

"Arab Women Writers" students present film series

By Deena Zaru
SENIOR WRITER

"The field of Arab women writers is a burgeoning field, still quite under-theorized and under-taught, and my hope is that we can contribute to raising its profile," said Diya Abdo, assistant professor of English.

Appropriately, Abdo teaches "Arab Women Writers," a senior seminar course.

"In the course we have been distinguishing between stereotypes and reality when it comes to Arab women," said senior Laura Milot.

Senior John Jenkins said that discussion is at the center point of the class.

"So far, most of our class has been looking at colonial and post-colonial feminist theory in Arab countries," said senior Alex Barnett. "More recently, we have started reading fictional narratives which are awesome."

The class has organized an Arab Women Film series composed of five films, each followed by student-led discussion of the film and the issues surrounding it.

Senior Bailey Arnold said that in order to prepare for the film series, the students have been engaged in readings on the Arab world and Western perceptions of the Arab world.

"The film series addresses different subject matter that relates to Arab women writers

and the lives of Arab women in general," said Arnold.

The first of the films, "Hollywood Harems," a 1999 24-minute Tanya Kamal-Eldin production, was shown Feb. 17 from 6:30-7:30 in the Bryan Jr. auditorium.

The film was presented by seniors Jerry Hrechka, Juliana Janisch, Laura Milot, and Sheena Morning, who moderated discussion and asked the audience questions.

"It is about the power of media, specifically, Hollywood," said Milot. "The entertainment industry not only has the ability to manipulate western culture, but also has the ability to influence how western culture perceives others around the world."

The film juxtaposes clips from Hollywood films about a fantasized, exotic east throughout the decades (from the 1920's until the 1980's).

Hollywood's portrayal of the exotic East fuses together elements of Arab, Persian, Chinese and Indian culture and does not distinguish between them. The East is represented as one united entity, free from differences.

The film argues that in creating a false cultural plurality, these popular films have created and then stimulated offensive stereotypes about the East by simultaneously

reinforcing ideas of ultimate Western supremacy.

The film referenced Hollywood movies, especially those that feature harems, such as "Cleopatra" (1963), "Son of Sinbad" (1955), "Arabian Nights" (1942) and "Son of the Sheik" (1926).

According to the film, in the early 1920's "nudity, suggestive dances and costumes were prohibited in films," but in Eastern settings filmmakers were able to break these rules.

Often in these films Western men were permitted into the sacred walls of the harem and "could indulge through the intruder's gaze" in bathing scenes, orgies, and "dancing girls which were fixed icons" who performed eroticized dances.

"In the early 1900s, female characters were often portrayed as prude and proper unless they were Eastern, in which case they primarily played the role of 'the seductress,'" said Milot.

During the discussion, Hrechka asked the group whether it is the ethical responsibility of the film maker to portray these cultures "in a positive light."

"No, not necessarily positive," said sophomore JoJo Gao, "but it is their ethical responsibility to portray them realistically."

Abdo said that through the course and the film series she hopes to "dispel stereotypes, create room for discussion and interrogation about issues of representation, and contribute to and extend the discussion about Arab/Muslim women's lives and productions ... as well as to arrive at a more informed, less Euro-centric and less stereotypical understanding of Arab and Muslim women."

Abdo said that these two objectives can be accomplished by "contextualizing the various texts we are reading, delineating the variances among Arab women from different countries, regions, social classes, and religious backgrounds, and exploring the ways they inhabit differing historical, cultural, social, political, and economic contexts."

Senior Dana Kilgoe, who was present at the film, said that the course has encouraged her to challenge her own opinions by getting educated.

"This class takes us deeper into the world of the Arab women that includes her language, fears and her ability to survive over some insurmountable odds and circumstances," said Kilgoe. "Never have I had the opportunity to experience and view the world from this angle. I can go on and on. But, you will just have to come and see for yourself."

