

A CLASSICAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION: READINGS IN ARABIC LITERATURE

Comparative Literature 1310E | Fall 2014 | Wed 3:00-5:30 | Sayles Hall 012 | Brown University

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Office hours: Mondays 3-5
& by appointment

Course Description:

This seminar introduces students to the essential texts of a classical education in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world. What works of poetry, literary criticism, belletristic prose, biography, geography, history, and other disciplines were considered staples of a well-rounded education in medieval Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, or Fez?

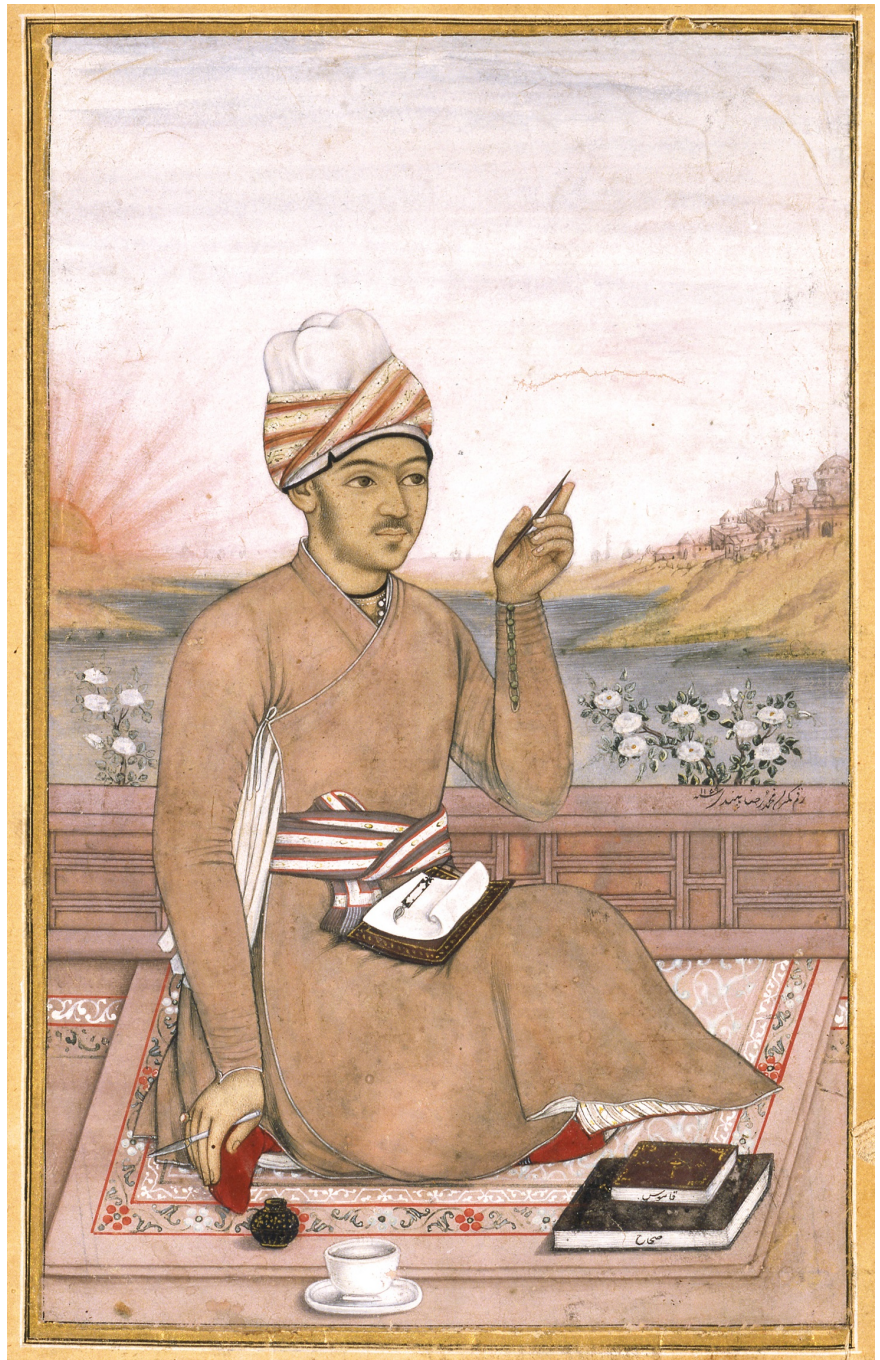
Emphasis will be placed on close and patient readings of primary sources. At least two years of Arabic required.

