
 - Film clips: Marvels, magic, and storytelling in popular culture
 - *Response paper due*

WEEK 5: CRIME & PUNISHMENT

- Tue. Feb. 25
- *Arabian Nights*, “The Hunchback’s Tale,” “The Christian Broker’s Tale,” “The Steward’s Tale” (203-34)
- Thu. Feb. 27
- FILM: *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924)
 - Irwin, *Companion*, “Low Life” (140-158)
 - *Response paper due*

WEEKS 6 – 8: SEAS & SELVES

- Tue. Mar. 4
- *Arabian Nights*, “Jullanar of the Sea,” (part 1, 260-280)
 - Hans Christian Andersen, “The Little Mermaid”
- Thu. Mar. 6
- *Arabian Nights*, “Jullanar of the Sea,” (part 2, 280-302)
 - TBD on Thetis, mother of Achilles
- Tue. Mar. 11
- *Arabian Nights*, “Sindbad the Sailor” (part 1, 303-323)

- Sindbad in illustration, comic books, graphic novels
- Thu. Mar. 13
- *Arabian Nights*, “Sindbad the Sailor” (part 2, 323-349)
 - Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (selections)
 - *Response paper due*
- Tue. Mar. 18
- FILM: *The Seventh Voyage of Sindbad* or *Sinbad the Sailor* (Fairbanks)
- Thu. Mar. 20
- **Midterm exam**
- Mar. 22 – 30
- *Spring break*

WEEKS 9 – 10: EUROPE’S DISCOVERY OF THE *NIGHTS*

- Tue. Apr. 1
- “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” (*Sindbad and Other Stories*, 63-95)
 - Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “A Thousand and One Nights,” in *Arabian Nights*, 381-86.
 - Final paper prompts announced
- Thu. Apr. 3
- Jorge Luis Borges, “The Translators of the *1,001 Nights*,” in *Arabian Nights* (409-26)
 - Selections from Burton and Lane’s translations of the *Nights*
- Tue. Apr. 8
- “Ala’ al-Din and the Magic Lamp” (*Sindbad and Other Stories*, 97-147)
 - Clips from Disney’s *Aladdin*
- Thu. Apr. 10
- “Ala’ al-Din and the Magic Lamp” (*Sindbad and Other Stories*, 147-97)
 - Kanye & Jay-Z, “Otis”
 - *Response paper due*

WEEKS 11 – 12: MODERN ENGAGEMENTS & AFTERLIVES

- Tue. Apr. 15
- Elias Khoury, *The Journey of Little Gandhi*
- Thu. Apr. 17
- *Arabian Nights*, “The Story of the Three Apples” (148-54)
 - Assia Djebar, “The Woman in Pieces,” from *The Tongue’s Blood Does Not Run Dry*
 - *Response paper due*
- Tue. Apr. 22
- Jason Grote, *1001*
- Thu. Apr. 24
- Poe, “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade,” in *Arabian Nights*, 356-72.
 - Clips from Rimsky-Korsakov, *Scheherazade*; Albert Ketèlbey, *In a Persian Market*
- Thu. May 8
- **Final paper due**