UPCOMING SCREENINGS FOR ARAB WOMEN WRITERS FILM SERIES

March 4	March 18	April 1	April 18
"COVERED: THE HEJAB IN CAIRO, EGYPT"	"ALGERIA: WOMEN AT WAR"	"THE VEILED HOPE: WOMEN OF PALESTINE"	"FAMILY TIES"

BONNER

Senate denies funding to senior Bonner trip to Puerto Rico

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

19,000-20,000 hours of service per academic year

Many senators worried that such a trip would not affect the whole community.

"Our impact on the community may not be tangible the way Senate would like to see," said James Shields, the director of community learning. "I think a lot of students don't realize all of the work and benefits that the Bonner Scholars provide to the community."

Shields cited Guilford's national recognition for community service and how Bonners establish service sites locally, nationally, and internationally that any Guilford student could use because of the relationship that they built. He also stressed how the Bonner program teaches members of the community to be socially and culturally aware of issues beyond the horizons of the Guilford bubble.

"The Bonners don't feel that they are entitled to the money," said Shields. "It concerns me that people are making decisions based on the idea that we are sitting on a pot of gold."

As a result of the Lilly Grant running out in December 2007, the Bonner students do not have the same financial resources. Since then, Senate has approved funding for service trips to Nicaragua, Costa Rica and India.

Although the Steering Committee business manager Nancy Klosteridis said she fully supports the work the Bonners do, she worries that Bonners may depend too much on Senate funding.

"We don't like to be passed the bill," said

Klosteridis, who stood aside on the vote. "The Bonners need to consider the future of their programs fiscally if going to places like the Crow reservation and abroad are so important to them."

Some senators received the first-year's proposal with fewer reservations because of their future plans to increase fundraising for the annual trip.

For the past eight years, the first-year Bonners have taken the trip to the reservation. Students involved with the Bonner program emphasized the importance of serving more than simply the local community.

"It's crucial to continue a relationship with the Crow reservation," said senior Bonner Natan Harel. "You have to treat it as you would a good friend. You can't just cut off contact."

Senators expressed a need for more specific by-laws to help determine what should and

Senate. He reiterated that the senior Bonners successfully raised \$11,200 for their trip.

Senators differed in their views on why Senate faces such a difficult budget conundrum. As Senate tends to face more pricey proposals in the spring, Lashley argued that the money should have been handled more responsibly.

"It's not fair to the Bonners to deny them money based solely on Senate's current budget situation," said Lashley.

Mallet pointed out that Senate blocked two proposals last semester and stated that the increasing demand for Senate's money caused the current budget situation. "Senate this year has actually been more fiscally responsible," she said.

Shields reflected that the problem may be even broader than just Senate.

"I think the whole community needs to

"It's not fair to the Bonners to deny them money based solely on Senate's current budget situation."

Shepard Lashley, senate communications director

should not be funded by student activities fees.

"We need to change to way the by-laws handle personal trips so that personal opinion does not determine why some trips should or should not get funded," said senior Shepard Lashley, a communications coordinator for

come together and decide how to spend their student activities fees," said Shields. "If we are a community that prides ourselves on service, then students who don't go out into the world and serve need to support other students who go out and do work that makes real change happen."

GREEN LIGHT, RED LIGHT

WHAT PASSED, WHAT DIDN'T, AND WHAT'S STILL ON THE TABLE

APPROVED

Draw-A-Thon: \$1,700
Sustainable Health Choices: \$230
Bird-Banding Trip to Nicaragua: \$636
BUS-Black Panther Speaker: \$2,420
Art Fair: \$1,300
IMPACT conference: \$2,825
Serendipity: total of \$15,516
-Toubab Krewe: \$7,500
-Stage and Production: \$8,016

DENIED

Senior Bonner Trip to Puerto Rico: \$2,927
Bonner Trip to Montana: \$8,000

VOTE PENDING

Remainder of Serendipity: \$7,500
GCRO Stop Hunger: \$2,500
Fundred Dollar Bill: \$1,595
Anti-Oppression Workshop: \$12,000