



Middle Eastern Studies Program Syracuse University

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Middle Eastern Studies Program

Director:

Yüksel Sezgin • ysezgin@maxwell.syr.edu

Middle Eastern Studies Program
Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs
100F Eggers Hall

Phone 315.443.4431 • **Fax** 315.443.9085

Email mes@maxwell.syr.edu

Website <http://middle-eastern-studies.syr.edu>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/syracusemes/>

THE MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES PROGRAM (MESP)

Located in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs' Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, the Middle Eastern Studies Program (MESP) offers both an interdisciplinary minor and a Bachelor of Arts degree through the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as a graduate certificate of advanced studies through the Maxwell School. All three programs offer world-class instruction and study-abroad opportunities, providing unique insights into one of the fastest growing regions of the world.

MAJOR IN MES

The interdisciplinary major, which leads to a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies (MES), provides students with the opportunity to study the languages, history, culture, religions and politics of the Middle East. The major is open to all undergraduates who have completed at least two Middle Eastern content courses (one of which may be a language course) and have a GPA of 2.8 or better. The major requires students to complete (a) three core courses, (b) three consecutive semesters in one of the regional languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish), (c) two lower division courses, and (d) three upper division courses. At least 18 of the 36 credits required for the major should be in courses numbered 300 or higher. A maximum of 6 credits of independent study can be applied to the major by petition.

MINOR IN MES

The minor in MES was established in 2003 to offer students exposure to the diverse cultures, languages, literatures, religions and political systems of the Middle East as it took center stage in the international geopolitical landscape. Students must complete a total of 20 credits (6 courses) for the minor in MES: 8 credits in a regional language, 3 credits in one core course, and another 9 credits in upper division courses (numbered 300 or higher).

CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

The Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Middle Eastern Affairs is available to Syracuse University students in all graduate programs who are seeking to supplement their degree with a strong foundation in the culture and politics of the region or to prepare for a career involving regional specialization. The CAS is administered and awarded by the Maxwell School. Students are required to complete at least 12 credits: a 3-credit required course and 9 credits in the form of approved electives selected from affiliated departments within the University and/or approved extracurricular experience.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE • YÜKSEL SEZGIN

The Middle East region continues to be a vastly misunderstood part of the world. In the minds of most Americans, the region is often associated with violence, terrorism, warfare and authoritarianism. Social and mainstream media produce, and reproduce, biased and prejudiced representations of the region and its people. Unfortunately, American political institutions and policy-makers not only increasingly subscribe to these misinformed, racialized and ahistorical representations, but also base their policies in the region on these fallacies.

The Middle East region is going through some of the worst times in its history since the end of World War I. The people's dreams of freedom, peace, prosperity and democracy now look even less attainable. And what's worse, the Middle East is not alone in this bleak picture. As political developments of the last few years attest, democracy and freedoms are under threat all over the world. The rule of law, civil and political rights and freedoms are diminishing right here at home, too. Trust in democratic institutions, the judiciary and the media are at an all-time low.

I know that this is a very discouraging picture. But there is some good news and hope. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Americans continue to trust and place a very high level of confidence in science and scientific institutions. Approximately 90 percent of the public reports to have either a "great deal" or "some" confidence in the scientific community, which is far above the levels of confidence expressed in favor of the press, the executive branch, the Congress, banks or private corporations.

Scientific institutions and communities must rise to the challenge of the day and they must lead where other democratic institutions fail. We must usher in a new age of reason by educating and empowering the public, and building in them scientific agency so they can independently discern fact from fiction—an increasingly critical, but rare, skill for citizenry in a healthy democracy.

One of my favorite words in Farsi and Ottoman Turkish is *Dar ul-Funun*. It literally means "the house of sciences" or "university." Syracuse University is a world-renowned house of sciences. Here, we are dedicated to the production and dissemination of data-driven, impartial and objective scientific knowledge and truth. We do not see people as "whites" or "blacks," we do not ban people because they read a different scripture or turn their faces in a different direction when they pray; we do not have walls separating those who dare to dream from those who dare to love, and we do not have any political agendas. Here, we seek only knowledge, nothing but the knowledge.

Syracuse University's MESP is an interdisciplinary program dedicated to the advancement of scientific and scholarly knowledge in Middle Eastern cultures, languages, history and politics. We are a community of educators, scholars and students who every day carry out cutting-edge research and knowledge production, and engage in world-class teaching and learning. We empower our students by teaching them skills that are critical not only for their academic and professional development, but also for participation in public life as global-minded citizens.

The education of the citizenry is the key. In the absence of such education, the democratic experience suffers and leads to deterioration of our freedoms and the rule of law. Throughout the year, we organize workshops, panels, language tables and cultural events, which are attended by hundreds of students and community members. As the director, I am happy to report that we continue to grow as a program and shine as a beacon of knowledge and learning on our campus, in our city, in our state, and in the nation.

