

**PROGRAM IN MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN (MENA) STUDIES**  
**MENA 301 Seminar in Middle East and North African Studies Sequence**

Fall 2016

MENA 301-1/RTVF 351-0-20

“National Cinema: Middle Eastern & North African Cinemas”

Professor Hamid Naficy

This course offers a survey of the cinemas of the Middle East and North Africa, dealing with the emergence and efflorescence of film industries in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, and Palestine. While these cinemas are diverse operating within specific national, historical, cultural, religious, industrial, stylistic, and authorial paradigms and aspirations, there are many fascinating similarities and affinities in the resulting films in terms of narrative, theme, performance, visual style, and representation of women and minorities.

There are two textbooks for the course and additional readings for each week that are posted on the Canvas. Each session includes a lecture on the readings and films, discussion of the readings and films with students, and a film screening. Assignments consist of five reaction papers and two term papers. There are also required discussion sessions with TAs.

Winter 2017

MENA 301-2-20/ANTHRO 390-0-21

“Protest and Popular Culture in the Middle East”

Professor Jessica Winegar

This course will examine the connection between popular culture and politics in the Middle East and North Africa. Popular culture – including films, music, poetry, street art, the internet, and television – has been a critical means for expressing political viewpoints and indeed motivating political action. It has also been used by groups and governments seeking to maintain power and repress populist sentiment. This course will take a careful and critical view of different examples of popular culture from across the region, asking what kind of politics they embody and enable. We will concentrate on what popular culture tells us about social change and hierarchies of power related to nation-states, generations, social class, gender, race/ethnicity, and religion.

Spring 2017

MENA 301-3/ENGL 313

“The Arabian Nights”

Professor Rebecca Johnson

While in the contemporary popular imagination the *Arabian Nights* is often reduced to a few well-known stories, this course will take a wider approach to the collection, which was compiled over several languages and centuries and contains a wealth of genres, including romance, poetry, fables, jokes, pornography, wisdom literature, and rhetorical debates. Over the quarter, we will read the earliest of these stories, as well as follow the collection's history as the product of a still-ongoing process of circulation and cultural exchange. The last third of the course will therefore be devoted to the modern “afterlives” of the collection in novels, film, and theater. We will consider how the *Nights* has been used in these works as a vehicle for deeply-considered investigations into narrative form but also clichéd and colonially-imbued images of the Middle East. Reading and watching these works next to and against the Arabic versions, we will encounter the vast variety of ways that the *Nights* has been a source of narrative techniques,

literary themes, political allegories, and feminist debates across literary traditions. Students will write two short literary analyses of individual tales and a final paper examining the use of *Nights* formal devices in a modern context.