

ISLAM AND MODERNITY

NEW APPROACHES IN MIDDLE EAST SCHOLARSHIP



Workshop Sponsors:
The Community College Humanities Association
The Hill Center for World Studies
The Kevorkian Center, NYU

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Faculty Workshop
Saturday, April 8, 2006
Kevorkian Center, NYU

Islam and Modernity: New Approaches in Middle Eastern Scholarship

Today's media coverage of events in the Middle East does not help us understand the historical processes through which Middle Eastern countries entered the global world of the Nineteenth- and Twentieth- Centuries. In fact, the media may make it more difficult, especially for students, to even know what to ask in connection with modernity and the Middle East since Islam and modernity are often set against each other and presented as mutually exclusive. In this workshop we will focus on new scholarly approaches in history, political science and anthropology that reveal some of the contours of these historical processes. Our scholars draw on the rich archive of colonial and postcolonial analysis and on insights from Michele Foucault, Bruno Latour, and Giorgio Agamben to help us understand the nature of modernity in this part of the "Islamic" world.

9:00 - 9:30	coffee
9:30 - 10:30	Khaled Fahmy, "Islam, Science and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Egypt"
10:30 - 11:30	Timothy Mitchell, "Making Egypt Capitalist"
11:30 - 12:30	Arzoo Osanloo, "The Conditions of 'Women's Rights' in Iran: Politics, Discourse, and Practice"
12:30 - 1:30	Lunch
1:30 - 3:00	Panel Discussion with Professors Fahmy, Mitchell, and Osanloo and Audience

The workshop is sponsored by the Community College Humanities Association, The Hill Center for World Studies, and the Kevorkian Center, NYU.

WORKSHOP PRESENTERS

Khaled Fahmy

Associate Professor of Middle Eastern Studies
Middle Eastern Studies Department
New York University

Research interests:

I have been interested in discourses and practices centered around the human body which were an integral part of modernity as experienced by Middle Eastern societies in the 19th and 20th centuries. At the heart of my project is a fundamental question: to whom does the body belong? Is it the “person” inhabiting it or the modern state that lays a fundamentally new claim on it? Does it belong to the community in which it lives and which honors and protects it after death? Or to God who, according to classical Islamic thought, entrusted it to “man” to fulfill His wish in this world? My previous research reflected on this question by studying the regime of Mehmed Ali in Egypt in the first half of the 19th century which was squarely based on a brutal system of mass conscription whereby the modern state lay its hands on the bodies of its male citizens. My current research on 19th-century Cairo (and to a lesser extent, on “Cosmopolitan” Alexandria) expands on this theme by studying the newly reconstituted domains of law and medicine and by exploring how members of the Egyptian popular classes reacted to the unprecedented encroachment on their daily lives which these new state institutions and practices entailed. My extensive experience in the Egyptian National Archives has enabled me to gather a significant amount of hitherto unconsulted material which has helped me to engage with the exciting new scholarship within Middle Eastern studies on nationalism and state building, social history and gender studies, as well as medical and legal history.

Timothy Mitchell

Professor of Politics
Department of Politics
New York University

Research

Fields of research, writing, and lecturing

The political economy of the Middle East: Contemporary Egypt; rural politics and agrarian transformation; the politics of development and economic reform; the political economy of oil; the role of the United States and international financial institutions.

The politics of expertise: The creation of economic knowledge and the making of “the economy” and “the market” as objects of politics; expert knowledge and the formation of the modern state; representation and objectivity as forms of socio-political practice; the past and future of Middle East expertise in the United States.

Political ecology: Sustainable agriculture and land reform; hydropolitics of the Nile valley; the discourse of development.

Colonialism and modernity: The place of colonialism in the making of the modern world; forms of reason, power, and truth that define the experience of modernity; the nature of the colonial and modern state and its relation to law, property, and violence.

Visual culture and the built environment: The history and politics of “the world as exhibition;” the making of the colonial city; vernacular architecture in Egypt.