We are aware of our intellectual responsibilities and civic duty. We are working very hard to succeed in them. In the days ahead, we will work even harder to make sure we are not just educating our students, but also contributing—in meaningful ways—to the intellectual evolution of our communities beyond the campus.

I would like to thank our deans at the Maxwell School and the College of Arts and Sciences, the staff and leadership of the Moynihan Institute, our dedicated faculty, our students, the friends of the program and our donors for their generosity and continued support. I hope that you will consider supporting our programs and activities by making a tax-deductible donation at <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/giving> (please designate "MESP" as the recipient in the comment box).



2018-19 MESP SPONSORED AND CO-SPONSORED EVENTS

September 19, 2018

Book Talk: "Circulation of Political Elite in Post-Revolutionary Iran: An Empirical Investigation" by Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Professor of Political Science, Syracuse University

September 27-29

Film Festival: 16th annual Syracuse University Human Rights Film Festival

October 11

Lecture: "Nana Asma'u: The Model for Literate Women Muslims" by Beverly Mack, Professor Emerita of African Studies, University of Kansas

October 23

Lecture: "Transitional Justice Without Transition: Whither Egypt?" by Mohamed A. 'Arafa, Assistant Professor of Law, Alexandria University (Egypt), Visiting Scholar, Cornell University

November 1

Lecture: "The Politics of Kuwaiti Foreign Aid and Islamic Charitable Giving in Africa" by Mara Leichtman, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Michigan State University

November 12

Lecture: "Eight Years Later: What Has Gone Wrong with Syria's Conflict?" by Deyaa Alrwishdi, Director of Syria Initiative to Combat Sexual and Gender Based Violence

February 20, 2019

Language Table: Arabic Conversation Table

March 5

Language Table: Persian Language Table

March 19

Lecture: "Being Muslim: Women of Color in American Islam" by Sylvia Chan-Malik, Associate Professor in the Departments of American and Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University

March 21

Language Table: Arabic Conversation Table

March 27

Language Table: Hebrew Language Table

April 2

Language Table: Hebrew Language Table

April 5-6

Conference: From Historiography to Philosophical Engagement: The Future of Islamic Philosophy

April 9

Language Table: Persian Language Table

April 10

Language Table: Hebrew Language Table

April 11

Film Screening: And Then They Came for Us: Film Screening and Q&A with Dr. Satsuki Ina

April 12

Symposium: Challenging Authoritarianism: Stories and Strategies of Resistance

April 12

Lecture: “Understanding Erdogan’s New Turkey: Identity Politics Inside Out” by Lisel Hintz, Assistant Professor of International Relations and European Studies, Johns Hopkins University

April 17

Language Table: Turkish Language Table

April 18

Arabic Cultural Day

April 23

Panel: “Transnational Feminist Solidarities: A Conversation” with panelists Sunera Thobani, University of British Columbia; Carol W.N. Fadda, Syracuse University; Amy Kallander, Syracuse University; and Dana M. Olwan, Syracuse University

April 29

Reception: Middle Eastern Studies Program Spring Reception

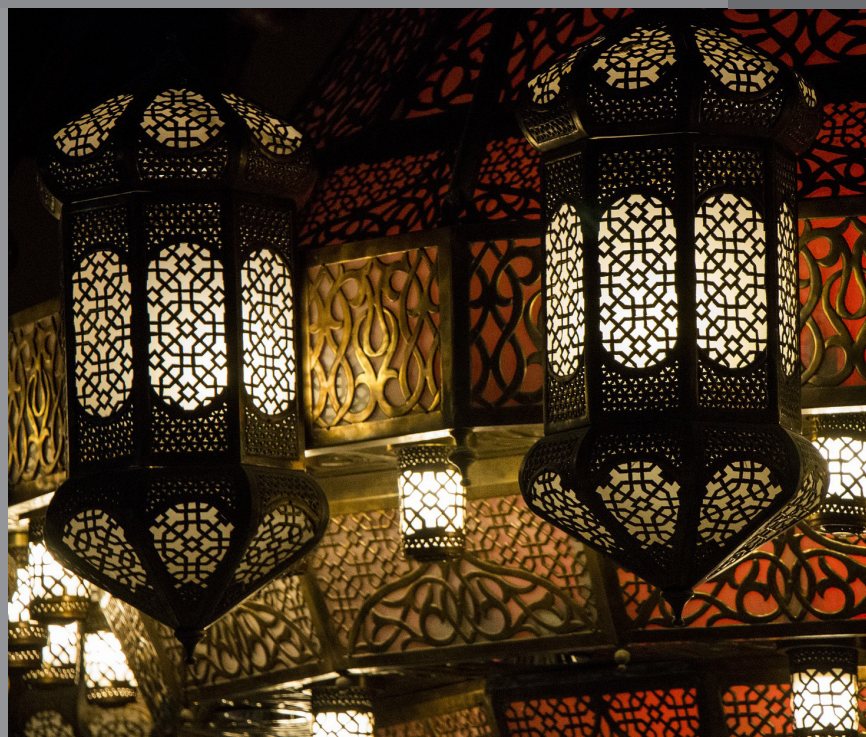
CONGRATULATIONS TO MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES SENIORS GRADUATING IN SPRING 2019

