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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

First of all, the good news: Brown’s Academic Priorities Committee has approved that, starting on July 1, 2019, the Program in Middle East Studies will become a Center within the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. With the change, we will still house a thriving undergraduate concentration, now with an expanded mandate to facilitate research and to continue programming of events pertaining to the Middle East. The upgrade has resulted from the Program’s spectacular success over the past seven years. It affirms Brown’s commitment to Middle East Studies as a permanent feature of the University’s intellectual landscape.

This report provides a sense of our work during the 2018-19 academic year. Our students continued their inspiring work both in and outside of classrooms. We welcomed new faculty, expanding the array of fields and topics available for students to pursue. The work of research initiatives resulted in conferences, smaller events, and publications. We organized special events to reflect on situations in Syria, Yemen, and the Kurdish region that need urgent analytical and humanitarian attention. Initiatives on Iran and Turkey involved visits from distinguished and emerging scholars and events spearheaded by graduate students on campus. In the arts, we cosponsored music concerts and exhibitions. Behind the scenes, our faculty and staff were busy with faculty searches and other planning endeavors whose fruits will become visible in coming months. It was a busy year as usual, our efforts ensuring that the Middle East remained at the forefront of Brown’s coverage of international affairs.

As I reflect on continuing in my role as the director, I am committed to increasing the extraordinary success of Middle East Studies at Brown under the umbrella of the new Center. This means thorough ongoing support for areas such as Palestinian Studies, for which Brown has become an international hub. I also wish for us to expand our topical horizons by covering more of the region and creating new projects that will further solidify Brown’s reputation as a model for the future of Middle East Studies. Our success to date is a source of great satisfaction, but it must spur us to do even more as we continue the important work of providing academic coverage of a region crucial to global affairs.

My sincerest thanks to our financial supporters and all Brown students, staff, faculty, and administration whose commitment makes the work of Middle East Studies possible. The community we form is our foremost asset; it deserves acknowledgment and celebration as we aspire to brighter futures.

Shahzad Bashir
Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities
Director, Middle East Studies
MISSION

Middle East Studies at Brown University promotes knowledge, understanding, and informed discussion about the Middle East societies through research, teaching, and public engagement.

ABOUT

Housed in the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs and supported by the Dean of the Faculty, Middle East Studies (MES) has since 2012 grown from an undergraduate concentration into one of the top programs in the country. Eschewing the hothouse legacy structures of the conventional Oriental and area studies models, MES is driven by thematic research initiatives that tap into Brown’s tradition of interdisciplinary, critical, and engaged scholarship. Through collaborative partnerships around these themes, MES integrates Middle East studies into the larger streams of intellectual life at Brown University by building a cutting-edge research community, producing innovative programming, and offering an exciting array of courses and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.
RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Middle East Studies is organized around niche research initiatives that seek to shape fields of knowledge through annual workshops, publications, pedagogy, and public outreach.

ARTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

DIGITAL ISLAMIC HUMANITIES

DISPLACEMENT AND THE MAKING OF THE MODERN WORLD

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

ISLAM AND THE HUMANITIES

NEW DIRECTIONS IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES
PEOPLE

**SHAHZAD BASHIR**
DIRECTOR
AGA KHAN PROFESSOR OF ISLAMIC HUMANITIES

**ALEX WINDER**
VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
MIDDLE EAST STUDIES DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

**BARBARA OBERKOETTER**
MANAGER

**SARAYA MCPHERSON**
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR
PHIL LAI ‘13
PHD STUDENT, HARVARD UNIVERSITY
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND BRAND CONSULTANT

HANNAH CHOW ’20
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

MIRANDA MO ’22
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

PAULA PACHECO-SOTO ’20
STUDENT ASSISTANT

ZENAB YOUSSEF ’20
STUDENT ASSISTANT

HOUDA BARROUG ’20
WEBSITE ASSISTANT

SOPHIE ZACHARAKIS ’19.5
STUDENT ASSISTANT
SHAHZAD BASHIR
CHAIR; AGA KHAN PROFESSOR OF ISLAMIC HUMANITIES; PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
Islamic studies with interests in the intellectual and social histories of the societies of Iran and Central and South Asia circa fourteenth century CE to the present, as well as temporality and historiography, corporeality, the study of Sufism and Shi’ism, and messianic movements originating in Islamic contexts.

