

Film, Nation, and Identity in the Arab World  
Spring 2012/Yaqub

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will introduce students to the rich and varied history of Arab cinema from the 1940's to the present. We will begin by situating Arab film within both Third cinema and world cinema, and by examining disparate models for national cinema in the Arab world. We will then study recent and contemporary movements in Arab cinema including new film movements and diasporic and art cinema. We will engage in close analysis of selected films as well as the ways in which both local and transnational forces affect who makes films and why. A central theme of the course will be the relationship between recent cinema, new subjectivities and the current revolutions in the Arab world. This course has no prerequisites and no knowledge of Arabic is required. However, it is primarily designed for juniors and seniors. Students are expected to be interested in the culture and politics of the modern Arab world, and to have mastered basic college writing and critical thinking skills.

**COURSE WEBSITE:** This class will be using Sakai ([sakai.unc.edu](http://sakai.unc.edu)).

**COURSE PORTFOLIO:** Students are expected to keep all their work from the course in a portfolio. Please purchase a folder at the start of the semester to store all reading responses, papers, and exams after they have been graded. Students will meet with the instructor to review portfolios at the end of the semester.

**COURSE TEXTS:** Texts will consist of the following films and readings. Films will be screened weekly on Mondays throughout the semester.

**Films:**

*Afrita Hanem*, (Little Miss Devil), Henri Barakat, Egypt, 1949  
*Al-Makhdu'un* (The Dupes), Tewfik Saleh, Syria, 1972  
*Al-Abwab al-Mughlaqah* (The Closed Doors), Atef Hetata, 1999  
*Waqa'i Sanawat al-Jamr* (Chronicle of the Smoldering Years), Muhammad Lakhdar-Hamina, Algeria, 1975  
*Omar Gatlatlo*, Merzak Allouche, Algeria, 1976  
*Al-Kompars*, (The Extras), Nabil Malih, Syria, 1993  
*Yadun Ilahiyah*, (Divine Intervention), Elia Suleiman, Palestine, 2002  
*Samt al-Qusur* (Silences of the Palace), Moufida, Tlatli, Tunisia, 1994  
*Bosta* (Bus), Philip Aractingi, Lebanon 2006 (tentative)  
*Sam'an fi al-Day'ah* (The One Man Village), Simon El-Habre, Lebanon, 2009  
*Khudhni ila Ardi* (Take Me Home), Mais Darwazah, Jordan/Palestine/Syria 2008

**Readings:**

*Available through Sakai:*

Alexander, Livia "Is There a Palestinian Cinema? The National and Transnational in Palestinian Film Production." In *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 150-174

Allouache, Merzak. "The Necessity of a Cinema Which Interrogates everyday Life," in *Film and Politics in the Third World*, edited by John Downing, Praeger, 1987, pp. 93-100.

Armbrust, Walter, "New Cinema, Commercial Cinema, and the Modernist Tradition in Egypt," *Alif*, 15 (1995), pp. 81-129

Armbrust, "Islamists in Egyptian Cinema," *American Anthropologist*, 104:3 (2002), pp. 922-31

Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005, pp. 15-83 (in 2 parts as PDFs)

Armes, Roy. *Omar Gatlatto*. Flicks Books, 1998. pp. 1-37, 43-9

Bouزيد, Nouri and Shereen El-Ezabi, "New Realism in Arab Cinema: The Defeat-Conscious Cinema" *Alif*, 15 (1995), pp. 242-250

Hafez, Sabry "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: the Algerian Paradigm," *Alif*, 15 (1995), pp. 39-80

Maleh, Nabil. "Scenes From Life and Cinema," in *Insights into Syrian Cinema: Essays and Conversations With Contemporary Filmmakers*, edited by Rasha Salti, Rattapallax Press, 2006. pp. 87-94.

Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton University Press. pp. 3-39.

Porton, Richard. "Notes From the Palestinian Diaspora: an Interview with Elia Suleiman," *Cineaste*, summer 2003, pp. 24-7

Qattan, Omar. Challenges of Palestinian Filmmaking (1990-2003) in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema* (London and New York: 2006), pp. 110-130.

Salti, Rasha. "Critical Nationals: The paradoxes of Syrian Cinema," in *Insights into Syrian Cinema: Essays and Conversations With Contemporary Filmmakers*, edited by Rasha Salti, Rattapallax Press, 2006. pp. 21-44

Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 1-49 (in 3 parts as PDFs)

Shohat, Ella, "Post Third Worldist Culture" in *Taboo Memories: Diasporic Voices*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Wright, Lawrence. "Disillusioned," in *Insights into Syrian Cinema: Essays and Conversations With Contemporary Filmmakers*, edited by Rasha Salti, Rattapallax Press, 2006. pp. 45-65.