MAJORS:

- Ashlee Beers
- Julia Simone Rephen
- Corey O’Neill Driscoll
- Deniz Sahinturk
- Steven Schmidt
- Elijah Ali Shama
- Cassandra Torres

MINORS:

- Sol Lim



GRADUATE STUDENTS CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON TOPICS RELATED TO THE MIDDLE EAST



UGUR ALTUNDAL POLITICAL SCIENCE

Altundal's interests include contemporary political philosophy, democracy, citizenship, immigration and open borders.



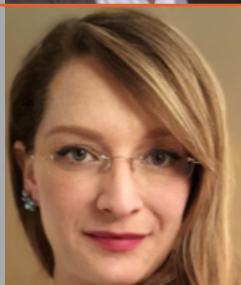
AYKUT OZTURK POLITICAL SCIENCE

Ozturk's research interests encompass democratization, populism, political psychology, and Islamist movements.



PEDRAM MAGHSOUD-NIA POLITICAL SCIENCE

Maghsoud-Nia's research interests include state and society relations, political economy of development, Middle East politics, and social theory.



DARCI PAUSER POLITICAL SCIENCE

Pauser's research interests include transboundary water issues, natural resource policy and management, international environmental agreements, science and technology politics and policy, environmental security, Turkey, Israel, and the Middle East.



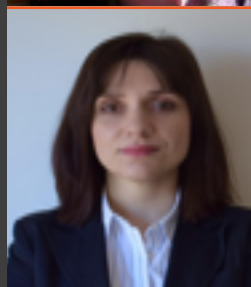
ELIZABETH DAVIS POLITICAL SCIENCE

Davis's current research interests include diaspora and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, comparative migration policy, and gender and migration.



RAZA RAJA POLITICAL SCIENCE

Raja's research interests include political economy of development finance, public policy, and politics in Middle East and South Asia.



ESRA EKINCI POLITICAL SCIENCE

Ekinçi's interests include political institutions, democratization, electoral systems and political parties.



KATHARINE RUSSELL POLITICAL SCIENCE

Russell's research interests include politics of the Middle East, with an emphasis on women's issues.



ABOLGHASEM BAYYENAT POLITICAL SCIENCE

Bayyenat's research interests include state identity discourses and foreign policy; international relations of the Middle East; foreign policy of Iran; political economy of the international trade system and development; and politics of national and subnational identities.



IVY RAINES POLITICAL SCIENCE

Raines's research interests center on post-conflict nation building with a focus on identity politics and political institutions. With her primary regional focus on the Arab World, her other areas of interest include Post-Soviet politics, China/Hong Kong/Taiwan Relations, and Cyprus.



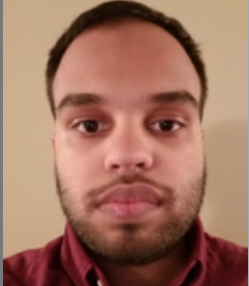
SEFA SECEN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Secen's research interests include refugees, human rights, ethnicity and nationalism, Middle Eastern and European Politics.



PRAKHAR SHARMA POLITICAL SCIENCE

Sharma's dissertation focuses on explaining the heterogeneity of preferences among civilians regarding service provision in a civil war context, with Afghanistan serving as a principal case.



MOHAMMAD EBAD ATHAR
HISTORY

Athar's research interests include U.S. and the World; U.S. and the Middle East; Empire.



REBECCA MOODY
RELIGION

Moody's primary research interests reside at the intersection of religion, cultural studies, feminist theory, film theory, affect theory and ethnography.



MEHDI NEJATBAKHS
SOCIOLOGY

Nejatbakhsh's research interests include globalization, cosmopolitanism, national and cultural identity, political sociology, immigration and diaspora, the Middle East and Iran.



DUYGU YENI CENEBAS
RELIGION

Cenebasi's research focuses on religion and feminism; gender and sacred texts; Jewish, Christian and Muslim women's theologies; and women's and minority literature in the MENA region.



