

Muslim women film series dispels stereotypes

By Ivy Lamb
STAFF WRITER

The IDS 485: Arab and Islamic Feminisms class, taught by Assistant Professor of English Diya Abdo, is presenting a Muslim women film series. The film series challenges stereotypes about Muslim women by exploring the lives of Muslim women around the world.

"They Call Me Muslim," the first film in the series, was screened in Bryan Jr. Auditorium on Oct. 6. Directed by Diana Ferrero, the film examines the debate over the Muslim headscarf by interviewing two women; one in France who is forced to remove her hijab, and another woman in Iran who is forced to put it on.

A small group of students gathered to watch the film and

afterwards participated in a discussion that was led by four seniors from Abdo's IDS class. The discussion focused on how the hijab relates to oppression, identity, and anti-Muslim sentiments.

"For many women, the veil is liberating," said presenting senior Lee Cornett, addressing the common Western misconception that the hijab is a symbol of oppression. "We all place different ideologies on the same piece of clothing."

Competing religious, political, and feminist ideologies have singled out the hijab as a controversial piece of clothing, even though many religions have mandates for women to cover themselves.

"Even the Bible has verses about covering women," said senior presenter Alicia Bachman. "There

are other religions like the Quakers who require women to cover, yet they don't catch nearly so much flak for it."

The hijab is treated differently in different countries. The Iranian government does not currently recognize a separation between church and state, and women are forced to wear the hijab to comply with Shari'a law—an Islamic code of law based on the Qur'an and the hadith, which refers to a compilation of the Prophet Mohammad's actions and sayings. France, on the other hand, a secular nation, outlawed "ostentatious" religious symbols in public schools in 1994, which included the hijab.

In the film, girls who were forced to remove their headscarves in France tell how traumatic it was, and how their sense of identity was threatened when they took the hijab

off in public. "K," the woman living in Iran also commented on how being forced to wear a headscarf impinged on her sense of identity.

"When I watched the film, I had to ask myself if there is anything that I wear that would threaten my sense of identity if I couldn't wear it, or is there anything that I could be forced to wear that would threaten my identity? I don't think there is," said senior and presenter Joshua Osborne.

Manar Hmeidan said that she understands what it means to have the hijab as a part of her identity. Hmeidan was born in Palestine and chose to wear the hijab when she was 15, and she came to the U.S. with her family when she was 16. She often has to deal with negative stereotyping because of her hijab.

"I have to be careful," she said. "I have to watch what I do because

people judge Muslims as a whole based on what they see me do and say."

Abdo said that it is especially important to discuss these issues in today's political climate. She said that thanks to the multiple conflicts in the Middle East, we have labeled the culture as oppressive and use the rhetoric of liberation as justification for war.

"We need to dispel stereotypes," said Abdo. "There are millions of Muslims in the world, and as many Muslims as there are, there are that many reasons for wearing the hijab. The Muslim world is incredibly diverse."

The schedule for the rest of the film series is available on the Guilford Web site at http://www.guilford.edu/about_guilford/news_and_publications/releases/muslimwomen_09films.html.

SURVEY

Survey asks CCE students about class experience with traditional students

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"I think it would be beneficial for everyone if Guilford eliminated all designated parking spaces except those for drivers who have physical mobility issues," CCE senior Gabriel Valentine said. "I don't see the need to separate students and faculty/staff. Parking spaces should be available on a first-come-first-served basis."

The third question that CCE students answered was "If you've been in any classes with traditional students, how was it?" The responses were then classified into six categories.

44 of the 100 responses were positive. The students who enjoyed it said that they appreciated the diversity.

CCE junior Victor Vincent said that the combination of CCE and traditional students makes Guilford great.

"I love a healthy debate and I believe both types of students elevate the discussion in class," said Vincent. "Traditional students are really intelligent and I enjoy them in my classes."

21 of the 100 responses were negative.

"It's a little intimidating at first," said CCE sophomore Tammy Willard. "It comes down to walking into a room full of people and I'm the odd man out and everyone knows it."

Many of the negative responses explained that their main problem with traditional students is feeling like the maturity levels are different.

"Each one approaches school different just like the CCE students; some come to class and work hard where others come when they want and don't pay attention in class," said CCE sophomore Stephanie Gilbert Thornburg. "Sounds like students don't change much the older they get."

18 of 100 said that they had not been in classes with traditional students yet so their responses were "not applicable," while eight percent had mixed reviews, citing things they both liked and disliked about classes with traditional students.

CCE first-year Cathy Saunders said that traditional students are mostly mature but that she's been frustrated by students who play in class.

Six percent had general comments which were neither negative nor positive.

"When I leave class, I'm raising a son, I'm mowing my yard, I have a mortgage and bigger responsibilities than just school," Willard said. "So, my world is different from theirs. And one world is not any better than the other—just different. And, because of that fundamental difference, I always wonder how I'm going to connect to my fellow classmates. Because we all know, there will be a group project."

Finally three percent said they couldn't tell the difference between CCE and traditional classes.

The last question asked regarded the attempted merger this year of the traditional and the CCE Homecoming. The merger was unsuccessful, according to CCE SGA president Jessica Butler because the traditional student government never responded to the SGA's suggestion to possibly hold a tailgate party.

The question was "What do you think about the possible merging of Homecoming with the traditional and CCE students and why?"

54 percent said they liked the idea; 5 percent said it was not a good idea; 29 percent said they were too busy to attend and 12 percent said they didn't care one way or the other.

"I think it can only benefit the school. Right now there seems to be an almost invisible barrier between the two groups," said CCE sophomore Tim Ryan. "Some of it, I believe, is CCE students perhaps being intimidated by their younger classmates and the traditional students being unsure of us old people."

Another student who thought that merging CCE and Traditional Homecoming was a great idea was CCE senior Pamela Hirt.

"It would help to bring the students of Guilford College closer together. We need more of a community atmosphere between the traditional and CCE students," Hirt said.

Guilford College welcomes Dorothy Allison

October 30, 2009



Dorothy Allison, an amazing and award-winning author who writes about class, gender, and sexuality issues, is coming to campus this Friday, Oct. 30th, to give a reading from her forthcoming work.

Where: Carnegie Room of Hege Library

When: 6 p.m. (seating begins at 5:30)

Cost: Free and open to the public!

Allison received mainstream recognition with her novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*, a finalist for the 1992 National Book Award. The novel won the Ferro Grumley prize, an ALA Award for Lesbian and Gay Writing, and became a best seller and an award-winning movie.

She is also the author of the best-selling novel *Cavedweller* (1998), named a NY Times notable book of the year, and the short-story collection *Trash*, originally published in 1983 and expanded in 2003. Allison received the 2007 Robert Penn Warren Award for Fiction.

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