ABSTRACT

Engaging American Studies at Minufiya University: Strides and Setbacks

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This presentation probes the strides and setbacks encountered when engaging the field of American Studies at an Egyptian regional university. Located in the heart of the Nile delta, Minufiya University comprises a student corpus of seventy five thousand students, all of whom encounter British English either in its literary or linguistic form. Introducing an American Studies component into what is largely British-based course descriptions has been my commitment since 2005; an endeavor which has taken the form of sundry activities. Assisted by the Fulbright Commission in Cairo and the American Studies Center at AUC, a group of seminars and workshops have been organized for Minufiya University students exploring the diversity of American culture and thought. A distinguished group of American academics eagerly volunteered in these events, bringing their experiences and expertise to the fertile, inquisitive minds of my students. The positive reception of such events at Minufiya has culminated in the implementation of a Fulbright Senior Specialist Program, and the consequent, imminent inauguration of an American Studies degree at Minufiya University in 2010. However, looming political tug of wars between the U.S. and the Middle East often deter university officials from acquiescing to the integration of American Studies in university curricula. The presence of American academics at Minufiya University and the American Studies component which they plan to introduce seem to pose logistic and security complications which often create setbacks to the many strides we have taken. This presentation, as such, highlights through PowerPoint slides and other documents, the many strides and the resultant setbacks impeding our progress.