

**Mediated Culture in the Middle East, MES 72900/ANT70700
SPRING 2013
Prof. Christa Salamandra
Monday 6:30-8:30**



The aim of this MA-level seminar is to explore changing ethnographic treatments of audio-visual and digital media in various Middle Eastern contexts. Media is broadly defined to include a range of expressive cultural forms. Particular attention will be devoted to the ways in which work on contemporary Middle Eastern media draws from and contributes to trends in social theory and cultural studies. We trace the rise of national television and film industries, move onto recent work on new media such as satellite television and video games, and culminate with cultural production during the 2011-2013 Arab uprisings. Sessions will include occasional film or television screenings, introducing students to significant indigenous works that exemplify themes discussed. Assessment is based on three extended review essays and class participation. Students will also be asked to present brief, critical presentations on reading assignments.

Requirements

Blackboard is an essential feature of this course. You will need it to download reading assignments and to access other class information. If you have not already done so, please open your CUNY portal account. This gives you access to our class on Blackboard. For technical assistance, contact the IT Help Desk 718-960-1111.

Reading, Screening and Discussion. Completing assigned readings and screenings, and discussing them in class each week are basic requirements for this course.

2 Reading Response Essays. Essay questions will be handed out and posted on Blackboard in Assignments two weeks before their due date. Essays must be 5-6 pages, typed, double-spaced, and properly, consistently referenced (any citation format is acceptable). They are intended to demonstrate completion and comprehension of the assigned readings and screening; no outside sources may be used. **Plagiarism in any form, including internet downloads, will result in automatic failure and notification of the appropriate college authorities.**

1 Research Paper (15-20 pages). Topic must be discussed and approved well in advance of the end of semester.

Papers must be emailed to <christa.salamandra@lehman.cuny.edu> by midnight on the due date.

1 Class Presentation. Each week one student will be responsible for a critical summary of the reading that proposes questions for class discussion.

Essays and participation are weighted as follows:

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|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Response essay 1 | 20% |
| Response essay 2 | 20% |
| Class participation and presentation | 20% |
| Final paper | 40% |

January 28: Introduction

Screening

The Extras (al-Kumbars). Syria 1993. Nabil Maleh, director.

February 4: Motion Pictures, Colonial Struggle, Emerging Nationalisms

Required reading:

Anderson, Benedict

1983 "Introduction," and "Cultural Roots." In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 11-40. London: Verso.

Armbrust, Walter

2000 "The Golden Age before the Golden Age: Commercial Egyptian Cinema before the 1960s." In Walter Armbrust, ed. *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond,* 292-327. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thompson, Elizabeth

2009 "Politics by Other Screens," *Arab Media and Society* 7

http://www.arabmediasociety.com/peer_reviewed/index.php?article=699

Optional reading:

Armbrust, Walter

2004 "Egyptian Cinema On Stage and Off." In Andrew Shryock, ed. *Off Stage/on Display: Intimacy and Ethnography in the Age of Public Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Screening: *Flirtation of the Girls (Ghazal al-Banat)* Egypt 1949. Anwar Wagdi, director.
A Summer in la Goulette. Tunisia 1996. Ferid Boughedir, director.

February 11: Guest Lecture by Prof. Vit Sisler, "Digital Heroes: Identity Construction in Iranian Video Games"

Required reading:

Sisler, Vit

2008 "Digital Arabs: Representation in Video Games," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11: 203-220.

Souri, Helga Tawil

2007 "The Political Battlefield of Pro-Arab Video Games on Palestinian Screens," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27(3): 536-551.

February 20: (Re)Imaginations: Nostalgia and Nasser's Egypt

Required reading:

Gordon, Joel

2000 "Nasser 56/Cairo 96: Reimagining Egypt's Lost Community." In Walter Armbrust, ed. *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond*, 161-181. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shafik, Viola

2007 "Chapter 2: The Allegorical Nation." In *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*, 89-115 (especially 100-115). Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Stone, Christopher

2009 "Ahmad Zaki and Muhammad Khan: Icons of the Nile's Unlikely Golden Age." In *The State of the Arts in the Middle East*, 45-47. Washington, DC: The Middle East Institute.

Optional Reading:

McAlister, Melanie

2005 "The Middle East in African-American Politics, 1955-1972." In *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East*, 84-124. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Screening: *Nasser 56*. Egypt 1996. Mohamed Fadil, dr.

February 25: Israel, Palestine and the Cinema of Dispossession

Required Reading:

Bardenstein, Carol

2005 "Cross/Cast: Passing in Israeli and Palestinian Cinema." In Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg, eds. *Palestine, Israel and the Politics of Popular Culture*, 99-125. Durham: Duke University Press.

