

Films and the "Middle East"  
University of Houston  
Spring 2007

HIST 3399  
SECTION 05627

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### Course Description

What does a country's film industry tell us? How do art, history and politics interact? What is the role of artistic expression? These are the kinds of questions that frame this course centered on Iranian and other films in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. We look at cinema analytically and critically. Movies play a central role in a country's cultural life, how does that comport with their political missions? Second, Iranian movies have received international acclaim, what makes them so appealing to a broad audience? This course is necessarily comparative in nature and has a large writing component. It is implicit that in order to receive a good grade students are expected to attend and actively participate.

### Course Requirements and Grading

50%-Film Reviews, 5 film 10% each

20% 2 Book Reviews

10% Midterm

5% Participation

10% Leading Film Discussion

5% Academy Awards

### Course Reading (available at the bookstore)

Satrapi, M. Persepolis. Moaveni, A. Lipstick Jihad

### Course Films:

Children of Heaven

Hidden Half

Kandahar

Color of Paradise

Baran

White Balloon

Promises

Selections: Not Without My Daughter and Aladdin.

### Course Schedule

1/16 Introduction to the course

#### Iran Film

1/18 Historical Overview I (for the next three classes, you may reference Cleveland, W. History of the Modern Middle East)

1/23 Historical Overview II

1/25 History of Iran; Read Tapper, R. Chapter 1, 2-distributed

1/30 Guest Speaker and Film maker Kavon Mashayekh (The Keeper)

2/1 **Film:** Children of Heaven Film

2/6 Discussion of Children of Heaven Film

2/8 **Film:** Color of Paradise part 1

2/13 **Film:** Color of Paradise part 2

2/15 Student led discussion of Color of Paradise; Movie Review Due

2/20 Book Review and discussion of Persepolis

2/22 **Film:** Hidden Half, midterm review distributed

2/27 **Film:** Hidden Half, student led discussion of film and movie review due

3/1 Midterm

3/6 **Film:** Not without my Daughter; Aladdin

3/8 Book Review and discussion of Lipstick Jihad; Chapter 1-6

3/20 **Film** Kandahar

3/22 Student led discussion of Kandahar Movie Review Due,

3/27 **Film** Baran

3/29 **Film** Baran part 2

4/3 Review of Baran due, student led discussion.

4/5 **Film** White Balloon

4/10 **Film** White Balloon part 2

4/12 Movie Review due, student led discussion

#### Palestine-Israel Film

4/17 History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

4/20 **Film** Promises

4/24 **Film** Promises; student led discussion of Promises

4/26 "Academy Awards"

## The Assignments

All written work must be original and properly cited. You may use the Internet for research but cite all your sources. *Any work that is not original and submitted under your name will result in severe penalties. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is and not to do it. Any unexcused late work is penalized 5 points per class period late. Assignments submitted after 10 days are not accepted.*

### 1. Film Reviews

This 3-4 page assignment requires you to provide an analytical review of the film. Creative insightful analysis is rewarded. DO NOT RETELL THE STORY. Use the story to prove your argument. What is the objective of the film, is it achieved? What does it tell us about its society? The more research you do about the film the better the analysis. Try to go beyond the obvious. Try to think about using a vehicle for your review, who are you writing for? A film magazine, your grandmother, the New York Times? Reviews should be typed, double spaced and fully cited.

### 2. Leading Film Discussion

Each time we watch a film a team of students will lead the discussion on that film. Creative leadership is rewarded. What is the best way to promote discussion? What are the salient features of the film, why? Students can feel free to be as imaginative as possible in executing this assignment. Imagination in this presentation is heavily rewarded.

### 3. Satrapi, Persepolis. (book review).

Provide a through review of the arguments and explanations of this text. What question(s) is the author raising? Are these important? Does she answer these? What are her objectives? What is the books premise? Did you like the book? Why or why not? Could you relate to the author's experience? Where does she take you intellectually? Four pages typed minimum and properly cited.

### 4. Moaveni, A. Lipstick Jihad (book review)

Follow the instructions above.

### 5. "Academy Awards"

For this assignment you will present an argument to the class on why your film should win the semester's academy award. Arguments are oral and should include 5 compelling reasons for us to vote on your film. The class will vote collectively to determine the semester's winners-that means your peers will determine your grade.