Arzoo Osanloo

Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Law
Anthropology Department
University of Washington

Research Interests:

Human rights, law, gender and Islam, refugee and asylum, liberalism, sovereignty, mercy/forgiveness and social accountability

I hold a joint appointment in Anthropology and the Law, Societies and Justice Program, so my research interests reflect anthropological inquiries into the realm of law, governance and the state. I am currently working on a book project that focuses on women's everyday discourses of rights in Iran's

Islamic Republic, a unique, if not contradictory, combination of religious state and a republic. The primary aim of this research is to examine the social, political, and legal conditions that mediate urban middle-class women's conceptions rights. I am further interested in human rights as a discourse of social accountability in the current geopolitical era and am beginning research on a new project that examines the relationship between human rights, mercy and state power. Before venturing into Anthropology, I was a lawyer and practiced asylum and immigration law in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. My work in human rights law sparked an interest in the interplay between international and national legal systems and their effects on people at local levels.





SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Timothy Mitchell's selections

Lila Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (2005). Questions of Islam, gender, nationhood, and modernity explored through a study of wildly popular television soap operas.

Asef Bayat, "Cairo's Poor: Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity," *Middle East Report*, Winter 1997. A short article examining the situation of Cairo's poor and the political strategies they use to improve their situation.

Mona El-Ghobashy, "Egypt's Paradoxical Elections," *Middle East Report*, no. 238, Spring 2006. A brief analysis of the 2005 elections and the means by which the regime resisted pressures for reform and defeated its opponents.

Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: A sympathetic and insightful study of aspects of the contemporary Islamic movement in Egypt, exploring the lives of women who participate in study circles in local mosques.*

Khaled Fahmy's Selections

I suggest the following items as further readings on the topic of public health and medicine in the Middle East:

Laverne Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*
Amira Sonbol, *The Creation of a Medical Profession in Egypt, 1800-1922.*

Cyrus Schayegh, "'A sound mind lives in a healthy body': Texts and contexts in the Iranian modernists' scientific discourse of health, 1910s-40s," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, v. 37 (2005), pp.167-188.

Hormoz Ebrahimnejad, "Theory and practice in 19th-century Persian medicine: intellectual and institutional reforms," *History of Science*, v. 38 (2000), pp. 171-78.

Ferozeh Kashani-Sabet, "Hallmarks of Humanism: Hygiene and love of homeland in Qajar Iran," *American Historical Review*, v. 105 (2005), pp. 1171-1203.

Arzoo Osanloo's Selections

Books

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

John L. Esposito with Natana J. DeLong Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, 2nd Edition. Syracuse University Press, 2001.

Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Articles

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women really need saving?" *American Anthropologist* 104(3) 2002. Pps. 783-790.

Chandra Talpate Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses (in *Third World Women and the Politics of Memory*, Mohanty, et al. eds. 1991). Pps. 51-80.

Homa Hoodfar, "The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women (in, *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, Lowe and Lloyd, eds. 1997). Pps. 248-279.

Arzoo Osanloo, "Islamico-civil 'rights talk': women, subjectivity, and law in Iranian family court," *American Ethnologist* 33(2), May 2006.

WORKS BY OUR SPEAKERS

Mitchell, Timothy, *Colonizing Egypt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)

If you've heard about the Cairo street at the Paris World Exhibition of 1889 but never knew the source, look no further: in the first chapter of this important book on the political processes of colonization Mitchell introduces four Egyptians who happened to be in Paris at the time. They marveled at the Eiffel Tower but left disgusted, says Mitchell, at the street made purposefully dirty and the mosque façade that houses a coffee house complete with dancing girls and whirling dervishes.

Mitchell, Timothy, ed., *Questions of Modernity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)

In the preface to this collection of essays Mitchell tells readers that the book grew out of an interest that he and Lila Abu-Lughod had in bringing together specialists in the Middle East and in South Asia to address theoretical questions having to do with modernity. The collection has articles by well known Indianists Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Nicholas Dirks, Veena Das, and Gyan Prakash, as well as Middle East scholars Lila Abu-Lughod, Stefania Pandolfo, and Mitchell. These essays take us through some of the steps necessary for understanding how the concept of modernity was detached from modernization theory in order to allow for recognition of the importance of initiatives from outside the West. The essays, with their emphasis on the local rather than the global, also suggest that modernity as a concept may not signify anything universal. The book is also worthwhile for enabling readers to see how a common body of theory can be used to address questions focused on different geographical areas.

