Making Women (Free): Colonialism, Orientalism, and Liberalism in Conversation

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Meeting via Zoom @ 6pm on September 16th and October 21st, 2020

Believing that Muslim women are oppressed, many liberal nations--France, Italy, Austria, and now Canada, among others, have gone to lengths to regulate when and where Muslim women can wear the hijab. Even today, black women and men face restrictions on their hairstyles in U.S. workplaces. Why do the self-presentations of women of color make liberal societies so uncomfortable, even when liberals agree that individual freedom and autonomy are crucial principles to protect? Philosopher Frantz Fanon suggested that the French colonial government in Algeria concentrated its efforts on regulating women’s haïks in order to control, if not destroy, Algerian society. By contrast, defenders of liberalism believed that colonized (and enslaved) people had to be educated and uplifted before they could be trusted to govern themselves. In this seminar, we’ll explore these questions through films and the works of Frantz Fanon, Lila Abu-Lughod, and others.

This seminar’s final two (2) sessions will meet via Zoom at 6pm on the following Wednesday evenings during the 2020 fall semester: September 16th and October 21st. The Zoom meeting link will be sent via email at least one day prior to each session. For further information, please email the Fox Center at foxcenter@emory.edu.

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