

## Presentation/Project

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is for students to understand a variety of social tensions in late 20<sup>th</sup> century Middle East and to evaluate the utility of the prison memoir as a source for history. On one hand, they provide unique insight into problems of the Middle East, e.g. lack of democracy, censorship, oppression, etc. On the other hand, the authors' agenda(s), political orientation, etc. often impedes his/her ability to tell the full story.

**Division of Labor:** Each group will need a leader, people to carry out research, and people to give the presentation—some groups may have people serving in all capacities. The role of each position will be discussed below. Hopefully people will choose positions that draw on their personal and academic strengths.

**Group Leader:** Your role is to read the book early so that you can better coordinate the activities of your group. You will be the nerve center/email contact for your group, and you will need to make sure that a dependable quorum of your group is doing what it is supposed to do. It is your responsibility to contact the primary instructor if there are significant problems. You will turn in a short report summarizing the efforts of all the individuals in your group. This is a good job for someone with excellent organizational and people skills.

**Researchers:** Your task is to see how the work contrasts with more scholarly sources. This is a good job for someone who is not particularly outgoing and/or someone with little time to connect to others outside of class. You will write a short report (either individually or collectively) that you distribute to the group the week before the presentations, which addresses the following points:

1. Why is the author writing the book and who is the target audience? How far separated was the author from the events that took place in the book—was it written immediately, in pieces, or years after the events? Was the book published at the time it was written, or was it published or reissued due to certain historical circumstances?
2. Is the book originally written in English or is it a translation? Does the author translate him/herself? How evident is the hand of an editor/translator?
3. Does the book cover the entire life span of the author, does (s)he focus on a specific period or event, and/or does (s)he include events prior to his/her birth? Is incarceration the central story that the author is telling, or is it merely part of a larger picture? How does the author view the detention and does (s)he accept responsibility for it? How does it shape his/her identity? What types of events does the author spend more/less time discussing? Does (s)he tell his/her story in chronological order or does (s)he utilize some other method? Does this method work well?
4. What kind of educational and class background does the author have? Is this indicated in the book, or did you have to research the author? Did this education/upbringing influence his/her writing about his/her subject?

5. What are the pivotal events in the lifetime (or period covered) of the author? Are these the same events that are given the most coverage in the Cleveland textbook and in class discussions? Does the author support (or contradict) material covered in class? Does the author present information thematically, chronologically, or in some other manner—do you get a sense of history and chronology from reading his/her account? Is there an event (or certain events) that profoundly influence the way in which the author writes his/her book.
6. Do nationalist, ideological (Marxist, feminist, etc.), or religious inclinations play a significant role in the individual's incarceration?
7. How does the author spend his/her time while incarcerated? Does (s)he interact with other prisoners? Do the prisoners organize?
8. Which individuals in the person's life have the most influence on the author? From whom does the author learn the most? What relationships are most central to the author? What role does family play in the narrative?
9. How does the author compare to an academic account of a similar topic?

**Presenters:** Your task is to create an innovative talk-show performance addressing the issues of your book. You can do 60-minute type interviews, Oprah Winfrey, Jerry Springer, or even a Saturday Night Live type of show, but there must be some sort of role-playing involved utilizing the most important themes raised by your book. If you are having troubles generating ideas, meet with the primary instructor during office hours. Your performance must be 30 minutes long, and you may involve researchers/group leader in the performance, but the bulk of the work is yours. This is a good job for the creative extrovert, who also perhaps dislikes formal writing. In preparing your presentations you should probably also think about the issues about which your researcher is writing [see questions above].

Groups will be given a small amount of time on last class of the week, to meet. It is presumed that most of your work will take place individually and via email. In other words, I do not foresee students having to do much meeting outside of class.