

Annual History Seminar Opens at AUC

The Annual History Seminar, hosted by the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations, begins today in Oriental Hall at AUC Tahrir Square. The seminar - “Craftsmen and Labor in Medieval and Modern Egyptian History,” will bring researchers

and professors from across Egypt, the Netherlands and Scotland together.

Nelly Hanna, chair of the department, notes that the topic is relevant for various reasons. “Craftsmen and labor represent a kind of 'history from



below.' It was important to ask what their role was in the historical process of any particular moment in time. We chose the topic collectively after discussion at the end of the last annual history seminar March 2010 and later discussion among the organizers,” Hanna said.

This year’s seminar is in honor of **Professor Raouf Abbas**, a scholar known for his work on the subject of labor, who passed away in 2008. Abbas was a former visiting professor at AUC and former president of the Egyptian Society of Historical Studies. The keynote address, “**Raouf Abbas** and Egyptian Labor History,” will be delivered by Abdel Aal Al Baquri and Assem Al Dessouki, dean of Faculty of Arts, History Department at Helwan University.

Established in the early nineties, the seminar initially served the department’s graduate students, but it has expanded to include young historians from national universities throughout Egypt as well as select international universities. This year’s seminar will feature papers on the themes of craft making, labor history and workers and protest. The seminar will feature both Arabic and English lectures over the two days.

“The seminar aims to be a true learning experience, every year focusing on a specific topic,” Hanna said. “A call for papers, circulated several months before the event, outlines the themes around the selected topic, which is intended to further the traditional academic curricula.” This is done with the hope of introducing students, especially those in national universities, to ideas and to methods not usually addressed at their institutions.

Over the years, the Annual History Seminar has become one of Cairo’s cultural landmarks, and a prominent forum providing young scholars with inspiring intellectual and social discourse. During the two-day seminar, scholars have a chance to present and receive feedback on their research, engage in

discussions with faculty from various universities within Egypt and abroad, and expand their intellectual horizons. The seminar encourages a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Egyptian and Arab history through a focus on literary analysis and revisions of social, economic and cultural histories. In recent years the conference audience has drawn from universities in Benha, Zagazig, Mansura, and Suhag and European and American scholars, residing in Cairo, and who are keen on expanding their research and knowledge.

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