



The Department of English and the Anis Makdisi Program in Literature
at the American University of Beirut

cordially invite you to a

Lecture by Timothy Brennan *University of Minnesota*

on

DIASPORA, INTELLECTUALS, AND THE STATE: THE LEGACY OF EDWARD SAID IN THE AGE OF WORLD LITERATURE

Thursday, November 24, 2016 | 6:00 pm | College Hall, B1

Edward Said was obsessed with geography: "geography is our enemy," he once wrote. "We are separated by space." But that space, although literal, was in much of his writing imaginative: "a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here," as he puts it in *Orientalism*. If it is true that terms like "East/West/North/South" are ideological categories masquerading as geographical ones, then the whole question of political belief (are you a republican, anarchist, democrat, socialist, communist, fascist, or whatever) can be seen as a civilizational one. An entirely coherent, self-generating set of cultural norms dictate certain modes of behavior of entire peoples on the basis of their secular or political belief-systems. Historically, in fact, political dissidents have often been persecuted not because of their programs but because they were considered barbarians: rough, unhewn, underdeveloped, and uncivilized, of poor hygiene and suffering under the weight of a backward, mystical faith. The spuriousness of the operative concept of a "clash of civilizations" is more evident when one can apply the same logic of internal coherence, untranslatability, and so on to *beliefs* as well as to *bodies*. I would like to look here at the darker side of immigration and diaspora by exploring a perverse, but understudied, case: the active recruitment by the United States of former collaborators from US military operations abroad (Hmong, Bosnian Serbs, Cubans, and Vietnamese) -- immigrant communities based on political beliefs rather than ethnicity.

