My semester in Cairo is definitely the highlight of my university career! The American University of Cairo as well as Cairo and Egypt more generally can be a bit chaotic, stressful, yet wonderfully exciting if you go in with an open mind and a sense of adventure!

Getting to Egypt is quite easy. All major airlines fly there, and the average ticket will cost around more than a 1000 but if bought in advance less than 2000. Cairo international airport is user friendly. However, just like in the rest of Egypt people do not help you without expecting money in exchange. So if someone helps you carry your bags, or is excessively friendly and helpful then they are expecting a tip. The university can arrange a pick up from the airport, but if you end up taking a cab to the downtown dorms then 50 Egyptian pounds, or around 10 dollars maybe a bit more is the maximum you should give them. Make sure to negotiate beforehand! And when you get out of the cab chances are the cab driver will still try to hassle you for more money. Be strong, give him what you negotiated and just walk away.

AUC dorms in downtown area, Zamalek are what I advise. Zamalek is one of the nice classier areas in Cairo. The only downside is that they are around 1 hour away from the New campus. But the school provides transportation to and from the new campus at many different times during the day and evening. The new dorms on the new campus are very far away from downtown, and it is hard to get around and there is nothing close to there, meaning it's boring, and doesn’t give you the opportunity to really get to know Cairo.

The dorms in Zamalek are quite spacious and are all double rooms. Cleaning service is provided and they have enough closet space. The garden area is nice and provides a nice place to socialize. There is also a gym and computer lab for the residents to use. Unfortunately, the food in the cafeteria isn’t the best, and is not very cheap. The cost is comparable to eating at an average restaurant and is defiantly more expensive then fast food.

The dorms are highly gender segregated. Males are not allowed in the girl's section, nor in the rooms. Rez life, similar to that on SFU campus, is active enough, organize events in dorms and even trips around Egypt.

Egypt is definitely easier of guys. Girls are subjected to a lot of verbal harassment and it sometimes makes it uncomfortable to wander around downtown alone. However, it is pretty safe and harassment will rarely escalate to more than just words. The more revealing a girl is dressed, the worse the harassment. Guys, don’t worry about dress codes. You can get away with wearing anything. Girls, dress modestly. Nothing too short, no sleeveless shirts, no tubes tops. Around dorms you can wear whatever you want, and even up on campus. But when going around the country dress modestly to make it easier.

Egypt is fairly cheap, and so is traveling around. I defiantly recommend going to Alexandria and eating fish and shrimp, going to Siwa desert oasis, Dahab on the red sea, and up to Upper Egypt. Travel as much as you can, Egypt is a great country, and try to make your way around the Middle East! In most places hotels are quite affordable, and there is a lot to do!
For the most part classes in Egypt are easier than those at SFU. However a lot of classes seem to be geared solely towards international students and they tend to be more rigorous as everyone there is coming from North American universities. The exchange program in Egypt is mainly geared towards North Americans. Most of the students you'll meet are American. Egyptian students tend to keep to themselves, but try to get to know them, most of them are pretty cool. If you can, I advise taking some of the development courses because they give you the change to volunteer in Egypt which is a great experience! If you don’t manage to register online or have some problems don’t worry about it, all that will get sorted out during the first few days where advisers will help you sort all that out. You can even changes classes after the first week and see what suits you best.

The Arabic program at AUC is excellent. If interested take a class, or take the Arabic colloquial class to give you the basics to get around Egypt.

Nightlife in Cairo is good enough to keep you busy! One thing I recommend is catching as many performances as possible at the Cairo opera house. There student deals are great, and it is one of the main cultural venues in Egypt. The Crock is a free magazine found in the dorms and in most restaurants that has all the cultural events and concerts happening in Egypt. there is more going on then one might thing, so check it out to get the full Egypt experience.

Egypt and Cairo and AUC are great. Sometimes things don’t run as smoothly, but once you wrap your head around things running late, and bureaucracy, you will realize what a great place it is. Make the best of it, I loved it!

If you have any questions don’t hesitate to contact me at mgk@sfu.ca