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Dear Friends,

This past year—for all of us—was clearly a year like no other before, yet the responses to the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic proved heartening. I have taken up my new role as director of CMES in a context in which we were forced to improvise, rethink, and reimagine our community. MES faculty and concentrators alike adapted to remote- or hybrid-learning formats, as well as Brown’s three-semester schedule. Faculty reconfigured existing courses and made a number of new course offerings available. MES concentrators, meanwhile, worked with faculty to overcome frustrated plans to study language or conduct research abroad, making the most of online tools and resources to produce revised or new research projects.

I see my role as building on the excellent work and achievements of my two predecessors, Beshara Doumani and Shahzad Bashir. In addition to enabling colleagues and students to pursue their intellectual passions, I am also intending to point the Center in new directions and expand our horizons.

One of the main initiatives that I started this year revolves around women and gender as a wider lens to understanding the Middle East and its diasporas. I aim to make CMES a focal point for exploring and discussing the politics of gender not only within the Middle East and its diasporas, but also comparatively with colleagues working in and on Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, as well as South Asia, within our institutional home, the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown, and beyond.

In another new strand, I started to develop links to examine intersectional struggles around racism in the Middle East. We hosted a couple of interesting and well-attended events in which we explored both historical constructions of blackness and race as well as more contemporary forms of anti-Black racism in the Middle East.

Amongst the 36 events we have hosted, we had one on labor and employment in the context of COVID-19, as well as another on climate change in the Middle East in conjunction with the Climate Solutions Lab. The silver lining of our mainly online existence has been our ability to easily gather speakers from around the world. Our audience members, ranging from several hundred to 26,000 during one event in which we teamed up with the online platform Jadaliyya, are based not only throughout the US, but also in the Middle East and Europe. We provided simultaneous translation into Arabic (and are planning Turkish and Persian in the future) to make our events more widely accessible.

This year, we had two major items of news linked to our New Directions in Palestinian Studies initiative. In August, Beshara Doumani was appointed the Mahmoud Darwish Professor in Palestinian Studies, the first endowed professorship in Palestinian studies at any American research university. More recently, it was announced that Professor Doumani will become the new president of Birzeit University in Ramallah, Palestine, with his return to Brown in the fall of 2023. He will be continuing his outstanding work and contributions as the Mahmoud Darwish Chair in Palestinian Studies.

I extend my best wishes for a safe and healthy future, and that we will be able to reconnect in person with our students, colleagues, and members of our CMES community soon.

Nadje Al-Ali
Director, Center for Middle East Studies
Robert Family Professor of International Studies
Professor of Anthropology and Middle East Studies

The Center for Middle East Studies is part of the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown. It promotes research, teaching, and public engagement on key issues of the Middle East in a historically and culturally grounded manner. Its coverage includes all time periods—from antiquity to contemporary geopolitics—and an expansive geographical imagination in which the Middle East is both a region with changing boundaries and a conceptual entity part of global discourses. As the hub for Middle East studies at Brown, the Center supports research and programming generated by a world-renowned faculty. It houses a thriving undergraduate concentration connected to an extensive interdisciplinary curriculum. The Center also acts as a second intellectual and social home for a large group of graduate students spread across Brown’s departments that grant advanced degrees. Through collaboration with other units on campus, the Center furthers Brown’s work as a global university especially dedicated to seeking a just and prosperous future for all.

With an extensive footprint in research, teaching, and advocacy, the Center is a major academic node in the international network of institutions dedicated to discussing a region crucial to global affairs.

