ACCLAIMED AND AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARIES FOR

Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies

YOUTH BEHIND BARS: THE IRAN TRILOGY
Directed by Mehrdad Oskouei
2007-2016, Total running time: 181 minutes
Purchase of complete set: $875
(a savings of 20% off individual titles)
DVD+Digital Site License: $1,850

A groundbreaking, acclaimed and unforgettable documentary trilogy directed by Iran’s most prominent documentary filmmaker Mehrdad Oskouei, Youth Behind Bars: The Iran Trilogy provides unprecedented access to Iran’s imprisoned youth.

In this harrowing trilogy, Oskouei captures the lives, dreams and hopes of young teens, who offer astoundingly open and honest tellings of their life stories. Neither villains nor heroes, they have grown up too fast — left to find their own means of survival.

While Starless Dreams portrays the female experience in Iran’s juvenile justice system, the first two installments, It’s Always Late for Freedom and The Last Days of Winter, focus on boys behind bars. Youth Behind Bars: The Iran Trilogy is a groundbreaking, unforgettable documentary trilogy signaling the presence of a major voice in contemporary cinema.

“Mehrdad Oskouei’s reputation as one of Iran’s finest documentary filmmakers grows film by film.” —The Hollywood Reporter

“Somewhere along the way, these documentaries stop being mere films and become lifelines instead.” —Village Voice

STARLESS DREAMS
2016, 76 minutes
Purchase: $395 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $890

Starless Dreams plunges into the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at an all-female juvenile rehabilitation center on the outskirts of Tehran. Mehrdad Oskouei spent seven years securing access to the facility.

As the New Year approaches, the girls, all under 18, bond and reveal with disarming and often playful honesty the circumstances and acts that resulted in their incarceration. They have killed their father, robbed a bank or were arrested for carrying 651 grams of cocaine.

It is the sisterly bond that brings the girls to sing and dance with hope. Outside the prison walls, danger is everywhere.

“A heartbreaking work. What amazes is [the girls’] collective joie de vivre in the face of horrific experience.” —Stephen Holden, The New York Times

“An extraordinary film. Starless Dreams captures a rare, sorrowful, infinitely complex milieu.” —Michelle Orange, Village Voice

“A completely unfiltered look at life as a female juvenile offender in Iran. It covers feminism, class issues and abuse in a way that is poignant and authentic.” —Vox Magazine

“Provides a rich entry point into some very complex questions about the state of human rights in Iran and the state of correctional systems internationally.” —Bitch Flicks

THE LAST DAYS OF WINTER
2011, 52 minutes
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

Following his harrowing documentary, It’s Always Late for Freedom, director Mehrdad Oskouei continues his exploration of a male juvenile detention facility near Tehran. The Last Days of Winter follows a group of young men under 15 as they take stock of their lives.

Oskouei follows their day-to-day activities at the facility. He also joins them on a holiday excursion to the Caspian Sea where, according to The New York Times, a young Oskouei “thought of drowning himself after his father was imprisoned, throwing the family into poverty.” With no walls around them, the boys become more open with the documentarian, detailing their plans of the future, family and love.

“A fantastic examination of the human spirit. It’s easy to forget where these boys are and all they’ve had to go through in their short lives, but their big brown eyes tell the tales of their sadness.”

—Vox Magazine

IT’S ALWAYS LATE FOR FREEDOM
2007, 53 minutes
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

In this first installment of the Youth Behind Bars: The Iran Trilogy, Mehrdad Oskouei provides a rare glimpse into an all-male juvenile detention facility in Iran, where every boy, head freshly shaved to prevent lice, completes chores, shares a bunk bed and waits to use the phone—alongside adult inmates. The Tehran House of Correction treats the boys as adults, and boys come to see themselves this way.

“A testament to community and compassion.”

—POV Magazine
FROM IRAN: A SEPARATION
Directed by Azadeh Moussavi and Kourosh Ataee
2013, 52 minutes
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

A gripping and moving story that illustrates the impact cosmopolitan recognition has on an isolated population. From Iran: A Separation details the reception of the speech Asghar Farhadi (About Elly) gave when his film A Separation won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. After the awards, it seems everyone in Tehran has an opinion about Farhadi’s film, and the discussions about its message take place in cinemas, at carpet dealers and in front of kiosks and at carpet dealers.

From Iran: A Separation shows how important an Oscar acceptance speech can become when divorce is taboo and freedom of speech is something not to be taken for granted.

