

¡Critical Thinking Saves Lives!

Routes of Radical Love
Reading *Layli & Majnun*
NEAR E 429 / C LIT 322 | Winter 2021 | Virtual

Aria Fani | ariafani@uw.edu
Mon. & Wed. 1:30–3:20 PM
Office hours: Book on [Calendly](#)



LAYLA AND MAJNUN AT SCHOOL
SCHOOL OF BEHZAD, TIMURID HERAT, CIRCA 1480

The story of *Layli & Majnun* is without a doubt the most globally-circulated and adapted love story to have emerged from West Asia. Together we will read Nezami Ganjavi's (d. 1209) twelfth-century narrative of *Layli & Majnun* in English translation. We will use this story as an entry point into formative debates on ethics or akhlaq, socially subversive poetry, mystical and profane concepts of love, and representations of animals in literature. These debates were part and parcel of Muslim societies that developed diverse ideas and practices of spirituality. This class will help you develop more imaginative and nuanced reading practices and use academic writing as a medium for critical thinking. Intrigued yet?

Central question: What types of radical beings/existence in the world does this love story open up for its readers?

Prerequisites: Familiarity with a second language would be desirable, but not assumed. Curiosity and empathy are however required.

Required materials: PDFs to be provided; if you wish to buy the main book, click [here](#).

What will you gain in ten weeks?

- **How to read academically**
 - Academic reading is produced in a collective and collaborative setting. In fact, this syllabus itself exists thanks to the intellectual generosity of my colleague Prashant Keshavmurthy and his virtual reading group with whom I read and discussed *Layli & Majnun*. In a group setting, we become critically aware of our assumptions and learn that our ideas develop in generous and patient interactions with others. This model of reading is not only a component of a university education, it's also vital for one's ability to operate in life.
- **A critical meditation on alterity**
 - What does it mean to live outside normative models of ethical behavior? What does it mean when a social outcast who is likened to wild animals composes delightful and moving poetry? What happens when two lovers adopt wildly different languages through which to communicate their love for one another? *Layli & Majnun* is a radical tale of being other in society.
- **How to read & appreciate poetry**
 - Poetry is seen by many in the U.S. as an academic or niche pursuit. However, in the cultures of West, Central, and South Asia, poetry occupies a central place as a mode of social and literary expression. Appreciation for poetry cuts through religious, social (literate/illiterate), economic, and national lines. It makes it all the more important to be able to read poetry as a major component of a cultural heritage shared among millions of people worldwide.

How's this course good for your life?

In "Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed The World," Stephen Metcalf writes, "neoliberalism' is not simply a name for pro-market policies, or for the compromises with finance capitalism made by failing social democratic parties. It is a name for a premise that, quietly, has come to regulate all we practise and believe: that competition is the only legitimate organising principle for human activity." According to this logic, this course is only valuable insofar as it may help you become more marketable, on purely transactional terms.

What we are witnessing in our world today is the utter moral bankruptcy and the slow death of the age of the capital market. This experience is no doubt traumatic and devastating to millions of people. To best respond to it, we must learn how to create robust alternatives to corporate capitalism and its system of value-making. In this course, through slow and patient debate on issues that are central to human society, we can learn how to insist on the distinction between price and value and on the centrality of humanistic inquiry and intentional empathy in any healthy and thriving society.

How will I evaluate you?	Participation	15%
	Discussion posts	15%
	Presentations (2)	20%
	Quizzes	25%
	Final Essay	25%

	Total	100%

Grading scale:

A = 4.0-3.9 | A- = 3.9-3.5 | B+ = 3.4-3.2 | B = 3.1-2.9 | B- = 2.8-2.5 | C+= 2.4-2.2
 C = 2.1-1.9 | C- = 1.8-1.5 | D+ = 1.4-1.2 | D = 1.1-0.9 | D- = 0.8-0.7 | E = Failure

Pedagogical Commandments

Participation: It’s important that you show up to class, engage the materials, ask pointed questions, and support your peers in their pursuit of learning. Broadly put: take ownership of your learning.

Discussion posts: At the end of each week, you are to post a reflection on Canvas in which you elaborate on one of the major points that we discussed that week. These reflections can also pose a question for further inquiry. You are also to respond to one peer’s post. Given that we can’t meet in person, having a virtual dialogue will help us better build a community of engaged minds and hearts. So please be generous and intentional in your Canvas posts.

Presentations: You will do two mini presentations for this course. The first will be done in a group and on a topic related to our discussions of *Layli & Majnun* and the second will be solo, an overview of your final essay. The final presentation will give you the opportunity to present your ideas and receive critical feedback. I will provide you with a rubric closer to the date.

Final essay: You will turn in one final essay (5-7 pages, excluding bibliography) that addresses the central question stated in the first page of this syllabus. This essay will give you the opportunity to think critically about our discussions and readings on *Layli & Majnun*. **#No-such-thing-as-overanalysis**

Quizzes: Every week, I will take a quiz on the assigned reading, either on Monday or Wednesday. I will not announce that in advance. The quiz will be a straightforward question. As long as you’ve done the reading, you will be able to answer. For those who miss class, you can email me a short paragraph demonstrating that you’ve done the reading in order to get full credit.

