



Fall 2013

Welcome to the second year of the Middle East Studies Initiative, which promises to raise the bar on a banner first year in terms of new faculty, robust programming, and enthusiastic interest among students and the Brown community as a whole. Building on this momentum takes on special significance as Brown University celebrates its 250th anniversary, and as a revitalized [Watson Institute](#) makes its mark on campus under the leadership of its new director, Richard Locke.

Nothing moves a program of studies forward more than the addition of new scholars. So please join me in welcoming new Assistant Professor in History, Faiz Ahmed; visiting professors Bashir Abu-Manneh, Adi Ophir, and Mohsen Namjoo; as well as post-doctoral fellows Mayssun Succarie, and Sa`ed Atshan. In the spring semester, we will also be joined by Bogac Ergene, the Aga Khan Visiting Professor of Islamic Humanities. You can access their profiles on the [Middle East Studies](#) website.

In planning our lectures, conferences, workshops, and major public events, our aim is not simply to insert expert opinion into public debates, but to question how these debates are framed and to suggest innovative lines of inquiry grounded in intimate knowledge of the region. In 2012-2013, we introduced the Lecture Series, the Luncheon Seminar, and the Undergraduate Paper Series. Starting the Fall 2013 semester, we are adding a Film Series beginning with the theme "Love in the City: Urban Lives in the Middle East." The poignant stories and rich imagery delve into the intimacy of everyday life in ways that only film can deliver.

There will be eight conferences and workshops this year that reflect the passions of our faculty and students, and that address key thematic issues of interest to the Brown community and beyond. A year-long series of events, "Oslo is Dead; Long Live Oslo!," marks the 20th anniversary of the famous handshake on the White House lawn that inaugurated the "Peace Process." We ask: How did this process come about? Where is it going? And what actually changed on the ground? Hanan Ashrawi opens with a major speech "Process vs. Peace," followed the next day with the first installment in another new series, Critical Conversations on Palestine/Israel.

This year is also the 60th anniversary of the US-British coup that overthrew the government of Iran and transformed the Middle East. A daylong conference on December 6th, "The U.S., Iran, and the Cold War: Global Perspectives on the 1953 Coup," rethinks this seminal moment from a world history context and explores its impact on U.S. involvement in the region. Iranian musician extraordinaire, Mohsen Namjoo, will give a solo performance at the Granoff Center on December 7th.

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The crisis in Syria has been headline news for two years, but little is known about the daily lives and perspectives of most Syrians. Two events will highlight the conflict: “Crisis in Syria: A Teach-in by Brown Faculty” on September 9th, and “Syria: Beyond Geopolitics,” a day-long conference featuring experts who know the situation on the ground, especially in the fields of public health, political economy, and social movements.

The Fall 2013 semester opens with a major international conference, “Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle East Studies,” a pioneering event bringing together scholars experimenting with digital methodologies in their study of Middle Eastern history, language, art, culture, and society. The conference is the start of a multi-year initiative that will sponsor regular gatherings, workshops, symposia, and other kinds of research projects, all oriented around the digital Islamic humanities.

The Spring 2014 semester will also feature four major events. In February will be the first international conference to be held in the United States on the Turkish poet and activist, Nazim Hikmet. In March, a major conference, New Directions in Palestinian Studies, will explore recent trends under the theme “Political Economy and the Economy of Politics.” Two annual workshops take place in April: The Aga Khan workshop on Islamic Humanities, and the Engaged Scholarship Workshop. The latter’s theme for this year is the militarization of knowledge production, especially the dilemmas faced by Anthropologists, Archaeologists, and other scholars doing research in conflict zones.

All this is a collective effort and it is a privilege to work with such a talented and energetic group of faculty, students, and administrators. We realize that Middle East Studies is no stranger to controversy, but there is no better place to raise these difficult issues than the University Campus. We welcome all of you to participate in our activities and to make your voices heard.

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