Mitchell, Timothy, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002)

In this book Mitchell inaugurates his study of capitalism, defined as an abstract concept that both is and is not a universal phenomenon. In a series

of chapters focused on different times, places and themes in Egyptian life, Mitchell calls attention to how language and systems of representation produced by dominant groups have consistently misrepresented the activities of non-elites in order to project images of how the world works. All the chapters reinforce each other in helping us to think through the human consequences of misrepresentation, and particularly teachable, I think, is chapter 6, focusing on attempts to supply the newly independent nation state with an identity and an ancient past. We are first introduced to the important modern architect Hassan Fathy, commissioned by the government in 1945 to build housing for the peasants of Gurna, who are to be relocated away from their close proximity to the newly developed tourist site at Luxor. Fathy designs houses that Egyptian peasants do not want to live in, and this tale of the resistance of the inhabitants of Gurna to government initiatives ends with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and UNESCO, fifty years after Fathy, successfully encouraging forcible removal of people now branded as tomb robbers.

Selected Articles

- * Economists and the Economy in the Twentieth Century (2005), in The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others, edited by George Steinmetz.
- * The Properties of Markets (2004). Working Paper No. 2, Cultural Political Economy Research Group, University of Lancaster.

- * The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science (2003). In *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, edited by David Szanton.
- * The Stage of Modernity (2000). In *Questions of Modernity*, edited by Timothy Mitchell
- * Society, Economy, and the State Effect (1999). In *State/Culture: State-Formation After the Cultural Turn*, edited by George Steinmetz.
- * Fixing the Economy (1998). *Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 82-101.
- * The Object of Development: America's Egypt (1995). In *Power of Development*, edited by Jonathan Crush.

- * The Limits of the State (1991). *American Political Science Review*, vol. 85, 77-96

* Everyday Metaphors of Power (1990). *Theory and Society*, vol. 19, 545-577

Fahmy, Khaled, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, his army and the making of modern Egypt*, (New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 1997)

In this book Fahmy works against the narrative of 19th century Egypt that pictures Mehmed Ali attempting to free Egypt from Ottoman rule and instituting reforms that would inevitably flower into the formation of the nation, were it not for the period of British intervention in Egyptian history. As Fahmy sees him, Mehmed Ali sees himself as a reformer within the domain of the Ottoman Empire. How, then, did the Egyptians peasants who fought in Mehmed Ali's army see themselves and their service? Were they fighting for an emerging Egyptian nation? Fahmy draws on archival evidence to argue that the peasants hated Mehmed's army and felt mightily oppressed by having to serve in it. They had no sense of themselves as having a national identity and were certainly not fighting in its cause. When, in 1841, the Ottoman Sultan and the British acknowledged Mehmed as ruler of Egypt they did so for diplomatic reasons that had nothing to do with Egyptian national aspirations. Through his close attention to the day to day world of the Turkish speaking Albanian, Mehmed Ali in Egypt, Fahmy strongly encourages readers to reject those explanatory scripts, such as the one that tells us that the nation pre-existed its actual historical emergence, in favor of the kind of evidence that he is able to assemble in this book. Students will find the book hard going, but teachers will find the effort has a payoff in increasing understanding of how to think about the nation in this part of the world.