Salti, Rasha

2010 "From Resistance and Bearing Witness to the Power of the Fantastical: Icons and Symbols in Palestinian Poetry and Cinema," *Third Text* 24(1): 38-52.

Shohat, Ella

1989 "The House on Chelouche Street." In *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, 168-173. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Optional Reading:

Gertz, Nurith and George Kheifi

2005 "Palestinian 'Road Block Movies,'" *Geopolitics* 10: 316-334.

Screening: *The House on Chelouche Street*. Israel 1973. Moshe Mizrahi, dr.

The Dupes (al-Makhdu'un). Syria 1973. Tawfiq Saleh, director.

Optional screening:

Divine Intervention. Palestine 2002. Elia Suleiman, director.

Rana's Wedding. Palestine 2002. Hany Abu-Assad, director.

March 4: Television Drama of and Beyond the Nation

Required reading:

Abu-Lughod, Lila

2005 Chapter 6, "The Ambivalence of Authenticity." In *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*, 135-161. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Salamandra, Christa

1998 "Moustache Hairs Lost: Ramadan Television Serials and the Construction of Identity in Damascus, Syria," *Visual Anthropology*, 10(2-4): 227-246.

Salamandra, Christa

2012 "The Muhannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama and the Arab Female Gaze," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 45-78.

Optional Reading:

Armbrust, Walter

1996 "Chapter Two: "The White Flag."” In *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Screening: selection of TV drama clips

March 11: Islams and Secularisms

Required reading:

Armbrust, Walter

2012 "Islamically Marked Bodies and Urban Space in Two Recent Egyptian Films,” *Material Religion* 8(3): 354-373.

Moll, Yasmin

2010 "Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt,” *Arab Media and Society* 10.

<http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=732>

Öncü, Ayşe (2006) "*Becoming Secular Muslims: Yaşar Nuri Öztürk as a Super-Subject on Turkish Television.*” In Meyers, Birgit and Moors, Annelies, eds. *Religion, Media and the Public Sphere*, 227-240. Indiana, Indiana University Press.

Winegar, Jessica

2008 "Purposeful Art between Television Preachers and the State,” *ISIM Review* 22: 28-29.

Optional reading:

Salamandra, Christa

2008 "Creative Compromise: Syrian Television Makers between Secularism and Islamism,” *Contemporary Islam* 2(3): 177–189.

van Nieuwkerk, Karin

2008 "Repentant Artists in Egypt: Debating Gender, Performing Arts and Religion,” *Contemporary Islam* 2(3): 191-210.

Screening: *The Yacoubian Building*. Egypt 2006 Marwan Hamed, director.

March 18: Recent Realisms in Cinema and Television

Required Reading:

Abu-Lughod, Lila

2005 Chapter 4, "Developmental Realism, "Real Melodrama" and the Problem of Feminism.” In *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*, 81-108. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Naficy, Hamid

2011 "Neorealism Iranian Style.” In Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar, eds. *Global Neorealism: The Transnational History of a Film Style*, 226-239. University Press of Mississippi.

Salamandra, Christa

2011 "The Persistence of the Real: Syrian Social Drama Creators in an Age of Commercial Nostalgia," paper delivered at American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Montreal.

Optional reading:

Niazi, Sarah

2010 "Urban Imaginations and the Cinema of Jafar Panahi," *Wide Screen* 1(2).

<http://widescreenjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/59/83>

Screening: *The Circle*. Iran 2001. Jafar Panahi, director.

(March 25, April 1 no classes)

April 8: News Media, Documentary and Reality Television

Required reading:

al-Abdalla Yakoub, Hala

2006 "Interview with Omar Amiralay." In Rasha Salti, ed. *Insights into Syrian Cinema*, 113-117. New York: ArteEast and Rattapallax Press.

Amiralay, Omar

2006 "Were it Not for Cinema." In Rasha Salti, ed. *Insights into Syrian Cinema*, 95-98. New York: ArteEast and Rattapallax Press.

Kraidy, Marwan

2009 "Reality Television, Gender and Authenticity in Saudi Arabia," *Journal of Communication* 59(2): 345-366.

Soueid, Mohammad

2006 "Omar Amiralay, the Circassian, Syrian, Lebanese." In Rasha Salti, ed. *Insights into Syrian Cinema*, 99-111. New York: ArteEast and Rattapallax Press.

Zayani, Mohamed

2005 "Introduction: Al Jazeera and the Vicissitudes of the New Arab Media." In Mohamed Zayani, ed. *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*, 1-46. London: Pluto Press.

Optional reading:

Wedeen, Lisa

1998 "Acting "As If": Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40(3): 503-523.

Screening: *Film Essay on the Euphrates Valley*. Syria 1970. *A Flood in Bath Country (Tufan fi Balad al-Ba 'th)*. Syria 2003. Omar Amiralay, director.

