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The Riz Test: Teaching Against Islamophobia Through Film

Abstract

This paper offers a concrete tool for teaching against Islamophobia using a film assignment and “the Riz Test.” In four parts, it briefly reviews terminology and literature connected to Islamophobia and Muslimophobia, histories of looking and the power of visual culture, pedagogy and critical viewing habits, the Riz Test, and examples of student engagement and course learning goals met through this assignment. Then, readers can use the concrete tool in their courses and practice critical viewing habits.

This paper was part of a panel on “Teaching Asian Religions Through Film” presented at the Association for Asian Studies conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, March 24–27, 2022. The panel offered concrete examples on how to adopt cinema and TV to discuss Asian religions, culture, and modernity in the classroom and contributed to the developing analysis concerning the use of visual media in Asian studies pedagogy.

Keywords

Islamophobia, Riz Ahmed, Ramy, Pedagogy, Teaching

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Author Notes

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“The premise for empathy has to be equal humanity; it is an injustice to demand that the maligned identify with those who question their humanity.”

-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Islamophobia, Muslimophobia

Islamophobia is a systemic issue that affects Muslims and anyone who may be perceived as Muslim. It is acknowledged and identified, while not often actively taught *against*. This article addresses a specific pedagogical intervention I have most recently used in religious studies courses titled “Islam, Race, and Politics” and “Islamophobia,” contextualized within recent scholarship on Islamophobia and framed as a way to teach *against* Islamophobia through film.¹

In his scholarship on Islamophobia, Todd Green notes that the term Islamophobia came into public discourse steadily after the Runnymede Trust created the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia in 1996 and published an influential report the following year. This report identified Islamophobia as something distinct and singled out Muslims for protection, creating a siloed view of the issue.² The original report noted that there were three aspects to the term, “Islamophobia.” These are “unfounded hostility towards Islam; practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities; exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs.”³ Scholar Salman Sayyid notes that there is “an implicit recognition

of the racialization of Muslims,” in the transition from hostility towards Islam to hostility against those perceived to be Muslim.⁴ The authors of the original report, Farah Elahi and Omar Khan, in revisiting the Runnymede Trust report in 2017, offer a short definition of Islamophobia: it is anti-Muslim racism. Green summarizes a revised definition of Islamophobia as “the fear of and hostility toward Muslims and Islam that is rooted in racism and that results in individual and systemic discrimination, exclusion, and violence targeting Muslims and those perceived as Muslim.”⁵ Juliane Hammer has further explicated the systemization of Islamophobia, including the perspectives of U.S. politics, imperial wars, feminist negotiations, and “Western” claims of superiority present in both liberal and conservative political ideologies in describing networks of implicit Islamophobia.⁶ On the use of this word, Hammer notes, “The term has become a convenient shorthand, and like every shorthand, it contains a problematic reductionism while proving a convenient label for a much more complex set of phenomena.”⁷ For example, one might consider shifts in politics in which Muslims are “tools for negotiating political allegiances,” imperial wars (neocolonialism), racism and bigotry (primarily through representation), or “civilizational discourses on the moral and cultural superiority of ‘western’ powers.”⁸ Sayyid further notes that the scope of Islamophobia supersedes its formulations, and the concept evolves as “a response to the problematization of Muslim identity.”⁹

Focusing more on the American political adaptations of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, Nadine Naber and Junaid Rana note that policies such as the 2017 Muslim Travel Ban (Executive Orders 13769 and 13780), upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in 2018, serves as a progression of U.S. imperial racism mentioned by Hammer. The difficulty in defining anti-Muslim racism and providing a way for the public to interpret it as a form of racism has made it difficult to organize against it. They, similar to others' definitions above, note that anti-Muslim racism is a "shorthand for inter-personal, media, and state-based targeting of persons of those who are Muslim and those perceived to be Muslim."¹⁰ They add, however, that this targeting is usually connected to the enmity status of Muslims to the United States. Furthermore, the "War on Terror" created a threat that was anything and anywhere, offering justification for wide swaths of discrimination and targeting.

