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978-0-521-00931-7 - America on Film: Modernism, Documentary, and a Changing America

Sam B. Girgus

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## AMERICA ON FILM

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### MODERNISM, DOCUMENTARY, AND A CHANGING AMERICA

In *America on Film*, Sam B. Girgus traces how the representation of being “American” in films of recent decades differs dramatically from portrayals in classic mid-century Hollywood film. In works such as *Mississippi Masala*, *Lone Star*, *Malcolm X*, *Raging Bull*, *When We Were Kings*, and *Bugsy* he finds new and ethnically varied characters that reembody American values, ideals, and conflicts. Such films dramatize a transformation in the relationship of American identity and culture to race and ethnicity, as well as to sexuality, gender, and the body. *America on Film* charts these changes through analysis of cinematic tensions involving fiction, documentary, and modernism. As an art form that combines fragments of reality with imagination, film connects the documentary realism of the photographic image to the abstraction and nonrepresentation of modernism.

Sam B. Girgus is professor of English at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *Hollywood Renaissance: The Cinema of Democracy in the Era of Ford, Capra, and Kazan*; *The Films of Woody Allen*; *The New Covenant: Jewish Writers and the American Idea*; and *The Law of the Heart: Individualism and the Modern Self in American Literature*, among other titles. A recipient of a Rockefeller Fellowship and other scholarly and teaching awards, he has lectured and taught extensively in universities throughout America and the world.

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*To*

*Arielle Gianni,*

*Zachary Isaac, and*

*Mia Victoria*

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