FAIZ AHMED
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
Legal and constitutional history of the Middle East and Islamicate world, including student and scholarly networks, constitutional movements and state building, and international law and diplomacy from the Ottoman Empire to the British Raj, and from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.

LINA FRUZZETTI
PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY
Social anthropology in India and North East Africa with a focus on the relationship between kinship, marriage, and rituals; the meaning of the construction of gender in India; caste and the life cycle rites of Hindus; and recent structural changes to the institution of marriage and what constitutes the person.

YANNIS HAMILAKIS
JOUKOWSKY FAMILY PROFESSOR OF ARCHAEOLOGY
Socio-politics of the past, the body and bodily senses, the archaeology of eating and drinking, the ontology and materiality of photography, archaeology and nationalism, archaeological ethnography, and critical pedagogy in archaeology.
FACULTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

ELIAS MUHANNA
MANNING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
Classical Arabic literature and Islamic intellectual history in addition to encyclopedic texts in the Islamic world and Europe, the cultural production of the Mamluk Empire, and the problem of the vernacular in different literary traditions.

ADI OPHIR
MELLON VISITING PROFESSOR OF HUMANITIES AND MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
Contemporary continental philosophy, political theory, political theology, and in particular, the socially structured existential and political nature of evil.

HOLLY SHAFFER
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE
Eighteenth and nineteenth century art and architecture in South Asia and Britain, interpretations of eclectic arts from the Indian city of Pune, studies of ephemeral arts, such as light, cuisine, architectural models, and scent in the Indian region of Awadh, and nineteenth-century European representations of India that went viral.
New Directions in Palestinian Studies (NDPS) brings together emerging and established scholars to shape knowledge production on Palestine and the Palestinians. Since it was established by Beshara Doumani in 2013, NDPS has built an international community of scholars through an annual workshop that takes stock of research trends, identifies promising new questions and sources, and encourages networking across institutions. NDPS also supports the careers of young scholars through an endowed postdoctoral fellowship and a book series with the University of California Press.

The 2019 workshop, titled “Palestinian Homes and Houses: Subjectivities and Materialities,” explored the relationship between physical structures of habitation (houses) and sites of belonging (homes) for Palestinians—a relationship rendered particularly complex and fraught by Palestinians’ historic and ongoing experiences of displacement, dispossession, and destruction. Participants examined the social, economic, emotional, health, and political dimensions of Palestinian homes and houses across different spaces and times, addressing subjects ranging from the construction (and historical reconstruction) of Palestinian households in the late Ottoman period to the impacts of virtual reality technology and the “sharing economy” platform Airbnb.
Islam and the Humanities is a research initiative led by Shahzad Bashir, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities. It connects the study of Islam and Muslims to topics engaged by scholars in the humanities in general. The initiative’s website is a hub for those interested in the subject at Brown, also signaling the University’s commitment to the field for the outside world. During 2018-19, the initiative sponsored lectures and a poetry reading, and a group of faculty and students worked together to create a call for proposals, followed by democratic adjudication, that will result in a conference titled “The Primacy of Form” to be held in October 2019. With support from the Carnegie Corporation, Islam and the Humanities sponsors an Open Access book series titled Islamic Humanities, published by the University of California Press. The first book in the series — Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia by Shenila Khoja-Moolji (a Brown alumna) — was recently awarded two prizes: the Jackie Kirk Outstanding Book Award from the Comparative and International Education Society, and the Michael Harrington Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems.
The arts have played a pivotal role in shaping and transforming Middle Eastern and Muslim societies, both past and present. This research initiative cultivates a network of scholars passionate about the relationship between the arts and social agency. The aim is to support, innovate, and shape research agendas in the fields of Islamic art and architecture, Middle Eastern cinema and photography, fine arts and visual culture, and music and dance.