Expansive definitions of Islamophobia, as noted above, may not be perfect and, to some, indicate too broad of a field to be helpful. Still, their nuances are teachable moments and ripe for discussion in undergraduate classrooms. Introducing other terms that could identify similar concepts offers a chance for comparison and clarity in the debate. Since Islam has been referred to as "a 'theoretical metonym' for the Arab world,"¹¹ identifying Islamophobia often remains related to an understanding of Muslims from the Middle East or Muslim experiences in North America without also situating this in Asian or pan-Asian

contexts. For undergraduates, discussing the neologism of Muslimophobia helps identify a broader view of Muslims as neither the exclusive target nor recipient of acts or attitudes characterized as Islamophobic.

Because of these more significant systemic issues, Islamophobia is not an issue only related to violence against or towards Muslims; as Simran Jeet Singh argues in the case of anti-Sikh, anti-Muslim acts, “hate violence is not committed solely on the basis of ignorance; nor is every instance of hate violence against a Sikh intended for a Muslim.”¹² Singh contends that the phrase “Muslimophobia” is more precise and accurate than Islamophobia.¹³ The racialization of Muslim identity occurs as people are presumed to be Muslim, not adherents to Islam. It is their racialized “religious” body that is the target, not “the religion.” This framing helps expand our understanding of the violence caused by perpetrators who seek to attack or belittle those perceived to be Muslim who may follow other faiths, such as Sikhism. It also helps us understand that in cinematic representations, switching languages (Arabic to Persian in places where the opposite one would be more accurate) or casting actors of South Asian descent to play Arab characters often happens, demonstrating Muslimophobia through the interchangeability of the “apparently Muslim.”

Jaideep Singh has argued the category of the “apparently Muslim,” rose in post 9/11 America, hybridizing and defining those deemed to be under its scope. Neda Maghbouleh, in her book, *The Limits of Whiteness*, has discussed the related

theory of “socially brown” in identifying racial loopholes and racial hinges in the lives of Iranian Americans. “Apparently Muslim” groups might include Muslims, Sikhs, Arabs, and those of South Asian communities. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity have also reported targeting for being deemed “apparently Muslim” as well. The visibility of racial and religious signifiers, such as “turban-wearing Sikhs, veil-wearing women, and brown-skinned men with facial hair,” makes the status of someone who does or does not practice Islam as less relevant than being identified as apparently Muslim.¹⁴ Nadine Naber and Junaid Rana connect anti-Muslim racism with these signifiers as identifying potential terroristic connections which can include “specific clothing such as the hijab to an apparently ‘Muslim’ or ‘Arabic’ name, to a national origin or region of origin associated with predominantly Muslim populations (i.e. Iran, South Asia, West Asia, Northern Sudan, etc.).”¹⁵ While race has been interpreted as a visual marker through physical appearance and based on skin tone and other factors, “religious” symbols such as a turban or hijab offered an additional marker through which the “apparently Muslim” can be identified and targeted.

In another example, in *Islam is a Foreign Country*, Zareena Grewal writes, “African Americans have contested the dominant American discourse about the Muslim World. [...] Their transnational attachments to Muslims abroad who are not Americans destabilizes the idea of a “people” at the heart of citizenship.”¹⁶ In considering transnational, transregional, pan- identities across Asian countries and

societies, instructors can take a closer look at anti-Islamic violence and representation through film and the presentation of storylines involving Muslim life or locations where Muslims might live or work to teach against Islamophobia. Whether one uses the terminology of Islamophobia, Muslimophobia, anti-Muslim racism, or something else, the phrases can be unpacked with undergraduates in order to understand how issues of representation and marking difference find their way to film and media.

Most directors and producers may not wake up in the morning seeking to misrepresent or malign, but systemic problems run deep. If we can recall Edward Said's *Orientalism*, he notes, "It is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interest inevitably brought to bear on any occasion when the peculiar entity 'the Orient' is in question."¹⁷ Later Said adds that it is not just knowledge *about the Orient* that is the substance of Orientalism, but rather "geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts," and "an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction, but series of interest it creates and maintains."¹⁸ In light of this, we can recognize the failure not to have Muslim perspectives and representation in film is not solved only by adding diverse names to the credits.

