“Arab American Studies: Beyond Orientalism and anti-Orientalism”

Nadine Naber
University of Illinois Chicago, United States
naber@uic.edu

This paper is an internal critique of Arab American Studies and much of my own previous research. It addresses the significance of methodologies that transcend both Orientalist and anti-Orientialist approaches, approaches that ultimately require Arabness to map onto the bifurcated and ultimately false options of the “effeminate cultural” self and the “masculinist political” self. This paper discusses diasporic Arab feminist critique as a critical methodology for grappling with the highly invasive and shifting relations of power central to contemporary US neocolonialism and imperial formations and emanate from transnational sources and structures as well as the experience of belonging to a “diaspora of empire.” My analysis is grounded in broader efforts that are situating Arab American Studies within Women of Color, Queer of Color, and Critical Ethnic Studies and bringing Arab American critiques of U.S. empire to bear on these and other fields.