Teaching Beyond September 11th
Module 19

Challenging Muslim Representation in Popular Culture
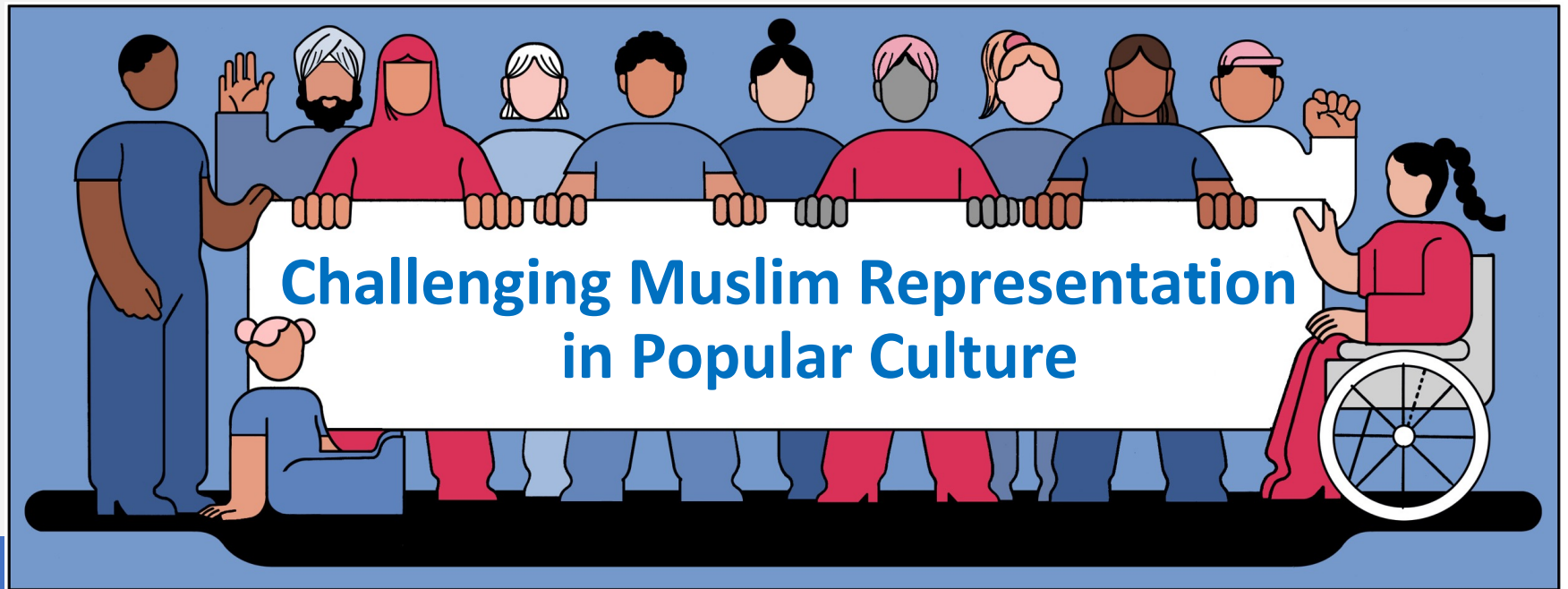
Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Popular Media

Module 19, Lesson 1

Think

Imagine that you have been approached by a production company interested in creating a television series or movie about your life. The TV series/movie would capture the most important moments, situations, and experiences of your life.

What would the title of the series/movie be?

Think

Craft a title for your partner (without consulting them).

What would the title of the series/movie depicting their life be?

Pair + Share

Share both titles with your partner.

Which title do you prefer more: The one you created for yourself or the one your partner chose for you? Explain.