NASTASSIA VAITSIAKHOVICH
SOCIOLOGY

Vaitsiakhovich's research interests include gender and disability studies, social theory, social policy, migration, qualitative research, and Middle East studies.



SULE AKSOY
COLLEGE SCIENCE TEACHING

Aksoy's research interests include socio-scientific issues-based science education, teacher education, science teachers' beliefs, nature of science, STEM education, and learning science in informal environments.



AHMET CELIK
RELIGION

Celik's research focuses on the relationship between law and politics in Islamic history, particularly the 16th-century Ottoman Empire.



SHAUNDEL SANCHEZ
ANTHROPOLOGY

Sanchez's dissertation examines the question of belonging for U.S.-citizen Muslim residents in the United Arab Emirates. This research analyzes the community as its members travel between their country of citizenship and a Muslim majority country where many have resided for over 20 years.



M.OWAIS KHAN
RELIGION

Khan's research interests include early modern Islamic political theology and practice in the Indian Ocean.



NATALIE EL-EID
ENGLISH

El-Eid's research interests include Arab-American and ethnic literature, particularly in respect to war, trauma, gender, sexuality and diaspora. While engaging various types of media, she intends to analyze Western perspectives of Arabic culture, dominantly through representations of Arab males and females post-9/11, as well as the construction of the diasporic identity in the U.S.



LAUREN MCCORMICK
RELIGION

McCormick's research focuses on Biblical studies, ancient Near Eastern studies, material culture (specifically, discerning creativity within repetitious art forms).

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH



Ugur Altundal
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science

Altundal is working on co-authored research with Omer Zarpli (University of Pittsburgh) regarding the effect of travel freedom on democracy. Altundal and Zarpli published the main findings of the research in the 2019 *Henley Passport Index and Global Mobility Report*. It was also cited in the Newsweek article “Ranked: The World’s Least Powerful Passports in 2019.” “Despite the important progress made in overall global mobility,” they write in their contribution to Henley and Partners’ annual report on global mobility, “there remains a significant ‘global mobility divide’, with some passports much more powerful than others (January 11, 2019).

Over the past decade, travel freedom has expanded precipitously, thanks to the rising number of bilateral visa-waiver agreements and unilateral decisions by governments. For example, in 2006, a citizen, on average, could travel to 58 destinations without needing a visa from the host nation; by 2018, this number had nearly doubled to 107. While this development has certainly paid economic dividends related to booming tourism, did it also have political benefits? More specifically, what has been the effect of increasing border openness on democracy? The literature on democratic diffusion would suggest that expanding cross-border interactions should be correlated with democratization. Yet, there is no systematic empirical evidence about the effect of the visa-waiver programs on democracy. Altundal and Zarpli aim to fill this gap. Using a novel data set that records the number of visa-free destinations for each country and territory from 2006 to 2018, their research offers the first cross-national analysis of this relationship. They find that the number of visa-free destinations held by a sender country has a positive and statistically significant, albeit non-linear, effect on that country’s democracy score. The findings suggest not only that visa-free travel can have non-tourism-related benefits, but also that democratization can indeed have an important international dimension.

Altundal and Zarpli will present their research at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, D.C., later in the fall. They are also preparing an article to be published in a prominent academic journal.





Ahmet Celik
Ph.D. Student
Department of Religion

Celik is completing coursework this semester and will take the comprehensive exams in Fall 2019. In the meantime, he is working on his dissertation proposal, which enables him to focus on key methodological, conceptual and historical frameworks that serve to establish core competencies that will help structure the scope of his future research.

In his master's thesis, Celik focused on the relationship between law and politics in Islamic history and particularly the 16th-century Ottoman Empire. His thesis provides an analysis of the 16th-century Ottoman legal-political thought and shari'a-based legal practices of the Empire.

Celik's dissertation project aims to explore and compare basic concepts and themes of political philosophy and legal theory in modern Europe and Islam. His research sits at the intersection of politics and law as it examines the concept of sovereignty and constitutionalism in modern state and Islamic governance. In particular, the project aims to explore and understand how sovereign power is defined, identified, justified and limited within the context of Islam and modern political philosophy. His method, in order to find an answer to this question, will be tracing the roots of similarities and differences in political and legal systems in modern Europe and Islam by rigorously analyzing and critically engaging with the basic texts in continental political philosophy and Islamic political thought.

Celik's supervisor is Professor Ahmed Abdel Meguid, a faculty member in the Department of Religion.

