Views of sexuality in modern and contemporary Islamic societies are in general completely at variance with those held in premodern Islamic societies, largely due to the impact of Western colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This talk will attempt to sketch out some of the complexities of premodern attitudes, noting that our available Arabic textual sources are anything but reticent about questions of gender and sexuality, aspiring to a full and frank taxonomy of variations in both realms, but also exhibiting a range of attitudes that can by no means be reduced to a simple exposition of what “Islam” says about sex.

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