*Available through the UNC library catalog as an e-book:*

Armbrust, Walter, "The Golden Age Before the Golden Age," in *Mass Mediations*, ed. Walter Armbrust, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 292-327

Khatib, Lina, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*. London: I.B. Taurus, 2008

*Available online:*

Salti, Rasha. "From Unbearable Lightness to Undaunted Seriousness. The Uncanny Story of How Lebanese Cinema Took Itself Seriously." Available online at:  
<http://www.cinematicadistrital.gov.co/pdf/Cat%C3%A1logo%20Cine%20Medio%20Oriente.pdf#page=60>

Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema" available online at  
<http://documentaryisneverneutral.com/words/camasgun.html>

**ARAB SPRING CONFERENCE:** UNC and Duke are co-sponsoring a conference on the Arab Spring February 16-18. Students are required to attend the conference in lieu of class that week. Details about the conference will be provided soon. Our discussion of films we watch after the conference will explore relations between these texts and these political uprisings.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop a familiarity with trends in Arab cinema from its inception to the present, and how those trends are related to historical, economic, and socio-political contexts.
3. Learn to watch and analyze films thoughtfully and critically.
4. Develop analytical skills. That is, refine skills in thinking and writing, so that after the course students will be able to offer informed and insightful analysis of cultural texts from different cultures, including but not limited to the Arab World.
5. Refine research skills, including but not limited to, skills in evaluating resources, synthesizing information, and developing evidence-based conclusions.

### **GRADING**

Please note that you may not submit for credit work that you have written for another class, although in exceptional cases and with my prior approval you may submit an extension an earlier research project.

Grading standards for papers and exams:

- A = Excellent; precise and relevant description and analysis, and includes original, well-documented interpretation
- B = Good; good description and good analysis
- C = Adequate in the sense of compliance with the assignment
- D = Poor; did not complete the assignment adequately but shows some effort
- F = Failing; did not complete the assignment or clearly put no effort into it.

Grades will be assigned on the following basis:

**Participation 5%:** Attendance and class participation is mandatory. All students are expected to come to class prepared (having read and thought about the assigned reading) and ready to share their opinions and ideas with their peers. To receive full credit for participation, a student must attend every class well-prepared, consistently and on time, and demonstrate active engagement with the material in class.

**Reading responses 10%:** Students are required to write four graded responses to the films and readings we are studying in class. Everyone must write a reading response to our first reading as a practice response. After that, the class will be divided into groups and each student will be randomly assigned to one of the groups. One group will write a reader's response for each set of weekly readings. See "Resources" in the Sakai course page for detailed instructions regarding the format and grading of the reading responses.

**Study Guide (30%):** Each student will prepare a study guide on a film of his or her choosing. Students will work closely with the class GRC in researching and preparing the guide. Details about this assignment are available under “Resources” on Sakai.

**Analytical Paper (20%):** Students will write one five-page analytical paper in which they explore in depth either the film they selected for their study guide, one of the films discussed in class. This paper will be due at the time of the final exam. Details about this assignment are available under “Resources” on Sakai.

**Final Exam (20%):** The final will consist of short answer questions based on films, readings, lecture, and class discussions.

**Oral /Visual Presentation (10%):** Students will work with their colleagues in small groups to prepare a final group presentation. These presentations will be conducted at a mini-film conference in which you will share your work with students from other film classes in the Department of Asian Studies. The presentation will be based largely on student study guides and/or analytical papers. The final presentation will have a well-rehearsed oral component as well as a thoughtfully designed visual component (Powerpoint slide show, video, poster, photo essay, etc.). Details about this assignment will be available under “Resources” on Sakai.

**Portfolio Review (5%):** All students are required to keep all of their course work in a folder. At the end of the semester the instructor will meet with each student to review portfolios. This is an opportunity to make sure that the instructor’s records match the work the student has completed and to discuss the overall strengths and areas for improvement in the student’s work.

**Extra Credit: up to 3%:** You may earn up to 3% extra credit by attending events (lectures, films, conferences, etc.) relating to the Arab World. You may obtain 1% extra credit for each event you attend. *To receive the credit, you must check with me to ensure that the event is relevant to the course, and write a 300-500 word review of the event within one week of the event.* Your review should not just summarize the event, but include analysis and discussion of ideas, images, etc. presented. An excellent source of information about events related to Islam and the Middle East can be found at <http://mideast.unc.edu/calendar/>. This list is continually updated, so I encourage you to visit the site frequently. However, note that many of the listed events, although worthwhile in their own right, do not relate to this course. Do not assume that an event can count as extra credit if it is listed. Events required (or used as extra-credit) for another course cannot be used for extra-credit in this course.

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### **CLASS POLICIES**

**Academic Procedures:** Students are expected to know and abide by Academic Procedures published by University in the Undergraduate Bulletin. Details can be found at: <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/procedures1.html>

**Disabilities Services:** UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to providing reasonable accommodations so that students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified may, as independently as possible, meet the demands of University life. Disabilities Services at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is responsible for providing accommodations and services to eligible students. Please see <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/> for details.