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH



Katharine Russell
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science

Russell previously earned a B.A. at Binghamton University, majoring in political science and Arabic studies. Her research focuses on why terrorist organizations deploy “unconventional operatives”; that is, those individuals who do not represent traditional expectations of a young, able-bodied adult male terrorist. Her dissertation, titled “Femme Fatale: The Deployment of Female Operatives by Terrorist Organizations,” explores why some terrorist groups deploy women in active operative roles, whereas other groups use women primarily in supportive, auxiliary roles within the organizations. In order to understand this question, Russell examines two Palestinian organizations designated as terror groups by the U.S. government and others: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB) during the Second Intifada (2000-05). Both groups operated out of the West Bank during this time. The PFLP did not use female operatives in violent attacks, while AAMB famously employed several women as suicide bombers.

Russell’s dissertation argues that a gendered division of labor exists within terrorist organizations; women tend to take on nonviolent, supportive roles in the absence of tactical and strategic incentives for the organization to incorporate them into the violent roles more often dominated by men. She further argues that when these tactical and strategic incentives exist for the use of female operatives, the organization must weigh these tactical benefits against the societal costs of using women in normatively unacceptable ways.

Additionally, she has done work on child suicide bombers, exploring both the organizations who deploy children in suicide roles, as well as the public perception of these groups. Her future research will examine how public opinion among the terrorist group’s constituents and the broader public is impacted by the organization’s deployment of children in suicide attacks.



MESP FACULTY UPDATE

Mehrzaad Boroujerdi, professor of political science, published an article on Iranian foreign ministry in *Foreign Affairs* (March 6, 2019) and on Iran's new chief justice in the *Atlantic Council Blog* (March 11, 2019). He also gave talks at the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, University of London, UCLA and Stanford University. Boroujerdi was a recipient of the Andrew Berlin Family National Security Research Fund from Syracuse University's Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (December 2018), and was awarded an Astrid Merget Fellowship for academic year 2019-20 to teach a graduate course on foreign policy of Middle East states in Washington, D.C., for the Maxwell School.

Rania Habib, associate professor of linguistics and Arabic, published one invited chapter in 2018: "Use of Standard Arabic [q]-Lexical-Borrowings in Syrian Rural Migrant Speech" in the edited volume *Rural Voices: Language, Identity and Social Change Across Place*. She presented this work at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America in Salt Lake City, Utah. In February 2018, she was selected as editor of the literature, linguistics and criticism section of the Taylor & Francis Group journal *Cogent Arts and Humanities*. In addition, since November 2016, she has served as editor of the sociolinguistics, Arabic linguistics, and phonetics and phonology sections of the De Gruyter journal *Open Linguistics*.

Natalie Koch, associate professor of geography, published a book in 2018: *The Geopolitics of Spectacle: Space, Synecdoche and the New Capitals of Asia* (Cornell University Press), and it was recently profiled on BBC Radio 4's *Thinking Allowed* for the March 13 program on "Spectacular Cities." She also had published several articles and book chapters related to her research sports, including her ethnographic study of Qatar's hosting of the 2016 UCI World Championships for Road Cycling in Doha. In Spring 2019, Koch presented this research in Doha, as the inaugural media and politics lecturer at Northwestern University-Qatar, speaking on "Media and Politics in Qatar." During a Fulbright Fellowship in Qatar and the UAE in Spring 2019, she continued research on her ongoing project on sustainability, renewables, and the food-water-energy nexus in the Arabian Peninsula. During this visit, Koch also started a new book project on historical and contemporary connections between Arizona and the Gulf states. In Spring 2019, she was elected as the communications liaison for the Association for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies (AGAPS), an affiliate of MESA, and in Fall 2018, became an executive board member of the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC). She continues to serve as the faculty advisor for the Central Asia and the Caucasus (CAC) research group.

Jaklin Kornfilt, professor of linguistics and director of the linguistics studies program, published articles and papers in 2018 and 2019. Her work has been featured in prestigious publications such as *Papers in Turkish and Turkic Linguistics and Turkic Languages*. She was also a visiting professor at the University of Venice, Ca' Foscari, and at the University of Crete.

Yüksel Sezgin, associate professor of political science, has spent the last year at Princeton University's Law and Public Affairs Program (LAPA) as a visiting professor and returned to Syracuse University in Fall 2018. In 2019, Sezgin has received a fellowship from the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) to work on a book-length comparative study of Muslim family laws in Israel, India, Greece and Ghana. In Spring 2019, he began serving as an editor for the Harvard Law School's SHARIAsource, a digital portal housing primary and secondary sources on Islamic law.

James W. Watts, professor of religion, will be a faculty fellow in the Special Collections Research Center at Bird Library this summer. In this role, he will develop resources and skills to revamp REL 301 Ancient Near Eastern Religions and Cultures to include student research on primary texts—including Syracuse University's collection of 489 Sumerian cuneiform tablets. Watts will also publish a new book this summer: *How and Why Books Matter* (Equinox).

