

Course Syllabus

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In this seminar, we will embark on a collective project to draw from al-Jawlan (Arabic for the Golan). Throughout the semester, we will develop drawings that record processes and architectures of conquest, military occupation, settler-colonization, human rights violations, and ethnic cleansing. We will draw the violence of fortifications and the existing and desired transgressions upon those very borders, both real and imagined. We'll trace the suspensions of movement: of peoples, resources or histories. We will draw the exploitation of subterranean resources, agricultural produce and heritage both as strategies of control and as modes of civic resistance.

Occupying a unique strategic location, the Jawlan is the Arabic name given to two geographic regions, the first mountainous and the second a plateau, bordering the contemporary states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. To its north it is bound by Jabal al-Sheikh (Mount Hermon) with which it is geopolitically associated today. One of the most conspicuous mountains in the region and a great geographic resource, Jabal al-Sheikh possesses three distinct summits and is the primary source of water for the river Jordan. At the spurs of the Jabal, the Northern Jawlan presents the appearance of a wild and hilly landscape, covered in ancient blocks of basalt and once-magnificent but since depleted oak forests. To its south, the Jawlan is an even plain of rich soil composed of volcanic detritus of long-celebrated fertility.

Since 1967, the western two thirds of the Jawlan have been occupied and administered by Israel where it has been undergoing continuous, systematic and protracted processes of annexation: primarily expressed through military means, the control of natural resources, and the forceful clearing of the landscape from its indigenous population including the transfer of more than ninety five percent of the Jawlan's inhabitants into Syria. Thus, for nearly four decades Israel has applied its jurisdiction and administrative laws upon its lands and the remaining indigenous people. Having refused to carry passports of the occupying power, Arabs of the Golan are today stateless, maintaining an incessant struggle against systematic violations of their rights, including land and water appropriation, home demolitions, and surveillance, whilst illegal Israeli settlements continue to grow and develop. Across the border in Syria, the revolution and subsequent war has also produced multiple sites for the reconfiguration of citizenship and belonging that raise essential questions about the identity and future of the Jawlan and its inhabitants, both those defiantly present and/or displaced.

When drawing the Jawlan, a place that refuses static uni-dimensional definitions, it becomes necessary to rethink conventional visual representations of geopolitical terrains, making this class a laboratory for drawing new maps. The work will be supported by theoretical readings on nation-building, settler-colonialism, statelessness, and the multiple forms of violence performed on

bodies, ecologies, and memories. We will also closely examine the work of other scholars, writers, film makers, lawyers and citizens, particularly those from the Jawlan. We will explore the potential of the drawing to operate as a powerful site of resistance: a place where violations are revealed, and possibilities of self-determination imagined and materialized.

Course Structure:

The semester will be organized in three main sections. During the first four weeks, participants can work in teams of two to develop written and visual responses to readings and other audio/visual sources on the following themes: edges and borders, ruins and memory, resource extraction and land exploitation, and future imaginaries. Each week, participants will continue to intervene onto a base map of the Jawlan following the topics listed above, while also gathering an archive of readings on the site and of relevant cartographic and drawing precedents. During the four weeks that will follow, participants will be asked to propose their individual drawing project, which they will continue to hone until the final submission date. An important aspect of the class is the week of travel to the Jawlan, during which we will visit and work with colleagues on the ground. During that trip, we will also draw.

The final submission consists of a drawing or series of drawings, supported by a text ranging from 2000 to 3000 words.

The grade for this class will be determined as follows:

Class Preparation and Participation 25%

Midterm Presentation 25%

Travel Preparation and Participation 25%

Final Drawing and Paper 25%

** Please note that we have to limit the class enrollment to 8 students, and must open a call for applications to participate in this class. To apply, please send a 1-page letter of interest, your cv, and a pdf file of relevant work samples to na2366@columbia.edu by Friday, September 7th at 5pm.

Course Schedule:

Introducing the Jawlan:

Week 01: Introductions

Week 02: Drawing from the Past : Edge

Week 03: Drawing in the Present : Ruin

Week 04: Drawing in the Present : Resource

Week 05: Drawing a Future : Image

Individual projects:

Week 06: Presentations of Project Proposals

Week 07: Desk crits

Week 08: Desk crits

Week 09: Midterm Presentation

Seminar travel:

Date(s) to be confirmed

Preparing for finals:

Week 11: Presentation: Drawing from the Jawlan

Week 12: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 13: Presentation: Pre-final

Final Presentation:

Date(s) to be confirmed