Techno-Orientalism

(American Studies AMST 304 cross-listed with Science in Society Program SISP 304)

Instructor: Long T. Bui
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Meeting time: Monday CAMS 1 (7-9:50 PM)
Office hours: Wed 2-5 and by appointment
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This course seeks to understand why Asians are so closely associated with technology, a relationship that may seem obvious, but one that remains understudied. Throughout the course, the overarching theme of techno-Orientalism—the exotification of Asians through technology—will help students frame discussion of cyborgs, globalization, digital industry, high-tech labor, and economics. Issues to be explored include the preponderance of Asians in scientific fields and digital industries as well as the popular representation of Asians as technological whizzes. The class scrutinizes how U.S.-Asian relations shaped the rise of high-tech superpowers like Japan, South Korea, and China as emergent powerhouses. The class focuses primarily on the contemporary period, centering the late 20th century to early 21st century as a seismic moment in time for techno-Orientalism. As an interdisciplinary seminar, we will cover the gamut of fields from sociology to literature to philosophy to media studies; this expansive scope allows for a far-ranging knowledge base. Class participation will be highlighted with students presenting in teams to present the materials to their peers, unpacking questions and themes raised in the texts.

Class Presentations: All students will be required to present one week in class in order to generate discussion. Presenters must bring together all the readings for that week in a cohesive manner, while the rest of class must bring in 3 questions or points about readings. For presenter, think of interesting queries such as: How are the week’s readings related to previous texts and themes discussed in class? What is the argument of the author? What is the methodology and evidence used? Is it effective? What do you find most interesting about the articles?

Gender Pronoun/Disability/Name Preference: If you have a specific name or gender pronoun you prefer to be called by, please contact me at the beginning of the course. If you have a disability and need specific accommodations for this class, you must contact Disability Resources and Educational Services and get an official statement of your disability and give it to me.
**Disability:** Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860/685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

**Academic Integrity:** This class assumes that all participants are doing assignments with integrity. Academic dishonesty violates university regulations and is a reportable offence that may lead to expulsion or other punishments.

**Grade Breakdown:** Class Assignments/Participation 30%, Midterm 30%, Final Exam 40%

**Week 1: Orientalism (Monday Sept. 7)**
Introductions  ALL READINGS ON MOODLE. For the second week, the readings are also available on my personal website: https://longbui1981.wordpress.com (for those not registered)

Watch in class: “The Chinese Professor” (2012)

**Week 2: The Orientalist Gaze (Monday Sept. 14)**


Watch a clip: “Exploring Orientalism in Disney” (2012)

**Week 3: Techno-Orientalism as Concept (Monday Sept. 21)**


Watch Cloud Atlas (2012)

Week 4: The Study of Techno-Orientalism (Monday September 28)


Week 5: Techno-Orientalism and the Western Gaze (Monday Oct. 5)


Watch Blade-Runner (1982)

Week 6: Digital Identities and the Internet (Monday Oct. 12)


*Höglund, Johan. "Electronic Empire: Orientalism Revisited in the Military Shooter." Game

Watch: Advantageous (2013)

**Week 7: The Science of Japan (Monday Oct. 19)**


**Midterm:** Please write a 4 page single spaced paper (1 inch margins, 12 font) on the ways Techno-Orientalism usurps and upsets our traditional ideas of “Asianness,” Asia, and/or Asians. When Americans think about the Asian, they think about this object in certain conventional ways. Using the texts you’ve already read, please discuss how techno-Orientalism is a provocative creative lens for reappraising the Oriental specter of the EAst. *Your paper is due electronically on Moodle at noon on Monday 10/26.*

**Oct. 26 Mid-Quarter Break (No Class)**

**Week 8: Science Fiction and Postmodern Cyberpunk (Monday Nov. 2)**


**Week 9: Anti-Asian Racism and High-Tech Globalization (Monday Nov. 9)**


Watch a clip: The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow (2006)


Watch film: Dark Matter (2007)

**Week 10: Informational Labor and Professionals (Monday Nov. 16)**


*read Asian tech articles

* Watch in class clip from “Outsourced” (2011) and I’m a Cyborg, But That’s Ok (2006)

**Week 11: (Class cancelled Nov. 23 for Thanksgiving)**

Begin reading the rest of Said’s introduction….

**Week 12: (Post)humanism and Gender/Sexuality (Monday Nov. 30)**


Watch in class video clip of *Maquilaopolis* (2006)

**Week 13: Hybridity and Style/Aesthetics (Monday Dec. 7)**  (Read Beynon, Rivera and one more article based on whether you like EDM or Hip-Hop)


Watch a clip: ABDC the Kinjaz “The Dancebox” and X-Men 2 (Lady Deathstrike)

**Final Paper:** Write a 6-7 page single spaced paper (1 inch margins, 12 font) that analyzes techno-Orientalism in relation to Edward Said’s framework of Orientalism. How does techno-Orientalism extend, revise, or challenge Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism? You are required to read more excerpts from Said’s *Orientalism*, using it as a guide and reference point for discussing techno-Orientalism as an imperialist and colonial discourse based on cultural representations, intellectual discourses, political projects, and/or moral crises. It is enticing and easy to talk techno-Orientalism in all its coolness without regard for the groundbreaking work of Edward Said, but Orientalism is a classic text that you must always deal with in regards to techno-Orientalism. However, the point is not an extensive analysis of Said’s work. Use it to synthesize and make sense of all your diverse readings on the technologization of Orientalism. Show me that you read the articles and understood them by way of Said, who can act as a portal to help you bring different texts and themes together. Please refer to the following sections of *Orientalism*: “Introduction (1-28), “Orientalizing the Oriental” (pp. 50-73), “Projects” (pp. 73-92), and “Crisis” (92-110). Use a minimum of 10 readings from class to make your argument.


*Your paper is due electronically on Moodle Friday Dec. 18 at Noon.*