

# The Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry Emory University

## 2022-2023 Great Works Summer Seminar



### The Arabian Nights

August 4, 11, 18, and 25 • 6-8 pm via Zoom

Moderated by Professor Devin J. Stewart  
Department of Middle East and South Asian Studies, Emory

Scheherazade, Aladdin, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves are some of the most recognizable names in world literature, whereas in the medieval Arab world, it appears that the collection of stories to which they belonged was only fit for street storytellers. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (1888), Jorge Luis Borges' essay on reading *The Arabian Nights*, John Barth's "Dunyazadiad," scores of films, plays, ballets, and other adaptations attest to the work's enduring fascination. How and why did *The Arabian Nights* influence European and then world literature to such an extent?

In this seminar we will explore *The 1001 Nights*, also known as *The Arabian Nights*, the most famous collection of framed tales in world literature. We will read some of the most famous stories in the collection, along with a few less-known tales. We will trace the transmission of the tales from Persian into Arabic, and then into the European languages, assess the different translations available, including Richard Francis Burton's fascinating and quirky rendition, and investigate some of the modern cultural products engendered by them, including Edgar Allan Poe's "1002<sup>nd</sup> Night," *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924), and other film adaptations of *The 1001 Nights*.

This Great Works Seminar will meet **via Zoom from 6:00-8:00 p.m.** on the following **Thursday evenings: August 4, 11, 18, and 25, 2022.** Participants are expected to attend all four sessions. For further information and to reserve a spot on a "first-come basis," email the Fox Center at [foxcenter@emory.edu](mailto:foxcenter@emory.edu). Everyone from the Atlanta community is welcome and invited to join us for this free seminar.

#### Texts Online:

*The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, trans. Richard F. Burton

[https://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol\\_1/vol1.htm](https://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_1/vol1.htm) (Links to an external site.)

This includes all the tales, in 10 volumes + 5 supplemental volumes.

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/burt1k1/tale31.htm> (Links to an external site.)

This includes many of the most famous tales and might be easier to use. If you want to purchase a copy of a selection of the nights in Burton's translation—a good idea in my view—I suggested getting a used copy of this edition: *The Arabian Nights*. Modern Library edition, introduction by A.S. Byatt.

**Other texts to be provided by instructor.**

#### Session I: Thursday, August 4, 6-8 pm

To prepare, watch the Disney Aladdin Cartoon movie and read

"Aladdin; or, The Wonderful Lamp" [http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Sn\\_3/vol13.htm](http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Sn_3/vol13.htm)

#### Session II: Thursday, August 11, 6-8 pm

To prepare for this session, read the Frame Tale, "The Tale of the Trader and the Jinni," and "The Fisherman and the Jinni" (including the other stories in those sections)

[https://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol\\_1/vol1.htm](https://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_1/vol1.htm)

Also read: "The Story of Tawaddud"

[https://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol\\_5/tale113.htm](https://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_5/tale113.htm) (Links to an external site.)

Watch film *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1924

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQ8KCfCu23I>

#### Session III: Thursday, August 18, 6-8 pm

Reading: Ali Baba [http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Sn\\_3/vol13.htm](http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Sn_3/vol13.htm)

Reading: The Voyages of Sindbad

[http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol\\_6/vol6.htm](http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_6/vol6.htm)

*The Arabian Nights*, 2000 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FI2B7BYVa9E>

#### Session IV: Thursday, August 25, 6-8 pm

Reading: Marouf the Cobbler and His Wife Fatimah [http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol\\_10/vol10.htm](http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_10/vol10.htm)

Reading The Tale of Kamar al-Zaman [http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol\\_3/vol3.htm](http://www.wollamshram.ca/1001/Vol_3/vol3.htm) (Links to an external site.)