How would you feel if someone who understood nothing about you or your life created the title for you instead? Explain.
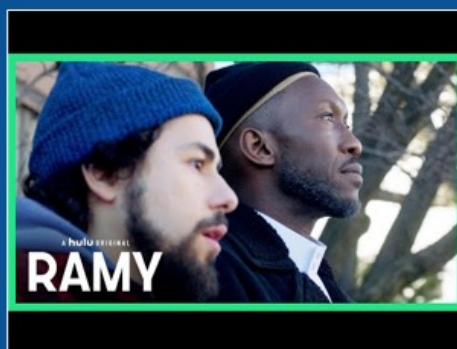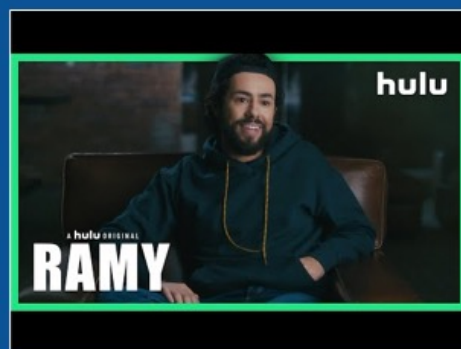
Common anti-Muslim tropes include:

- ❑ Muslim men, and sometimes women, as violent terrorists (associations include use of torture, kidnapping, highjacking, bombing)

- ❑ Muslim men, especially depicted as wealthy sheikhs, being lascivious (hyper-sexual)

- ❑ Muslims, especially women, lacking agency and in need of saving

- ❑ Muslim women hiding behind hijab, niqab, or burqa

- ❑ Black Muslims as domestic terrorists

- ❑ Muslims as only Arab or brown

- ❑ Muslims as being intolerant toward other religions

- ❑ Islam as a monolith

Source: The Bridge Initiative

Ramy

Genre	Premiere	Network
Comedy	April 19, 2019	Hulu

Background

Ramy is a first generation Egyptian-American who is on a spiritual journey in his politically-divided New Jersey neighborhood. Ramy explores the challenges of what it's like being caught between a Muslim community that thinks life is a moral test and a millennial generation that thinks life has no consequences.

Synopses

Season 1, Episode 1	Season 1, Episode 2	Season 1, Episode 3
S1, Ep1: Ramy goes out on a date with a Muslim American woman who challenges Ramy's own preconceived notions. His experience leads him to reflect on dating and relationships as a Muslim millennial from New Jersey.	S1, Ep2: Ramy begins working for his Uncle Naseem after he loses his job at a tech startup. He attempts to call his Uncle out on his overt sexism and conspiracy theories.	S1, Ep3:Ramy meets a Jewish American woman who he is interested in dating despite his friends' reservations.

Watch Snippets

Ramy

Review 1	Review 2
"Ramy follows a similar structure to shows such as I May Destroy You, I Hate Suzie, Insecure and Dave, which are built around millennials who represent either alter egos or caricatures of the actors who play them. The result is that these programmes feel intimate and human, and, in their best moments, force the audience to reflect on themselves. One of the most successful things Ramy does is play with viewers' feelings of proximity and prejudice. Do you come to the show as a young Muslim feeling close to the characters because their lives look and sound familiar? Or do you have preconceived ideas of who they are because they don't? Wherever you sit at the beginning of the show, you might not be in the same place after a few episodes."	"Ramy is nothing short of revolutionary as a vivid, occasionally piercing panorama of Arab-Muslim lives in post-9/11 America laudably devoid of victimisation; a collection of character studies that brings the flawed humanity of a dysfunctional Arab family to the fore in a fashion previously unseen. But once the novelty of Ramy's fundamental conceit wears off, the defects of its writing become apparent. They include muddled spiritual politics; a lack of tangible moral choices; oversimplification of religion; cliches about Arabs and Arab lives; a refusal to engage with politics; and the overall thinness of the material."
Click here to read more. Source: Amrani, I. (2021, February 5). Ramy: culture-clash comedy with a deeper message. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/feb/05/ramy-culture-clash-comedy-message-ramy-youssef	Click to read more. Source: The trouble with Ramy: How the award winning TV show has failed Arab-Americans. *Middle East Eye.* https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/ramy-hulu-show-arab-americans-how-failed

Questions on Graphic Organizer:

What do you notice about the TV Series? Describe what you see and hear.

What tropes does the TV series attempt to challenge?

Think of someone who shares aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain.

