



2nd Global Conference on Media, Communication, and Film

12 - 13 December 2024

Dubai, UAE

Framing the Other: Stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood Cinema

Prof. Dr. Omar Alsaif

Alfaisal University and King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract:

Cinema has historically functioned as a powerful medium of communication and artistic expression, significantly influencing societal perceptions and interactions. Despite its potential for fostering understanding, Arab and Muslim communities have frequently been subject to negative stereotyping within this medium. This study examines the origins of these stereotypes in Hollywood, which are often rooted in a complex interplay of historical narratives, including the conflict between Islam and Christianity, medieval propaganda during the Crusades, literary works such as "One Thousand and One Nights," and the broader framework of Orientalism. These influences have culminated in a dichotomous representation of Arabs, characterized by themes of romance, violence, and treachery, among others. This research also explores how such portrayals have perpetuated myths about Islam, often depicting it as a vengeful force against Christianity and reducing figures like Muhammad to simplistic and derogatory representations. Drawing on Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, this study aims to delineate the specific characteristics of stereotypical Arab representations in Hollywood films and to assess their implications for public perception in the United States and beyond.

Keywords: Cinema, Arab, Muslim, Orientalism, Hollywood, stereotype.