

**THE HISTORY OF MODERN EGYPT:
Nasserism on Film**

SUMMER 2015

Email: pdsedra@sfu.ca

Office hours: Tues. and Wed. 12 noon-1 pm

This course will introduce students to the most productive period in the history of Egyptian cinema, the 1950s and 1960s. The aim is to place the films of the period in their political and social contexts, tracing their development as responses to the Free Officers' revolution of 1952 and Nasser's subsequent rule of the country. The analysis will focus on images of village poverty, colonial violence, family discord, and the subjugation of women. Students will consider the possible links between these images and such state priorities as eradicating 'backwardness' and 'superstition,' pacifying the 'social body,' and consolidating 'modern' forms of subjectivity — among them, the companionate spouse, the productive worker, and the patriotic citizen. Given the uneven state of the literature and the limited availability of film prints, the course aims neither at comprehensiveness nor at theoretical or methodological uniformity.

Evaluation:

Presentation	30%
Term paper	50%
Class participation	20%

Required texts:

- Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class, and Nation* (American University in Cairo Press, 2007)
- Laura Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt* (Stanford University Press, 2011)
- Anne Alexander, *Nasser: His Life and Times* (American University in Cairo Press, 2005)

Class participation: Repeated absences from class will lead to a failing participation grade. Please consult the instructor should you have to miss classes for health or family reasons. Completion of the readings before class and a consistent effort to contribute to class discussions will be rewarded with high marks in this category. Lateness and poor preparation for class will be penalized.

Term paper: The term paper for the course should be 15-20 pages in length, and furnish historical context for one of the 25 films that the class will screen through the term. There are a range of approaches that students might adopt as they seek to provide this historical context: for instance, comparing the film with an Egyptian film of a different period; or contrasting the film with an American film of the 1950s

and 1960s; or exploring the literary sources upon which the film was based. Whatever the particular approach adopted, the instructor expects the paper to mount a close analysis of the film exploring how the filmmaker speaks to the zeitgeist of the Nasser era. Term papers are evaluated for clarity, organization, insight, and originality. Faulty grammar, spelling, and syntax reduce clarity, and will thus reduce your grade. Grades are final and not subject to negotiation. Term papers submitted after the deadline receive a penalty of ten percent for the first day late; for each additional day late, a further five percent will be deducted. The instructor will not accept submissions beyond a week from the given deadline. Extensions of deadlines will only be granted in the event of a documented health or family crisis.

Presentation: At the beginning of the term, each student in the class will select for analysis one of the films they are to screen at home during the term. Each week, the relevant student will have fifteen minutes in which to present her/his analysis of the film to the class. These analyses should consist of close readings of particular scenes (usually two or three) from the film under scrutiny, with a view to exploring how the filmmaker speaks to the zeitgeist of the Nasser era. Students are not expected to present definitive interpretations of the films, and are encouraged as much to raise questions about the films as to explain them. Further, students are strongly encouraged to consult with the instructor about which scenes to select and which sources to draw upon. Presentations will be followed by discussions in which peers are encouraged to offer constructive criticism.

Course regulations: I will not tolerate cheating or plagiarism. These are extremely serious academic offences which may lead to loss of credit, suspension, expulsion from the University, or the revocation of a degree. If you are having trouble with a concept or assignment, meet with the instructor well before the relevant deadlines. Keep in mind that poor, but legitimate, performance in a given assignment is far preferable to jeopardizing your academic career through fraud. All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on plagiarism and academic honesty. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations. In student papers, it is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived.

Fair dealing: Particular course materials may be copied under the Fair Dealing provisions of the Copyright Act as enumerated in SFU Appendix R30.04A - Application of Fair Dealing under Policy R30.04. Students may not distribute, e-mail, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person.

May 12
The Revolutionary Hero

Film screening in class: *A Man in Our House (Fi baytina rajul, 1961, dir. Henri Barakat)*

May 19

The Romance of Revolution

Film screening at home: *River of Love (Nahr al-hubb, 1961, dir. Izz al-Din Zulfiqar)*

Film screening in class: *The Flirtation of Girls (Ghazl al-banat, 1949, dir. Anwar Wagdi)*

- Alexander, "A Childhood at the End of Empire"
- Shafik, "Introduction," 1-10
- Bier, "Introduction," 1-22
- Electronic reserves: Joel Gordon, "Class-crossed lovers: Popular film and social change in Nasser's new Egypt"

May 26

Moral Codes

Film screening at home: *A Glass and a Cigarette (Sigara wa kas, 1955, dir. Niazi Mustafa)*

Film screening in class: *The Sins (Al-Khataya, 1962, dir. Hasan al-Imam)*

- Alexander, "Crisis of the Old Order"
- Shafik, "Negotiating Class through Genre," 241-280
- Bier, "Egyptian Women in Question: The Historical Roots of State Feminism," 23-59

June 2

Rural Roots

Film screening at home: *The Nightingale's Prayer (Duaa al-karawan, 1959, dir. Henri Barakat)*

