

Journalism and Mass Communication Interview Project

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Rawan Abdel Latif

Interviewee: Doctor Yasmine Motawy

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People present: Rawan Abdel Latif
Yasmine Motawy

Rawan: Okay, I want to start of by saying thank you for your time, and please, if you don't mind, state your name, title age or age range and place of residence.

Motawy: Okay. Um, I'm Doctor Yasmine Motawy. I'm an instructor here at the Rhet department of Rhetoric and Composition. I'm in my thirties and I live in Maadi.

Rawan: Okay. So, basically why rhetoric? Why study it? Why, why do you teach it? Have you always wanted to or is it something recent?

Motawy: Why rhetoric, I think it's really very very important. I think one of the things that I find very valuable in a person who graduates from a liberal arts program where there is a rhetoric department that all the students are exposed to, is that they are capable of articulating themselves very very carefully. They understand how to construct an argument. They also understand something that I find very important, which is critical discourse analysis: how they are able to look at various discourses and critique

them using various models and methodologies, how they can extract ideologies of race, class and gender from what is said. Um, I'm also a big fan of writing in general, and I love having being in a classroom where the creative process is going on, and being part of that, and I think I learn more from my students in writing classrooms than I actually teach them, so it's a great opportunity. And, um, I think as a writer myself, the more I have to look at the way writing is deconstructed and, and watching the processes, I think I improve as a writer. So I don't think its just rhetoric. I think rhetoric is a great discipline, but I think being in the classroom with students who are in the process of understanding rhetoric and writing is just also important.

Rawan: Yeah. Uh, you mentioned that there are lots of different types of writing like critical and creative, which ones do you teach?

Motawy: Um, I teach a variety of courses; For instance, I've taught 101, which is critical thinking, which is a very important course that I've coordinated before. Very important. The second one, 102, argument, and I think this is where students are forced to find an argumentative voice that is not necessarily belligerent and aggressive. It's one that presents an argument and defends it and anticipates the arguments of others, and um, addresses those, even before they are stated. Um, I think this is an

important skill in general, so I've taught that as well. I've also taught research writing, which is great because you follow a researcher through their research process and, um, all the, the various parts of that, and you'll create a support system for each individual student as they pursue their interests. Um, I've taught 342 many times, and this is dear to my heart because my Ph.D. is um, on ideologies in children's literature, both in the Arab world and uh, in the West. And I find that um, as a scholar in the field of children's literature, and somebody who's right now in the process of contemplating writing for children, I think um, I enjoy that class very much. I also have taught, um, ECLT 123, which is creativity and the imagination, and um, the creative aspect of that is great, except that you're not requiring students to necessarily be creative all semester, but to understand what creativity is all about, and to be exposed to great instances of creativity.

Rawan: Okay. Um, in general, the students that you find coming into your classes, how often do you come across someone who you feel their writing is good enough to publish? If it's in the Arab World or if it's abroad.

Motawy: Um, okay. Right now, I think this is um, concrete evidence. Uh, two of my former students are now journalists, and I follow them

on twitter and *laughs* I'd like to think that I may have had a hand in developing their writing. Um, in my 342 class, I encounter generally more mature students in later stages of their university career, and they've developed more of a persona and more of a voice, and I think many of them, I find, are writers that could be published. Um, I think, I think it's less their writing than the demands of the publishing industry at the moment, um, that is the determining factor in whether they publish or not. But, uh, I come across, I would say every semester, I come across maybe three or four students, and considering I cater to about 45 students a semester, I think that's pretty good.

Rawan: Yeah, that is. And, what advice would you give them to stand out from all the other work that's sent to publishers daily, probably?

Motawy: Unfortunately, we live in a world where people have very short attention spans, and editors are bombarded with um, manuscripts all day long. So, what you need to do is to first of all, make sure you get your point across in as little words as possible, so you need an amazing proposal. Obviously, you need a very attract-, this is non-withstanding talent of course; you have to have a good work behind you. But um, you need to have a very good sample chapter. You have to have a well-

written, extremely concise proposal, okay, that will find its way, not just on the desk of an editor, because it will, but make the editor want to read it. That's one thing. Uh, a knowledge of the pathways of getting published also involves knowing what is required at this moment in time, and who does what. Uh, but I think that's my biggest advice: be concise.

Rawan: Okay. Finally, just thinking about the future: how um, the world is becoming more globalized and technology is increasing at a very very fast pace, do you think that because of this technology going into games and, and more forms of entertainment, do you think that writers will decrease, or people will lose interest in writing, or is it an aspect we have to try to hold on to?

Motawy: Okay. You're right. Technology has taken over and now books are competing with things like the Internet, games, and television, and series, definitely, but I don't think it's time for writers to give up. First of all, people write series and people write screenplays*laughs* okay? And people create, generate content for um, Internet websites. I do think that, um, writing has to find its way into new media, where it collaborates with people who are visual artists and people who create things like e-content and applications to create things that are, things that we like to read, um, but also in the format that we'd like to

receive these things, and I think e-books are one way to do this. Uh, I don't think reading is going out the window anytime soon, but I do think that it's increasingly going to have to adapt to new media if it's going to survive, yes.

Rawan: That's very true, that's very true. Well thank you so much again for your time, thank you.

Motawy: you're welcome. You're very very welcome!