BOOK IN FOCUS

Mehrzaad Boroujerdi has coauthored, with Kourosh Rahimkhani, a new book entitled *Postrevolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook*. The book was published by Syracuse University Press. We have recently interviewed Professor Boroujerdi to learn about the book.

"a monumental achievement"

Gary Sick

former National Security Council member

Post-Revolutionary Iran

A Political Handbook

Mehrzaad Boroujerdi
Kourosh Rahimkhani

Would you give us a summary of your educational and professional background, your activities and your research?

I completed my doctoral studies in international relations at the American University and then spent two years at Harvard University and the University of Texas at Austin as a postdoctoral fellow. I came to Syracuse University in 1992, served as the founding director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program from 2003 to 2014, and then chaired the Political Science Department from 2014 to 2017. During the 2017-18 academic year I was a visiting scholar at UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies as well as a fellow of the American Council on Education at California State University, Northridge. At Syracuse, I have taught such MES-related courses as Politics of the Middle East, Politics of Iran, Islam and Politics in Asia, Representations of the Middle East, International Relations of the Middle East, and Social Theory and the Middle East.

Can you tell us about your book, *Postrevolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook*, with Kourosh Rahimkhani?

Postrevolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook, which came out in 2018, is a massive book (853 pages). The book addresses two main shortcomings in the study of Iranian politics. The first part provides 40 years (1979-2019) of electoral data, information on more than 400 political parties, an extensive political chronology, and detailed data on major institutions of power in Iran (office of the Supreme Leader, President, Parliament, Guardian Council, etc.). The second half of the book provides biographical sketches of 2,300 politicians since the very first day of the Revolution. This is the largest data set on political elites in any Middle Eastern or North African country. The book also has a section on family ties among the elite.

How did publishing this book change your process of writing?

This is the third book I have published with Syracuse University Press. My first two books, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (1996) and *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and Theory of Statecraft* (2013) were mainly works of intellectual history. The new book is based on extensive empirical research. Indeed, it took 14 years to collect the data that has been assembled in the book. I came away from this experience with a much better appreciation for those who do large-scale data collection.

One of your areas of specialty is Middle Eastern politics. As you can see in the news, Middle Eastern politics is ever changing. Can you describe the importance that Middle Eastern politics has in this globalized world?

Someone once said that Middle East is no Las Vegas. What happens there does not stay there. We are all impacted with events in that part of the world. Oil, long-running Arab-Israeli dispute, wars in Iraq and Syria, the fight against ISIS, and problems of refugees and immigrants are just a few examples of how Middle Eastern politics has impacted the rest of the world. In other words, even if you are not interested in politics in the Middle East, it is interested in you. This is the message I try to convey to my students as I try to get them to understand the complexities of this region.

STUDENT AWARDS

Recipient of Perryman Summer Research Grant for the Middle East:
Aykut Ozturk

Recipient of Goekjian Summer Research Grant for the Middle East:
Sule Aksoy

*Recipient of the Young Scholar Prize in Middle Eastern Studies
(for Outstanding Scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies at the Undergraduate Level):*
Hannah Lee Gross

*Recipient of the Young Scholar Prize in Middle Eastern Studies
(for Outstanding Scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies at the Graduate Level):*
Natalie El-Eid



FACULTY AWARDS

Teaching Recognition Award

The Teaching Recognition Award was established in 2016 to recognize excellence in teaching and to appreciate the indispensable contributions of our faculty to enhance knowledge of the MENA region.

Previous recipients of the award include Professor Amy Kallander (2016), Professor Hossein Bashiriyeh (2016), Professor Miriam Elman (2017), Professor Rania Habib (2017), Professor Jaklin Kornfilt (2018), and Eva Phillips (2018).

This year, the award committee, consisting of Professor Jaklin Kornfilt, Eva Phillips and student member Franziska Liu, selected Professor Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Political Science) and Michal Downie (Hebrew instructor) as co-recipients of the Teaching Recognition Award.



“An award to Professor Mehrzad Boroujerdi for teaching is long overdue,” the award committee members noted. “The Middle Eastern Studies Program owes so much to him; he worked extremely hard to give the program campus-wide visibility, and then visibility beyond our campus. For a long time, he was essentially the only person who worked on the curriculum of the program, who called for meetings, and who was in email contact with all of us very frequently ... His teaching of his own courses was an outstanding contribution, as well—as those of us who attended some of his classes can attest. We are honored to name Professor Boroujerdi the co-recipient of the 2019 teaching excellence award.”

In the announcement released by the award committee, members noted their appreciation of Michal Downie as a very devoted and also very successful instructor: “Her contribution to the Hebrew language program and, through it, to the MESP is outstanding. Her commitment to her classes and to her students are reflected in her student evaluations which are stellar, and she has also taken courses herself so as to develop professionally. We are extremely pleased to be able to name her the co-recipient of the 2019 teaching excellence award.”

