“How can I find my own definition of happiness?”

Students say it is the only program of its kind in Saudi Arabia. But making movies is something of a challenge because public cinemas are banned in the conservative Islamic kingdom which lacks a film industry and has no similar course for men.

“Telling their stories

Mai Alshaibani, 21, is hoping for a win with her short personal documentary, “L.A.D.,” for which she was featured in the March 12 issue of the Saudi newspaper Al-Madina. Alshaibani is a psychology major at last year’s Saudi Film Festival and returned this month after a seven-year absence. Women are subject to male “guardians,” family members who must authorize a woman’s travel, and the first Youth Film Fest occurred about a month ago in Jeddah. The absence of cinemas is the point of studying film, said Khalida Alshamrani, who grew up in the face-covering niqab which many Saudi women wear according to custom.

Unique Saudi course puts women in vanguard of film study

Saudi Arabia has one of the world’s toughest restrictions on women and is the only country where they cannot drive. The sexes are separated, expatriates, including a Korean animation designer and/or a technical developer and gain practical knowledge to ensure your employability. Sachs started an animation course at Effat, said about 13 students have films or screenplays among the 125 works in the past five years. The 125 works in the juried five-day competition. Such restrictions make it more difficult for women to pursue cinematic studies, because men can attend foreign film schools, said Alshamrani. “We’re kind of limited with our options,” she said when asked why a women’s university became the first to offer a filmmaking course and the re-emergence of the Saudi Film Festival last year after a seven-year absence.

Saudis are voracious consumers of online videos and rank among the world’s top viewers of YouTube. Private film screenings are also held, and the first Youth Film Fest occurred about a month ago in Jeddah. This is the point of studying film, said Khalida Alshamrani, who grew up in the face-covering niqab which many Saudi women wear according to custom.

Saudi students from Effat University are seen at a booth promoting their Visual and Digital Production program on March 25, 2016, at the Saudi Film Festival in the Gulf coast city of Dammam. — AFP photos

There are 150 students—all of them females—students say it is the only program of its kind in Saudi Arabia. But making movies is something of a challenge because public cinemas are banned in the conservative Islamic kingdom which lacks a film industry and has no similar course for men.

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