Thematic Questions: Cities of Salt (pp. 419-627)

Instructions: names in **bold** will prepare a 3-4 minutes response to the question.

1. Characters in this novel are often partnered with a “mirror image” who embodies a narrative equivalence or oppositional quality, such as Ibn Rashed/Dabbasi and Dr. Subhi Mahmilji/Mufaddi. What literary and aesthetic purposes do these character pairings serve? Why might the exposition of character in this novel be structured in this way? What are some other paired characters you’ve come across? (**Allie, Alex, Alia**)

2. In light of Munif’s Cities of Salt, how accurate or inaccurate was Wilfred Thesiger’s forecast of the “doom” of the Bedouin (p. 329), and what he felt would be the loss of their most noble characteristics? (**Katie, Cameron, Firas**)

3. What elements from al-Rihani’s essay “Centers of Industry in the Desert” and the various articles that you’ve read from ARAMCO World resonate with specific narrative details in Cities of Salt? (**Salma, Vivian**)

4. Does the conclusion of this novel successfully draw together its various thematic, narrative and dramatic arcs? What aspects of the novel are left unsettled, and what aspects are resolved in a coherent fashion? (**Laura, Tom**)

5. Who amongst the plethora of characters introduced in this novel best represent its primary themes? Can any one character be identified as a main character? (**Caroline, Freshta**)

6. How does the story of Akoub and Raji – a novella in its own right – fit within the broader narrative of Cities of Salt or is it, dramatically and thematically, a red herring? (**Jack, Kent**