Selected publications:

- "An olfactory tale of two cities: Cairo in the nineteenth century," in *Historians in Cairo: Essays in Honor of George Scanlon*, ed. Jill Edwards. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002).
- "Prostitution in nineteenth-century Egypt," in *Outside in: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene Rogan. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001).
- "The police and the people in nineteenth-century Egypt," *Die Welt des*

- Islams*, 39 (1999), 1-38.
- “The anatomy of justice: Forensic medicine and criminal law in nineteenth-century Egypt,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 6 (1999), 1-48.
 -
 - “Women, medicine and power in nineteenth-century Egypt,” in *Remaking Women*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS (Hill Center for World Studies)

Frederick Cooper, "Modernity," *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp 113-149, 274-288

Cooper is an historian of Africa who has recently been writing on the history of colonialism in a world context. In this thorough historiographical review of studies of modernity he includes material on the Middle East. The real value of the article, however, is in Cooper's analysis of the confusions, complexities, and usefulness of the term "modernity" for historical analysis.

Michael Dutton, "Lead Us Not into Translation: Notes toward a Theoretical Foundation for Asian Studies, *Nepantla: Views from South*, vol 3, Issue 3, 2002.

This article goes very well with Mitchell's "The Middle East un the Past and Future of Social Science." Both are historiographical surveys and critiques of American social science. Dutton is an historian of China.

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Bruno Latour, *Science in Action*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987)

Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

This study provides a history of European and American visions and representations of the Middle East, showing that there was never a monolithic view, but emphasizing that ther mainstream idea based on difference and inferiority succeeds in marginalizing views of basic human equality. Noteworthy about Lockman's book is that he does not attempt to tell us much about how Muslims in areas that came (in 1902) to be called the Middle East thought about Europeans and Americans.

Burke O. Long, *Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003)

This book adds considerably to McAlister's remarks on the significance of the idea of the Holy Land in American popular culture at the end of the 19th century. (Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Read along with McAlister's "Introduction" and Ch. 1, the book provides a fascinating way to connect late 19th century notions about the Middle East with the long tradition in the U.S. of failing to consider the history (especially the colonial history) of the Middle East as it grew to a position of centrality in our foreign policy.

Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

This book is a study of American popular culture representations of the Middle East starting in the late 19th century. As well as including the early material, it does a fine job of covering the period of the Cold War.

Web Resources

<http://www.al-bab.com/media/cinema/film2.htm>

web site for Arab cinema with section on Youssef Chahine

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/Humanities/pschmid1/array/ruins/egypt.intro.html>

This is the Swarthmore College site on the volumes on Egypt produced after Napoleon's invasion in 1797. It has explanatory text and illustrations, as well as links to more illustrations from the original.

<http://www.irfilms.com/>

info on Iranian films

http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/9709/offscreen_reviews/makhmalbaf.html

Comments on Iranian filmmaker Mahsen Makhmalbaf

<http://www.iranianmovies.com/reviews/kiarostami.htm>

More films by Kiarostami, maker of Taste of Cherries.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

PRIMARY SOURCES

Al-I Ahmad, Jalal, *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West*, (Trans. R. Campbell), (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984)

This is a 20th century work by an Iranian intellectual writing about the dangers coming from the West and what to do about them.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

On the second page of the Preface the author writes: “When I was a young boy growing up in Tehran I once asked my grandfather about his age. With a familiar pose that must have given him time to return to old memories, he could only give his approximate age. ‘I was a boy of six or seven playing ball in my hometown, Kashan, when the news of Nasir al-Din Shah’s assassination arrived.’” The book is a study of Nasir al-Din’s “life and career,” (1831-1896), and the author goes on to say that his death marked the end of an era. Nasir al-Din, according to the author, managed to keep control of his monarchy during the time when the European presence was pushing the forces of modernization in the area. In this book, Amanat tells us in the Preface, we will learn a good deal about Iran’s transition to modernity by learning about the Persian monarchy on its own terms, not through those lenses produced, he says, “From Herodotus and Aristotle to Montesquieu and Hegel...”

Nasir al-Din Shah was the fourth ruler of the Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925) and Amanat describes the Qajar period as a bridge between the Safavid period (1501-1722) and 20th century Iran. During this transitional period Iran under the Qajar rulers was brought into contact with Europe and although Iran was never formally colonized, it came under European economic, political and cultural influence.

Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and After*, (London: Longman, 2003)

Ansari starts this book by noting that Lord Curzon, Viceroy of British India in the early 20th century, called the Persians the “Frenchmen of the East.” To the imperial Curzon the Persians were sophisticated and civilized and exotic. Persians, or Iranians as we can call them, were also looking admiringly at the west; but unlike Curzon, they also had the opportunity to look at themselves as they were represented in European scholarship. There was no comparable Iranian scholarship on the West although by the mid 20th century there certainly would be. Ansari reminds us that the West’s encounter with Iran “coincided not only with the political ascendancy of the West, but with the development of the discipline of history. Indeed, the study of history, as we know it today, is a product of modern Western society, and many of the first histories written reflected the aspirations, prejudices and demands of a Western readership... When Iranians encountered their ‘history’ therefore, it tended to be mediated through the pens of Western historians, while their own, largely oral traditions were dismissed as fable and at best as literary artifacts, skillfully written, but of little historical value.” What the writer is talking about here is the phenomenon that Edward Said has so ably discussed in *Orientalism*, published in 1978. Ansari continues by noting that the problems of western prejudice in scholarship on Iran are being addressed by Iranians who are professional historians. The Revolution, continues the author, had a deleterious effect on Iranian historical scholarship because western commentators and scholars pushed forward interpretations of events that were not grounded in history, particularly in the history of Iran’s long confrontation with modernity. The purpose of the book is to return the study of the Iranian revolution to its historical context.

Shiva Balaghi, *Saddam Hussein, a Biography*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006)

This book is part of the Greenwood Press series of biographies of people “from all time periods and backgrounds, both historic and contemporary, who have made an impact on American and/or world culture.” (Series Foreword). Thus, Saddam Hussein joins a list that includes Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Fidel Castro, Desmond Tutu, Franklin Roosevelt, Cesar Chavez, Stephen Hawking, J.K. Rowling, and others. The series,

according to its editors, is designed for high school students, and though secondary school students may be the principle beneficiaries, college students will find this biography of Saddam to be well worth reading, since many of them will not be old enough to have been reading the newspaper and watching TV news during the period when the interests of Saddam and the US began to merge. On the other hand, the story the book tells will be largely familiar to teachers who have been attentive to our media presentations of Iraq, especially during the 1980s and 1990s and into the first decade of the 20th century. In telling the story of Saddam's early life and rise to power Balaghi interweaves the narrative of 20th century diplomacy in the Middle East with a synthesis of materials from hagiographic and critical biographies of Saddam, to come up with a view of a man whose political consciousness is directed toward freeing the Iraqi people from foreign domination, securing justice for all, and implementing the goals of secular Baathist socialism. Readers also get a sense of Saddam's habits of cleanliness and personal hygiene, his romantic streak, his enthusiasm for learning and love of reading, his regard for family, and his interest in the past of Mesopotamia and the Arab world. The Iran/Iraq War and favorable American policy toward Iraq is reconstructed from secondary sources and government documents, as is the coverage of the first Gulf War and the build up to the current war.

The emphasis in the Greenwood Series on the impact of the biographical subjects on American culture perhaps explains the author's choice to draw on American documents, and readers should be cautioned that the book does not deal with Saddam's impact on world culture, or indeed on the Arab world. We do not learn much about Saddam's impact on American culture, either, but we do learn a good deal about how the US government and the press attempted to understand and deal with Saddam.

For me, at least, the best part of the book, and the part that most reflects the author's own scholarly interests, is Chapter 6, "The Specter of Saddam," which analyzes Saddam's manipulation of Iraqi popular culture. This chapter, on Saddam's portraiture, his enthusiasm for monuments, his interest in the ancient past, his interest in contemporary painting, and his activities as a writer of novels, will help students begin to understand how Saddam managed to stay in power. To supplement this chapter there is a nice photo essay. The book also includes a bibliography with lots of web sites, which students will find useful, and a timeline, which begins with Saddam's birth in 1937 and ends with his capture by American forces in 2003.

Elton L. Daniel, *The History of Iran*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001.

Greenwood Press puts out a series of books for students and general readers on the history of “the nations of the contemporary world.” Those nations chosen for inclusion in this post-Cold War series are ones “whose political, economic and social affairs mark them as among the most important in the waning years of the twentieth century,” say the editors of the series. Unfortunately, the other titles in the series are not listed.