Policies & Stuff

Camera On or Off? Learning online is not the same thing! Sociability is an integral part of our learning and I am relieved that this pandemic has made that abundantly clear. In order to create a more dynamic learning environment, I ask that all of you turn your cameras on. You don't have to keep it on during the entire class, but keeping on for some duration of the course will make a big difference in our collective morale. If you are unable to do this, please email me so I can accommodate you.

Disability Resources for Students: If you need any type of accommodation, please contact the [Office of Disability Resources for Students](#). I am more than happy to work with Disability Resources to provide appropriate accommodation for you.

Self-Care/Community-Care: There is no learning without self-care. It is important to care for our body, mind, and spirit while we are in school. Toward that end, there are many different kinds of support services on campus, including the Counseling Center, Hall Health, and the IMA. If you are concerned about yourself or a friend who is struggling, Safecampus, at 1-800-685-7233, is a very helpful resource to learn more about how to access campus-based support services. Also, if you ever need someone to talk to, I always make myself available to students as best I can. Please feel free to email me or come by my office. Ultimately, the best type of self-care is community care.

Religious Accommodation: It is the policy of the University of Washington to accommodate student absences to allow students to take holidays for reasons of faith or conscience or for organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization, so that students' grades are not adversely impacted by the absences. Click [here](#) to read further.

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to treat their fellow classmates and instructors with honesty and respect throughout the course. All exam answers and posters must reflect original work. No form of cheating is acceptable. The following [link](#) has information on academic honesty, plagiarism, and consequences. Students are expected to adhere to the University of Washington Code of Student Conduct which can be found at the following [link](#).

Civility for All: I am committed to creating a space that is inclusive to all. By all, I mean whoever may be reading this. The University of Washington is committed to fostering an environment where the free exchange of ideas is an integral part of the academic learning environment. Disruption of classroom discussions can prohibit other students from fully engaging and participating. Any student causing disruption may be asked to leave any class session, and, depending on the severity and frequency of that behavior, an incident report may be filled with Community Standards and Student Conduct. As a condition of enrollment, all students assume responsibility to observe standards of conduct that will contribute to the pursuit of academic goals and

3	<p>1/18 Monday</p> <p>1/20 Wednesday</p>	<p>Monday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 48-64</p> <p>Wednesday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 65-80</p>
4	<p>1/25 Monday</p> <p>1/27 Wednesday</p>	<p>Monday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 81-91</p> <p>Wednesday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 92-107</p>
5	<p>2/1 Monday</p> <p>2/3 Wednesday</p>	<p>Monday: - Group presentations (see rubric on Canvas)</p> <p>Wednesday: - Group presentations</p>
6	<p>2/8 Monday</p> <p>2/10 Wednesday</p>	<p>Monday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 108-121</p> <p>Wednesday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 122-134</p>
7	<p>2/15 Monday</p> <p>2/17 Wednesday</p>	<p>Monday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 135-151</p> <p>Wednesday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 152-167</p>
8	<p>2/22 Monday</p> <p>2/24 Wednesday</p>	<p>Monday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 168-183</p> <p>Wednesday: - <i>L&M</i>, p. 184-199</p>

9	3/1 Monday 3/3 Wednesday	<p>Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>L&M</i>, p. 200-217 - Guest lecture: Prof. Haidar Khezri on a multilingual reception of <i>Layli & Majnun</i> <p>Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>L&M</i>, p. 218-238
10	3/8 Monday 3/10 Wednesday	<p>Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>L&M</i>, p. 239-258 - Solo presentations <p>Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solo presentations
Final essay due at noon on March 18, 2021		

Bibliography*

- Al-Ghazali, *The Book of Love, Longing, Intimacy and Contentment: From the Ihyā' ulum al-din (The Revival of Religious Sciences)*. Trans. Eric Ormsby. The Islamic Texts Society, 2011.
- ‘Attar Farid al-Din. *Memorial of God's Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis*. Trans. Paul E Losensky. Paulist Press, 2009.
- Avicenne, *A Treatise on Love by Ibn Sina*. Trans. Emil Ludwig Fackenheim, 1943.
- Avicenna, *Remarks and Admonitions*. Trans. Shams Constantine Inati. Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984.
- Brookshaw, Dominic Parviz. *Hafiz and His Contemporaries: Poetry, Performance and Patronage in Fourteenth-Century Iran*. I.B. Tauris, 2019.
- Ḥallāj Al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr. *Hallaj: Poems of a Sufi Martyr*. Trans. Carl W Ernst. Northwestern University Press, 2018.
- Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', et al. *The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Nizāmī ‘Arūz..ī. ***The Chahár Maqála: The Four Discourses***. Trans. Edward Granville Browne. Published by the Trustees of the E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, 1978.

Nezami Ganjavi, ***Layli & Majnun***. Trans. by Dick Davis. Mage Publishers, 2020.

Nizāmí, Ganjavī , et al. ***Lailí And Majnún; a Poem [Translated in Verse] from the Original Persian of Nazámi***. Trans J. Atkinson. Oriental Translation Fund, 1836.

Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa‘di of Shiraz, ***The Gulistan (Rose Garden) of Sa‘di: Bilingual English and Persian Edition with Vocabulary***. Trans. by W. M Thackston. Ibex, 2008.

The Nasirean Ethics by Nasir ad-Din Tusi. Trans. G. M. Wickens. London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1946.

* [The list below contains texts from which we will read excerpts in dialogue with our main text, Nezami Ganjavi’s *Layli & Majnun*]

~~~