

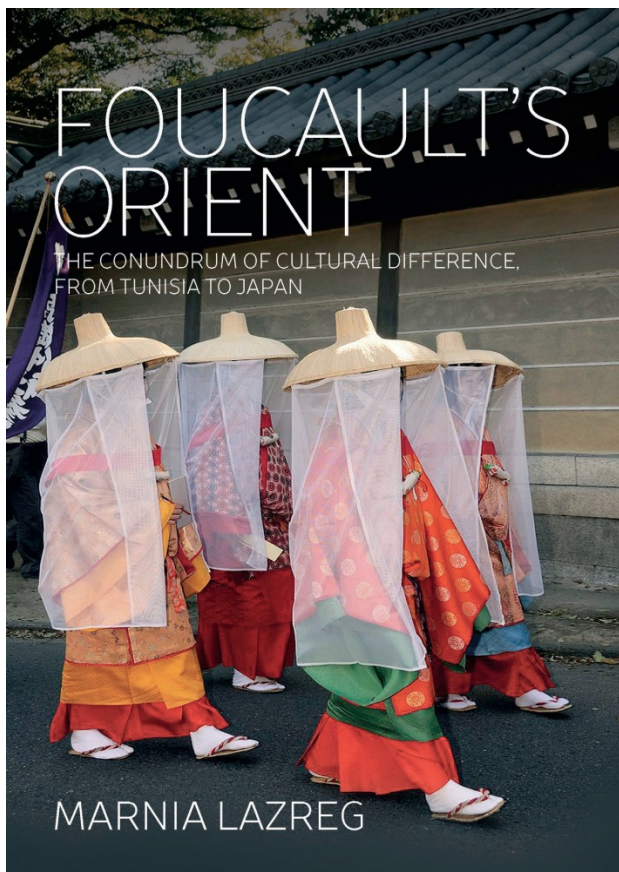


PRO GED Kick-Off : Keynote Lecture

Foucault and the Challenge of Cultural Difference: An Interpretation

Marnia Lazreg (City University New York)

February 22, 2019, 17:15-18:45 | University of Zurich, KO2-F-152 (main building)



Although he was not an “orientalist,” Foucault thought of the Orient as a “limit experience” to Western rationality. What did he mean by this? In living and traveling in countries of the “Orient,” Tunisia, Iran and Japan, Foucault faced a philosophical, methodological, and personal challenge. How did he meet this challenge? Did he re-orient his work to take into account cultural difference? Drawing on archival research supplemented by interviews with key scholars, this talk traces the genealogy of Foucault’s view of the Orient, and cultural difference generally, as he faced the challenge of the Iranian Revolution and the 1968 Tunisian students’ revolt. It further examines the short-lived effort he made to amend his conception of revolution and religion. It concludes with a reflection on the reasons for which Foucault’s thought, although culturally circumscribed as well as largely gender-blind, made inroads in feminist theory, which has typically sought to be culturally inclusive.

Marnia Lazreg is a professor of sociology at Hunter College and at the CUNY Graduate Center. She is the recipient of fellowships from the Bunting Institute (Harvard University); the Pembroke Center for Research and Teaching on Women (Brown University); the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center (Italy); and the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. Prof. Lazreg has written extensively on human rights, social class inequality, cultural movements, and gender in the Middle East and North Africa. Her books include *Foucault’s Orient: The Conundrum of Cultural Difference From Tunisia to Japan* (Berghahn 2017); *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton, 2008), *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women* (Princeton, 2010) and *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (Routledge, 1996).