

Frameworks for Understanding Imperialism

—an online project featuring Edward Said and Anthony Bourdain—



This project features two icons—one an academic, one a TV host. Edward W. Said was at the time of his death professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, and author of the monumental book *Orientalism*, one of the most influential books of cultural criticism of the last 50 years.

The first video below explains the book's major concepts and is based on a lengthy interview with Said himself. The second video, from the popular cable series *No Reservations*—written and hosted by the late Anthony Bourdain, the so-called “rock ‘n’ roll chef”—has Tony touring and tasting through Mozambique...and thinking a lot about imperialism. This topic brings these two icons (looking strikingly similar here) into unlikely proximity for this assignment.

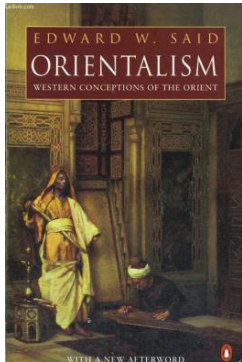


I. WATCH TWO VIDEOS

- A) A program and interview with [Edward Said](#) on *Orientalism*.
- B) The “Mozambique” episode from season eight of *No Reservations*. This is available in several places, among them as an inexpensive iTunes download, or on the Streampix feature from Comcast OnDemand. Please find and watch.

II. WRITE AND SHARE

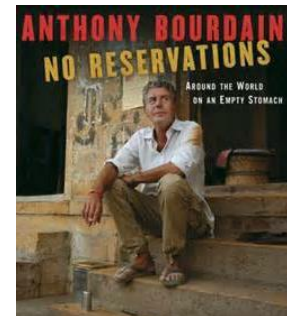
Write short answers to the following and email them to me. We'll share them in class.



A) What is your big take-away from the *Orientalism* program and what one example or instance strikes you the most? These two may or may not be related. Write about 75 words.

B) Reflect on the Bourdain episode, focusing particularly on what you felt was a central idea or fact, or the scene that most struck you (and why), and on Bourdain's persona. Does his persona strike you as appropriate/inappropriate, for example, or as representative of some important point of view or

activity? (Some ideas here may also apply to what you write for (C) below.) Write about 125 words.



C) Here you will use Said to reflect on Bourdain and vice versa. Write about 175 words. In your answer you might consider ideas like the following. What ideas from Said's *Orientalism* might most apply to analyzing the Bourdain episode? *Orientalism* focuses on “Western conceptions of the Orient,” as the subtitle says, so you will have to translate from “Orient” to Africa. Does Bourdain exhibit any of the stereotypical thinking Said comments on, or does he more or less avoid it? What effects do such “orientalisms” have on power relations, politics, economics, or artistic or other cultural productions (including food)? Does Bourdain seem to understand these or could he have been more sensitive to them? Give examples.