

Counter-Narratives, New Publics, Dissent in the Arab World (Cairo, 16–27 Sept)

AUC Cairo, Sep 16–27, 2012

Deadline: Apr 15, 2012

Georges Khalil

The research project Europe in the Middle East—The Middle East in Europe (EUME) of the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien and the 'Center for Translation Studies' of the American University in Cairo invite scholars of Comparative Literature, Cultural Anthropology, Middle East Studies, Political Science, and Sociology to apply for an international Summer Academy from September 16 – 27, 2012 at the American University in Cairo on the theme Aesthetics and Politics: Counter-Narratives, New Publics, and the Role of Dissent in the Arab World.

The Summer Academy

is chaired by a group of scholars that include Randa Aboubakr (Cairo University), Michael Allan (University of Oregon / Fellow of EUME 2011/12), Sinan Antoon (NYU), Ayman El-Desouky (SOAS London), Elias Khoury (NYU/Beirut), Samia Mehrez (American University in Cairo), Rachid Ouaiassa (Philipps-Universität Marburg), Friederike Pannewick (Philipps-Universität Marburg), Samah Selim (Rutgers University), and is held in cooperation with the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies of Philipps-Universität Marburg.

24 doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from different countries and academic disciplines will be given the opportunity to present and discuss their current research. Intellectuals, writers and scholars from Egypt will also participate in the discussions and events of the Summer Academy.

The Summer Academy is designed to support scholarly networks and contribute to closer ties among research activities in and outside Europe and the Middle East. It is also meant to foster interdisciplinary research fields that benefit from the sort of intercultural cooperation this forum provides. In order to promote intensive debate and encourage new perspectives, the Summer Academy is structured around four main elements: presentations of individual research projects in small groups, working group sessions for the participants, general lectures, and panel discussions open to a wider public.

Program

The uprisings in the Arab world have challenged traditional paradigms for understanding culture and politics in the region and have opened up new sets of questions in both spheres. 'Revolution,' as both concept and practice, has at once enabled innovative modes of critique, imaginings of new utopias, re-signified subjectivities, as well as communal solidarities. What are some of the new terms, frames of understanding, and transformations that have begun to crystallize through the political and cultural changes in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings? In what ways do the

uprisings across the Arab world reformulate the relationship between politics and culture in and outside the region? How might we understand the role of dissent and counternarratives in the political process? And how should we conceive the place of literature and the arts in this new context? How might analyzing the relationship between aesthetics and politics ultimately enrich the way we understand and position our own work as scholars of the region? How might we understand and deploy key political terms inspired by the Arab uprisings emphasizing freedom, human dignity, and social justice—and what do these terms mean in our academic contexts?

Scholars are encouraged to explore aesthetic forms in the broadest sense—not in only literature, but also in new media, music, film, performance, fashion and street art. How have these aesthetic forms facilitated the imagining of political practice and a new public sphere? Can we trace echoes of this political vocabulary in the novels, art, poetry, songs, and films of the last decades, many of which deployed emancipatory or subversive rhetoric? The postmodernism of the 1990s and 2000s in the Arab world emerged as an explicit rejection of older forms of realism, and aesthetic—as well as political—commitments: the fragment, the minority, the personal confession, the pastiche, and the mistrust of representation itself were all features of this trend. Were the 21st century uprisings nourished and shaped by this movement, or has their explosion onto the world stage sounded the death-knell of the postmodern Arab subject? What kinds of new narrative modes and structures—or even altogether new genres—might emerge from this revolutionary moment?

What is the impact of old and new media on the values and norms of a society? Do new forms of communication point to new ways of reconstructing civil society in the Middle East or are these channels limited to intellectual and social elites? How has new media transformed literature? We might consider shifts both in style and language (with the influence of SMS language, cell phone novels and blogs), as well as the new publics imagined in these textual forms. Is there something like a new aesthetic implicit in the current revolutionary movement?

Part of analyzing the relationship of aesthetics and politics means rethinking the role of culture and intellectuals in a revolutionary context. Are intellectuals still relevant in current public debates? Does the term 'intellectual' apply to the new actors, movements, and organizations involved in the Arab uprisings? What does a 'revolution' without leaders tell us about the role of intellectuals in the 21st century? These questions are deeply embedded in the ongoing reconfiguration of the idea of culture as a whole in the revolutionary imagination. How are intellectuals, artists, institutional actors and the broader public beginning to rethink the idea of culture as a public good in light of the complex tensions between the effects of globalization and the marketplace on the one hand, and established practices of 'managed' national culture on the other? How are we to define public culture in this context, and how can we begin to map out a revolutionary genealogy of cultural practice relevant to the changing landscapes of the 21st century?

In what ways do cultural forms inflect the political imaginary, and what might be the role of the revolutionary state, corporate foundations, and the market in cultural production and dissemination?

Conditions of Application and Procedure

Participants receive a stipend covering travel and accommodation. The program targets doctoral and postdoctoral researchers of Comparative Literature, Cultural Anthropology, Middle East Studies, Political Science, and Sociology, who wish to present their ongoing projects in a compara-

tive perspective in relation to the questions raised above. The researchers' work should be clearly relevant to the themes of the Summer Academy. While the focus of the Summer Academy will be the Arab world, comparative perspectives on the relation of aesthetics and politics from other regions are welcome, transregional comparative approaches being especially encouraged. The working language is English. The application should likewise be in English and consist of

- a curriculum vitae
- a three- to five-page outline of the project the applicant is currently working on, with a brief summary thereof,
- the names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees
(no letters of recommendation required)

sent by e-mail as one pdf file or in one word document.

The application should be submitted in English and should be received by April 15, addressed to eume@trafo-berlin.de

Institutional Framework

The Summer Academy is supported within the overall framework of the research program 'Europe in the Middle East–The Middle East in Europe' (EUME), which focuses on the diverse processes of transfer, exchange and interaction between Europe and the Middle East. EUME is hosted and supported by the Forum Transregionale Studien.

The Forum Transregionale Studien is a new research platform of the Land of Berlin designed to promote research that connects systematic and region-specific questions in a perspective that addresses entanglements and interactions beyond national, cultural or regional frames. The Forum works in tandem with already existing institutions and networks engaged in transregional studies and is supported by an association of directors of research institutes and networks mainly based in Berlin. It is funded by the Senate of Berlin.

Contact

Europe in the Middle East–The Middle East in Europe
c/o Forum Transregionale Studien
Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin
Attn: Georges Khalil
Wallotstrasse 19
14193 Berlin
Germany
eume@trafo-berlin.de

For more information on Europe in the Middle East–The Middle East in Europe:
www.eume-berlin.de

For more information on the Forum Transregionale Studien:
www.forum-transregionale-studien.de

ArtHist.net

CFP: Counter-Narratives, New Publics, Dissent in the Arab World (Cairo, 16-27 Sept). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 5, 2012 (accessed Apr 7, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/2945>>.