**The Music of Syria:**
*Contemporary Syrian Composers*

*Ashraf Kateb and Hamsa Al-Wadi Juris*

On October 18, Middle East Studies hosted a concert by Syrian-German violinist and composer, Ashraf Kateb, and Syrian-Finnish pianist, Hamsa Al-Wadi Juris, at the Maddock Alumni Center. This concert – part of a five-campus collaboration with Boston University, Brown University, Tufts University, Yale University, and Connecticut College – focused on illuminating Syria’s rich prewar classical music scene. The concert was supported by the Brown Arts Initiative.
The workshop titled “Warzones as Displacement in the Middle East: the Kurdish Case,” which took place on November 9, 2018, studied the particularities of Kurdish warzones and its ripples throughout the Middle East and beyond. The event considered the warzone along Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran as “borders” and zones of Kurdistan. It examined the causes and consequences of Kurdish displacement, and the ways displacement transforms the socioeconomic and political landscapes of migration destinations. It culminated with a roundtable discussion on scholarly engagement with the issue of displacement in such warzones, and the risks to scholars who do such research.

Middle East Studies collaborated with Art at Watson on The Displaced Language of Mesopotamia exhibit, which was organized to coincide with MES’s workshop “Warzones as Displacement in the Middle East: the Kurdish Case.”

The works by Selahattin Şep, a Kurdish visual artist from the Kurdish city of Diyarbakır, in Turkey, depict the mysterious stories of Mesopotamian women. This secret and symbolic language traces back to Eastern mythology’s influence on the ways women relate through their diaries with symbols found in nature. This aesthetic symbolism is manifested on carpets, with body tattoos, and carved on stone to chronicle these women’s place in society, their personal stories and deepest emotions.
**PROGRAMMING**

**CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS**

*Critical Conversations* is MES’s public discussion on issues of particular political urgency and historical significance. These events bring together academics, practitioners, and audience members for informal, invigorated discussions.

**EXPERIENCES OF INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND SYRIA**

A collaboration between Brown Students Organize for Syria and Middle East Studies, this January 19 event was centered on personal experiences of incarceration in the United States and Syria, exploring the impact of imprisonment on individuals, families, and communities. Omar Alshogre, a Syrian citizen now living in Sweden, who was held prisoner by the Syrian Intelligence Agency for three years, and José Díaz, a US citizen incarcerated for 11 years in upstate New York, reflected on their respective experiences of imprisonment, opening up conversations on the personal and communal impact of mass incarceration; the physical, mental, and emotional effects of incarceration; visibility and invisibility; and personal and social transformation. They also reflected on life after imprisonment and the residual impact of incarceration.
LECTURES

Lectures on contemporary Iranian society and culture are intended to address the general lack of knowledge and sensational coverage circulated in US media.

IRAN TODAY

Part of a year-long series of sophisticated discussions on contemporary Iranian society and culture.
PROGRAMMING

LUNCHEON SEMINARS

Nadje Al-Ali
Robert family professor of middle east studies
“Feminist Dilemmas: How to Talk about Gender-Based Violence in the Middle East?”
12:00-1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, January 30
Mckinney conference room, Watson Institute

Rawan Arar
Postdoctoral fellow in international and public affairs
"Leveraging Sovereignty: Syrian Refugees and the Jordanian State"
12:00-1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 24

Asli Zengin
Louise Lamphere visiting assistant professor of anthropology and gender studies
"Caring for the Dead: Intimacy, Abandonment and Transgender Funerals in Turkey"
12:00-1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, March 13

FILM SCREENINGS

(left): Comedy Film Series

(right): Kurdish Studies Initiative
Signs of Satan in Iran: Hollywood, Cosmopolitanism, Paranoia

