



January 18, 2019

Dear Friends,

I hope the new year has begun well for you.

At Middle East Studies, we have been getting used to our bright new suite of offices at Stephen Robert '62 Hall in the expanded Watson Institute since December. A move like this has its pleasures and challenges as we discover new neighbors and recreate old comforts. Please do stop by some time to see the upgraded facilities—there is no better way to feel at home than to see friends.

It is a special pleasure for me to welcome [Nadje Al-Ali](#) as the new Robert Family Professor of International Studies and professor of anthropology and Middle East studies. She has a joint appointment with the Department of Anthropology and the Watson Institute. This semester's programming includes presentations by our colleagues [Lidia Gocheva in Philosophy \(2/27\)](#), [Asli Zengin in Anthropology \(3/13\)](#), and [Rawan Arar at the Watson Institute \(4/24\)](#).

We will also host an extensive array of visitors during the semester. The week after classes start, we present the discussion "[Experiences of Incarceration in the United States and Syria](#)" led by Omar Alshogre and José Diaz. On February 26, Rosie Bsheer from Harvard University will discuss the current political situation in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The annual [New Directions in Palestinian Studies](#) conference takes place on March 15 and 16 with the theme of "Palestinian Homes and Houses: Subjectivities and Materialities." Continuing from last semester, we have two distinguished speakers—[Abbas Amanat from Yale University \(3/7\)](#) and [Niloofer Haeri from Johns Hopkins University \(4/17\)](#)—coming to campus to give Peter Green Lectures as a part of the [Iran Today](#) series. Maya Mikdashi will present her work on Lebanon on February 14 and Sadia Abbas will discuss her work as a novelist as well as a scholar of literature and culture on April 25.

Last but certainly not least, please have a look at the list of Middle East Studies related courses being offered in the spring semester. As you attend courses and our events, please also think about what else you would like to see sponsored by the Program. We would welcome suggestions for traditional academic lectures as well as events with innovative formats.

In the academic cycle, the spring semester contains both beginnings and significant closures. We hope to welcome new undergraduate concentrators to MES and hear about graduate students who will join various departments in Fall 2019. Together with this, some students will complete their journeys at Brown

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in the coming months and begin to look toward new horizons. Among the latter, I would like to extend special congratulations to MES concentrator [Rhea Stark, '18.5](#), recently chosen as a Rhodes Scholar from the United States. May we all find such affirmation and success this year and beyond.

Shahzad Bashir
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