Filmmaker Susan Youssef didn’t set out to be the filmmaker representing the Arab American female community. But her two feature-length films, and many short films and works, focus on just that: making films more about “issues than identity,” she said.

That sentiment was expressed during a panel at Old Dominion University on contemporary representations of Arab Americans and Muslims in the U.S. with Youssef, an Arab American writer and director; Dr. Kristian Petersen of Philosophy and Religious Studies; and Dr. Shadi Bayadsi of World Languages and Cultures to a packed room of students, faculty and community members last Friday.

One of a number of events centered around Youssef’s work, more than 200 people attended the campus screening of her recent full-length feature, Marjoun & the Flying Headscarf, followed by a Q&A. Youssef, who was a journalist and teacher in Beirut before becoming a filmmaker, also met with ODU film students to discuss filmmaking as a career.

The panel discussed a number of issues, from how representations of Arabs and Muslims have changed from early film through the 1980s, then in a post-9/11 America - right up to current media, such as the recent remake of the Disney film Aladdin and Hulu series Ramy, a dramatic comedy about the son of Egyptian immigrants in New Jersey who feels pulled between his Muslim community, millennial friends and his relationship with God.

“Representations of Arab Americans and other underrepresented communities can fall into tropes, but there has also been a shift into the ideas of ‘good Muslims’ and ‘bad Muslims’ as portrayals,” Peterson said. Marjoun also deals with these themes.

There is also the issue of burdens of representation, which Youssef feels strongly as a woman, a mother and a filmmaker working with her community, she said. Marjoun & the Flying Headscarf deals with issues of a Muslim American family, nationality and the high school experiences of its main character, which serves to step away from the one-dimensional Muslim characters sometimes seen in media, she said.

The event was co-sponsored by the College of Arts and Letters, Honors College, Strome Entrepreneurial Center, Women’s Center, Student Engagement & Enrollment Services, Department of English, Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, Department of Women’s Studies, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Graduate Program in International Studies, Institute for the Humanities and the Institute for Jewish Studies & Interfaith Understanding.

The number co-sponsors across the university shows the “degree of investment in this conversation at Old Dominion University,” Santo said.
Nearly 1,000 people turned out at the Naro for two screenings of *American Dreamer*, a dramatic thriller directed by and co-written by distinguished Old Dominion University alumnus Derrick Borte ’91.

More than 25 ODU students worked on the Hollywood production, which opened in 12 cities across the United States this past weekend. It will be released broadly nationwide on Friday.

David Mallin, director of ODU’s film program, said nearly 400 people attended Thursday’s showing. The 500-seat theater appeared to be almost full for Saturday’s screening. Approximately 70 people attended a VIP reception at Alkaline before Saturday’s showing.

“We wanted to do something bigger,” he said. “Derrick and I had been talking about this idea for quite a while. ... And when the tax incentives came, that was a major incentive to see that this is the right project. We really thank the Virginia Film Office for that.”

He added that ODU had a sound stage, production offices and other things that helped the film attain a production value “that looks like it cost a lot more than we actually spent.”

It also had something that proved to be fortuitous. The house where the drug dealer and his girlfriend lived had been purchased by ODU to knock down to make way for Kornblau Field at S.B. Ballard Stadium.

“My God, he can be this dark,’” she said. “Then the minute they yell, ‘Cut,’ he’s joking about Hot Pockets.”

Borte credited Andy Edmunds of the VFO with the idea for a Workforce Development Initiative, which allowed for a higher tax rebate from the state.

“‘Oh my God, he can be this dark,’” she said. “Then the minute they yell, ‘Cut,’ he’s joking about Hot Pockets.”

Edmunds has touted educational and economic benefits of the collaboration for the state, and Alonzo Brandon, ODU’s vice president of university advancement, cited donors’ role in making the initiative a reality.

*American Dreamer* is available on iTunes. The extras include a 30-minute video about the production. Mallin shot and directed most of the interviews that are much of the backbone of the story, and there is a section that talks specifically about the ODU partnership. It’s also on Amazon and Hulu.

So could Hampton Roads be the backdrop for another film directed by Borte? “I think that the crew here is world class and the locations are amazing,” he said. “I would love to make another film here - or more.”
OCTOBER

10/07. PURS grant applications due to Dean. Drafts were due to Avi by September 25.

10/10-10-20. Theatre Program puts on HOMESick, written and directed by Deborah Wallace (Goode Theatre, Shows start at 7:30 PM except October 20 matinée at 2:00 PM; no shows October 13-15). Tickets are free (with code) for ODU COMM department faculty; $5 for ODU students.