Alireza Doostdar
PROGRAMMING

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT EVENTS

Continuing the traditions set by past Departmental Undergraduate Group (DUG) leaders, this year’s cohort organized the Undergraduate Paper Series, an opportunity for students to share their independent research work and explore the Middle East with feedback from faculty and peers. DUG leaders focused on fostering community and fellowship through bi-annual socials, while also challenging their peers to think critically about the unique challenges and benefits of studying abroad in the Middle East and North Africa via their panel event “Studying Abroad in the Middle East: What to Expect?” These efforts were complemented by the Middle East Studies Undergraduate Fellows’ outreach efforts to welcome potential concentrators into the MES community while providing perspective and guidance on navigating their time at Brown.
SAMPLING OF SPONSORED PARTNER EVENTS

AFTERLIFE OF GENDER: SOVEREIGNTY, INTIMACY, AND TRANSGENDER FUNERALS IN TURKEY
Asli Zengin | Department of Anthropology

THE ALLURE OF THE ANCIENT: EARLY MODERN RECEPTIONS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
Department of Egyptology and Assyriology

A BOAT TO LESBOS-- A POETRY READING BY THE SYRIAN POET NOURI AL-JARRAH
Center for Language Studies

CAN MUSLIMS BE LIBERAL? INSIGHTS FROM COLONIAL INDIA
Ayesha Jalal | Center for Contemporary South Asia

EXPANDING THE FIELD, DISRUPTING CANONS: IRANIAN CERAMICS, TRADE, AND COLLECTING PRACTICES
Martina Rugiadi | Minassian Collection of Ceramics at John Hay Library

JIHAD MADE IN GERMANY
Reinhard Bernbeck | Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology

VOICES FROM SYRIA: MUSICWORKS COLLECTIVE WITH KINAN AZMEH
Brown Arts Initiative; Community Music Works

NOROOZ (PERSIAN NEW YEAR)-- PARTY LIKE IT’S 1398!
Brown Iranian Students Association

THE NUNS, PRIESTS AND THE BOMBS
Brown War Watch

ORDER IN TURMOIL: MAKING SENSE OF KALEIDOSCOPIC CHANGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST
Chas Freeman | Watson Institute

PERSIAN MUSIC NIGHT: LECTURE AND PERFORMANCE OF CLASSICAL PERSIAN MUSIC BY AFSHIN GOODARZI
Center for Language Studies

SENSESCAPES OF THE TOPKAPI PALACE IN OTTOMAN ISTANBUL
Department of the History of Art and Architecture

SYRIAN EYES OF THE WORLD | EXHIBITION
Sherena Razek, Graduate Student at the Department of Modern Culture and Media; Art at Watson

TURKISH STUDIES READING GROUP
Series Organized by Graduate Students

WINE AND PRAYER - AN EVENING WITH HAFEZ OF SHIRAZ
Center for Language Studies

WOMEN’S HISTORY SERIES 2019: CULTIVATING RADICAL COALITION
Sarah Doyle Center for Women and Gender

WORKING ACROSS BOUNDARIES: APPROACHES TO STUDYING THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD THROUGH SPACE AND TIME
Undergraduate study communities of Middle East Studies, South Asian Studies, and Southeast Asian Studies
FACULTY

FACULTY IN 2018-19

RUTH ADLER BEN YEHUDA, Judaic Studies
FAIZ AHMED, History
NADJE AL-ALI, Anthropology, Watson Institute for Int’l and Public Affairs
IRAJ ANVAR, Center for Language Studies
RAWAN ARAR, Watson Institute, Postdoctoral Research Associate
ARIELLA AZOULAY, Modern Culture and Media, Comparative Literature
ERCAN BALCI, Center for Language Studies
OMER BARTOV, History, German Studies
SHAHZAD BASHIR, Middle East Studies, Religious Studies
LAUREL BESTOCK, Archaeology, Egyptology and Assyriology, HIAA
SHEILA BONDE, History of Art and Architecture (HIAA), Archaeology
VANGELIS CALOTYCHOS, Comparative Literature
MIRENA CHRISTOFF, Center for Language Studies
JONATHAN CONANT, History, Classics
JOAN COPJEC, Modern Culture and Media
LEO DEPUYDT, Egyptology and Assyriology
LISA DICARLO, Sociology
BESHARA DOUMANI, History
EMILY DRUMSTA, Comparative Literature
MILED FAIZA, Center for Language Studies
LINA FRUZZETTI, Anthropology
GREGORY HALABY, Comparative Literature
Yannis Hamilakis, Archaeology, Classics
JAE HEE HAN, Religious Studies
JO-ANNE HART, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
SUSAN HARVEY, Religious Studies, Medieval Studies
ALLA HASSAN, Center for Language Studies
DENNIS HOGAN, Sociology