As Kristian Peterson notes in a recent review of the broadcast comedy series *United States of Al*, "even with the presence of Muslims in the writer's room,

the show relies on unsurprising stereotypes, such as jokes about “strange” food, religious eating habits, and bargaining for deals.”¹⁹ Casting directors, producers, and writers must continually address issues of inclusion and diversity, especially as research has shown a direct correlation between viewers’ consumption of entertainment media presenting Muslims or Middle Easterners as terrorists and those viewers’ espousal of stereotypes about terroristic activity and Muslims or Middle Easterners.²⁰ On the other hand, representation overall is lacking; a UCLA report that evaluated the top 200 English-language theatrical and major streaming films released in 2021 found that that there were zero MENA²¹ women leads, and overall cast share in films was only 1.1% for women from the MENA region.²² Too little representation overall, coupled with the overwhelming representation of Muslims or Middle Easterners as connected to terroristic activity when presented on screen yields a consistent media environment that reinforces tired stereotypes.

The power of images, propaganda, and stereotypes are far-reaching and not limited to American media landscapes. A few brief examples of consumption habits in Iranian history will shed light on the long-term strategies of viewing and consumption habits. In the case of the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution (1978-79), the newly formed Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran used images and words on posters and the release of martyrdom films from the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) to fight an information and ideology war with the power of images and movies alongside humans. They are not images meant to be forgotten but

imprinted. Scholars Peter Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi credit these ways of looking, successful movements, and effective motivations to “500 years of persuasive institutionalization,” stemming from the rich, powerful, and influential visual culture within Shi'a-oriented states, including the Safavid Empire.²³ They further note that the “Islamic Revolution in Iran has been one of those remarkable occasions in history when the power of words and images has successfully challenged the military might of an established state.”²⁴ In this case, viewers (Shi'a, Persianate) learned to be affected by such images, and young viewers adopted and internalized these consumption habits. Of the Iranian Revolution, Dabashi and Chelkowski note, “The story of the Islamic Revolution in Iran is the story of carefully and deliberately constructed images, drawn from the depth of Persian historical memory, orchestrated towards specific political ends.”²⁵ With attention to the imperial connections to Islamophobia as mentioned earlier, one can see some overlap with the bombardment of media representation that connects with support for American foreign policy ends, such as war efforts. Yet, increasingly diverse viewers are demanding increasingly diverse films and media. In UCLA's *Hollywood Diversity Report 2022*, researchers find that “America's increasingly diverse audiences prefer diverse film content,” showing correlations between higher ratings across many racial groups for films with higher percentages of diverse or majority-minority casts.²⁶ Introducing students to diverse films and examining the films through the Riz Test, described below, encourages students to

weaken the links between Islamophobia and their entertainment media reinforcements to lessen stereotypical policies in the long term by ushering in new ways of looking.

Pedagogy & Critical Viewing

Recent pedagogical research indicates that teaching for retention (being able to transfer such knowledge later, in the case of my current study, improving critical viewing abilities and challenging longstanding assumptions in repeated transfer of concepts) involves three main associations. The first is *an emotional connection* to the topic; in the case of films, this can be the human dimension: what are the real-world implications of systemic Islamophobia? How do representations of war in Syria, Iraq, or Yemen impact and perpetuate Muslimophobia worldwide? The second is *sense* in terms of what students already know. In the case under consideration here, students are often quick to note that “the media is biased;” instructors can use such attitudes to build on this sense and address commonalities through critical watching in a more sophisticated way. Sense is also a way for students to connect course readings to other topics; they apply course materials on race or religion to the complex fictional or documentary scenes in their chosen media. The third is *meaning*; if the brain needs a reason to remember information, that reason cannot simply be a quiz or examination! Personal interests (such as

choosing their film or topic described below) can help, combined with students' goals of religious or cultural literacy and fighting ignorance with education.²⁷ Students' motivation to be anti-racist or speak truth to power can be harnessed through the realization that they can process a film's representation of Muslims with these motivations in mind and using new tools gained in the course. The Riz Test can function as a tool for students to put into action these pedagogical concepts of emotional connect, sense, and meaning.