Nadje Al-Ali
Director, Center for Middle East Studies
Robert Family Professor of International Studies
Professor of Anthropology and Middle East Studies
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 both a hub for those interested in the subject at Brown, as well as a signal for the outside world of the University's commitment to the field. During 2020-21, the initiative's programming activities were on hold because of pandemic restrictions and the fact that Professor Bashir was on sabbatical. Aided by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, the initiative’s open-access book series, Islamic Humanities (University of California Press), published its third title, God’s Property: Islam, Charity, and the Modern State by Nada Mountaz (April 2021). Additionally, Tony Stewart’s Witness to Marvels: Sufism and Literary Imagination, which was published in the series in 2019, was awarded the Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy Book Prize in South Asian Studies by the Association for Asian Studies.
The new research project is led by CMES Director Nadje Al-Ali, Robert Family Professor of International Studies and professor of anthropology and Middle East studies. The project is based on the recognition that a gendered intersectional lens is central, not marginal, to a deeper analysis and understanding of political mobilizations, social developments, and cultural expressions in the Middle East. A gendered lens also allows for a comparative perspective and collaboration with other regional centers and initiatives at Brown University. The project involves panel discussions, lectures, and book talks, as well as relevant research.

GENDER STUDIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

This research project is co-organized and led by Professors Nadje Al-Ali and Beshara Doumani, and is supported by Africana Studies. Within Middle East Studies, we are intimately familiar with grinding generational struggles for dignity and freedom of colonized, occupied, disenfranchised, and oppressed people in the Middle East. Yet the history of slavery and racism within the region has remained under-studied and insufficiently engaged with. The principals are committed to initiating internal conversations and dialogue within Brown and Middle East Studies more broadly and to organizing activities that engage with the global issues of structural racism and exploitation.

KURDISH STUDIES

Kurdish studies have historically been sidelined within Middle East studies or reduced to the study of Kurdish nationalism. While there has been a proliferation of Kurdish studies across the US and Europe in recent years, there has been only limited engagement with Kurdish society in its complexity. The aim of this project led by Professor Nadje Al-Ali is to support and contribute to critical and original Kurdish studies that combine theoretically cutting-edge and empirically grounded work while highlighting creative approaches (films, art, literature) to the study of Kurds and Kurdish societies.
Brown University’s Center for Middle East Studies has earned a reputation as an international interdisciplinary gate - way 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 with key themes such as gender and sexuality, displacement and refugees, law and society, and the politics of heritage. A growing number of college applicants and transfer students seek entrance to Brown with the express intention of pursuing Middle East studies, drawn by the opportunities and support for Middle Eastern language learning and research. Students at Brown often study more than one Middle Eastern language and conduct primary research (including, when permitted, in the region itself) with the support of Brown faculty and librarians and research and travel funding from CMES. Inside the classroom and beyond, it is through a diversity of academic, cultural, and artistic events, Middle East Studies forges a tight-knit community of scholars—students and faculty—who bring their wide-ranging interests and perspectives together in the service of greater understanding.

<table>
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<th>COURSES</th>
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<th>SAMPLE OF COURSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>MIST 1456 Bankrupt: An Economic and Financial History of the Middle East in the 19th and 20th Centuries</td>
<td>SREEMATI MITTER</td>
<td>This course critically examines the economic—and particularly the financial—history of the modern Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is structured chronologically and thematically. It starts in the mid-19th century by examining the role of European states, as well as private European investment firms and oil companies, in facilitating the colonization of the region via loans, capitalizations, and extractive concession agreements. It then shifts to the postcolonial period, studying how Western oil companies, banks, investment firms, and multinational organizations shaped the tropes of the newly independent states in the Middle East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 1198V America and the Middle East: Histories of Connection and Exchange</td>
<td>FAIZ AHMED</td>
<td>This seminar explores connections and exchanges between the diverse peoples of two constructed regions: the Middle East and North America. The course proceeds chronologically from the global context surrounding Columbus’s 1492 voyage, eventually focusing on U.S. relations with the “Middle East.” Students read closely for underlying socioeconomics, diplomatic, and cultural processes, including trade; migration; education; and evolving conceptions of race, religion, and citizenship—themes often ignored by conventional histories that dwelled on watershed events, personalities, or conflicts. The course’s goal is to recognize how and why interactions between the Middle East and North America are far more complex, rich, and deep-rooted than is generally assumed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HENG 1209 Rural Palestine: Natives, Peasants, and Revolutionaries</td>
<td>PAUL KOHLBRY</td>
<td>This course looks at how the inhabitants of rural Palestine were seen (and saw themselves) as natives, peasants, and revolutionaries. Over the 19th and 20th centuries, rural Palestine was understood as both isolated and globalized; timeless and transforming; unchangeable and critically vulnerable to forces of modernity. The native, the peasant, and the revolutionary emerged as different actors—European missionaries and Palestinian activists, international NGOs and local cooperatives, village cultivators and urban CEOs, seed banks and financial banks—broadening the legacies, histories, and futures. How, then, does the rural past become the basis for claims on, and struggles for, Palestine’s future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS 9038 Islamic Modernities: Religion, Culture, and Power</td>
<td>NANCY KAHALE</td>
<td>This course explores the culture and practice of contemporary Islam in a variety of geographical contexts. From the United States to South Asia to Europe to the Middle East, the class looks at how Islam is practiced, discursively shaped, and represented across a variety of media. The course also introduces students to major phenomena, including Orientalism, colonialism, modernity, and the postmodern: What do these terms mean and why are they relevant to understanding the Islamic world?</td>
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**ANTH 2353**

