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"Post-9/11 Television Discourses: Gender, Violence, and the War on Terror in American TV Series"

ABSTRACT

Drawing from postcolonial and feminist studies, and their engagement with representations in popular culture, this lecture aims at analyzing the discursive construction of gender in selected American television series in the post 9/11 era. I argue that the media narratives of gender have been crucial to create and maintain the dominant discourse on the war on terror, with its notion of patriotism, nation, Enemy/Other, traditional masculinity, and legitimization of violence. As J. Melnick states in *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction*, "The work of celebrating 'real men' after 9/11 has been done across many media and in political discourse, but nowhere in so focused or sustained a manner as in mainstream Hollywood film and television" (2009, 124). In my talk I will examine the consequences of the (re)emergence of the traditional masculinity (and violence connected therewith) in the moments of crisis and threatened security as well as its influence on visualizations of women (both Muslim and non-Muslim) in television narratives.

In her book *Casting Out: the Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (2008), S. Razack reveals the post-9/11 logic of thinking about race and gender by analyzing three figures connected to the war on terror: "dangerous" Muslim men, "imperiled" Muslim women, and "civilized" Europeans. Razack's considerations will be the point of departure to examine the position of women in television narratives; however, I am interested not only in how selected visual texts rely on nationalistic myths of the Enemy/Muslim Other that represent Muslim men as, among others, oppressors of Muslim women—victims of culture and custom that need to be "saved," but also I want to have a look at representations of American women and their roles in maintaining/contesting the dominant discourse on the war on terror and the violence it perpetuates. The post-9/11 rhetoric undoubtedly has contributed to a significant backlash to feminist accomplishments, which has been clearly visible in the media, as emphasized by, among others, Susan Faludi in her book *Terror Dream* (2007). Women's advances and their position within the society are questioned and criticized, and particular mediated images of gender are mobilized to strengthen such logic of thinking. In this context, I will look critically at such television productions as *24* (2001- 2010, 2014-date), *Sleeper Cell* (2005-2006), and *Homeland* (2011-date).