

Elias Muhanna

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Education

Ph.D. (with distinction), Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, Harvard University, 2012.
A.M. (with distinction), Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, Harvard University, 2008.
A.M., Comparative Literature & Literary Theory, University of Pennsylvania, 2004.
A.B., *magna cum laude*, Linguistics and Philosophy, Duke University, 2000.

Professional appointments

Manning Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, Brown University, 2014 – present
Assistant Professor, Comparative Literature, Brown University, 2012 – 2014
Visiting Scholar, Program on Arab Reform & Democracy, Stanford University, 2011 – 2012

Publications

Books

Translator, Shihab al-Din al-Nuwayri, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition: A Compendium of Universal Knowledge from the Classical Islamic World*. New York: Penguin, 2016.
Editor, *The Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle East Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.

Articles and book chapters

- “The Art of Copying: Mamluk Manuscript Culture in Theory and Practice.” In *Autograph/ holograph and authorial manuscripts in Arabic script*. Edited by Frédéric Bauden and Élise Franssen. Leiden: Brill, in press.
- “Islamic & Middle East Studies and the Digital Turn.” In *The Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle East Studies*, edited by Elias Muhanna, 1-9. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.
- “The Scattered and the Gathered: Questioning Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi.” In *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, edited by Alireza Korangy, Roy P. Mottahedeh, and William Granara. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.
- “Encyclopaedias, Arabic,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- “Why Was the 14th Century a Century of Arabic Encyclopaedism?” In *Encyclopaedias and Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, edited by Jason König and Greg Woolf, 343-56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- “The Sultan’s New Clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk Gift Exchange in the 15th Century.” *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 189-207. (*Winner of the Margaret B. Sevckenko Prize from the Historians of Islamic Art Association*)
- “Ilyâs al-Mawsilî.” In *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, c. 1350-1830*, edited by J. Lowry & D. Stewart. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2009.

Selected essays and commentary

- “The Fate of a Joke in Lebanon,” *The New Yorker* (News Desk, online edition), Sept. 26, 2015.
- “Hacking the Humanities,” *The New Yorker* (Culture Desk, online edition), July 7, 2015.
- “Iraq and Syria’s Poetic Borders,” *The New Yorker* (Page-Turner, online edition), August 13, 2014.
- “Translating ‘Frozen’ into Arabic,” *The New Yorker* (Page-Turner, online edition), May 30, 2014.
- “Lebanon’s War in Syria,” *The New Yorker* (News Desk, online edition), February 21, 2014.
- “Letter from Lebanon: A Bookshop Burns,” *The New Yorker* (Page-Turner, online), Jan. 16, 2014.
- “The Many Faces of Wissam al-Hassan,” *The New York Times* (Latitude, online), October 22, 2012.
- “Syria’s Foreign Policy: A Juggling Act,” *Al-Akhhbar* (English section), July 17, 2012.
- “Nasrallah’s Fighting Words,” *The New York Times* (Latitude, online edition), December 14, 2011.
- “Lebanon’s Confused Secularism,” *The Guardian*, April 23, 2010.
- “Two Houses, Many Mansions,” *The National*, August 14, 2009.
- “Our Lady of Hizbullah,” *Bidoun* (Winter 2008), 98-99.

Book reviews

- Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*, in *The Nation* (Jan. 6-11, 2016).
- Carl Petry, *The Criminal Underworld in a Medieval Islamic Society*, in *Mamluk Studies Review* 18 (2014-15): 355-57.
- Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha and Tarif Khalidi, eds., *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 73.1 (April 2014): 176-78.
- Matthew Ingalls, “Subtle Innovation within Networks of Convention: The Life, Thought, and Legacy of Zakariyya al-Ansari,” Ph.D. diss., Yale (2011), in *Dissertation Reviews* (May 10, 2013).
- Reza Aslan, *Tablet and Pen: Literary Landscapes from the Modern Middle East*, in *The Nation* (Aug 29, 2011).
- Michael Young, *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square: An Eyewitness Account of Lebanon’s Life Struggle*, in *The Nation* (July 15, 2010).
- Eugene Rogan’s, *The Arabs: A History*, in *The National* (December 4, 2009).

