This interdisciplinary course focuses on the representation of women in modern-day literary, scholarly, and visual “texts,” produced by both men and women in Muslim-majority countries and their diasporas in the West. It covers a wide range of geographical regions and treats a variety of literary texts (novels, short stories, poetry), as well as other art forms (painting, photography, film). Thematically, its main goals are two: a/ To explore issues of gender, as reflected in the selected sources, and to discuss the factors which affect the perception of gender roles and the representation of women in a given cultural setting; b/ To acquaint students with authors of international renown, whose work reflects important cultural, ideological, and aesthetic trends in modern Muslim societies and communities.

Students are invited to consider the extent to which religion shapes the creative choices of the authors. Is the dominant mode of women’s representation typified by Islamic values and ideals? Or is there an array of associations and images of women that stem out of different cultural, political, and aesthetic sensibilities? How is the female body, behavior, sexuality, and identity at large constructed in reference to literary, cultural, and societal norms? What is the relationship between text and context? How do historical circumstances, “the spirit of the times”, and the priorities of the moment affect the representation of women, and the issues which authors choose to highlight? In addressing these topics, the course explores--and in part problematizes--the term "Islamic literatures/cultures" when used as a common denominator for a host of creative activities that transcend purely religion-oriented behavior and experience. It also tests the conventional polarities between tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, East and West.

All course materials are read in English/ translation. As part of their course work, students are welcome to introduce other relevant texts and stories, especially oral narratives that they may be familiar with, but which do not exist in English translation.

Course Director: Marta Simidchieva
E-mail: msimid@yorku.ca
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 13:00-15:00, Founders, Room 237
COURSE ASSESSMENT:

10% – Review of a scholarly article: due by November 9, 2016. You can choose to review any scholarly article from the Required and Recommended readings of the First term, with the exception of the ones for the Panel Discussion 1 on Islamic Feminism

20% – Research Project (ca. 10-12 pages) OR Patchwork paper

   a) 5% – RESEARCH PROJECT OUTLINE AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OR INTRODUCTORY REFLECTION AND ARTICLE ANNOTATIONS: due by January 25, 2017 (The assignment can be submitted and evaluated before the deadline.)

   b) 15% – RESEARCH ESSAY: due by March 22, 2017 (The project can be submitted earlier, but all marks will be released at the end of the academic year) OR PATCHWORK PAPER due in installments, but marked at the end of the year.

40% – Two Term Tests held in class

   a) TT1: November 30, 2016 (worth 20%)

   b) TT2: April 5, 2017 (worth 20%)

16% – 2 Panel Discussions (Group project): (8% each: 3% group mark + 5% individual assessment):

   a) October. 12, 2016 – “Feminist scholarship on Islamism and gender: Can we speak of Islamic feminism?”

   B) January 18, 2017—Discussion of Prof. Kabita Chakraborty’s book Young Muslim Women in India, pub. 2015

14% – Participation

= 100% of FINAL GRADE

**REQUIRED READING:

**Course Kit


**Shahrnush Parsipur (b. 1946-) Women Without Men (novel, pub.1989, Tehran)--108 pp. (available also as an E-book through Scott Library, but only to be read online, by one person at a time)

**Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006; Nobel prize for literature 1988), The Day the Leader Was Killed (pub. 1983, Cairo)—102 pp.

**Tayeb Salih (1929-2009), Season of Migration to the North (novel, pub. 1966, Beirut)-- 169 pp.

**Marjane Satrapi (b. 1969--), Persepolis (graphic novel, pub. in installments 2000—2004, Paris; obtain the complete or the boxed-set version)—314 pp.

NOTE SYMBOLS:

** - REQUIRED

* - RECOMMENDED
**Secondary E-Resources (E):**


**Articles listed on the course website.**

**Films viewed and discussed in class sessions:**

*RECOMMENDED READINGS*: *Books on course reserve; *E-resources (E), to be used as starting point in research and for enhancing discussions. The recommended readings are listed on the Moodle website, under each thematic section.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This course is cross-listed by the undergraduate PROGRAM OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES, housed in the Division of Social Sciences at the Faculty of Arts. To have the course count towards their major, students from this program are advised to select their assignments and research-paper topics from the thematic units pertaining to South Asia and its diaspora.