Riz Test: *What is the Riz Test?*

In a significant USC study through the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative on 200 top-grossing movies released between 2017 and 2019 in 4 Anglophone regions (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand), researchers found that of the extremely slim representation of Muslim characters on screen, most were linked to violence. In the 200 films surveyed, only 41 primary and secondary characters were Muslim, and 54.7% of those were targets of violence and 39% were perpetrators of violence. Most Muslim also appeared in the past, instead of featured as a part of present-day settings.²⁸

This is directly connected to the impetus behind the "Riz Test." Scholars Sadia Habib and Shaf Choudry developed the "Riz Test," named after the Muslim actor Riz Ahmed and inspired by the popular Bechdel Test.²⁹ For a film to pass the

Bechdel Test, it should feature at least two women; these women speak to each other; and they speak about a topic that is not a man/their relationship with a man. The Riz Test similarly has found a way to measure how Muslims are depicted in films and T.V. shows by asking questions about Muslim-presenting characters connected with common stereotypes, such as oppression of women or terroristic activity. If the answer to one of the following questions is yes, the film or show has failed the test: Does/Is the character talking about, the victim of, or the perpetrator of terrorism? Are they presented as irrationally angry? Are they presented as superstitious, culturally backward, or anti-modern? Are they presented as a threat to a “Western” way of life? If the character is male, is he presented as misogynistic? Or, if female, is she presented as oppressed by her male counterparts? This test is a way to watch a film critically and better highlight the directorial and casting decisions that perpetuate stereotypes.

Alison Bechdel and Liz Wallace created the Bechdel Test in 1985. Currently, many more tests have been designed as ways to help both the viewer and the producers or writers of films and media better represent diverse, complex, and fully realized characters on screen. The Russo Test represents a standard for mainstream Hollywood films to reach regarding representation of LGBTQ+ characters;³⁰ the Duvernay Test asks that African Americans and other minorities have fully realized lives and characters;³¹ and the Aila Test aims to bring Indigenous/Aboriginal concerns into feminist media critiques.³² Together these

tests, along with the Riz Test and even more related to Muslim identities (Obeidi-Alsultany Test³³; Muslim Women's Test³⁴) can be incorporated into discussions and assignments in order to encourage students to see their work as part of a greater trend towards more fully realized characters across racial, gender, sexuality, and religious spectrums. In the context of this article, watching with the Riz Test in mind, students grapple with ambiguity, values, and their own emotional connections to the media to assess the film's representation of Muslims. They also consider the lasting impact of the media by considering how it may influence wider audiences and their perceptions.

An assignment built around the Riz Test allows for such assessment. First, I offer students an ever-expanding list of movies, including documentaries and new cinematic releases. When using the activity in a new iteration of the class or assignment, I cull media that did not produce great results in discussing the Riz Test (for example, the linkage to Muslim life or representation did not offer enough information to thoroughly present on and write about). An example of a film I removed from review for this reason was *Girlhood*,³⁵ a French film that follows the life of a teenage girl living in a public housing complex in a *banlieue* of Paris, France. The location setting for the film is in an area known to have a large Muslim population, but the linkage is not readily made apparent, and one student found the application of the Riz Test and processing themes about Islamophobia too distant from our course materials. This assessment led me to pull the film from my list.

Consistent adaptation and flexibility of the assignment and materials for use allows for student feedback to be taken into consideration, while also working to make sure the assignment remains compelling and interesting for the students through diversity of materials presented. As an instructor dedicated to accessibility and equality in education, it is my responsibility to make sure most films are available to watch or stream through services at my college. Unless a specific budget is offered for rentals or streaming, professors should work to use campus resources to make materials accessible to all students. For films or series that should be included that are only available on popular streaming services, I group those by the streaming service (such as *Netflix* or *Hulu*) so that students without access to those services can choose different films.

In order to put the Riz Test into practice, students first read short introductory pieces on Muslim representation in Hollywood (these can change based on new actors who have become famous or achieved a new milestone to keep the connections timely). They also read a description of the Riz Test and its purpose in honing critical viewing skills. Next, students pick a film from a pre-circulated list. Occasionally students have brought to my attention films I might not be familiar with, such as films from a student's country of origin or a new release of which I was unaware. As long as students can apply the assignment's parameters to their media of interest, I usually accept the suggestion. Such flexibility connects with the emotional connection, sense, and meaning described in the pedagogical

section above as choices empower students to engage with media that is important to them. Next, I instruct students to watch the film with the Riz Test in mind while keeping time stamps documented so they can find the most relevant clips later to show to the class. I limit these to 5 minutes of clips per student so they can focus on finding the clearest examples of their arguments about the applicability of the Riz Test and Muslim representation on screen. Then, they present the films to the class, engaging with the Riz Test, noting how they might have had to think through the decision carefully, or demonstrating through clips and quotes points of representation that deserved a closer look. Other students ask questions during the presentation, comparing issues of representation or other films and media they have consumed. Finally, students complete a short write-up of the film and points made in the presentation to submit, where they often dig deeper into issues not covered in the presentation to the class.

