

The University of Connecticut, Department of Sociology, Fall 2007

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Sociology 266 Honors: Film, Politics and Society in the Middle East

Scope

We will explore commonalities and differences across the Middle East and North Africa with feature films from the region. We will analyze the economic, political, and cultural context in which these films are produced, explore how indigenous filmmakers present the region's history, cultures, and people, and discuss the messages these film advance. Experts on the Middle East will join us to introduce some of the films.

Requirements and Grading

Class participation (10%), weekly screening reports (40%), class presentation of research (10%), and research paper (40%).

The research paper will relate to one or two of the films. The topic will have to be agreed with the instructor by September 17, summary and annotated bibliography submitted by October 1. The paper is due when the final exam is scheduled to begin. If you submit a draft by November 12, I will be happy to comment on it. The paper will be printed double-spaced and have a minimum of 4,000 words.

The weekly screening report will develop a specific point about the film you raised in the class discussion in one to two pages: to be submitted to my mail box in the Sociology Department or by e-mail by Monday, 4 pm. Missed papers will earn an F. Late papers will incur one full grade reduction. The four lowest grades will not count.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism "involves taking the thoughts, words, or ideas of others and passing them off as one's own," to quote UConn's *Student Code*. It is sanctioned with an F. Also, when you reproduce text verbatim, you have to use quotation marks.

Reading

Readings will be individualized to fit the topic of the research paper. Suggestions to get you started are provided separately.

1 Iranian Cinema: Regime Critics Confront Censorship

The Hidden Half (2001, Tahmineh Milani): The repression of women and of the secular left opposition; based on Farideh Golbu's novel *Bad as eshgh*

Under the Skin of the City (2001, Rakhshan Bani Etemad): Mother Tuba's struggle to keep her family together

Stray Dogs (2004, Marziyeh Meshkini): Cruelty and humanity amidst hardship in Afghanistan

2 Syria: State-Sponsored Cinema Attacks the State

The Extras (1993, Nabil Al-Maleh): Two lovers suffer the twin repressions of a patriarchal culture and a tyrannical state

3 Lebanon: Films of the Civil War

In the Shadows of the City (2000, Jean Khalil Chamoun): Love, destruction, and death in Beirut

4 Israel: Engaging the Other

Kedma (2002, Amos Gitai): The birth of two nations at war in 1948

5 Palestine: Support for the Struggle

The Dupes (1972, Tawfik Saleh): Three generations up-rooted from Palestine and betrayed; based on Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Men Under the Sun*

Tale of the Three Jewels (1994, Michel Khleifi): Children living and dreaming amid violence in Gaza

Paradise Now (2005, Hany Abu-Assad): Making the supreme sacrifice

6 Egyptian Cinema: Critiques of the Regime and Its Fundamentalist Opposition

Destiny (1997, Youssef Chahine): Liberal and fundamentalist Islam clash amidst the splendor of 12th century Andalusia; based on the life of the renowned Muslim philosopher Averroës

Closed Doors (1999, Atef Hetata): The appeal of fundamentalism for adolescents without a future

7 Cinemas of the Maghreb: Three Variations on Political Film, Funding, and Censorship

Bedwin Hacker (Tunisia, 2003, Nadia El Fani): A hacker challenging Western domination of the global media in cyberspace is pursued by a French secret service agent

Ali Zaoua, Prince of the Streets (Morocco, 2000, Nabil Ayouch): The harsh life of street children and the poetry of childhood