Assigned Texts:

Please purchase a copy of J.G. Hava's *Arabic-English Dictionary* and Robert Irwin's *Night, Horses, and the Desert* via Amazon.com or a local bookstore. All other texts will be made available on the course website.

Other Resources:

The following texts are on reserve at Rockefeller Library. J.G. Hava, *Arabic-English Dictionary*; Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*; William Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*; *The Qur'an* (Abdel Haleem trans.); Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*; Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage* (Cambridge Univ. Press); *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*; J. Meisami & P. Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*.



Muhammad Riza-i Hindi, "A Scribe on a Terrace," Iran, 1755. (18.8 x 11.8 cm, The David Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark)

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and participation: 40% – Consistent and engaged participation is essential in this class. You are invited to read each session’s assigned texts carefully and critically, and to come to class prepared to discuss them. As this seminar meets only once per week, only one unexcused absence is permitted. All other absences may be excused for medical or religious reasons and must be made up with a written assignment within one week.

2. Class presentation: 10% – Every week, there will be one student presentation, providing background on the text we are reading. The presentations should be about ten minutes long, and they may engage with the text in a comparative, creative, or conceptual manner. Please speak to me about your plans prior to the presentation.

3. Midterm exam: 20% – To be taken home, the exam will consist of a passage for you to translate, annotate, and write a short commentary upon. Further details will be given in class.

5. Final paper: 30% – The final paper (10-12 pages) is broken down into two different components: abstract and bibliography (5%), and a final draft (25%).

6. 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.

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.

Course Schedule

Wed. Sept. 3	Course introduction
Wed. Sept. 10	A Well-Rounded Education <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ibn Qutayba, <i>Uyun al-akhbar</i>, selections▪ Ibn al-Muqaffa’, on the education of the scribe
Wed. Sept. 17	The Qur’an and its Readers <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Qur’an, selections.▪ al-Zamakhshari, <i>al-Kashshaf</i>, selections▪ Irwin, <i>Night, Horses, and the Desert</i>, “The Qur’an” (30-41)▪ Michael Cook, <i>The Koran</i>, 127-45
Wed. Sept. 24	The Jahili Poets <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The <i>Mu’allaqat</i>, selections▪ Irwin, <i>Night, Horses, and the Desert</i>, “Pagan Poets” (1-29)
Wed. Oct. 1	Chivalric Romance and Love Poetry <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Romance of ‘Antara▪ Irwin, <i>Night, Horses, and the Desert</i>, “Court Culture” (42-67)

Wed. Oct. 8	Prophetic Biographies and Tradition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On the lives of the prophets, selections ▪ <i>Arba'in al-Nawawi</i>, selections ▪ Secondary source readings TBD
Wed. Oct. 15	Belletristic Prose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ al-Jahiz, In Praise of Wine ▪ Irwin, <i>Night, Horses, and the Desert</i>, 68-101.
Wed. Oct. 22	Wonders of the Earth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ al-Nuwayri, <i>Nihayat al-arab</i>, selections from Book III ▪ <i>Midterm exam due</i>
Wed. Oct. 29	Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ibn Sina, <i>The Canon of Medicine</i>, selections ▪ Secondary source reading TBD
Wed. Nov. 5	Lexicography and Literary Criticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ibn Jinni on <i>al-ishtiqaq al-akbar</i> ▪ John Haywood, <i>The Arabic Lexicographical Tradition</i>, selections
Wed. Nov. 12	Philosophy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi and Miskawayh, <i>al-Hawamil wa'l-shawamil</i> ▪ Secondary reading TBD.
Wed. Nov. 19	Early Islamic History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ al-Tabari, selections ▪ <i>Abstracts and bibliographies due</i>
Wed. Dec. 3	Proverbs, Epigrams, and Aphorisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ al-Raghib al-Isfahani, <i>Muhadarat al-udaba'</i>, selections
Wed. Dec. 18	Final paper due