**The Honor Code:** All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code, In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please see me or consult <http://honor.unc.edu/students/index.html>.

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes. Unless justified by family or medical emergencies, missing or coming late to class will count against your grade. Five or more unexcused absences will result in a full letter drop in grade. Ten or more unexcused absences will result in an F grade.

**Laptops and Cell Phones:** No laptops should be open and all cell phones must be either turned off or on silent during class time.

**Citation Policy:** Please follow the Chicago Manual of Style author-date method in all papers you prepare for class. For a quick guide see: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

**Late Work:** All written assignments are due **IN HARD COPY** at the start of class on their assigned due date. No late work will be accepted except in cases of documented emergency.

## RESOURCES

**Media Resource Center:** Most films for the class are available from the Media Resource Center. Most films cannot be taken out of the library, but must be viewed at the MRC. Plan your schedule accordingly! More information is available at: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/house/mrc/>.

**Graduate Research Consultant:** In this course, you will be working with Graduate Research Consultant Nathan Swanson who will assist you in the research for your Study Guide and in preparing your presentations. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research ([www.unc.edu/depts/our](http://www.unc.edu/depts/our)). I encourage you to visit this website to see other ways that you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

**The Writing Center:** Students are encouraged to consult the Writing Center as work on their papers. You will benefit most from their help if you consult the Center when you first begin to think about your paper, rather than waiting until the last minute. More information is available at: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>

**TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:** Any changes to this schedule will be posted on Sakai

	1/10 intro to course What is Arab Cinema?	1/12 Transnationalism and Arab cinema Reading: Shohat <i>Unthinking Eurocentrism</i> (excerpts). <b>Reading response due</b>
1/16 MLK Holiday. Watch Afrita Hanem on your own at the MRC before class on Tuesday.	1/17 Early Egyptian commercial cinema	1/19 Early Egyptian cinema Reading: Armbrust, "Golden Age,"; Armbrust "New Cinema" ( <b>Group A response due</b> )
1/23 Screening: The Dupes	1/24 Political Cinema Reading: Solanos and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema,"; Bouzid "Defeat-Conscious Cinema" ( <b>Group B response</b> )	1/26 Political cinema cont. <b>Study guide proposal due.</b>
1/30 Screening: Chronicle	1/31 Post-revolution Algerian cinema	2/2 Algerian cinema cont.

of the Smoldering Years (NOTE this is a 3-hour film.)	Readings: Armes, <i>Postcolonial Images</i> (excerpts); Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghrebi Cinema" (Group A response due)	
2/6 Screening: Omar Gatlatlo	2/7 New Subjectivities Readings: Allouache, "Necessity of Cinema"; Armes, Roy. <i>Omar Gatlatlo</i> (excerpts) (Group B response due )	2/9 New subjectivities cont. <b>Annotated bibliography due</b>
2/13 NO SCREENING:	2/14 NO CLASS: ARAB SPRING CONFERENCE Readings: TBA	2/16 NO CLASS: ARAB SPRING CONFERENCE
2/20 Screening: The Closed Doors	2/21 Art House Cinema Reading: Armbrust, "Islamists in Egyptian Cinema" Naficy <i>Accented Cinema</i> (excerpt) (Group A response due)	2/23 Art House Cinema cont.
2/27 Screening: Silences of the Palace	2/28 Tunisian Women's Cinema Reading: Hochberg, "National Allegory; Shohat "Post Third Worldist Culture" (Group B response due)	3/1 Tunisian women's cinema cont.
3/5 SPRING Break	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
3/12 Screening: The Extras	3/13 Secret Syrian Cinema Readings due: Salti, "Critical Nationals,"; Wright, "Disillusioned," Maleh "Scenes from Life" (Group A response due)	3/15 Secret Syrian Cinema cont. <b>Final Study Guides Due</b>
3/19 Screening: <i>Bosta</i>	3/20 New Lebanese Cinema Salti "From Unbearable Lightness;" Khatib <i>Lebanese Cinema</i> (excerpt) (Group B response due)	3/22 New Lebanese Cinema cont.
3/26 Screening: Divine Intervention	3/27 Palestine & Cinema of Absurdity Readings: Alexander, "Is There a Palestinian Cinema;" Porton, "Notes from the Palestinian Diaspora;" Qattan, "Challenges of Palestinian Filmmaking"	3/29 Palestine & Cinema of Absurdity cont.
4/2 Take Me Home; The One Man Village	4/3 The Personal Film Essay	4/5 Personal Film Essay <b>Analytical Paper Due</b>
4/9 Screening: TBA	4/10 Arab Revolutions and film	4/11 Arab Revolutions;
4/16 PORTFOLIO REVIEW	4/17 PORTFOLIO REVIEW FINAL PRESENTATION EVENT	4/19 PORTFOLIO REVIEW
4/23 No Screening	4/24 TBA	
<b>4/28 4-7 pm Final Exam</b>		