April 15: Debating Cultural Intimacy, part 1: Arab Americans

Required reading:

Shryock, Andrew

1998 "Mainstreaming Arabs: Filmmaking and Image Making in Tales from Arab Detroit," *Visual Anthropology* 10 (2-4): 165-180.

Mandell, Joan

1998 "Cultural Resilience through Change: Finding the Theme for Tales from Arab Detroit," *Visual Anthropology* 10 (2-4): 189-208.

Shryock, Andrew

2002 "New Images of Arab Detroit: Seeing Otherness and Identity through the Lens of September 11," *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 917-938.

Screening: *Tales from Arab Detroit: Abu Zayd Comes to America*. USA 1995. Joan Mandell and Sally Howell, directors.

The Arab American Comedy Tour. 2006 USA. Ahmed Ahmed, Dean Obeidallah and Maysoun Zayid, directors.

April 22: Debating Cultural Intimacy, Part 2: Gender, the Politics of Representation, and Neocolonialism

Required Readings:

Abu-Lughod, Lila and Maya Mikdashi

2012 "Tradition and the Anti-Politics Machine: DAM Seduced by the "Honor Crime,"" *Jadaliyya*, 23 November.

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8578/tradition-and-the-anti-politics-machine_dam-seduce

Tamer Nafar, Suhell Nafar, and Mahmood Jrery (DAM)

2012 "Dam Responds: Tradition and the Anti-Politics Machine: DAM Seduced by the "Honor Crime,"" *Jadaliyya*, 26 December.

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/9181/dam-responds_on-tradition-and-the-anti-politics-of

Abu-Lughod, Lila and Maya Mikdashi

2012 "Honoring Solidarity during Contentious Debates. . . A Letter to DAM from Lila Abu-Lughod and Maya Mikdashi," *Jadaliyya*, 26 December.

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/9249/honoring-solidarity-during-contentious-debates.-.->

Optional reading:

Abu-Lughod, Lila.

2002 "Do Muslim Women really Need Saving?," *American Ethnologist* 104(3):783-790.

Khader, Nehad

2012 "DAM: Crime, Honor, and Hip-Hop," *Jadaliyya*, 14 November.

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8367/dam_crime-honor-and-hip-hop

Screening: Video, "If I Could Go Back in Time," Tamer Nafar, Suhell Nafar, and Mahmood Jrery (DAM), 2012.

April 29: Students' Choice

Reading TBA

May 6: The Arab Uprisings, part 1: Egypt and Beyond

Required reading:

Aouragh, Miriyam and Anne Alexander

2011 "The Egyptian Experience: Sense and Nonsense of the Internet Revolution."

International Journal of Communication 5: 1344-1358.

<http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1191/610>

Kraidy, Marwan

2012 "The Revolutionary Body Politic: Preliminary Thoughts on a Neglected Medium in the Arab Uprisings," *Journal of Middle Eastern Culture and Communication* 5(1): 66-74.

Schielke, Samuli and Jessica Winegar

2013 "The Writing on the Walls of Egypt," *MERIP* 265.

<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer265/writing-walls-egypt>

Wilkins, Karin Gwinn

2012 "Wearing Shades in the Bright Future of Digital Media: Limitations of Narratives of Media Power in Egyptian Resistance," *MedieKultur* 52: 49-61.

Optional Reading:

Boëx, Cécile

2012 "Emergency Cinema. An Interview with Syrian Collective Abounaddara," *Books & Ideas*, 5. October. <http://www.booksandideas.net/Emergency-Cinema.html>

Della Ratta, Donatella

2012 "Syrian Hands Raised: User Generated Creativity between Citizenship and Dissent," *Jadaliyya*, 31 October.

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8125/syrian-hands-raised_user-generated-creativity-betw

Peterson, Mark Allen

2011 "Egypt's Media Ecology in a Time of Revolutions," *Arab Media and Society*, 14

<http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=770>

May 13: The Arab Uprisings. Part 2: Precursors and Aftermaths

Required reading:

Armbrust, Walter

2012 “Dreaming of Counterrevolution: Rami al-I’tisami and the Pre-Negation of Protest,”
Cinema Journal 52(1): 143-147

Beeman, William O. 1984. “The Cultural Role of the Media in Iran: The Revolution of 1978-79 and After.” In Andrew Arno and Wimal Dissanayake, eds. *The News Media in National and International Conflict*, 147-165. Boulder and London: Westview Press.

Kartoussieh, Karim

2012 “The Yacoubian Building: A Slice of Pre-25 January Egyptian Society?,”
Cinema Journal 52(1): 156-159.

Salamandra, Christa

2012 “Prelude to an Uprising: Syrian Fictional television and Socio-Political Critique,”
Jadaliyya, 17 May.
http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5578/prelude-to-an-uprising_syrian-fictional-television