Think of someone who does NOT share aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain
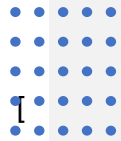

Name: _____   Date: _____   Class: _____

Discarding Anti-Muslim Tropes in Popular Media, Graphic Organizer

Directions: First, read the information in the Case assigned to you. Click the links in the Case to learn more about the TV series featuring a Muslim character as the protagonist. Then answer the questions below using the information provided. Use this page for Step 2 and Step 3.

Name of TV Series: _____

1. What do you notice about the TV Series? Describe what you see and hear.	2. What tropes does the TV series attempt to challenge?
3. Think of someone who shares aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain.	4. Think of someone who does NOT share aspects of the main character's identity (age, gender, race, etc.). How might they feel about seeing this character on screen? Explain.

Step 1
Jigsaw Groups (1 min)
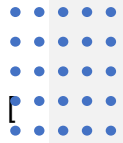
Get into small groups

(4-5 depending on number of case studies).

This group is your **Jigsaw Group**.

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5

Step 2
Jigsaw Groups (9 mins)

Begin to look **independently** over the materials distributed to you.

Read the information in your assigned TV Program Case and begin to answer the questions in your graphic organizer.
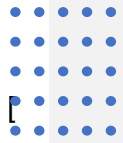
Step 3
Expert Groups (10 mins)

Meet with your peers who received the same Case you did. This group is your **Expert Group.**

Compare your answers and work together to address any gaps.

Case A Group	Case B Group	Case C Group	Case D Group

Step 4
Jigsaw Groups (10 mins)

Return to your **Jigsaw Group.** Take turns presenting information about the Case you received.

As you listen, ask questions and take notes in your graphic organizer. Each person has about **one minute** to share.

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5

Why is it important for media portrayals of Muslims to go beyond tropes?

Common anti-Muslim tropes include:

❑ Muslim men, and sometimes women, as violent terrorists (associations include use of torture, kidnapping, highjacking, bombing).

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❑ Muslims, especially women, lacking agency and in need of saving.

❑ Muslim women hiding behind hijab, niqab, or burqa.

❑ Black Muslims as domestic terrorists.

❑ Muslims as only Arab or brown.

❑ Muslims as being intolerant toward other religions.

❑ Islam as a monolith.

Re-Presenting for Representation's Sake: Why it Matters to See Ourselves On-Screen

Module 19, Lesson 2

After reading each statement, decide whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree and mark the appropriate box with a check mark.

❑ There are a variety of characters who are the same race as me.

❑ I feel represented when I see people like me featured in the media.

❑ There is a wide range of diversity and representation in media nowadays.

❑ The media is very effective at challenging stereotypes.

❑ Most TV shows and movies depict people like me in a positive light.

❑ I can easily find a storyline featuring a leading character that I can relate to.

❑ The communities I'm a part of are usually happy to be seen in the media

❑ I can name at least one celebrity who shares the same first name as me.

❑ I rarely feel marginalized or overlooked when I consume media.

❑ Characters that look like me are featured in a variety of different TV and film genres

Strongly Agree: 2 thumbs up **Agree:** 1 thumb up	**Disagree:** 1 thumb down **Strongly Disagree:** 2 thumbs down

- ❑ There are a variety of characters who are the same race as me.

- ❑ I feel represented when I see people like me featured in the media.

- ❑ There is a wide range of diversity and representation in media nowadays.

- ❑ The media is very effective at challenging stereotypes.

- ❑ Most TV shows and movies depict people like me in a positive light.

- ❑ I can easily find a storyline featuring a leading character that I can relate to.

- ❑ The communities I'm a part of are usually happy to be seen in the media

- ❑ I can name at least one celebrity who shares the same first name as me.

- ❑ I rarely feel marginalized or overlooked when I consume media.

- ❑ Characters that look like me are featured in a variety of different TV and film genres

Strongly Agree
👍👍

Agree
👍

Disagree
👎

Strongly Disagree
👎👎

Gallery Walk

As you view the Gallery Items, write down your:

(*) Thoughts: Ideas, reactions, concepts that the information brings to mind.

(?) Questions: General, clarifying, or extension questions concerning the information.

(!) Epiphanies: Any noteworthy realizations or greater consciousness about the information.

Why does Muslim representation matter in mass media, especially following the events of September 11th?