Presentations

Invited lectures

- “Textual Topographies: Some Notes on Patterned Corpora of Arabic Literary Texts.” Digital Ottoman Platform Workshop, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University (June 8-12, 2015)
- “Digital Scholarship in Islamic Studies: A Workshop” (co-taught by Prof. Roy Mottahedeh and Andras Riedlmayer), Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University (April 23, 2015).
- “Digital Scholarship in Islamic Studies: A Workshop.” University of Chicago Islamic Studies Workshop (April 16, 2015).
- “Elements of Style: Modeling Mannerism in Classical Arabic Poetry.” DH Forum, University of Chicago (April 16, 2015)
- “New Books from Old Books: Compilation and Authorship in the Mamluk Period.” The Histories of Books in the Islamic World, CSIC, Madrid (March 9-11, 2015).

- “Reading Post-Classically: Poetry and Encyclopedism in the Mamluk Empire.” Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University (Dec. 11, 2014).
- “Vernacular.” *Political Concepts* conference, Brown University (November 16, 2013).
- “A Mamluk Encyclopedist’s Working Method: The Evidence from Several Autograph Manuscripts of al-Nuwayri’s *Nihayat al-arab fi funun al-adab*.” Autograph/Holograph Manuscripts in Arabic Script Conference, Université de Liège, (October 10-11, 2013).
- “The Aesthetics of Accumulation in Mamluk Literature.” Yale Arabic Colloquium, (March 27, 2013).
- “Archiving the Revolution.” Habits of Living, Brown University, (March 22, 2013).
- “The Imperial Context of Mamluk Literature.” Delivered at the Arabic Studies Seminar, Columbia University, October 25, 2012.
- “Delineating the Post-Classical Muslim Humanitas.” “Imagining Muslim Humanities” Symposium Duke University, April 13-14, 2012.
- “Mamluk Encyclopaedias as Tokens of Decadence and Renaissance.” “Inhithat: Its Influence and Persistence in the Writing of Arab Cultural History” Symposium, American University of Beirut, Lebanon, December 8-10, 2010.
- “Historicizing *adab* in Mamluk Literature: The Case of al-Nuwayrī’s Encyclopaedia *Nihayat al-arab fi funun al-adab*.” Foundations of Arabic Literature Colloquium, Yale University, April 17, 2010.

Conference papers

- “Vernacular and Cosmopolitan Aesthetics in Mamluk Literature.” School of Mamluk Studies, Université de Liège, Belgium (June 25-28, 2015).
- “Innovation and Tradition in Scribal (Best) Practices: The Concept of *istilab* in Chancery Literature.” School of Mamluk Studies, Venice (June 2014).
- “Reception Studies and the Post-Classical Islamic World.” American Comparative Literature Association, New York City (March 22, 2014).
- “Orientalism & Encyclopedism: The European Reception of the Mamluk Encyclopedias,” Modern Language Association (January 9, 2014).
- “The Database and the Eyebrow.” Opening remarks delivered at the Conference on the Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle East Studies, Brown University, (October 24, 2013).
- “If it Walks Like a Genre, Quacks Like a Genre, and Swims Like a Genre: Some Observations about Large-Scale Compilation in the Mamluk Period.” American Oriental Society Annual Meeting, Portland OR, March 16, 2013.
- “Antoine Galland’s Eastern Muse: Hanna ibn Diyab’s Contribution to the 1001 Nights.” American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) Annual Meeting, New Orleans, April 1-4, 2010.
- “Eighteen Words for Snow and Everything Else: Eloquence and Encyclopaedism in the Mamluk Period.” Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Boston, Nov. 24, 2009.
- “Semantics or Poetics: Reframing Ibn Jinni’s Theory of Greater Derivation.” American Oriental Society (AOS) Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, March 15, 2008.
- “The Word as Wound: The Meaning of *kalam* in the Qur’an.” Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Montréal, November 18, 2007.
- “The Sultan’s New Clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk Imperial Gift Exchange in the 15th Century.” Historians of Islamic Art Association (HIAA) Majlis, New York NY, February 17, 2007.
- “The Wandering Sheep: Irony & Imagination in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi’s *al-Hawamil wa-l-Shawamil*.” Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Boston, November 20, 2006.
- “Imagining the New World: Ilyas al-Mawsili, Hanna al-Maruni, and the *1,001 Nights*.” Middle Eastern History and Theory Conference, University of Chicago, May 14th, 2005.

