

Villains, Misfits, and Tricksters of the Middle East

What does it mean to attend a course about societies from the perspective of people who are dominantly constructed as villains and bad guys, or in theological terms the subjects who are dominantly considered as sinners, who are not considered as good representatives of the victimhood language and politics that have controlled the global aspects of justice and morality specifically since WWII?

This course focuses on the ruins of the constructed and invented civilizations and their entailed languages, histories, faiths, and identities. Ruins are usually regarded as the unwanted piles of dust, rocks, and cement following the destruction of a building, a city, or even a whole country. They are useless and valueless material leftovers, which are usually thrown away far from well-structured and well-organized gardens, houses, universities, and streets. Nevertheless, the work of Walter Benjamin in specific offered another perspective to investigate the rubble and its presumed negativity. Writing against historicity and its linearity, this course will shed light on how rubble disturbs and stumbles the fetishization of how civilizations and their hegemonic ideas are built.

In this regard, this course will try to investigate two interrelated problematics in academia and public life: The first is a gap between the centrality of sinful, the outcast, and the misfit and the making of societies in the Middle East on one hand, and the political, social, and economic exclusion of these figures while debating the communal and citizenship rights of the people on the other hand. The second problematic has to do with stumbling personal stories that are full of the predominantly negated practices of the misfits, who interrupt the making of the hegemonic victimhood discourses.

Tentative Flow of the Weeks

Week 1: Introduction- Why Villains and Misfits (Didier Fassin & Daniel Rechtman's *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* and "Eshtebak", a film by Mohamed Diab).

Week 2: Ruins, Rubble, and Abandoned (Gaston Gordillo's *Rubble* and "In the Last Days of 'The Triangle'", a film by Mada Masr)

Week 3: Dirty, Impure, and Stinky (Mary Douglas's *Purity & Danger*) and "The Massacre", a film by Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim.

Week 4: Evils, Satan, and the Fallen Humanity (*Naguib Mahfouz's Adrift on the Nile* and its film "Chitchat on the Nile")

Week 5: Criminals, Mad, and Incarcerated Subjects (Reading TBD) and "El-Barei'", a film by Atef El-Tayyib).

Week 6: Bitches, Whore, and Sluts (Bad Girls of the Arab World by Nadia Yaqub and Rula Quawas and “The Syrian Refugees turning to Sex to Survive” a film by BBC).

Week 7: Addiction of Alcohol and Drugs (TBD) and “El-Keif”, a film by Ali Abdel Khalek.

Week 8: Beggars, Street Children, and Homeless (Mine Ener’s Managing Egypt’s Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952) and “Al-Motasawwil”, a film by Ahmed El Sab’awy.

Week 9: The Age of the Sarsagiyya (Lucie Ryzova’s *The Age of the Effendiyya: Passages to Modernity in National-Colonial Egypt* and “El-Almany”, a film by Alaa ElSherif).

Week 10: Conclusions and Final Remarks