The book has a timeline that starts around 4000 B.C. and ends with the elections to the new Majles in 2000, which returned a reformist slate. It also has a glossary of notable Iranians, which goes back as early as Cyrus the Great (600-530 B.C.), includes Zoroaster (c. 1100 B.C.) and includes the Shah (Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi 1919-1980) and Khomeini (Ayatollah Rouholloah Khomeini 1902-1989). There is glossary of terms (*ahura*, *chador*, *fatva*, etc) and a bibliographic essay. The author, Daniel, (his first name is Elton), according the series editors, is a distinguished specialist in the field.

The early chapters tell about the geography of the area and identify the early inhabitants as Indo-Europeans, belonging to the same language group as the early speakers of Greek and Sanskrit. Early texts include those associated with Zoroaster. For those interested in classical history, there is a nice section on Cyrus and Darius, Persian emperors. Alexander the Great defeated Darius in 331 B.C. and established Greek rule in the region. With the establishment of Greek rule, says Daniel, “the first major chapter in Iranian history was over.”

There now occurs in the book one of those transition statements that we have to take with a grain of salt or a little awareness that we often are helpless in the face of inequality in the way different subjects are studied. “The middle or ‘medieval’ period of Iran’s history,” says Daniel, “extends from the fall of the Achaemenids in the 4th century B.C. to the rise of the Safavids in the 16th century A.D.” Daniel does go on to tell us something about the politics of the intervening period before he takes us to the Safavids, but the book is not primarily about the spread of Islam in these Islamic centuries. More than half the book is devoted to the history of the late 19th and 20th centuries when

the Iranian nation state comes into existence, and this is the period that most interest Daniel.

Mohammed El-Nawawy and Adel Iskandar, *Al-Jazeera: The Story of the Network that is Rattling Governments and Redefining Modern Journalism*, (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003)

This book provides background information on the television news network based in Qatar that reaches the Arab world.

Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994)

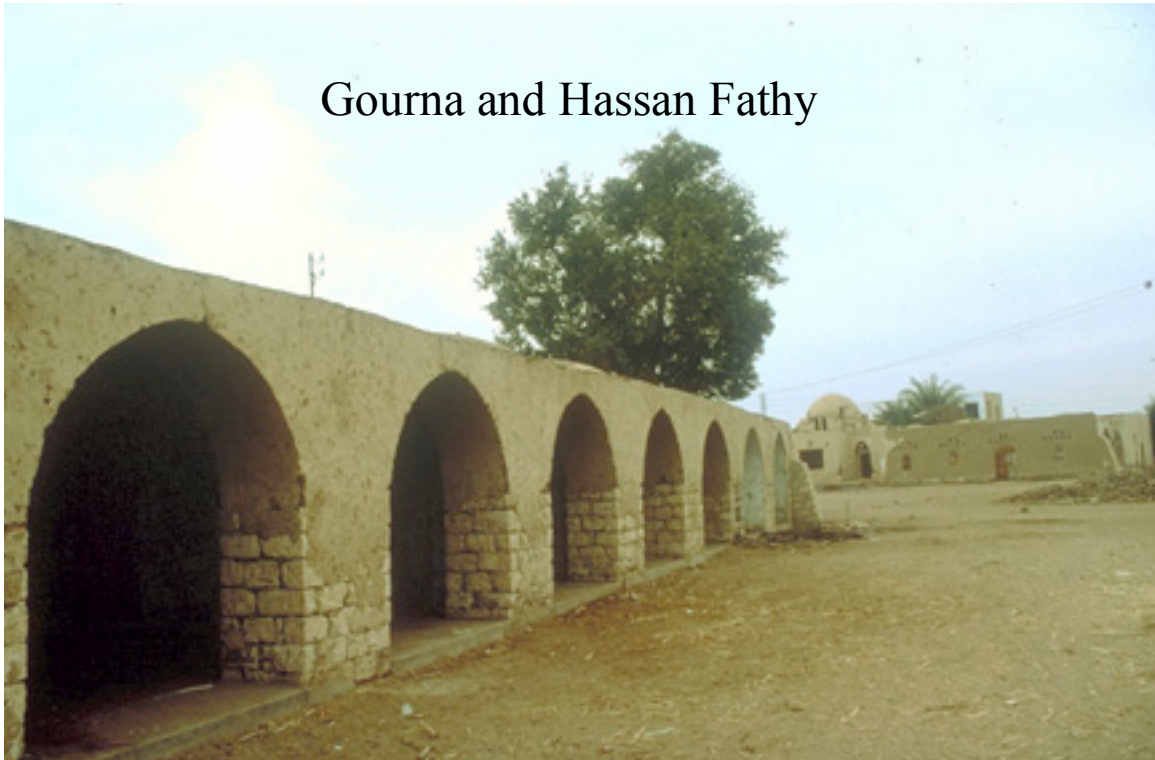
The overthrow of a despot, says the author in the Introduction, is not unique in history; what was surprising in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was the role of religion. The separation of religion from politics was supposedly one of the great achievements of the French Enlightenment and Revolution, and the movement toward that separation has been one of the marks of modernity around the world – or at least it seemed to be so, in scholarship as well as “on the ground.” The Iranian Revolution, however, seems to have inaugurated a new era of change in historical events as well as in scholarship. Scholars are not nearly so ready to declare a separation of sacred and secular as they once were. Nor is it possible to contain questions about the role of religion in politics to the world of fundamentalist Islam. This book, however, deals with events in Iran.

