The course investigates the relationship between architectural and environmental imaginaries in the development of post-colonial architecture in the Arab World. The course integrates readings and discussions around Orientalism, Environmental Orientalism, environmental history, and colonial/post-colonial architecture in the region. Integrating environmental history methodologies into architectural discourse reveals the relationship between architecture, environmentalism and colonialism. This framework raises the following questions: What do colonial legacies have to do with environmentalism, and how does this shape Arab architecture? How do contemporary ideologies and practices of environmentalism impact Arab architecture? And finally, what are non-Western designers to do in the face of ongoing Orientalism and the climate crisis?

Architecture and Environmental Orientalism in the Arab World

Course Description + Syllabus

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The course is structured in three parts. First, the readings build up conceptual complexity by introducing the ideas around Orientalism and modernity. Second, the course investigates the role Environmental Orientalism, and environmental history in the built environment. Third, the seminar moves towards a case study approach, with each week looking at a specific territory within the wider region to unpack the relationship between colonial architectural practices, the construction of an environmental imaginary, and the territory's actual environmental history. Throughout the course, we investigate explicitly architectural responses in the Arab World. However, they are now recast through the lens developed throughout the course.

COURSE OUTCOMES
1. Understand the conceptual framework of Orientalism and its relationship to architecture, the environment, and nation building in the Arab World with a specific focus on viewing it through the lens of Environmental Orientalism.
2. Deploy research methodologies used in environmental history into architectural research. This is due to the close proximity between the material, political and cultural components of both disciplines.
3. Identify the differences amongst colonial practices as it relates to the environment and architecture across the region.
4. Contextualize the emergence of post-colonial architecture practice in the Arab World and how these practices, and critical analysis of these practices, might influence contemporary architecture culture in the region.
5. Develop critical positions about contemporary architecture education and practice in the region.

ASSESSMENT METHODS
2. Research Project: This project integrates a writing exercise, archival research and field photographic documentation. Students investigate a built condition in the UAE that can be tackled through the tools of environmental history. The criteria for site/object selection include its historical relevance, the inherent relationships it presents with some form of shaping or manipulation of the natural environment, accessibility to an archival record, physical access for photographic documentation.
3. In-class presentations: Each student leads the class discussion once a semester through a presentation, extrapolated from the week’s readings.
4. In-class discussion.

COURSE STRUCTURE
Week 1-3: Introduction of Theoretical Framework: Orientalism and Modernity
Here, we embark on readings from primary and secondary texts on Orientalism, Modernity, Colonialism and Post-Colonialism, while always making inferences to the built environment. Students will be encouraged to develop opinions through an architectural lens, culminating in a discussion about how radically different colonial practices in the region generated radically different architecture and urban design practices. In general, the course deploys a Socratic method of open inquiry, where my role includes directing conversation in a way that enables students to think critically on the topic at hand and to question their own assumptions.
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**Week 4-6: Introduction of Environmental History and Environmental Orientalism**

Here, the readings and discussions begin to become more focused on issues of Environmental History and Environmental Orientalism as they relate to the built environment. The point of this part of the course is to integrate ideas around Orientalism and the environment, to show how they both work to create a particular architectural narrative in the region. This portion, before we start to look at more precise case-studies of architecture and urban design from the region that remained largely invisible to the student throughout their careers up to this point, allows the students to gain new knowledge and a new set of tools that are not typically introduced in architecture schools.

**Week 7-14 – Region by Region Case-Study**

This part of the course focused on a specific region per week, where readings highlighted both the architectural, environmental and cultural context of the region during and in the period after direct colonial rule ended. For example, each week sees readings around architecture, environmental history, environmental imaginaries and cultural history of the specific region, encouraging the students to understand these components as part of a larger whole.

**READING LIST**

**Week 1: Orientalism**

**Week 2: Tradition and Modernity**

**Week 3: Colonial Spatial Practices**

**Week 4: Environmental Histories**

**Week 5: The Climate and Postcolonialism**

**Week 6: Environmental Imaginaries**
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Week 7: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 1

Week 8: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 2

Week 9: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 3

Week 10: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 4

Week 11: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 5

Week 12: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 6

Week 13: Environmental Imaginaries: Case Study 7