ABOUT ELLY
Directed by Asghar Farhadi
2015, 119 minutes
Purchase: $195
DVD+Digital Site License: $645

From the Academy Award winning director of A Separation, comes this gripping mystery set among a group of old friends on a holiday retreat.

With the return of their close friend Ahmad from Germany, a group of old college pals decide to reunite for a weekend outing by the Caspian Sea. The fun starts right away as they quickly catch on to the plan of lively Sepideh, who has brought along Elly, her daughter’s kindergarten teacher, in hopes of setting her up with recently divorced Ahmad. But seemingly trivial lies suddenly swing round and come back full force when one afternoon Elly suddenly vanishes.

“50 Feet from Syria is a fine and inspiring film. A direct experience of the lives of people displaced—and often enough physically dismembered—by Middle Eastern war.”
—Anthropology Review Database

“Ideal for the classroom.”
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—The New York Times

“A devastating dissection of Tehrani upper-middle class dissimulation.”
—Sight and Sound
THE LIGHT IN HER EYES
Directed by Julia Meltzer and Laura Nix
2011, 87 or 58 minutes
Purchase: $310 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $720

Shot on the eve of the Syrian uprising, The Light in Her Eyes is a portrait of a remarkable woman, a Muslim preacher who founded one of the first religious schools for girls in Syria. This fascinating documentary explores a surprising cultural shift occurring in the Middle East today — in which more women are claiming space within the Mosque.

“Our Summer in Tehran transports us into the seldom seen realm of middle class family life in Iran. Academy Award-nominated director Justine Shapiro (Promises) takes her 6-year-old son Mateo with her to Tehran where they spend the summer with three families.”

—Deirdre English, Director, Felker Magazine Center, University of California, Berkeley

“The Other Side of Burka is an award-winning documentary about one of the most extreme examples of face-veiling in the Middle East.

“The heroic story of the first woman to run for President of Afghanistan. Frontrunner introduces us to Dr. Massouda Jalal, a mother of three children, whose campaign inspired thousands of women across the country to participate in the democratic process.”

—Educational Media Reviews Online

OUR SUMMER IN TEHRAN
Directed by Justine Shapiro
2011, 59 minutes
Purchase: $310 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $720
Optional Closed Captions

Our Summer in Tehran transports us into the seldom seen realm of middle class family life in Iran. Academy Award-nominated director Justine Shapiro (Promises) takes her 6-year-old son Mateo with her to Tehran where they spend the summer with three families.

“Gives us an exceedingly rare look at what can happen when the veils come off. A valuable educational tool for gleaning a unique cross cultural perspective.”

—Deirdre English, Director, Felker Magazine Center, University of California, Berkeley

“An exceptional documentary. Highly recommended for women’s studies, Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, and anthropological discussion.”

—Library Journal

“A rare close-up view of how women are engaging with the tradition of Qur’anic memorization and recitation in order to broach questions of feminism, Islam, and the ‘women’s mosque movement,’ or da’wa movement, in the Middle East today.”

—Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies

HIDE YOUR WORDS
Directed by Behnam Behzadi
2003, 27 minutes
Purchase: $210 | Classroom rental: $65
DVD+Digital Site License: $520

As they gather salt, two young girls talk about a fellow classmate, a 14-year-old girl who was forced to marry a 73-year-old man. An intimate look at the reality of arranged marriages in Iran.

“Reveals the contrasting views between the daughters and parents regarding the value of education and necessity of marriage. Recommended for discussion on Middle Eastern studies, gender equality, women’s education, women’s rights, and women and Islam.”

—Educational Media Reviews Online

FRONTRUNNER: THE WOMAN WHO SURPRISED THE WORLD
Directed by Virginia Williams
2008, 90 minutes
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

The heroic story of the first woman to run for President of Afghanistan. Frontrunner introduces us to Dr. Massouda Jalal, a mother of three children, whose campaign inspired thousands of women across the country to participate in the democratic process.

“Recommended. Frontrunner offers a fine portrait of one committed woman, while also reminding us that while the road to democracy may be worth traveling, it invariably features numerous potholes and speed bumps.”

—Video Librarian
TERRACE OF THE SEA
Directed by Diana Allan
2009, 52 minutes
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

Filmed in an unofficial Palestinian Bedouin camp that was established in 1948 on a stretch of beach in South Lebanon, Terrace of the Sea uses a collection of family photographs taken over three generations as a prism through which to reflect on memory, loss and history. An anthropologist, author and filmmaker, Diana Allan documents the experiences of the Ibrahim family and looks at their relationship to work and to the camp, and how they’ve persevered in this ‘temporary’ home.