10/15. Materials due to P&T committee for lecturers seeking promotion.

10/15. Summer Research Fellowship Program materials due to Avi prior to submission to Dean’s Office. Packets due to Dean by October 25.

10/18. Faculty meeting (2-4 PM BAL 9024) with Happy Hour to follow at Elesian. Happy Hour open to all.

10/18. A representive from ODU Counseling Services will be coming to our department to provide info on how faculty can direct students to get help. They will also be at the November 6 Adjunct Conversation (12:30-1:30 PM, BAL 9024), but if adjuncts cannot attend the November meeting then they are welcome to come to the first 30-minutes of the October 18 meeting

10/24. COMM ePortfolio Faculty Teaching Workshop. 11am-1pm, BAL 9002. RSVP by Tuesday 10/8.

10/25. Performance by MX.Oops at 12:30-1:25 PM in Diehn 1202. To register, contact Helene at hclehr@odu.edu.

10/31. Brown Bag Series. Thursday, October 31st from 12:30-1:30 PM in BAL 9024. PRIYA VASHIST and TED GOURNELOS will be presenting. Topics to come soon.

The Theatre Program will host the world premiere of HOMESick from October 10-20. Written and directed by Deborah Wallace, an ODU alumna, Literary Festival speaker, and Emmy nominee, HOMESick explores the myth of the American Dream: Fourteen pioneers on a wagon train heading west are in search of a new life, and, instead, they find betrayal. This past being prologue, we fast-forward to the present day, where politicians travel the campaign trail, immigrants journey towards our border, addicts trip into opioid dreams. People still search for a place to call Home, and betrayal still awaits around every corner; the Promised Land still elusive. HOMESick is an intimate and revealing look at what we, as a nation, are really searching for, and where we are headed. What is the American Dream, and what if it’s reduced to a cautionary parable?

HOMESick will be performed onstage in the Goode Theatre (Monarch Way & 46th) Oct 10-12 and 16-19 at 7:30 pm, and on Oct 20 at 2:00 pm. Tickets are free (with code THEAFAC20) for ODU COMMS department faculty and $5 for ODU students through ODUArtsTix.

Ms. Wallace will also be presenting at the Literary Festival on Tues, Oct 8 at 1:00 pm in the University Theatre. This event is produced by ODUREp, in partnership with the 2019 ODU Literary Festival, and with the generous support of the Hellenic Studies Endowment.
Our Brown Bag series continues, where our faculty present works in progress to their colleagues for the purposes of A) sharing their research, B) generating conversation, and C) building community.

Presenters at the Brown Bag series offer short informal 10-12-minute presentations of ongoing projects and then we open the floor up to questions. This is a great way to learn about what colleagues and professors in other parts of the department are doing.

We always look to pair a person on the COMM side with an artist on the DANCE/FILM/THEATRE side. All are welcome (and we also provide a virtual option), including grad students (and select undergrads if the presenter wants them there).

Our second Brown Bag will be on Thursday, October 31st from 12:30-1:30 PM in BAL 9024. PRIYA VASHIST and TED GOURNELOS will be presenting. Topics to come soon.

Please share accomplishments such as publications, awards, conference and festival acceptances, reviews, and other recognitions, and we will publish them in future bulletins: Submit content here.

A big THANK YOU to Tom & Diana Socha for hosting the Department party in September. The food, weather, company, and Atumpan Entertainment were all wonderful!

**KUDOS**

Adjunct instructor CRYSTAL NOLEN will be playing Sister Douglass in James Baldwin’s *The Amen Corner* at the newest Black Box theater in Norfolk’s Military Circle Mall. Leslie Rainey is directing this ensemble, and the play will celebrate the Grand Opening of #1SPACE.

**JAMES MORROW** was interviewed for a juried show, Harvest Chicago Contemporary Dance Festival, that took place September 27/28 in Chicago:

As a festival veteran, James Morrow—b-boy and choreographer who began his career by stumbling in on a modern dance class at Southeastern Illinois University—is excited to return to HCCDF to celebrate such a big milestone. “What I love about the festival is that it is very eclectic, because there are so many different styles and genres represented. The fact that Melissa and Nicole are able to curate such a diverse show with national and international artists is such an important part of the Chicago dance scene that’s been missing,” said Morrow in an interview.