**FALL TERM**

1. **September 14: Introduction: Islamic societies today: Spotlight on women:**

   **REQUIRED VIEWING (in class):**
   **Film: “Border Café” (Iran, 2005; dir. Kambuzia Partovi)**

2. **September 21: The historical context. The faith, the lands, and the peoples. Issues of women’s history and traditional perceptions of gender roles.**

   **REQUIRED READINGS:**

3. September 28: **Islamic models of ideal womanhood: The women of Muhammad’s household. Traditional views and modern reinterpretations (Sunni and Shi’a perspectives)**

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

**IBN SA’D (ca. 784-845):** Selections from THE WOMEN OF MADINA (Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir, vol.8) (KIT)

**FATIMA MERNISSI (b. 1940):** Chapter 6 “THE PROPHET AND SPACE” in The veil and the male elite: a feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam (E)

*Barbara Stowasser: Ch. 9 “The Mothers of the Believers in the Hadith” and Ch. 10 “Modern Muslim Interpretations” in Women in the Quran, Traditions, and Interpretation. (E). Oxford University Press, 1996


4. October 5: **IRAN and SOUTH ASIA: Images of women in court literature and art, and the transformations of modernity.**

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING AND VIEWING:**

**Afsaneh Najmabadi: “Part I: Beauty, Love and Sexuality”(pp. 11-63) in Women with mustaches and men without beards: gender and sexual anxieties of Iranian modernity (E).**

*Milo Cleveland Beach, The new Cambridge history of India (E). I.3, Mughal and Rajput painting [required for students from the South Asian Program]

*Nikki Keddie, “Women in Medieval Muslim Societies”, pp. 29-31; “Ottomans and Safavids”, pp. 53-57; and “Change in the Long 19th c.—1798-1914” pp. 60-68 in: Women in the Middle East: Past and Present (E)

**VISUALS POSTED ON THE COURSE WEBSITE: View all visuals and select the image(s) you would like to comment upon in class:**

**ARTWORK:** Medieval miniatures (Safavid and Mughal); Qajar paintings:

**PHOTOGRAPHY:**

--Qajar photography

Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-1896) photos of his harem: Antoin Sevruguin (1830s-1933), official photographer of the Imperial Qajar court of Iran:

--Contemporary Iranian photography:
5. October 12: PANEL DISCUSSION: Feminist scholarship on Islamism and gender: Can we speak of Islamic feminism?

*First stage (Groups 1-2-3—conducted online)*: All students read the article of Heba Raouf Ezzat, noting the specifics of her writing and ideas. Students from the three groups read the article(s) listed under each group and sum up the specifics of the authors’ approaches and what are the main points they make. How do their views relate to Heba Raouf Ezzat’s writings?

*Second stage (Groups A-B-C—conducted in-class)*: Groups 1-2-3 break up, and their members form new groups A-B-C, with at least one representative from the previous groupings taking part in the new circle. The A-B-C groups convene in reserved study spaces at Scott library during class time. Each member of the A-B-C groups explains to their colleagues what the works s/he read in the 1-2-3 group were about. After the break, all gather in the classroom, and a general discussion follows. Pre-registration into the 1-2-3 groups required.


**Group 1:**
**HAIDEH MOGHISI**: “Islamic Feminism and Its discontents” (pdf file on Moodle)

**Group 2:**
**NAYEREH TOHIDI** : “Islamic Feminism: Perils and Promises” (2001-2) (Website)
**MERVAT HATEM.** “Gender and Islamism in the 1990s” *Middle East Report*, No. 222 (Spring, 2002), pp. 44-47. (E)

**Group 3:**


**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING:**

**PARVIN E’TESAMI (1907-41):** Body and soul-- The needle and the thread--God's weaver-- The golden cage--Iranian women--A woman's place--The helpless hens--The tree of hope (KIT)

**FORUGH FARROKHZAD (1933-67):** Captive --Those days—The wind-up doll—My lover—I'll be greeting the sun again—Another birth—I pity the garden. (KIT)

**SIMIN BEHBHANI (1927--2014):** Dancing girl (pp.72-74)--Conversation—Twelve Fountains of Blood—Gypsiesque— I will rebuild you my homeland (p. 25)—Banu, Our Lady (website)—Necklace (website) (E)

These poems of Simin Behbahani are found in *Iranian Studies: Special Issue on Simin Behbahani, 41:1,2008*, in the following three articles: 1. Mahdi Tourage, “Text and the body in a poem by Simin Behbahani” ; 2. “Eight poems by

* Farzaneh Milani: *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, pp. 100-176; 231-240 (E)

  “Part Two: From Tahereh to Tahereh: The Poets”
  5. Revealing and concealing: Parvin Etesami”;
  6. “Unveiling the Other: Forough Farrokhzad”
  7. “Negotiating Boundaries: Tahereh Saffarzadeh”

  “Part Four: Voices Through the Veil:
  10. “The Birth of Neotraditional Feminism”

7. October 26: IRAN: Woman as the Muse in the Surreal World of Sadeq Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl*.

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING:**

**SADEQ HEDAYAT (1903-1951), *The Blind Owl*, (pub. 1937, Bombay)**


* Nikki Keddie, “Iran” pp. 84-88 and 108-117 in: *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (E)

8. NOVEMBER 2: IRAN: Magical realism as a tool of social commentary in the novels of Shahrnush Parsipur (b. 1946):

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING:**

**SHAHRNUSH PARSIPOUR (1946-), *Women Without Men* (novel; pub. 1989, Tehran)**


9. NOVEMBER 9: IRAN: Women in the eye of the camera

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED VIEWING AND READING:**

** ASGHAR FARHADI (b. 1972): **Film: “A SEPARATION” (released 2011; 2012 “Oscar” for best foreign-language film; 126 min.)