In action—It is always more complicated to decide!

In doing this assignment, students often find that it is not easy to decide on a clear decision as to whether the Riz Test has been met or not. While the test seems aimed for judging Western media sources, by pulling in many forms of media that can be consumed by far-reaching audiences, including feature films, documentaries, and TV series, students hone their critical watching skills across different forms of

media. The results are still complicated regardless of the media source used, and the discussion generated is more valuable than a strict yes or no for passing the test. It's important to note that since students can choose the films to engage with, they have often shied away from choosing explicitly anti-Muslim or Islamophobic films, such as Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper*, in exchange for more diverse and complicated stories.

In the following four examples, students use the Riz Test as a jumping off point to realize that critical viewing requires careful processing of their own assumptions and connections with course materials. For example, even when the film is a film made within a Muslim majority country, the actors are from that country, and the film demonstrates a thrilling action sequence, students wonder if it still can perpetuate stereotypes. For example, in the Iranian film, *A Separation*, Nader, the main character who is a husband, father, and son through different relationships highlighted in the film, loses his temper (and justifiably so, given the plot) many times.³⁶ Students who reviewed the film still wondered if the violence and drama on account of Nader did more to perpetuate negativity, even as it was central to the storyline. The inclusion of a film like *A Separation* is valuable in this assignment as a film made in a Muslim-majority country that received a wide audience as a winner of the Academy Award for best foreign language film of 2012.

In reviewing the French film *L'apôtre* (*The Apostle*), one student noted the complexity of Muslim characters present in the film, observing that it could have

been easy to pit Islam and Christianity against one another in the movie, but the characters were multifaceted.³⁷ In analyzing the film, however, the student concluded that the movie would fail if only a yes or no were allowed in answering the Riz Test. Yet again, ambiguity comes into play and furthers intellectual analysis. Showing the class clips demonstrates the points that gave students pause in assessing the Riz test, encouraging class discussion. A character named Youseff does appear violent and angry at times, but he is also a well-rounded character, shown in terms of his ritual practices related to Islam, kindness, and other emotions. Youseff's character sparked a discussion of whether viewers might only pick up violent behavior as stereotypical or if they would appreciate the complexity of the representation. This kind of perspective demonstrates effective uptake of two student learning outcomes in my course: to distinguish between varieties of Muslim experiences regarding their religious practices in different periods and geographic regions with precision and non-totalizing language, as well as to consume a variety of media sources, including fictional representation, in a discerning manner. Thus, a student asking if the Riz Test is applicable if positive depictions of Islam and Muslims balance characters exhibiting anger allows for critical viewing that the student can carry with them once the class assignment is complete. These fit the goals of not only seeing if the Riz Test would apply for the purposes of an assignment, but enabling an undergraduate to see a film through a careful eye and details that broader audiences might not pick up on.

In *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, a student struggled with the ambiguity of the Muslimness of the characters themselves.³⁸ The movie takes place in Bad City, Iran, a country with a majority Twelver Shi'a Muslim population, and wearing a *hijab* is mandatory for all women. Therefore, the protagonist's black *chador* and *hijab* are required for any resident or visitor in Iran, regardless of their religion, even while the black cloak alludes to modern depictions of vampire attire. Furthermore, the film does not mention religion or tie the characters' actions to an identifiable morality system. Yet, the context is one in which the viewer would expect rules or standards of Iranian religious culture to be present. The Riz Test, in this case, offered a chance to reflect on gender-based violence and retaliation present in the film, even though the viewer never knows specific information about the characters' Muslimness.

A television series like *Ramy*,³⁹ with some Muslim actors playing Muslim characters, offers another direction in analyzing students' application of the Riz Test. A student used interviews with the star and creator of the series, Ramy Youssef, to gain further insight into how *Ramy* attempts to portray Muslim problems as just human problems. In an interview, Yousseff quipped, "There's this idea that when you say you're Muslim, that you're either all in or you're trying to escape it. I love the idea of gradations and levels, just like everybody else has."⁴⁰ Through the show, the student acknowledged that rather than ignoring tropes or denying their existence, the show concedes they exist and complicates them, even

debunking them. The student integrated considerations of race and religion discussed in the course through concrete examples in the film, thus supporting a pedagogical goal of applying course concepts through media consumption habits.