A RESEARCH NOTE FROM NAZANIN SHAHROKNI



Nazanin Shahrokni, Assistant Professor of Sociology

For the academic year 2018-19, I received the Undergraduate RA Fellowship to hire Hanna Seraji (anthropology major with a minor in gender and women's studies) as my research assistant for a research project titled "Pink Rides" Go Global: A Comparative Study of Four Illustrative Cases of Women-Only Taxis Across the Globe.

Building on my interest in the interconnectedness of micro-level practices and macro-level politics, I have crafted my second book project: a multi-national transregional study on the politics around the production of gender segregated public transportation as exemplified in women-only taxi services in Malaysia, The United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Iran.

Discourses of sexual harassment have been co-opted by the state and market to justify these gendered initiatives; present scholarship reverts to cultural explanations highlighting women's geographies of fear (Valentine 1989) and dangers in the city (Wilson 1991) to explain them.

However, these approaches ignore economic, social and cultural processes shaping the specific forms in which these initiatives are exerted across the globe. Further work is necessary to elucidate their embeddedness in differently configured regimes of power that ultimately affect the production and negotiation of the cultural meanings associated with such initiatives. The project also highlights how Islam is being implicated differently in these different national contexts.

During the year, Hanna Seraji helped me develop a website for a course I am designing on the sociology of the veil. She also collected data to help me provide country-specific reports: a historical overview of the women-only cabs initiative in particular national contexts.

Prior to working with me on this project, Hanna was my student in Sociology of Sex and Gender (Spring 2018) and received an A for the course. As a student, I appreciated her willingness to learn and produce creative essays. As a research assistant, I appreciated her commitment to the project and the enthusiasm and thoroughness with which she carried out tasks she was given.



STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Revolutions, War and the Prospect for Democracy in the Middle East

Course Title: Revolutions, War and the Prospect for Democracy in the Middle East
PSC/IRP/MES 400/600, 3 or 6 Credits, Undergraduate/Graduate

Location: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Program Terms: Summer

Faculty: Mehrzad Boroujerdi

Offered during the summer, this program explores the problem of the lack of democracy in the Middle East and focuses on the causes and consequences of the recent wave of revolutions that took place in the Arab World. The course will also analyze the commitment the United States has to promote democracy or democratic institutions and values in the Middle East and in North Africa. There are case studies that pertain to countries such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. A seminar will be held in 2020 in Dubai, led by a senior professor of political science at Syracuse University, Mehrzad Boroujerdi. The seminar will include a host of activities such as field trips in Dubai and Sharjah, an overnight excursion, and guest speakers.



Unique in the Arabian Peninsula, the United Arab Emirates is a place where there is multiculturalism. It is the heart for trade, business and cultural exchange. It is a splendid place to learn about the Arab World, especially for students. Students will learn and witness the daily intersection of traditional values and modern realities.

Included in the program fee are tours of Dubai, day trips to Abu Dhabi (the Grand Mosque and Sadyaat Island), Sharjah (American University of Sharjah and Sharjah Islamic Civilization Museum), and a boat trip in the Omani waters. In addition, students will have an overnight excursion to a safari!



WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE ARAB WORLD

Course Title: Women and Gender in the Arab World
ENG 360/730, WGS/MES/QSX 400/600, 3 credits, undergraduate or graduate
Location: Beirut, Lebanon
Program Terms: Summer
Faculty: Carol Fadda, Dana Olwan



Students enrolled in this upper-level course will travel in Summer 2020 to Beirut for 10 days to engage with issues involving the study of gender and sexuality in the Arab World. This course caters to students with tools to understand the issues, debates, discussions embodying structures of gender and sexuality in the Arab World by covering an array of historical, national, socio-cultural, literary and theoretical perspectives. Although the course addresses some of the rampant assumptions and stereotypes dominating Western discussions about Arab societies, its main focus is constructing a critical analytic lens to captivate and better comprehend the fields of gender studies and feminist Middle East studies. In addition to enlightening students with some of the major literary, cultural and sociological texts and trends in these convoluted fields, this course enables students to connect with scholars and activists located in the Lebanese and Arab settings who work on issues related to gendered and sexualized identities, human rights discourses and feminist mobilizations.

MESP ORGANIZES ITS ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

Transnational Feminist Solidarities: A Conversation

On April 23, 2019, The Middle Eastern Studies Program held a panel discussion on the politics of transnational feminist solidarities that connect struggles beyond fixed geographic borders and academic disciplines. Focusing on movements for liberation and justice across the U.S., Canada, and the Middle East and North Africa, members of the Syracuse University community were invited to join this conversation about the meaning, implications and challenges of engaged feminist praxis in a time of rising xenophobia and racism.