Negin Nabavi, *Intellectuals and the State in Iran: Politics, Discourse, and the Dilemma of Authenticity*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003)

A good way to get started with trying to understand Iran's path to modernity is to recognize the role of intellectuals in the process. Intellectuals, of course, don't build roads and rail lines; they don't set up industries and employ workers, thus precipitating a movement from country to city; and they don't establish communications systems based on the newest technology. They are, however, the avant-garde of those who come in contact with ideas generated outside their own domain. At least that has been the way it was around the world in the 19th century as people outside

Europe came in contact with what Europeans were thinking. Although most of the Iranian intellectuals Nabavi deals with in this book belong to the 20th century, he calls our attention to some 19th century figures who knew the works of the French *philosophs* and wanted Iranians to think about changing their lives to conform more to the western model. For Iranians, the model to be followed was the political one. These intellectuals hoped for a constitution and indeed organized a movement to foster political change leading to constitutional government in 1906. Nabavi reminds us, in his summary of events and movements in the 19th century, that intellectual contact with the west inspired a variety of responses. Some felt that Iran and its institutions were inferior when compared with the west; some felt Iran was marginalized from the world of the great powers and should try to join that world; some felt that admiration for the west was misplaced. One of the effects that contact with the west and western scholarship had was to turn intellectual attention to the pre-Islamic history of Iran, pictured in western Orientalist scholarship as part of the ancient classical world; and thus to look negatively on the Islamic centuries. These intellectual movements and fashions do not seem to have much political clout until the formation of the Tudeh Party in 1941, which was “modern”, “progressive” and communist.

Gourna and Hassan Fathy



“Grappling with the problems of grinding poverty – poverty on a scale hardly remembered by living Americans – with insensitive bureaucrats, with suspicious people, with unskilled and sullen people, Dr. Hassan Fathy has produced not only answers but inspiration. His solution is of worldwide import. His thought, experience, and spirit constitute a major international resource.” William Polk, “Foreword,” in Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*, 1973

“For all their skill, for all their likableness, and in spite of their undeserved poverty, the damage they (the villagers) do is measureless. They excavate and sell, and no one knows the provenance of their finds, which means a big loss to Egyptology.” Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*

“Gourna’s prime location in terms of archaeological sites and transport routes ensured that the villagers would be central in the network of tourist locales and the complex machinations involved therein. Coffee shops, alabaster workshops, the production of forgeries, tour guiding and taxi driving were all on offer.” Lynn Meskell, “Sites of Violence: Terrorism, Tourism and Heritage in the Archaeological Present,” (2001)

