

The Politics of Language and Alphabets: History, Power, and Community



“[Slavs and Tatars](#).” Installation view.

May You Live in Interesting Times (Venezia Biennale 2019).

Course Flow

Week 1: Setting the Stage

Prompt: Language and identity

- Abdelfattah Kilito, “Thou Dost Not, and Shalt Not, Speak My Language” in *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language* (Syracuse University Press, 2008): 85-94.

Week 2: Imperial Language Policies and Multilingualism

Case study: Language and colonialism

- Mona Russell. "Competing, Overlapping, and Contradictory Agendas: Egyptian Education under British Occupation, 1882-1922." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 21.1 (2001): 50-60.
- Ziad Fahmy. “Francophone Egyptian Nationalists, anti-British Discourse, and European Public Opinion, 1885-1910: The Case of Mustafa Kamil and Ya'qub Sannu'.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28.1 (2008): 170-183.

Reading with:

- Sherif Fathy Salem. *That Alexandria* ([trailer](#)).

Week 3: Nationalism and the Mother Tongue

Case study: The Turkish language reform

- Hale Yilmaz. “Language” in *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945*. (Syracuse University Press, 2013): 139-178.

Reading with:

- “[Translitterative Tease](#).” Lecture performance by artist collective *Slavs and Tatars*.

Week 4: Arabization and Post-Colonial Debates

Case study:Linguistic dilemmas

- Ali Alalou. “Language and Ideology in the Maghreb: Francophonie and Other Languages.” *The French Review*(2006): 408-421.

Reading with:

- Abdelkebir Khatibi. “Diglossia” in Berger, Anne-Emmanuelle, ed. *Algeria in Others' Languages*. (Cornell University Press, 2002): 157-160.

Week 5: Beyond the National Language: Are Languages Dialects with an Army and a Navy?

Case study:Regional politics and languages in India

- Lisa Mitchell. “Introduction: A New Emotional Commitment to Language.” *Language, Emotion, and Politics in South India: The Making of a Mother Tongue*. (Indiana University Press, 2009): 1-34.

Reading with:

- “Catalan Government Defies Supreme Court Ruling on Teaching More Spanish Language at Schools.” ([El Pais](#), November 2021).

Week 6:Internationalism and Globalization

Case study:Decolonization and the language question in Algeria

- Margaret Majumdar. “The Battleground of Language and the Changing Discourse of Francophonie” in *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension*. (Berghahn Books, 2007): 147-173.

Reading with:

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. “The Burden of English” in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. (Harvard University Press, 2012): 35-56.

Week 7: Local Alphabets

Case study:French, Arabic, and Amazigh/Berber scriptural politics

- Dris Soulaïmani. “[Arabic or Latin: Language Contact and Script Practices](#).” *Middle East-Topics & Arguments* 13 (2019): 13-20.

Reading with:

- Lydia Liu. “Scripts in Motion: Writing as Imperial Technology, Past and Present.” *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 130.2 (2015): 375-383.

Week 8: English, the Latin Script, and Information Technologies

Case study: Multilingualism for Foreign Language Teaching

- Gabriela Sylvia Meier. “The Multilingual Turn as a Critical Movement in Education: Assumptions, Challenges and a Need for Reflection.” ([De Gruyter Mouton](#), August 2016).

Reading with:

- Abdelfattah Kilito. “Dog Words,” trans. Ziad Elmarsafy. Bammer, Angelika, ed. *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*. (Indiana University Press, 1994): xxi-xxxi.