

August 31, 2018

Dear Friends,

I hope you are starting the fall semester refreshed and ready for campus life in all its modes.

Middle East Studies has its fair share of scholars who combine commitment and compassion with the academic virtues of knowledge and intellect. My colleague [Beshara Doumani](#), who directed MES at Brown between 2012 and 2018, is a very fine example of this. I am grateful for his extraordinary dedication to the program that has seen it become a prominent fixture of Brown's intellectual landscape during his leadership. Projects he accomplished or set in motion will remain integral to the program as we look to the future.

When starting something, the first imperative is to learn. I hope to do this with the aid of our established student groups ([MES-DUG](#) and [MESGSA](#)) and members of the [Faculty Executive Committee](#). Over the course of fall semester, you will also receive invitations to provide feedback and join informal discussions to share your views. I hope that you will find the time to participate. This is important, both to ensure that we remain a cohesive community, and to plan for when the program expands.

It is my pleasure to welcome a number of faculty in new roles this semester. [Alex Winder](#) takes up the position of visiting assistant professor and director of undergraduate studies for the MES concentration. [Elias Muhanna](#) has generously agreed to be MES faculty fellow for two years. In a significant enhancement of language teaching at Brown, [Ercan Balci](#) will offer courses in Turkish at all levels. Elsa Belmont Flores joins the Center for Language Studies as a lecturer in Arabic. Other colleagues who become part of the MES community on visiting appointments include Heba Alhashmi (FLTA-Arabic), [Rawan Arar](#) (Watson postdoc), [Lidia Gocheva](#) (Philosophy postdoc), [Gregory Halaby](#) (Comparative Literature), and [Asli Zengin](#) (Anthropology).

We will sponsor the usual wide array of events during the fall semester with the help of our exceptionally dedicated staff. Among these, I would like to highlight [The Music of Syria: A Concert by Contemporary Syrian Composers and Performers](#) to be held on October 18. On November 9, we take up an important contemporary topic through the international workshop [Warzones as Displacement in the Middle East: the Kurdish Case](#). We also host the first two lectures in a year-long series entitled [Iran Today](#) aimed at bringing latest on-the-ground research to campus. If you have ideas for events that MES should organize or cosponsor, please get in touch with us.



We remain, as ever, immensely grateful for your support—intellectual, moral, and financial. I look forward to seeing you at the [Welcome Reception](#) on September 5 at the Maddock Alumni Center and throughout the coming months.

Shahzad Bashir
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