Developing societies have long been struck by tensions between their deeply rooted social and familial values on the one hand, and the compelling impact of modernity on their social and economic realities, which threaten those values, on the other. Marked by strong kinship and collective norms, Middle Eastern societies in particular ascribe existential significance to honor, shame, blood vengeance, patriarchal authority and obedience to it by wife and children. Despite two hundred years of modernization and westernization, these values still play a major role among Arab and Muslim societies in shaping individual, family, and community norms and individual practical conduct.

In recent decades these social characteristics became increasingly represented in literature, art, and most of all, in films. More than any other creative art, films, whether documentary or entertaining, became the primary medium where these painful social dilemmas, including gender relations, rape, and murder of wives, daughters and sisters in the name of family honor, are nowadays presented in an unprecedented realism and candor. Such films represent varied approaches, from protest against the existing social—and often also against the political—order, to compliance with, and reconstruction of, borders and rules of social relations via popular cinematic products.

A series of eight selected films (Turkish, Palestinian, Egyptian and Iranian – all with English subtitles) will be presented and accompanied by short introductions and Q&A after screenings.

These films will be presented on Tuesdays at 6:30 pm in Boliou 104.