Ambiguity helps in processing information and making students watch, view, and listen critically. However, the pendulum swing from terrorist to humanized Muslims or “socially browned”⁴¹ and modes of empathy are not enough to solve the problem. Documentary filmmaker and media expert Sonya Childress notes that shifting from empathy to solidarity can help de-center whiteness as the standard viewing lens to change to perspectives that are not normally seen or represented—and that do more than “humanize” the characters in the film, since their humanity should not be a question.⁴²

I include documentaries as options for students in the assignment since they can also have problematic elements of representation and topics. The statistics are stark for documentaries, as they are for feature films. In a critical review of a recently premiered documentary, *Jihad Rehab*,⁴³ Assia Boundaoui cites her study undertaken with a group of Muslim and Arab filmmakers examining the last 20 years of Sundance documentary films and found 76 with people that are Muslim as the central theme. Of those, most featured wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, making war the primary frame through which Muslims and/or Arabs are portrayed, and in these war-centered documentaries, “a staggering 75% [...] were made by non-Muslim or non-MENA filmmakers.”⁴⁴ But films should not only present war

as the topic of Muslims' lives, whether in documentary or feature film analysis. Films have the power to be political art, not just humanizing tools; Boundaoui asks, "where is the space for Muslim creatives to make beautifully intricate, nuanced films that center our positionality? Films that concern themselves not with war, but with life?"⁴⁵ Therefore, the point of the Riz Test must be more than an acknowledgment of humanity (and the fact that even this is so rarely represented on screen), but rather, a deeper reflection on how industries, governments, publics, schools, and much, much more work to create systemic modes of oppression.⁴⁶ To this end, students can consider the systemic nature of Islamophobia through their analysis of the feature films, documentaries, and TV series through what looks like a straightforward Riz Test to understand the many factors at play in Muslim representation on screen.

Critical awareness of the consumption of culture through film can offer a means through which students can see new facets of representation and improve media consumption acumen and habits. As noted above, students can learn to see differently and improve their media consumption habits through the assignment. The assignment creates better linkages with course materials situated in ongoing scholarly conversations as students create emotional connection, sense, and meaning in their engagement. This is a highly applicable tool that is easy to connect with other tests or practices in order to encourage critical looking and learning through film.

¹ While the idea of “teaching against Islamophobia” is not new, in this instance, I was inspired by the word choice from a 2018 workshop with the Wabash Center and a new working group within the *American Academy of Religion*, both with the same name.

² Todd H. Green, *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West*, 2nd ed., (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2019), 14-15.

³ Farah Elahi and Omar Khan, eds., “Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All,” (London: Runnymede, 2017), 1.

⁴ Salman Sayyid, “A Measure of Islamophobia,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2014): 13.

⁵ Todd H. Green, *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West*, 31.

⁶ Juliane Hammer, *Peaceful Families: American Muslim Efforts Against Domestic Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxy/detail.action?docID=5835152>, 37.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Salman Sayyid, “A Measure of Islamophobia,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2014): 14.

¹⁰ Nadine Naber and Junaid Rana, “The 21st Century Problem of Anti-Muslim Racism,” *Jadaliyya*, July 25, 2019, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/39830>.

¹¹ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Zones of Theory in the Anthropology of the Arab World,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18 (1989): 295.

¹² Simran Jeet Singh, “Muslimophobia, Racialization, and Mistaken Identity: Understanding Anti-Sikh Hate Violence in Post-9/11 America,” in *Muhammad in the Digital Age*, edited by Ruqayya Yasmine Khan (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxy/detail.action?docID=4397274>, 165.

¹³ Simran Jeet Singh, “Muslimophobia, Racialization, and Mistaken Identity: Understanding Anti-Sikh Hate Violence in Post-9/11 America,” in *Muhammad in the Digital Age*, edited by Ruqayya Yasmine Khan (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxy/detail.action?docID=4397274>.

¹⁴ Ibid., 159.