DAVID JACOBSON, Judaic Studies
JENNIFER JOHNSON, History
MARIA JOUKOWSKY, Archaeology
NANCY KHALEK, Religious Studies
STEPHEN KINZER, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
VIRGINIA KRAUSE, French Studies
SREEMATI MITTER, History, International and Public Affairs
OURIDA MOSTEFAI, Comparative Literature, French Studies
ELIAS MUHANNA, Comparative Literature
PAUL NAHME, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies
SAUL OLYAN, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies
ADI OPHIR, Cogut Center for the Humanities, Middle East Studies
EFSTRATIOS PAPAIOANNOU, Classics, Medieval Studies
AMY REMENSNYDER, History
RACHEL ROJANSKI, Judaic Studies
FELIPE ROJAS SILVA, Archaeology, Egyptology and Assyriology
MATTHEW RUTZ, Egyptology and Assyriology
KENNETH SACKS, History
MICHAEL SATLOW, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies
HOLLY SHAFFER, History of Art and Architecture
JOHN STEELE, Egyptology and Assyriology
NINA TANNENWALD, International Relations, Political Science
ADAM TELLER, History, Judaic Studies
MELTEM TOKSOZ, History and Middle East Studies
ALEX WINDER, Middle East Studies
VAZIRA F-Y ZAMINDAR, History
ASLI ZENGIN, Anthropology
ALEX WINDER, visiting assistant professor in Middle East Studies and director of undergraduate studies
ADI OPHIR, visiting professor affiliated with the Cogut Center for the Humanities and Middle East Studies
MELTEM TOKSOZ, visiting associate professor in Middle East Studies and the Department of History

SAMINE TABATABAEI
VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN IRANIAN STUDIES
is an art historian who studies modernisms and contemporary art of the Middle East and its diasporas at the intersection of media theory, the social life of art and contemporary technologies. At Brown, she will be teaching thematic courses on the history of media, contemporary technologies and creative life in Tehran.

PAUL KOHLEBRY
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES
is an anthropologist who works at the intersection of law, economy, and settler colonial studies. More broadly, his writing brings Palestine into conversation with a wider range of indigenous experiences through the lens of political economy. At Brown, he will be teaching about land and environmental politics.
Brown University’s Middle East Studies program has earned a reputation for being an international interdisciplinary gateway to the study of the Middle East, broadly defined. Affiliated faculty reflect the growing diversity of Middle East Studies, pushing the geographic and temporal boundaries of the field, while engaging in key themes such as gender and sexuality, displacement and refugees, policing and imprisonment, and the politics of heritage.

The program’s reputation is reflected in the growing number of college applicants and transfer students who seek entrance to Brown with the express intention of pursuing Middle East studies. Many are drawn by the opportunities and support for Middle Eastern language learning and research: students often study more than one Middle Eastern language at Brown, and research and travel funding through the program allows students to conduct primary research in the region.

Whether inside the classroom, via academic lectures and panel discussions, or through artistic and cultural events, Middle East Studies forges a tight-knit community of scholars—students and faculty—who bring wide-ranging interests and perspectives in the service of greater understanding.
FREN 1410R Images d’une guerre sans nom: The Algerian War in Literature and Film
OURIDA MOSTEFAI
Not officially acknowledged as a war by France until recently, the Algerian War of Independence remains, more than a half-century later, a contested battleground in the French national consciousness. Focusing on depictions of the Algerian War in literature and film, the course investigates the many taboos that still endure, most notably around the question of violence and torture, and attempts to reassess the relative “invisibility” of this conflict. Readings include films by Gillo Pontecorvo, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda, and works by Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Benjamin Stora, Claire Etcherelli, Assia Djebar, and Leïla Sebbar.