Film screening in class: *The Land (Al-Ard, 1969, dir. Youssef Chahine)*

- Alexander, "An Unlikely Revolution"
- Electronic reserves: Ahmad Shokr, "Hydropolitics, Economy, and the Aswan High Dam in Mid-Century Egypt"
- Electronic reserves: Alia Mossallam, "'We are the ones who made this dam 'High'!' A builders' history of the Aswan High Dam"

June 9

Anxiety about the Urban

Film screening at home: *Life or Death (Haya aw mawt, 1954, dir. Kamal al-Shaykh)*

Film screening in class: *Cairo Station (Bab al-hadid, 1958, dir. Youssef Chahine)*

- Alexander, "The High Tide of Liberation"
- Electronic reserves: Joel Gordon, "Broken Heart of the City: Youssef Chahine's Bab al-Hadid (Cairo Station)"

- Electronic reserves: Yasser Elsheshtawy, "City interrupted: modernity and architecture in Nasser's post-1952 Cairo"
- Electronic reserves: Gehan Selim, "Instituting order: the limitations of Nasser's post-colonial planning visions for Cairo"

June 16

Satire, the State, and the Social

Film screening at home: *The Secret Police (Al-Bulis al-sirri, 1959, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)*

In class: *A Rumor of Love (Ishaat hub, 1961, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)*

- Bier, "Between Home and Workplace: Fashioning the 'Working Woman'," 60-100
- Electronic reserves: Joel Beinin, "Labor, Capital, and the State in Nasserist Egypt, 1952-1961"

June 23

Women's Liberation

Film screening at home: *I Am Free (Ana hurra, 1958, dir. Salah Abu Sayf)*

In class: *The Open Door (Al-Bab al-maftuh, 1964, dir. Henri Barakat)*

- Shafik, "Feminism and Femininity," 119-196
- Bier, "Law, Secularism, and Intimacy: Debating the Personal Status Laws," 101-120
- Electronic reserves: Maggie Awadalla, "Generational differences in three Egyptian women writers: Finding a common ground"
- Electronic reserves: Nancy Reynolds, "Salesclerks, Sexual Danger, and National Identity in Egypt, 1920s-1950s"

June 30

Parents and Children

Film screening at home: *Sleepless (La anam, 1958, dir. Salah Abu Sayf)*

In class: *My Father Is Up in the Tree (Abi fawq al-shagara, 1969, dir. Hussein Kamal)*

- Bier, "The Family Is a Factory: Regulating Reproduction," 121-153
- Electronic reserves: B. Zollner, "Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle during Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954"
- Electronic reserves: Joel Gordon, "The Slaps Felt around the Arab World: Family and National Melodrama in Two Nasser-Era Musicals"

July 7

Gender Trouble

Film screening at home: *The Woman's Foe (Adu al-mara, 1966, dir. Mahmud Zulfiqar)*

In class: *The Devil's Road (Tariq al-shaitan, 1963, dir. Kamal Attia)*

- Shafik, "Female Stardom, Myth-Production, and Morality," 197-238
- Bier, "Our Sisters in Struggle: State Feminism and Third World Imaginaries," 154-176

July 14

Appropriating the Ancients

Film screening at home: *Love at Karnak (Gharam fi Karnak, 1965, dir. Ali Reda)*

In class: *The Night of Counting the Years (Al-Mumiya, 1969, dir. Shadi Abd al-Salam)*

- Shafik, "The Other," 13-87
- Electronic reserves: Abdullah Lux, "On 'cultural revolution' and the Arab culture of revolution"

July 21

Comic Fantasies

Film screening at home: *Land of Hypocrisy (Ard al-nifaq, 1968, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)*

In class: *His Majesty (Sahib al-galala, 1964, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)*

- Electronic reserves: Maurice Labelle Jr., "De-coca-colonizing Egypt: globalization, decolonization, and the Egyptian boycott of Coca-Cola, 1966"
- Electronic reserves: Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "Early pan-Arabism in Egypt's July revolution: the Free Officers' political formation and policy-making"
- Electronic reserves: Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "Neutralism Made Positive: Egyptian Anti-colonialism on the Road to Bandung"

July 28

The End of Nasserism

Film screening at home: *Chitchat on the Nile (Tharthara fawq al-nil, 1971, dir. Hussein Kamal)*

In class: *Where's My Mind? (Ayna aqli? 1974, dir. Atif Salem)*

- Alexander, "Seeds of Defeat" and "To the Brink and Back"
- Shafik, "Audiences and Class," 281-324
- Bier, "Conclusion: The Legacies of State Feminism," 177-185
- Electronic reserves: Joseph Mann, "King Faisal and the Challenge of Nasser's Revolutionary Ideology"

August 4

Nasserism in Retrospect

Film screening at home: *Nasser '56 (1996, dir. Muhammad Fadel)*

In class: *Al-Karnak (1975, dir. Ali Badrakhan)*

- Alexander, "Nasser's Legacy"

- Shafik, "The Allegorical Nation," 89-115
- Electronic reserves: Joel Gordon, "Film, Fame, and Public Memory: Egyptian Biopics from Mustafa Kamil to Nasser 56"
- Electronic reserves: Benjamin Geer, "Prophets and Priests of the Nation: Naguib Mahfouz's 'Karnak Café' and the 1967 Crisis in Egypt"