The panel consisted of Professor Sunera Thobani from University of British Columbia, as well as Professor Carol Fadda, Professor Amy Kallander, and Professor Dana Olwan, three MESP-affiliated faculty members from Syracuse University.

The discussion began with opening remarks by Yüksel Sezgin, Ph.D., associate professor of political science at the Maxwell School and director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program. After Sezgin's welcoming statement, Professor Thobani began her presentation by describing her work as lying at the intersection of activism and scholarship. Her exposition largely focused on the making of a "nation" in Canada, and how indigenous peoples fit within that process. Canada, a liberal democratic state, also has a long history of being a settler colonial society, and a colonial state. Reconciling these two images, argued Thobani, is a task that the country is currently facing. The battle between these two ideas, especially in the post-9/11 world, led to negative consequences for indigenous communities and people of color. Indigenous survival, thus, has been a crucial site of struggle and solidarity within the Canadian context.

The conversation continued with Dana Olwan, Ph.D., who began her presentation by noting the four sites where she has personally seen solidarity manifest itself. She first experienced solidarity in Palestine, seeing the struggle of peoples fighting against colonial settlements. Her own experience with multigenerational migration exposed Olwan to situations where she witnessed solidarity among minorities and colonized peoples. In the post-9/11 world, Olwan experienced solidarity among communities of color, especially Muslims, who came under attack from the global war on terror. Finally, she has seen indigenous internationalism, the coming together of multiple indigenous groups in response to the activities of global settler-colonial states. The language of solidarity, explained Olwan, is too often appropriated by states to achieve their own political objectives. Furthermore, throughout history, feminist movements have allowed themselves to be propagandized by states.

The panel progressed with remarks from Amy Kallander, Ph.D., whose presentation focused mostly on feminism in 1960s Tunisia. Post-independence feminism in Tunisia, explained Kallander, was very liberal and individualistic in nature. The ideology espoused freedom for women in private spheres of life, but not at higher social levels such as labor and politics. Just like the global context of the war on terror has played a role in the repression of minorities around the world, the Cold War had a similar effect on rights-movements in post-independence Tunisia. Kallander explained that her work attempts to examine, historically, the questions of what was accomplished, what kinds of exchanges happened between women, and what these exchanges led to in the 1960s and '70s.

The last talk was by Carol Fadda, Ph.D., mainly focusing on the importance of gender politics in imperial feminist policies. Like some of her colleagues on the panel, Fadda stressed the importance of understanding how states co-opt feminist thought to both expand governmental power; and how transnational spaces open possibilities for solidarity, but also for states to use transnational connections to confirm and verify the threat of immigrants and minorities. Furthermore, Fadda highlighted the role of gender politics in major foreign policy decisions that in turn lead to the oppression of minorities, especially Muslims. For example, the racialization of Arab men has been used to justify foreign policy action in parts of the Middle East, under the banner of rescuing Muslim and Arab women.

The panel concluded with closing remarks from the moderator, followed by a Q&A session among audience members and panelists. Students, faculty and community members from the area asked questions and had a lively discussion with all four speakers.



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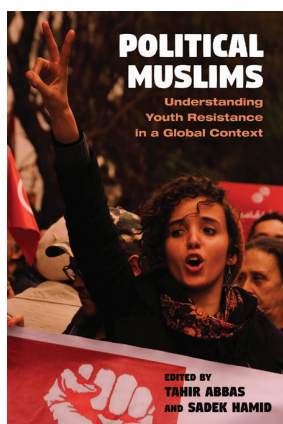
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The Maxwell School & The College of Arts and Sciences
Middle Eastern Studies Program
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Syracuse University
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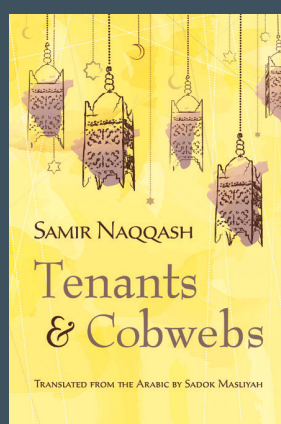


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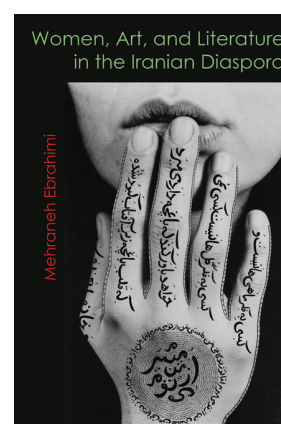
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