HUMAN 1973N Islam in America: A Global History
FAIZ AHMED
This course explores the history of Muslims in the United States—and American discourses about Islam—from colonial times to the present. Organized chronologically and thematically, the class follows major questions and debates in American relations with the so-called “Muslim world”—from Columbus’s fateful 1492 voyage to Morocco’s recognition of the United States in 1777; and from Muslim slaves and migrants in the Antebellum South to President Obama’s historic Cairo speech. As a broadly conceived transregional history, the seminar explores the diverse social, political, and economic processes connecting Africa, the Mideast, South Asia, and North America from the fifteenth to twenty-first centuries.

INTL 1803T Refugees, States, and the International System of Refugee Management
RAWAN ARAR
This course explores the historical, legal, and political constructions of refugees, the ways that refugees define themselves and experience displacement, and the institutions, states, and international organizations that shape refugees’ lives. It is organized by the movement trajectory of a “composite” refugee. This class looks at flight from the conflict country, refugee hosting in the Global South, refugee resettlement in the Global North, asylum-seeking, and repatriation or local integration. Students learn how refugees are embedded in a world system of control and humanitarian protection in which policymaking in one context is strongly shaped by actors elsewhere.

MCM 1505Z Kiarostami: Questions of Cinema + Reality
JOAN COPJEC
In the history of cinema, a small number of directors have been treated as if their work stood for cinema itself. Abbas Kiarostami is one of these. Yet while his films foreground the act of cinema, they also address questions of reality to which the “neorealist” label cannot respond. To existing attempts to analyze his films in this light, this course adds a principia domestica. The question is this: how is it that the mystical, Islamic background from which Kiarostami invents is able to respond to current debates about reality in compelling, modern terms?
STUDENTS

THE DUG

The Departmental Undergraduate Group, or DUG, is run by students in the Middle East Studies program who wish to build community both inside and outside of the concentration. The DUG aims to highlight the undergraduate-oriented nature of the program. This year’s DUG leaders were Zahra Asghar ’20, Anchita Dasgupta ’21, Kelley Tackett ’20, and Ryan Saadeh ’20. They organized a number of events, including the Undergraduate Paper Series and film screenings, in addition to spearheading outreach efforts through office hour information sessions on the concentration.

THE MUF

Eligible to rising seniors writing an honors thesis and concentrating in Middle East Studies, the Middle East Studies Undergraduate Fellows play an active role in MES life and assist with outreach efforts to underclassmen interested in becoming concentrators. This year’s fellows were Margaret Follett ’19 and Anna Murphy ’19.

MESGSA

Led by Robert Kashow and supported by Middle East Studies, the Middle East Studies Graduate Student Association is an interdisciplinary group united by a shared scholarly interest in the Middle East and North Africa. Combining diverse humanities and social sciences backgrounds with regional expertise, the association aims to foster conversations that are theoretically diverse and regionally focused.

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Bulbul is a new publication of art and literature produced by graduate students affiliated with MES who are interested in art that critically reflects upon the societies, culture, histories, and stories relevant to the expanded Middle East.

Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies, recently started by undergraduates, is a journal featuring work from Brown- and RISD-affiliated individuals and covering a wide array of disciplines, from arts and literature to politics and culture. The journal aims to expand understanding of the Middle East and raise awareness of contemporary topics and discourse in and about the region.
GRADUATING SENIORS: HONORS THERSES

MARGARET FOLLETT ’19

is a triple concentrator in Middle East studies, history, and computer science from Massachusetts. Her honors thesis in MES focuses on the Indian Ocean during the late 1870s, looking at interactions between local Hajj networks, shipping companies, and colonial interests in Jeddah. As a 2018-19 MES Undergraduate Fellow, Margaret has acted as a liaison to pre-concentrators in the freshman and sophomore classes. After graduation, she will move to Maryland to work for the government.

