“Egypt's Fulbright American Studies Alumni Circle: A Replicable Model to Transnationalize the Discipline”

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This presentation highlights the endeavors of the American Studies Alumni Circle, affiliated to the Fulbright Commission in Cairo, to engage and promulgate American Studies as an inter and multi discipline in Egypt's higher academic institutions. Inaugurated in December 2005, following an initiative to Egypt's Fulbright Commission by myself and other university colleagues, the American Studies Alumni Circle has gained momentum over the years to become, currently, a landmark of the American Studies discipline in Egypt. Created to form an umbrella that shelters a multiplicity of disciplines in the fields of social sciences and humanities, the circle has opted to create a forum of interaction and channels of communication between Egyptian and American Fulbrighters with similar disciplinary interests.

Coordinated each semester by an Egyptian Fulbright Alumni, the circle has engaged both Egyptian and American scholars in the field of American studies, tackling topics from a comparative perspective. A wide array of events, over thirty so far, have been organized both within the Fulbright Commission’s premises in Cairo, and at various Egyptian universities and higher institutions, targeting staff members and students alike, and lending itself to different formats: textual analysis, teaching pedagogy, conferences, workshops, seminars, film screening, and reading club activities; all geared towards the diverse needs of participants. The objective is to discuss and disseminate ideas related to American Studies in home institutions, and empower Egyptian universities to engage the discipline in both teaching curricula and research areas. It is my contention that this initiative on our part is a successful endeavor to engage American Studies from a transnational perspective; an academic initiative which can be replicated and built upon in other countries of the MENA region. Through expounding my experience with Fulbright's American Studies Alumni Circle in Egypt, I intend to highlight how previous participation in CASAR conferences, and engaging with professors and ideas in these conferences, have been a driving force for many of our activities. It is an ongoing process, growing and branching in several directions; a sincere, dedicated effort on the part of a few Egyptian professors to transnationalize American Studies, and make the Circle a replicable model for international colleagues engaged in the discipline of American Studies.