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### **(De)Constructing Identities Through Film: First Year Seminar- Liberal Arts Capstone Collaborative Assignment [Liberal Arts]**

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## **(De)Constructing Identities Through Film: First Year Seminar-Liberal Arts Capstone Collaborative Assignment**

**Habiba Boumlik (ELA) LIB200**

**Caron Knauer (English) LIF101**

### **Part I:**

#### **Assignment Description and Learning Objectives**

This high-stakes assignment was designed within the frame of Learning Matters Mini-grants Capstone-First Year Seminar Collaboration (Spring 2018). It was used in Caron Knauer's First Year Seminar class (LIF101) and in Habiba Boumlik's Capstone Liberal Arts—Humanism, Science, and Technology (LIB200). For this collaborative assignment, the primary LaGuardia Core Competency is Integrative Learning and the Communication Ability is Written.

The following dimensions of the relevant core competency and communication ability align well with this collaborative assignment:

- a. Ability to draw insight from connections across relevant learning experiences, including personal, co-curricular, and academic-- what connections are there between culture, traditions and how gender is shaped?
- b. Ability to apply learning across diverse contexts by applying knowledge and skills inside or outside the classroom--discuss attitudes towards gender in the Amazigh culture and how they connect to the students' own culture.
- c. Communication ability--discuss orally and reflect in writing the newly acquired knowledge about gender and indigenous Amazigh people.
- d. Reflection and Self-Assessment: students demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experience to respond to a new context offered to them through readings and film festival showings and discussions.

#### **The main objectives of the LIF assignment are:**

- to involve students in co-curricular activities, an important component of the First Year Seminar. Students attend and report on the kickoff of a co-curricular college event, the New York Forum of Amazigh Film.
- to expose students to learning about a particular culture by first reading two articles about it and then being exposed to in-person, expert context and watching two films about which to write a film review. At the end of this first phase, First Year Students are connected and paired with LIB200 capstone students close to graduating.

- They get feedback from the LIB 200 class. This enables LIF students to revise drafts and incorporate feedback.

**The LIF/LIB 200 collaborative aspect of the assignment unfolds following these steps:**

- Provide information to LIF students about the liberal arts capstone class, LIB200, and ask LIF students to write questions to LIB students.
- Hand out letters from LIB 200 students to LIF students, and have students write back.
- Let LIF students know that LIB students will be peer reviewing their research papers.

### **Habiba Boumlik LIB200: (De)Constructing Identities Through Film: Arab Cinema**

#### **Course Objectives**

- Familiarize students with the fundamental concepts and methods of a cinema to explore world cultures and global issues.
- Encourage students to analyze the cinematographic works from their own cultural perspective and also from the heterogeneous Arab perspective.
- Teach students to analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual repression, belief, and other forms of social differentiation play in the Arab world.
- Enable students to interpret these sociocultural differences in light of the contemporary life in the U.S. and in the Arab world.

The dimensions of the Core Competency that the assignment is aligned to is Integrative Learning. However, the assignment also addresses the dimensions of Global Learning.

The two dimensions of Integrative Learning targeted by the assignment are:

1. Connections to Experience: the goal is to help students identify and draw insights from connections from their personal experience and through a specific co-curricular experience, i.e. the Amazigh film festival.
2. Ability to apply learning across diverse contexts: allow students to apply their knowledge and learning experiences outside the classroom.

In addition, as the writing instructions below will illustrate, the assignment also aligns with the written communication ability.

It should take students six hours to complete the assignment. The assignment connects with other parts of the course. We scaffold the assignment by having a discussion about the film and the reading. There was a follow-up to the assignment because LIB200 students had to write a peer review and FYS students responded to their reviewer. The

final grade is worth 8% of the LIB class. The assignment was developed during the migrant workshop and through discussions and follow-up emails using Google Docs.

## **Part II: Assignment Description**

### **The Assignments**

**Caron Knauer LIF101**

***House in the Fields* and/or *The Lock* review assignment: Moroccan and North African Perspectives**

### **Instructions: Low stakes assignment – acquiring background information**

#### **Activities:**

Before viewing the film, read pages 1-7 of Bruce Maddy-Weitzman’s article “Berbers and the Nation State in North Africa,” published in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, 2017, and be prepared to discuss the following questions in class:

1. Where do the Amazigh, also known as Berbers, live, and what impact do you think their geography have on their lifestyle?
2. What did you learn about the identity of the Amazigh? What is meant by “identity movement”?
3. After looking up any words that you don’t know, paraphrase the following sentence, and write your paraphrase of it on the board. This quote explains the goals of the Amazigh people and how culture and politics intersect.

“The transnational Berber/Amazigh Culture Movement is an amorphous, many-headed phenomenon with a clear core demand: the official recognition of the existence of the Amazigh people as a collective and of the historical and cultural Amazighité (Berberity) of North Africa, and the adoption of policies that will ameliorate their social, economic, and cultural marginalization” (Maddy-Weitzman 3).

