The seminar is not intended to be a survey of housing in the region. Rather a set of representative cities have been selected following a classification that groups cities into two broad categories: established/old cities (Cairo, Algiers) and emerging cities (Kuwait; Dubai/Abu Dhabi). Arguably such a division can seem simplistic but it is useful for analytic purposes. We will begin by unpacking the construct of the ‘Arab City’ clearing misconceptions and clichés in addition to tackling the rise of the Arab Gulf cities. We then move to Egypt, the most populous and arguably influential country in the region. There our discussion will begin with the failed rural experiment of Hassan Fathy’s Gourna project, as an exemplar of a top-down architecture. Cairo is explored through multiple perspectives – Nasser’s socialist policies/modernization attempts, the rise of slums/gated communities and the triumph of neo-liberal urbanism. The post-colonial perspective will be discussed in the Algiers section. Here the notion of the dual city, the role of the Kasbah and modernizing attempts by Le Corbusier, are seen as a unique way in which modernism was trying to engage with a local culture. Lastly the rising cities of the Arab Gulf are presented through the case of Kuwait, specifically in the way in which urban planning and housing policies were used to promote patterns of exclusion. The UAE case is portrayed through the Emirati National – or Sha’abi – house displayed during the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale at the UAE National Pavilion (curated by the instructor); moreover the contemporary housing landscape and policies are tackled as well.

Overall, the seminar aims at: 1) enabling a nuanced understanding of Arab cities – i.e. a comprehension that there were multiple forms of modernisms; and 2) appreciating the extent by which housing remains a salient issue impacting policy and urban development across the Arab world.

METHOD
We will utilize multiple sources in this seminar including an examination of key texts, literary material (fiction, movies, documentaries) as well as visual sources (art works, photography). Particular emphasis will be placed on personal narratives recounting experiences and encounters within respective cities. For each class session one or more student will be assigned with preparing a presentation summarizing the readings as well as leading and moderating the discussion.
For the remainder of the class each student will be required to prepare a set of 3 questions based on the readings as well as any summaries/thoughts. A copy should be submitted to the instructor at the end of the class (reading journal).

A final project will be submitted at the end of the course. This should constitute a research paper combining both visual and textual material. The specific topic is to be derived from the readings and should be based on theoretical ideas/constructs explored in our discussion. Ideally it should be linked to a case study related to housing. Recognizing the inherent limitation in surveying the entire Arab region students are encouraged to look at specific forms of housing in cities/countries not covered in the seminar. A mid-semester review should be submitted on March 5, with a final submission and presentation on April 16. Creative forms of presentation/research are encouraged and should be discussed with the instructor.

ASSESSMENT

- In class discussion, preparation and participation 20%
- Weekly journal/reading and research responses, oral presentations 50%
- Final Project (Sources and Final essays) 30%

PLAGIARISM

Please review the GSAPP website for the School’s posted statement “Plagiarism and Acknowledgement of Sources.” Students are forewarned that any such breaches will be taken very seriously. Any student caught plagiarizing will—at minimum—receive no credit for the course.

LITERARY REFERENCES & BLOGS

The following is a list of references for works of fiction and movies that students are encouraged to consult during the semester to allow for a deeper understanding of the Arab City, in its multiple forms. Some sections will be explored during our weekly readings and discussion. I am also including two blog pieces that I wrote which capture some of the themes of interest to the seminar.

Fiction:


Movies:

- Battle of Algiers. Gillo Pontecorvo. 1967 (French) [Postcolonial; dual city]
- The Yacoubian Building. Marwan Hamed. 2006 (Arabic) [Cairo]
- The Nile Hilton Incident. Tariq Salih. 2017 (Arabic) [Cairo; downtown; general]
- In The Last Days of the City. Tamer El Said. 2016 (Arabic) [Cairo; downtown; preservation]
- City of Life. Ali Mustafa. 2010 (Arabic/English/Hindi) [Dubai]
- The Pruitt Igoe Myth. Chad Freidrichs. 2011 [Public housing; modernist architecture]

Blogs:

### WEEK 1  INTRODUCTION  1.22

### WEEK 2  OVERVIEW. PROBLEMATIZING THE ARAB CITY  1.29

**Required Readings:**

**Topics:** The Myth of the Arab/Islamic City; Urban Dualities; Dubaiization; Arab Spring


**Additional Readings:**


### WEEK 3  A RURAL EXPERIMENT IN EGYPT: HOUSING THE POOR  2.5

**Required Readings:**


**Additional Readings:**


**Additional Material:**

- Video (6 minutes): [https://www.wmf.org/project/new-gourna-village](https://www.wmf.org/project/new-gourna-village)
WEEK 4  **CAIRO I. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZING CAIRO**  2.12

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

**OVERALL VIEW OF HOUSING POLICIES/MODERNIZATION:**

**EXPERIENCING CAIRO/PERSOMAL NARRATIVES:**

**ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

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WEEK 5  **NO CLASS/INSTRUCTOR TRAVEL TO FRANCE**  2.19

**Assignment/Task:** 1) Read book *Yacoubian Building* and/or watch movie – prepare review or 2) Visit Tenement museum, Lower Manhattan (migrant housing) – with review

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WEEK 6  **CAIRO II. INTERLUDE: THE BURNING OF CAIRO, A NEW DOWNTOWN AND THE NILE HILTON HOTEL**  2.26

- Presentation. Talk Given At SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), London (Instructor) (approx. 30min)

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

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WEEK 7  **CAIRO III. “EGYPT OF THE SLUM AND EGYPT OF THE PALACES”**  3.05

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

**INFORMAL URBANISM:**
- Sims, D. (2010). *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City Out of Control*. Cairo, Egypt; New York: The American University in Cairo Press. *Selection*: Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (to be divided in 3 groups, 2 chapters each)

**GATED COMMUNITIES:**

Additional Readings:

Week 8 No Class/Spring Recess 3.12

Week 9 Algiers: Modernist Fantasies 3.19

Required Readings:
- Overall Development/Urban Planning

History/Le Corbusier, Plan Obus/Post-Colonialism/Battle of Algiers

Case Study (Climat de France)
• Pasini, R. (2000). Densified Space in Climat de France. The Future does not Exist... Yet. Retrieved from

Additional Material & Readings:
• Movie: The Battle of Algiers, 1967. Dir.: Gillo Pontecorvo
• O'Leary, A. (2016). The Battle of Algiers at Fifty: End of Empire Cinema and the First Banlieue Film. Film Quarterly, 70(2), 17-29. doi:10.1525/fq.2016.70.2.17

Week 10 Kuwait: Marginalization & Exclusion 3.26

Required Readings (Divided among two groups):
- Introduction. Urban Development & Growth. Welfare State
- Housing and The Case of Al-Sawaber

Bidoun & Marginalization
WEEK 11  UAE I. STATE SPONSORED HOUSING IN THE UAE  4.02

- Presentation: Architecture without Architects: Reflecting on the 15th Venice Architecture Biennale (Originally delivered at NYU-AD; 45min)(Instructor)

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

**BACKGROUND/THEORY:**

**ADDITIONAL READINGS:**

WEEK 12  UAE II. THE CONTEMPORARY EMIRATI HOUSING LANDSCAPE  4.09

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Emirati Neighborhoods: Morphology; Planning Policy

**The Other City: Public Housing; Labor Camps; Bachelors**

WEEK 13  PRESENTATIONS  4.16

Prepare Research Presentations.

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