*TAHMINEH MILANI (b. 1960): **Film “TWO WOMEN” (released 1999; best screenplay at the Fajr Film festival, Tehran. Available at Scott Library and on You Tube)

** S. Zeydabadi-Nejad (2007): **“Iranian Intellectuals and Contact with the West: The Case of
Iranian Cinema,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 34:3, 375-398 (E)


**ARTICLE REVIEW DUE**


REQUIRED READING:


CRITICAL SKILLS: WORKSHOP ON LIBRARY RESEARCH

11. November 23: SOUTH ASIA Afghanistan beyond the Taliban:

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED VIEWING AND READING:

**"LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN KABUL”, DIR. Amin Palangi, 2015** (Winner, Golden Phoenix Prize, Fajr International Film Festival, Tehran; Winner of the Audience Choice Award, Sydney Film Festival)—The film has been ordered by the library and is expected to arrive by that date

**“VIEW FROM A GRAIN OF SAND”, documentary film written and directed by Meena Nanji, 2006** (view at home, for general introduction to modern Afghan history and gender issues). http://dma.iriseducation.org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/index.php?dma=1&maxbps=1500&site=2&license=3ff64ddc9da6383fe3755d2dd1ef552&pid=13041&seg=302345


**TERM TEST 1**
WINTER TERM:

1. January 11: SOUTH ASIA: Partition and its aftermath(s)

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING AND VIEWING:

**FARKHANDA LODHI (1937--2010), “Pieces of Flesh” (Website)
**SAADAT HASAN MANTO: “Khol Do” (“Open up”)— Uploaded on the website as Word document

*Ayesha Jalal: “South Asia” in Encyclopaedia of Nationalism (E)
**MAMMO” (1995, DIR. Shyam Benegal, b. 1934; National award for best feature film in Hindi for 1995) [link]

2. January 18: SOUTH ASIA: PANEL DISCUSSION: “Young, Muslim, and Female in Present-day South Asia”: Discussion of KABITA CHAKRABORTY’s book Young Muslim Women in India: Bollywood, Identity and Changing Youth Culture. New York: Routledge, 2015. (The book, available on Scott Library book reserve, will be divided into chapters between three groups of students, who will study and discuss the assigned texts as a team, and present to the class the main issues which the author raises.)

QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION WITH KABITA CHAKRABORTY (To be confirmed)

RECOMMENDED VIEWING:

**“DON’T ASK WHY”, DIR. SABIHA SUMAR, Pakistan, 1995 (Scott library)
**“PUNJABI LOVE STORY”, (Dir. Kay Rasool, 2005, Pakistan; 77 mins) [link]


REQUIRED VIEWING (IN CLASS):

**MUSTANG (Dir. Deniz Gamze Ergüven b. 1978, film 2015, Turkey and France) [link]

RECOMMENDED READING:


RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OR Patchwork paper annotations DUE

4. February 1: THE ARAB WORLD: History as a context: Naguib Mahfouz and his novel The Day the leader was killed.

REQUIRED READING:

** NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, THE DAY THE LEADER WAS KILLED.


*Nikki Keddie, “Egypt” , pp. 89-95 and 121-127 in: Women in the Middle East: Past and Present

5. February 8: THE ARAB WORLD: Women short-story writers of Egypt and Iraq

REQUIRED READING:

**SALWA BAKR (Egypt): “The Wiles of men”—“That Beautiful Undiscovered Voice”(Kit)—“International Women’s Day”

**INAAM KACHACHI (Iraq and France) “Women in Fear” (kit)

**BUTHAYNA AL-NASIRI (Iraq): “The Return of the Prisoner” (Kit)


REQUIRED READINGS:

**KANAFANI: “ALL THAT’S LEFT TO YOU,” (KIT)

FEBRUARY 18—24: READING WEEK

7. March 1: THE ARAB WORLD: Sudan--colonialism and its legacies:

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READING:

**TAYEB SALIH (b. 1929--2009, Sudan): SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH

8. March 8: **THE NETWORKED MIDDLE EAST: New Media, Activism, and Gender in the Arab World and Iran.**

**BBC Documentary: “How Facebook changed the world: Arab Spring”.


**REQUIRED READING**
* **MARIJANE SATRAPI , PERSEPOLIS**


**REQUIRED VIEWING:**
* **ZARQA NAWAZ: “LITTLE MOSQUE ON THE PRAIRIE”**
  Season 2: 2. “Ban the Burqa”
RECOMMENDED READING:


Research Paper OR Final Installment of Patchwork Paper Due

11. March 29: Reflections and Review

12. April 5:
   Term Test 2