### **Instructions: High Stakes Assignment**

- Please write a film review of approximately 600-800 words about Tala Hadid’s documentary *House in the Field* (2017) or *The Lock*. Your opinion of the film and your explanation supporting it will serve as your thesis. Please focus on what you learn about Amazigh culture from the film. Take notes while watching it, contemplating the film’s depiction of socioeconomic issues as well as landscape, animals, plants, music, clothing, food, and anything you observe about the Amazigh’s cultural practices and lifestyle. Some themes you can consider focusing on are:

- What is revealed about the gender identity of the two main characters, the sisters Khadija and Fatima, as compared to their brother, Omar, and the other men in the film?
  - How do these characters' choices compare and contrast with young people in America?
  - How does life in the mountains of Morocco contrast with your lifestyle?
  - How do the young characters' ambitions and expectations of life compare and contrast with yours?
  - How does the wedding compare and contrast with weddings in your culture?
- Your essay should have a captivating introduction, one that includes your thesis and why or why not you recommend others watch the film.
  - Your body paragraphs should include supporting details. Make sure your conclusion ties your ideas together and reinforces your thesis. Proofread your work mindfully and carefully.
  - I hand out a copy of my Education Media Online Review (EMRO) published review of the documentary *Lady Kul el-Arab*, and we read and discuss how a reviewer makes observations and articulates her opinion.

### **Activities**

1. Show the first half of *House in the Fields* in class. Guide students in actively observing and taking notes about myriad aspects of this film, including its environment and natural world, music, clothing, food, cultural practices, lifestyle, dialogue, gender issues, family, home, work, character, identity, relationships, weddings, expectations, etc. and then contrasting it to their own lives. We discuss students' observations; I tell students to hold onto their notes. We watch the second half of the film during a subsequent class; I also give students the link to watch the rest of the film in case they were absent or want to watch it again.
2. We attend the New York Forum of Amazigh Film where students listen to a talk by an Amazigh scholar and viewed the film *The Lock*. They take notes and are encouraged to include their observations and thoughts about this film in their reviews. The act and practice of close listening, note-taking, reflecting, and writing about talks can be used for other co-curricular events.
3. Students will hand in their first drafts which will be peer reviewed by the LIB200 class. They will read the comments and respond to students. I will discuss revisions individually with students and they will hand in final drafts.
4. The grade of their final drafts will count for 10% of their grade.

5. We then watched the documentary *The Seventh Fire* about Native Americans in Minnesota and compared and contrasted a marginalized American group with one in North Africa.

**Habiba Boumlik LIB200**

**LIF/LIB200 Collaboration: Follow-up activity**

**Peer Review of High Stakes Assignment: Film Review of *House in the Fields* by Tala Hadid (2017) or *The Lock*.**

**Instructions:**

You will peer review one assignment written by a FYS student. Do not write on the FYS student assignment. Create a Word document and answer the following questions using an essay format:

LIB200 Student Name (Reviewer):

FYS Student Name:

1. Does the assignment have a thesis supported by the student's opinion and explanation of the film?
2. Did the student address the 5 questions below?
  - What is revealed about the gender identity of the two main characters, the sisters Khadija and Fatima, as compared to their brother, Omar, and the other men in the film?
  - How do these characters' choices compare and contrast with young people in America?
  - How does life in the mountains of Morocco contrast with your lifestyle?
  - How do the young characters' ambitions and expectations of life compare and contrast with yours?
  - How does the wedding compare and contrast with weddings in your culture?
3. Does the essay have a captivating introduction that includes a thesis and why or why not the student recommends others watch the film?
4. Do the body paragraphs include supporting details?
5. Does the conclusion tie the student's ideas together and reinforce his/her thesis?
6. What is your overall comment on the assignment? Do you have any comments/suggestions to make?

## **FYS students' response to LIB200 peer review**

### **Instructions:**

An LIB200 student has peer reviewed one of your assignments and provided you with feedback to revise your draft. Please revise your draft explaining how you addressed the issues.

- Use a **bold** font for any changes you made in the revised draft.
- Write a cover letter, explaining to the reviewer the changes you made based on the feedback received.

### **Part III**

#### **Assessment:**

The instructor can use their own rubric to assess student's work, but since the primary core competency for LIF 101 is the Integrative Learning, the two dimensions of integrative learning targeted by the assignment are:

1. Connections to Experience: the goal is to help students identify and draw insights from connections to their personal experience and through a specific co-curricular experience, i.e. the film festival.
2. Ability to apply learning across diverse contexts: allow students to apply their knowledge and learning experiences outside the classroom.

This assignment also aligns well the two dimensions of LaGuardia's Global Learning Core Competency: "Communicating Knowledge in Global Contexts," especially cultural practices, and "Ethical Engagement and Global Self-Awareness," especially personal attitudes and actions within a global framework looking at the role of individual and collective action.

### **Part IV**

#### **LIF Challenges:**

The range of student writing in the LIF class is quite varied. Some students are taking ENG099; some are in ENG101 and even 102. Students begin drafting their review essays in class, and I encourage them to extrapolate from and cite a line or two from the movies for their reviews of *House in the Fields* or *The Lock*. It's always important to be aware of the varying levels of writing skills in this and every class. Most students in this class were either in or had taken ENG101; one student was simultaneously taking LIB200 and close to graduating. More than a handful of students had fluency issues. I worked closely with students on drafts of their work.

Many students have had minimal experience paraphrasing. There are several words in the Maddy-Weitzman quote that students will need to look up, and the concept of transnational, collective, and cultural marginalization are essential to understanding the

Amazigh and the importance of studying its people and culture. In order to reinforce learning, I recommend having students choose another line from this text to paraphrase and put on the board.

### **Part V: Assessment and Rubric**

As explained above, several dimensions of the Integrative Learning and Global Learning Core Competencies can be assessed with this assignment. As the assignment writing instructions illustrate, the students are expected to compose a thesis-driven, well-organized, scaffolded, revised and proofread essay. This process aligns well with the three dimensions of the Written Communication Ability rubric.