“How the *Qāf* Lost its Spots: Aesthetics of Ambiguity in Medieval Arabic Inscriptions.” Penn Humanities Forum, University of Pennsylvania, March 27, 2004.

“Anastas, al-Shidyaq, and their Dictionaries.” Middle East Studies Regional Conference at the University of California, Santa Barbara, March 20, 2004.

Academic honors and distinctions

Manning Assistant Professorship, Brown University, 2014

Bruce D. Craig Dissertation Prize, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 2012

Margaret B. Sevckenko Prize, Historians of Islamic Art Association, 2008

Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Harvard University, 2007

Research grants and fellowships

American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship, 2015-16.

Humanities Initiative Research & Teaching Award, Brown University, 2014-2015

Humanities Initiative Research & Teaching Award, Brown University, 2013-2014

Humanities Initiative Research & Teaching Award, Brown University, 2012-2013

Whiting Fellowship in the Humanities, Harvard University, 2010-2011

Friends of Princeton Library Research Grant, 2008

Harvard University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Doctoral Fellowship, 2005-2010.

University of Pennsylvania, William Penn Fellowship, 2003-2005

Fulbright Scholarship, Morocco, 2000-2001

Service

To the university

Comparative Literature Graduate Committee (2012, 2013, 2014); Middle East Studies Executive Committee (2014-15); Middle East Studies Communications Committee (2013-14, chair); Middle East Studies Advisory Committee (2012-13); Middle East Studies Language Committee (2012-13); Middle East Studies Search Committees: Associate Director (2012, 2014); Postdoctoral Fellow in International Humanities (2013); Aga Khan Visiting Professor (2013); Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities (2014); Rockefeller Library Digital Humanities Colloquium (2013-14); co-convenor, “Poetic Forces: Creative Change in and Beyond the Arab Spring” (March 2013); convenor, “Methods of Collaboration among Early Modern Humanists” (April 17, 2013); Major Literature Exam Committee for Comparative Literature (2012); speaker, Brown Career Lab (2014); speaker, Sheridan Center Program II Certificate session on “Leading Effective Discussions” (2013, 2014); faculty sponsor, Sheridan Center “Principles and Practice of Reflective Mentorship” application (2014);

To the profession

Convener, “The Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle East Studies” (October 24-25 2013 conference at Brown University)
Convener, “Textual Corpora & the Digital Islamic Humanities” (October 17-18, 2014 workshop at Brown University)
Convener, “Distant Reading and the Islamic Archive” (October 16, 2015 conference at Brown University)
Founder and director, Digital Islamic Humanities Project (2013-15);

Panel convener: Middle East Studies Association (2006, 2007); American Oriental Society (2008, 2013); School of Mamluk Studies (2014)
Referee: *Middle East Journal*; *Journal of Arabic Literature*;
Outside PhD examiner: Princeton University, 2012;

Member: American Oriental Society, Middle East Studies Association, Modern Language Association, American Comparative Literature Association

Teaching

Regular courses

The 1,001 Nights (COLT 0510K)
Narratives of Decline in Arabic Literature (COLT 1813A)
The Classical Arabic Literary Tradition (COLT 1310A)
The Encyclopaedic Imagination from Pliny to Google Books (COLT 2820Z)
Desire and Sexuality in Arabic Literature (COLT 0811O)
The Problem of the Vernacular (COLT 1813)
Islam & Liberalism (COLT 1440G)
A Classical Islamic Education: Readings in Arabic Literature (COLT 1310E)
Before Wikipedia (COLT 0610Q)

Languages

Classical Arabic: Excellent
Levantine Arabic: Native
French: Reading knowledge
German: Reading knowledge
Persian: Intermediate reading knowledge