Morrow will be showing “We Don’t Dig Holes to Bury Ourselves,” a solo that “explores the cringeworthy justifications of war.” The piece comes from Morrow’s personal and visceral memory of 9/11 and its aftermath, the way the tragic event is permeated into the bodies of those who were alive to witness it, and the relationship that today’s generation has with the event. “The first time I performed this piece was after 9/11...and I remember how surreal it felt watching the second tower go down. I teach at a university and many of the students don’t really have a reference to it except for Google. There’s a part of me that felt the need to bring it back,” Morrow explained. As someone who was first introduced to dance at 10 years old through b-booing and Chicago’s house scene, Morrow’s work explores house dance and modern/contemporary techniques in his work as a spiritual experience. Morrow goes on, “Street dance doesn’t get the recognition it deserves. Watching [artists like] Ron K. Brown’s ‘Grace’ in New York...gave me permission, it empowered me, to use the vernacular that I grew up doing, and put it on the concert stage.”

**BROWN BAG SERIES / OCT 31**

**FACULTY CODE OF CONDUCT**

Please take some time to review the new proposed **Faculty Code of Conduct** on the Faculty Senate’s agenda. While it does promote ethical conduct, this proposal might also raise concerns about disciplinary actions and overreach when it comes to defining appropriate conduct. Provide your insights to Avi so he can bring these perspectives to the Faculty Senate.
WELCOME
Our New Fiscal Tech

We’d like to introduce you to CHRISTINA JOHNSON, the Department of Communication & Theatre Arts’ new fiscal technician. Ms. Johnson comes to us from the School of Dental Hygiene at ODU, where she was the assistant to the Chair. She has experience in payroll processing and with Banner and prior to joining our institution, a background in accounts receivable work for the healthcare industry. We are confident she will be an amazing addition to our department.

Christina will be undergoing trainings over the next few weeks, which are mandatory for her to gain access to some of the financial systems we regularly use, and it will take up to a month for her PCard to be activated, so even though we now have a fiscal technician in place, Christina will not be operating at full strength for a while longer. Stop by and introduce yourself!

YOU’RE INVITED
FALL 2019 COMM EPORTFOLIO FACULTY TEACHING WORKSHOP

GUEST PRESENTERS! FOOD! CONVERSATION

OCTOBER 24TH
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
BAL 9002
RSVP BY 10/8
Please let us know of any dietary restrictions. Lunch and a participation stipend will be provided.

DANIELLE JACKSON
DJACKSON@ODU.EDU
ALISON LITZENMAYER
ALIETZEN@ODU.EDU
https://www.commeporfolioodu.org/
upcoming events

HOMEsick
A world premiere, written and directed by Deborah Wallace
Produced by ODURep in conjunction with ODU’s Literary Festival
Produced with generous support from the Hellenic Studies Endowment

ODUArtsTix.com
Goode Theatre, Oct 10-20
The Department of Communication & Theatre Arts presents:

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE: Mx. OOPS

Date: October 24, 2019
Time: 12:30-1:25 pm
Place: Diehn 1202
All are welcome, but space is limited.
To register contact: hclehr@odu.edu

Mx. Oops teaches at the City University of New York’s Lehman College, in the Dance and Multimedia Performing Arts Programs. They are a transmedia artist with a focus on multimedia performance, urban dance, and queer mysticism. Their work blends dance, video design, costume, and rap.

They have toured the United States, Kenya, Burkina Faso, China, Russia, Austria, and the Netherlands; their works have been seen in NYC’s HERE Arts Center, Santos Party House, The Box, Dixon Place, Joyce Soho, BAAD, and Harlem Stage. As a member of the HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAfrican? Collective, they have presented in the Whitney Biennial, at the Witte de Witte Contemporary Art Center (Rotterdam), and Art Basel Miami.
fall dance concert

NOV 13-15 | 7:30 PM
NOV 16  | 2:00 and 7:30 PM

University Theatre
ODUArtsTix.com

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
09/24: Brittany Harris, MFA and Dr. Annemarie Navar-Gill (University Theatre 1002)
10/31: Priya Vashist, MFA and Dr. Ted Gournelos (BAL 9024)
11/26: Marilyn Marloff, MFA and Dr. Victoria Jennings (Diehn 1202)
01/30: Dr. Brendan O'Hallarn and Dr. Danielle Jackson (BAL 9024)
02/27: Jim Lyden, MFA and Dr. Fran Hassencahl (University Theatre 1002)
03/26: Dr. Carolina Conte and TBA (Diehn 1202)
04/23: Dr. Kyle Nicholas and Carla Harrell (BAL 9024)