



## ZMO-Colloquium Summer Term 2016

Thursday, 21 April 2016, 5 pm

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### Occidentalism: Uses and Abuses

Lecture by Prof Dr Sadik al-Azm

#### Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

ZMO is honored to host Prof Dr Sadik Jalal al-Azm for the opening talk of the summer term colloquium 2016. In his long career as one of the best known intellectual figures of Syria and the Arab World, Sadik al-Azm has appeared as a critical philosopher, political and human rights activist, and a champion of intellectual freedom and free speech. In the wake of recent political developments in the Middle East, he became a sharp critic of Islamism and a loud advocate for democracy. On August 28, 2015 Sadik al-Azm was honored with the Goethe Medal in Weimar.

The Damascus born intellectual earned his PhD from Yale University in 1961, specializing in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. In the late 1960s, al-Azm published two significant works: *Al-Naqd al-Dhati ba'd al-Hazima* (Self-Criticism After the Defeat), in which he criticized Arab regimes for their backward politics in the light of their defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967; and *Naqd al-Fikr al-Dini* (Critique of Religious Thought), where he rebuked Arab political and religious leaders for exploiting their populations' religious sentiments for political ends. Triggering heated debates, al-Azm's works were hailed by secular Arab intellectuals and condemned by voices from the political and religious establishment.

In later years, al-Azm became involved in the debates triggered by Edward Said's book *Orientalism* of 1978. He was troubled by what he saw as Said's tendency to essentialize 'the West' in ways not dissimilar to the essentialization of 'the East' which Said so successfully criticizes with regard to imperial and postimperial actors and scholarship in the West. Elaborating on this debate and taking it further, in his lecture at ZMO Sadik al-Azm will discuss the origins, uses and abuses of the concept of Occidentalism in both East and West.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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