

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

FALL 2019

Email: pdsedra@sfu.ca

Office hours: Wed. 11 am-12 noon, Fri. 1:30 pm-2:30 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), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3114733>
- Laura Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt* (Stanford University Press, 2011), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=753252>

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 23 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.

September 5
The Revolutionary Hero

Film screening in class: *A Man in Our House (Fi baytina rajul*, 153 minutes, 1961, dir. Henri Barakat)

September 12

The Romance of Revolution

Film screening at home: *River of Love* (*Nahr al-hubb*, 140 minutes, 1961, dir. Izz al-Din Zulfiqar)

Film screening in class: *The Flirtation of Girls* (*Ghazl al-banat*, 118 minutes, 1949, dir. Anwar Wagdi)

- Shafik, "Introduction," 1-10
- Bier, "Introduction," 1-22
- Joel Gordon, "Class-crossed lovers: Popular film and social change in Nasser's new Egypt," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/10509200109361538>

September 19

Moral Codes

Film screening at home: *A Glass and a Cigarette* (*Sigara wa kas*, 112 minutes, 1955, dir. Niazi Mustafa)

Film screening in class: *The Sins* (*Al-Khataya*, 147 minutes, 1962, dir. Hasan al-Imam)

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

September 26

Rural Roots

Film screening at home: *The Nightingale's Prayer* (*Duaa al-karawan*, 119 minutes, 1959, dir. Henri Barakat)

Film screening in class: *Hassan and Naima* (*Hassan wa Naima*, 99 minutes, 1959, dir. Henri Barakat)

- Joel Gordon, "A Country of Failure," *Nasser's Blessed Movement*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/reader.action?docID=272362&ppg=27>
- Ahmad Shokr, "Hydropolitics, Economy, and the Aswan High Dam in Mid-Century Egypt," <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/27934054>
- Alia Mossallam, "We are the ones who made this dam 'High'! A builders' history of the Aswan High Dam," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1007/s12685-014-0114-6>

October 3

Anxiety about the Urban

Film screening at home: *Life or Death* (*Haya aw mawt*, 76 minutes, 1954, dir. Kamal al-Shaykh)

Film screening in class: *Cairo Station (Bab al-hadid*, 77 minutes, 1958, dir. Youssef Chahine)

- Joel Gordon, "Broken Heart of the City: Youssef Chahine's Bab al-Hadid (Cairo Station)," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/14797585.2012.647670>
- Yasser Elsheshtawy, "City interrupted: modernity and architecture in Nasser's post-1952 Cairo," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/02665433.2013.739827>
- Gehan Selim, "Instituting order: the limitations of Nasser's post-colonial planning visions for Cairo," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/02665433.2013.808580>

October 10
Sex and Satire

Film screening at home: *The Girls of Today (Banat al-yawm*, 110 minutes, 1957, dir. Henri Barakat)

In class: *Princess Aziza (Al-Safira Aziza*, 94 minutes, 1961, dir. Tolba Radwan)

- Joel Gordon, "Lift Up Your Head," *Nasser's Blessed Movement*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/reader.action?docID=272362&ppg=92>
- Bier, "Between Home and Workplace: Fashioning the 'Working Woman'," 60-100

October 17
Women's Liberation

Film screening at home: *I Am Free (Ana hurra*, 110 minutes, 1958, dir. Salah Abu Sayf)

In class: *The Open Door (Al-Bab al-maftuh*, 103 minutes, 1964, dir. Henri Barakat)

- Bier, "Law, Secularism, and Intimacy: Debating the Personal Status Laws," 101-120
- Shafik, "Feminism and Femininity," 119-196
- Nancy Reynolds, "Salesclerks, Sexual Danger, and National Identity in Egypt, 1920s-1950s," <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1353/jowh.2011.0031>

October 24
Parents and Children

Film screening at home: *Sleepless (La anam*, 121 minutes, 1958, dir. Salah Abu Sayf)

In class: *My Father Is Up in the Tree (Abi fawq al-shagara*, 143 minutes, 1969, dir. Hussein Kamal)

- Bier, "The Family Is a Factory: Regulating Reproduction," 121-153
- Omar Khalifah, "Writing to Nasser," *Nasser in the Egyptian Imaginary*, <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g051h2.7>

- Joel Gordon, "The Slaps Felt around the Arab World: Family and National Melodrama in Two Nasser-Era Musicals," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1017/S0020743807070377>

October 31

Melodrama and the Modern

Film screening at home: *Date with the Unknown* (*Mawaid maa al-maghul*, 98 minutes, 1959, dir. Atef Salem)

In class: *A Rumor of Love* (*Ishaat hub*, 98 minutes, 1961, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)

- Shafik, "Female Stardom, Myth-Production, and Morality," 197-238
- Joel Gordon, "Stability, in Whatever Guise," *Nasser's Blessed Movement*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/reader.action?docID=272362&ppg=157>

November 7

Appropriating the Ancients

Film screening at home: *Love at Karnak* (*Gharam fi Karnak*, 101 minutes, 1965, dir. Ali Reda)

In class: *The Night of Counting the Years* (*Al-Mumiya*, 100 minutes, 1969, dir. Shadi Abd al-Salam)

- Michael Wood, "The Use of the Pharaonic Past in Modern Egyptian Natioonsliam," <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/40000469>
- Elliott Colla, "Pharaonism after Pharaonism: Mahfouz and Qutb," *Conflicted Antiquities*, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1215/9780822390398-006>
- William Carruthers, "Visualizing a monumental past: Archeology, Nasser's Egypt, and the early Cold War," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1177/0073275316681800>

November 14

No seminar this week, research for term paper

November 21

Comic Fantasies

Film screening at home: *Land of Hypocrisy* (*Ard al-nifaq*, 104 minutes, 1968, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)

In class: *His Majesty* (*Sahib al-galala*, 101 minutes, 1964, dir. Fatin Abd al-Wahhab)

- Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "Neutralism Made Positive: Egyptian Anti-colonialism on the Road to Bandung," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/13530194.2013.878526>
- Joseph Mann, "King Faisal and the Challenge of Nasser's Revolutionary Ideology," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1080/00263206.2012.706220>

November 28

The End of Nasserism

Film screening at home: *Al-Karnak* (143 minutes, 1975, dir. Ali Badrakhan)

In class: *Chitchat on the Nile* (*Tharthara fawq al-nil*, 121 minutes, 1971, dir. Hussein Kamal)

- Bier, "Conclusion: The Legacies of State Feminism," 177-185
- Shafik, "The Allegorical Nation," 89-115
- Benjamin Geer, "Prophets and Priests of the Nation: Naguib Mahfouz's 'Karnak Café' and the 1967 Crisis in Egypt," <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.1017/S0020743809990432>