Produced at Harvard’s Sensory Ethnography Lab (Sweetgrass, Leviathan, People’s Park), Terrace of the Sea is a haunting meditation on the process of memory.

“A lovely, evocative study of the memories of Palestinian refugees/settlers on the Lebanese coast.” —Anthropology Review Database

STILL LIFE
Directed by Diana Allan
2007, 25 minutes
Purchase: $250 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $600

“The Arab governments pushed us out of our homes... I was twelve years old... I’ve been here for 60 years.”

A beautiful, poignant documentary, Still Life examines the effect a collection of personal photos — which show life in Palestine before the 1948 displacement — have on an elderly Palestinian fisherman living in exile in Lebanon. A moving meditation on the role memory, and photographs, play in the lives of those in exile from their homes.

“At a time when the world must cope with growing numbers of refugees, this short film artfully records one voice that echoes for many.” —Al Jadid

“An intrinsically interesting story of the impact of childhood relocation.”

—The Gerontologist

THE ANABASIS OF MAY AND FUSAKO SHIGENOBU, MASAO ADACHI AND 27 YEARS WITHOUT IMAGES
Directed by Eric Baudelaire
2011, 66 minutes
Purchase: $395 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $890

Mixing personal stories, political history, revolutionary propaganda and film theory, renowned artist Eric Baudelaire illuminates the idealism and radicalism of left-wing extremist movements in the 1970s by connecting the stories of two of its protagonists: May Shigenobu, born in secrecy in Lebanon (her father was the leader of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and Masao Adachi, the legendary Japanese director who gave up cinema to take up arms with the Red Army for the Palestinian cause.

THE LAW IN THESE PARTS
Directed by Ra’anan Alexandrowicz
2012, 101 minutes
Purchase: $195 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $490

Through candid, first-ever, interviews with Israeli judges, prosecutors and legal advisors, The Law In These Parts — winner of the Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival — is a gripping and revelatory investigation into the legal framework put in place by Israel in 1967 to govern the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The film is executive produced by renowned filmmaker and journalist Laura Poitras.

“Superb. Fascinating. A brilliantly complex film.”

—Los Angeles Times

“Highly Recommended. It is difficult to conceive of a more potent, relevant work with such a unique assemblage of interviewees, and a creative yet surgical approach.”

—Educational Media Reviews Online
KARAMA HAS NO WALLS
Directed by Sara Ishaq
2013, 26 minutes
Purchase: $250 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $600

A 2014 Academy Award nominee, Karama Has No Walls is a gripping account of the tragic day that changed the course of the revolution in Yemen, when pro-government snipers opened fire on a peaceful gathering of protesters, sparking national outrage and ultimately leading to the end of 33 years of autocratic rule. Incorporating remarkable footage from two camera men who were there as events unfolded, Karama Has No Walls offers a dynamic, multifaceted perspective in telling the story of a single day that altered the path of a nation.

“A snapshot of a protest movement at its most powerful, when differences were put aside in the name of battling the shared injustices of poverty, unemployment, and corruption.” —The New Yorker

“An urgent, stereotype-exploding historical document.” —Salon

“A remarkable street-level portrayal of a historic clash between freedom and anti-freedom.” —Anthropology Review Database

“Highly Recommended.” —Educational Media Reviews Online

THE MULBERRY HOUSE
Directed by Sara Ishaq
2013, 65 minutes
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

An incredibly moving and intimate story by the director of Academy Award nominated Karama Has No Walls. Arriving at the heart of an emerging revolution after living abroad for ten years, a young female filmmaker redefines her place in Yemeni society, as well as her relationships with her father and grandfather. In a unique examination of the uprisings in Yemen, The Mulberry House shifts the focus from events on the streets to the impact of the revolution on the story of one family.