Senior Project: “Such a Method of Doing Business”: Local Shipping Agents, the Hajj, and the Divide between Corporate and Colonial Priorities in late 1870s Jeddah

ANNA MURPHY ’19

is a concentrator in Middle East studies. She is originally from the United Kingdom, but now lives in Charlottesville, Virginia. Her senior honors thesis focuses on identifying patterns of Islamophobia in the British tabloid press, specifically analyzing press coverage of British Muslim celebrities. Her interests include media and identity politics in the Middle East, a subject she plans to pursue as a career. This year, she served as one of two MES Undergraduate Fellows.

Senior Project: The Tyranny of the Tabloids: Identifying Methods of Exclusion in Press Coverage of British Muslims

GRADUATING SENIORS: CAPSTONE

RAKAN ABONEEAJ ’19

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and economics from Gwinnett County, GA. In March of 2020, with a Fulbright scholarship, he will travel to São Paulo, Brazil, to study the identities of Arabs in Brazil, looking specifically at Syrian refugees and their relationship to the older Arab-Brazilian immigrant community. This project will afford him the opportunity to combine his work in Middle East studies with his prior experience studying at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro as part of Brown-in-Brazil. Through his research, he hopes to contribute to the field of knowledge production specifically regarding identity production during displacement and diaspora, a topic important to his own identity as a second-generation Palestinian.

Senior Project: Social Statelessness in the Palestinian Diaspora: Application and Implications of a New Conceptualization of Statelessness

JESSICA BRAM MURPHY ’19

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and development studies from New York City. Her MES capstone project explores solidarity in response to the “travel ban” [Executive Order 13769], while her honors thesis in development studies discusses the experiences of African asylum seekers in Israel and implications for global refugee protection. Her interests include forced migration, international politics, grassroots advocacy, and journalism.

Senior Project: Displacement and Emplacement: Demonstrations of Solidarity in Response to the “Travel Ban”

ALEXANDER SAMAHA ’19

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and history, who graduated magna cum laude. His academic work has focused on sectarianism, the rights of marginalized communities in the Middle East, contemporary Levantine politics, and issues surrounding refugees and forced migration. He has served as MES DUG leader, research assistant, class president, editor-in-chief of the Brown Political Review, and coordinator for BRYTE, a tutoring and mentorship program for resettled refugee youth in Providence. He worked at the Vasilika refugee camp in Greece and at the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in Beirut.

Senior Project: Sex, Power, and the State: Assessing the Policing of Queerness in the Contemporary Middle East

RHEA STARK ’18.5

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and archaeology and the ancient world. Her research aims to put Islamic art in conversation with colonial histories, contemporary events, and popular perceptions of the Middle East in order to foster a more complex understanding of the Islamic world. As part of her senior thesis, Rhea curated Transcultural by Design: Iranian Ceramics from the Minassian Collection, an exhibition at the John Hay Library exploring the intercultural origins of Persianate ceramics. She was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to undertake an MPhil in Islamic art and archaeology at the University of Oxford in fall 2019.

Since graduating, Asya Igmen ’17 has worked at the intersection of the private and public sectors, primarily focusing on health and gender issues. She has worked in both the Washington, DC, and London offices of the Advisory Board Company, a best-practices health care organization. As a senior international research analyst, she helps hospitals in the UK and EMEA improve their care management based on rigorous comparative research. Asya recently attended, along with other thought leaders, the World Economic Forum 2019 Annual Meeting in Davos as an analyst at Kite Insights, a social-impact consulting firm that works with the New York Times.

Katherine Long ’15.5 recently graduated from Columbia School of Journalism with an M.S. in investigative reporting. While at Columbia, she worked on projects related to terrorism in Tajikistan, the kleptocracy underpinning the construction of the tallest dam in the world, and the U.S. military’s anti-sex trafficking policies. She is now at the Seattle Times on an investigative reporting fellowship.