“...Emerson asked about the tomb and the latest activities of the industrious tomb robbers of Gurneh.” Elizabeth Peters, *Seeing Like a Cat* (an Amelia Peabody Mystery, 1997)

“Most of the houses that were finished are now occupied, although not by the Gournii, who have gone back to their original hillside and old way of life.” James Steele, *An Architecture for the Poor: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy*

INTRODUCTION

READINGS

Primary Sources

Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973)

Secondary Sources: (Texts)

Lynn Meskell, "Sites of Violence: Terrorism, Tourism and Heritage in the Archaeological Present, papere presented at the Columbia University seminar on Historic Monuments and Sites, 30 January 2001, available on-line at <http://www.learn.columbia.edu/Usem2001/>

Timothy Mitchell, "Heritage and Violence," *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 179-205+344-350

Timothy Mitchell, "Worlds Apart: An Egyptian Village and the International Tourism Industry," *Middle East Report*, No 195, Sep-Oct, 1995, pp. 8-11+23

Ali Moustaafer, "Gourna: The Dream Continued," on-line article accessible at http://archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.tcl?document_id=4535

Youssef Rakha, "A Yearning for Another Country," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 24-30 June 1999, Issue No 435, available on-line at <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1999/435/feature.htm>

Richards, J.M., Ismail Serageldin and Darl Rastorfer, *Hassan Fathy*, (Singapore: Concept Media, 1985)

Susan Sachs, "Arts Abroad: Honoring a Visionary if not His Vision," *The New York Times*, April 4, 2000

Steele, James, *An Architecture for the Poor: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy*, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1997)

Hana Taragan, "Architecture in Fact and Fiction: The Case of the New Gourna Village in Upper Egypt," on-line article accessible at <http://archnet.org/library/pubdownloader/pdf/9710/doc/DPC1577.pdf>.

Robert Vitalis, "The Middle East on the Edge of the Pleasure Periphery," *Middle East Report*, No 196, Sep-Oct 1995, pp. 2-7

Secondary Sources: (Images)

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/newgourna.htm>

Hassan Fathy's project of building a new village for the inhabitants of Gournah is well represented on the net. This site, on tourism in Egypt, provides a short text and some very handsome pictures of Fathy's buildings. It also offers an explanation for why New Gournah was not a success. Students can use sites like this one to assemble a variety of explanations for the failure of Fathy's vision.

<http://archnet.org/library/images/imagestrip.tcl>

This site has well over a hundred slides of buildings in New Gournah.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Use Mitchell's ch 6 in *Rule of experts* and work up material on Hassan Fathy. Here are some sources:

http://archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.tcl?document_id=9710

This site enables you to download an article by Hana Taragan on New Gournah and Fathy.

http://archnet.org/library/parties/one-party.tcl?party_id=1

This is the general site for Hassan Fathy with lots of links to his buildings and to articles by and about him.

<http://www.kmtspace.com/kmt/fathy.htm>

Site for Fathy's ideas on architecture for the poor and tradition vs. modernity.

Timothy Mitchell, "Worlds Apart: An Egyptian Village and the International Tourism Industry," *Middle East Report*, No 196, Sep-Oct 1995, pp. 8-11, 23

Hana Taragan, "Architecture in Fact and Fiction: The Case of the New Gournah Village in Upper Egypt,"

Faculty Workshop

Lesson on modernity and the arts

1. For an intro read Fred Cooper's chapter on modernity.
2. Take a look at Tim Mitchell's chapter on the Cairo street at the worlds fair in Paris.

3. Look at some of the sites for movies from this part of the world: Youssef Chahine for Egypt, Kiarostami for Iran
4. Look at Shiva Balaghi's book on Saddam for how a ruler uses popular culture to augment power
5. Look at Monument for more on Saddam's art
6. Melanie Macalister's book for American popular culture and the Middle East
7. Book on Holy Land sites in US c. 1900
8. Look at book on world cinema