“Recommended. The Mulberry House provides viewers with an up-close look at the domestic side of the 2011 Arab Spring uprising in Yemen [and] reveals the universality of family tensions with regard to gender roles and cross-cultural differences.” —Educational Media Reviews Online

“Just as the Arab Spring signaled a challenge to the old ways of political reality in the Arab world, so too does Ishaq signal change inside the lives of ordinary Yemenis.” —Al Jadid

WORDS OF WITNESS
Directed by Mai Iskander
2012, 70 minutes
Purchase: $310 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $720

A fascinating account of Egypt post-revolution, Words of Witness follows a 22-year-old female reporter, an incredible, fearless young woman, as she covers her country’s unsteady transition to democracy. From the director of Garbage Dreams, this is a dynamic portrait of the youth movement that sparked the revolution and its continued reliance on social media.

“Recommended. This film’s use of a female voice to capture the emotional metamorphosis that the Egyptian masses are experiencing gives the viewer a very real sense of the fragility of the situation but also the hope and excitement that the youth of the country embody.” —Educational Media Reviews Online

“Fascinating — an excellent supplement to a broader curriculum about the world-changing events in the Middle East.” —School Library Journal

“A crucial story of modern revolution.” —Los Angeles Times

ROUGE PAROLE
Directed by Elyes Baccar
2011, 95 minutes
Purchase: $310 | Classroom rental: $125
DVD+Digital Site License: $720

On December 17, 2010, 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi set fire to himself on the streets of Tunis sparking a popular uprising that toppled a dictator and developed into the Arab Spring. With remarkable never-before-seen footage of the demonstrations and celebrations, Rouge Parole chronicles the revolution in Tunisia and its immediate aftermath.

“Rouge Parole is integral film for those trying to understand the spontaneity and collective nature of the revolution.” —Al Jadid

“Highly Recommended.” —Educational Media Reviews Online
**AMERICAN ARAB**

Directed by Usama Alshaibi  
2013, 60 minutes  
Purchase: $350 | Classroom rental: $125  
DVD+Digital Site License: $800

A provocative look at the complexities of Arab identity in post 9/11 America, American Arab interweaves filmmaker Usama Alshaibi’s own story, and that of his family, as well as other Arab-Americans to thoughtfully explore the values, passions, hopes and perceptions of his community, from inside and out.

Born in Iraq and raised in the United States, filmmaker Usama Alshaibi sets out to examine this stereotype and how it came to be. A timely and important film that emphasizes the diverse and complex array of voices and cultures within the Arab-American community.

“Alshaibi presents a very personal and exposed story of identity without finding a straightforward answer of what being a Muslim, an American, an Arab, or anything else really means to oneself or to those around that person.”  
—Anne Shelley, Illinois State University

**THE INTERRUPTERS**

Photographed and Directed by Steve James  
Produced by Alex Kotlowitz and Steve James  
2011, 125 minutes  
Purchase: $195 | Classroom rental: $95  
DVD+Digital Site License: $490

One of the most celebrated documentaries in recent years, The Interrupters tells the stories of three Violence Interrupters who try to protect their communities from the violence they once perpetrated. One of these three is Ameena Matthews, daughter of former gang leader Jeff Fort, who was herself a drug ring enforcer. She discusses and credits her Muslim faith for pulling her off the streets.

“A hard wallop of a documentary. Mr. James has put a face to a raging epidemic and an unforgivable American tragedy.”  
—The New York Times

**COMEDY MIDDLE EASTERN STYLE**

Directed by Soodabeh Oskoui Babcock and James Babcock  
2005, 56 minutes  
Purchase: $310 | Classroom rental: $125  
DVD+Digital Site License: $720

Middle Eastern standup comics living in New York share their views on political issues and the prejudices they’ve had to endure since 9/11.

“Highly Recommended. This is a very funny video that raises salient points about political and cultural issues.”  
—Educational Media Reviews Online

**BY THE DAWN’S EARLY LIGHT:**  
**CHRIS JACKSON’S JOURNEY TO ISLAM**

Directed by Zareena Grewal  
2004, 52 minutes  
Purchase: $310 | Classroom rental: $125  
DVD+Digital Site License: $720

Basketball star Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf caused a national stir when the NBA suspended him for refusing to stand during the national anthem because of his “Muslim conscience.” This documentary reexamines the controversy, the media misrepresentations and the reactions of the Muslim immigrants who responded with an embarrassed disavowals.

The film documents multiple and competing perspectives creating a complex montage of voices, including the analyses of four Muslim jurists, and addresses issues of Islam in the US.

“Recommended. This timely film should be of value to those interested in the place of Islam in American society as a whole, the relationship of the African American Muslim community to the immigrant Muslims in particular, and the situation of Muslims in America on the eve of 9/11.”  
—Educational Media Reviews Online

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