¹⁵ Nadine Naber and Junaid Rana, “The 21st Century Problem of Anti-Muslim Racism,” *Jadaliyya*, July 25, 2019, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/39830>.

¹⁶ Zareena Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 6.

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- ¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York City: Vintage Books), 3.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ¹⁹ Kristian Peterson, “The Rise of the Muslim Sitcom,” *The Revealer*, December 9, 2021, <https://therevealer.org/the-rise-of-the-muslim-sitcom/>.
- ²⁰ Ian Hawkins, Stewart M. Coles, Muniba Saleem, Jessica D. Moorman & Haleemah Aqel, “How Reel Middle Easterners’ Portrayals Cultivate Stereotypical Beliefs and Policy Support,” *Mass Communication and Society* 2022, DOI: 10.1080/15205436.2022.2062000.
- ²¹ Nomenclature for “Middle East and North Africa.”
- ²² Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón, *Hollywood Diversity Report 2022: Part 1: Film* (Los Angeles: UCLA Division of Social Sciences, 2022) <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2022-Film-3-24-2022.pdf>.
- ²³ Peter J. Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging a Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 22.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ²⁶ Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón, *Hollywood Diversity Report 2022: Part 1: Film* (Los Angeles: UCLA Division of Social Sciences, 2022) <https://socialsciences.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UCLA-Hollywood-Diversity-Report-2022-Film-3-24-2022.pdf>.
- ²⁷ Elizabeth Barkley and Claire Howell Major, *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, California: Josey-Bass Press, 2020), 92-93.
- ²⁸ Al-Baab Khan, et. al, *Missing & Maligned: The Reality of Muslims in Popular Global Movies* (Los Angeles: USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, 2021) <https://pillarsfund.org/content/uploads/2021/06/Missing-Maligned-in-Film-FINAL.pdf>. This study was also supported by Riz Ahmed’s film production company, Left Handed Films.
- ²⁹ <https://www.riztest.com/>
- ³⁰ “The Vito Russo Test,” accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.glaad.org/sri/2014/vitorusso>.
- ³¹ TheDuVernayTest.org redirects to Ben Child, “Ava DuVernay backs ‘DuVernay test’ to monitor racial diversity in Hollywood,” *The Guardian*, February 1, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/feb/01/ava-duvernay-test-racial-diversity-hollywood-selma-director-oscars>.
- ³² Ali Nahdee, “The Aila Test,” accessed August 31, 2022, <https://the-aila-test.tumblr.com/about>.
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- ³⁵ *Girlhood*, directed by Céline Sciamma (Product Dimensions, 2014).
- ³⁶ *A Separation*, directed by Asghar Farhadi (Asghar Farhadi Productions, 2011).
- ³⁷ *L’apôtre (The Apostle)*, directed by Cheyenne Carron (Carron Production, 2014).
- ³⁸ *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, directed by Ana Lily Amirpour (SpectreVision, 2014).
- ³⁹ *Ramy*, Directed by Ramy Youseff, aired April 19, 2019, on *Hulu video*, <https://www.hulu.com/series/ramy-4bcb6c3a-3d9a-4d49-b8e0-57fb7de9c8d6>.
- ⁴⁰ Lorraine Ali, “Ramy Youssef on making TV’s first Muslim American sitcom, Hulu’s millennial comedy ‘Ramy,’” *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-ramy-youssef-hulu-muslim-comedy-20190419-story.html> (accessed June 28, 2022).
- ⁴¹ Neda Maghbooleh, *The Limits of Whiteness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 5.
- ⁴² Sonya Childress, “Beyond Empathy,” <https://firelightmedia.medium.com/beyond-empathy-ad6b5ad8a1d8> (accessed February 7, 2022).
- ⁴³ *Jihad Rehab*, directed by Meg Smaker (2021; Sidestilt), screened at Sundance Film Festival, 2022.
- ⁴⁴ Assia Boundaoui, “Islamophobia and the Tyranny of Empathy: The Case of ‘Jihad Rehab,’” <https://www.documentary.org/online-feature/islamophobia-and-tyranny-empathy-case-jihad-rehab> accessed February 7, 2022.
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- ⁴⁶ Read more about Sundance (and the film *Jihad Rehab*) and its systemic curation problem <https://www.indiewire.com/2022/02/sundance-spotify-problem-jihad-rehab-1234696743/>.

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