Simon de Jesus Rodriguez ’15 left his consulting role with Bain & Company in Boston last June and relocated to London with his fiancée (and fellow Brown alumna). After a brief stay in the UK, he trekked 1,100 km along St. James’ Way (the Camino de Santiago), beginning in Lisbon and finishing at the famed cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. He has since been employed at Nested, a Series C property technology startup in London, where he works on the business operations team to help solve pressing strategic challenges and scale the team.

Kathryn Thornton ’14 spent the last two years living in Turkey and is now back in New York using her MENA knowledge to help develop marketing and communications for NaTakallam, a startup hiring refugees as language tutors.

Reva Dhingra ’14 is a PhD student in government at Harvard University, where she researches forced migration and the political economy of humanitarian aid in the Middle East. She previously worked at the International Rescue Committee on the humanitarian response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. She was a 2014-2015 Fulbright Fellow in Jordan. During Commencement 2019, she was alumni representative for the MES diploma awarding ceremony.

For the past four years, Micah Greenberg ’14 has been working for an international development firm, Chemonics International, on public service delivery and education in non-regime-held areas of Syria. Currently, she is working in Berlin as the operations and program manager for an education quality and access program working in formerly ISIL-held areas in northeastern Syria. This fall, she will leave Chemonics to pursue a master of business administration at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. She plans to use her degree to transition from international to local development, focusing on equitable and fair economy building at the municipal level.

Christina Kata ’14 works at Regional Plan Association, a nonprofit planning organization that seeks to improve the quality of life of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan region. Through economic and demographic research, RPA develops regional strategies and community development projects that improve the region’s long-term prosperity and social equity. As executive assistant and development coordinator, Christina works closely with RPA’s executive team to expand the organization’s network of supporters and partners.
AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

FACULTY FELLOW 2018-20
ELIAS MUHANNA, Manning Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS 2018-19
MARGARET FOLLETT ’19
ANNA MURPHY ’19

INCOMING MIDDLE EAST STUDIES UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS 2019-20
ZAHRA ASGHAR ’20
RYAN SAADEH ’20

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARDS
HUMA RAMAZAN ALI (Middle East Studies; South Asian Studies)
WILLIAM (LIAM) WALK (Middle East Studies)

GRADUATE RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARDS
KAREEM ESTEFAN (Modern Culture and Media)
LAUREL DARCY HACKLEY (Archaeology and the Ancient World)
MAARIYAH LATEEF (History)
DANIEL PLEKHOV (Archaeology and the Ancient World)
SHERENA RAZEK (Modern Culture and Media)
AYŞE ŞANLI (Anthropology)
CYRIL J. UY (Religious Studies)
KEENAN WILDER (Sociology)
MEMBERS

ALIA AL-SENUSSI ’03 AM’04
SALEH AL-TURKI P’03, P’05 AND FAWZIA ALGOSAIBI P’03, P’05
HASSAN ALAGHBAND P’15
AMMAR A. ALKHUDAIRY P’17 AND RAGHAD F. ALKHUDAIRY P’17
HISHAM M. ATTAR ’04
FOUAD DAJANI ’95
RIYAD K. DAUD ’89
FARUK R. ECZACIBASI P’14 MFA’17 AND FÜSUN ECZACIBASI P’14 MFA’17
MICHAEL I. FARES P’21
NATHALIE F. FARMAN-FARMA ’90
DANA FAROUKI ’03
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KAMAL G. JABRE ’90, P’20, P’22
LAYA KHADJAVI ’84, P’23
SAMER M. KHALIDI ’90
TAREK M. KHANACHET ’03
D. PATRICK MALEY ’67 AND NANCY B. TURCK ’68 AM’68
BASEM I. SALFITI ’93
E. PAUL SORENSEN ’71 SCM’75 PHD’77, P’06, P’06
MUSTAFA N. ZAIDI ’90

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ARTEMIS A. W. JOUKOWSKY ’55 LLD’85 HON., P’87, GP’13, GP’14, GP’16, GP’17
STEPHEN ROBERT ’62 LHD’04 HON., P’91 AND PILAR C. ROBERT P’91

YOUNG ALUMNI MEMBER

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