**Transnational Feminist Politics and Knowledge Production**

**NADJE AL-ALI**

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar aims to decenter and decolonize discussions about feminism(s) by focusing on transnational feminist politics and knowledge production. Course readings and discussions engage theoretical and methodological tools associated with transnational feminist politics and decolonizing knowledge. At the same time, the course provides concrete empirical examples of struggles, strategies and forms of feminist resistances emanating from the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and South Asia. The course encourages students to ask questions about transnational feminist solidarities and knowledge productions, as well as power imbalances, tensions, and conflicts within between feminist groups and initiatives.

**EGYPT 1030**

**Collapse! Ancient Egypt after the Pyramid Age**

**CHRISTELLE ALVAREZ**

How does a civilization or kingdom collapse after building some of the most enduring monuments from the ancient world? What happens in Egypt after the Pyramid Age? This course uses texts, objects, and monuments to delve into the history and archaeology of the Late Old Kingdom (up to the beginning of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt in 2150–2055 BCE), often described as a Dark Age characterized by chaos, decline, and natural disasters. This course discusses how art and architecture were written, with a particular focus on the narrative of collapse in ancient cultures.

**HIGA 0041**

**The Architectures of Islam**

**SHEILA BONDE**

Through selected case study examples, the course examines the varied manifestations of Islamic architecture. The course spans fourteen centuries and three continents and examines religious as well as secular buildings. It traces the sources and “invention” of Islamic architecture in the Umayyad dynasty of the seventh and eighth centuries, and explores its varied manifestations up to the contemporary period. By examining cross-cultural and transregional interactions, students also investigate the relationship between Islam and non-Islamist architectural traditions.

**MES 1209**

**Modern Arabic Poetry**

**IBRAHIM BONTE**

12th-20th century Modern Arabic Poetry (turath). The course encourages students to work with the express intention of pursuing Middle East studies, drawing on the opportunities and support for Middle Eastern language learning and research. Students at Brown often study more than one Middle Eastern language and conduct primary research (including, when permitted, in the region itself) with the support of Brown faculty and librarians and research and travel funding from CMES. Inside the classroom and beyond, it is through a diversity of academic, cultural, and artistic events, Middle East Studies forges a tight-knit community of scholars—students and faculty—who bring their wide-ranging interests and perspectives together in the service of greater understanding.

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ACADEMICS

STUDENTS

DEPARTMENTAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GROUP (DUG)
The DUG is run by students concentrating in Middle East studies who wish to build community both inside and outside of the concentration. The DUG aims to highlight those aspects of the Center that are related to undergraduate activities. This year’s DUG leader was Anchita Dasgupta ’21. She organized an Undergraduate Paper Series and other outreach events.

MES UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS (MUF)
Eligible to rising seniors writing an honors thesis and concentrating in Middle East studies, Middle East Studies Undergraduate Fellows play an active role in CMES life and assist with outreach efforts to underclassmen interested in becoming concentrators. This year’s fellow was Anchita Dasgupta.

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (MESGSA)
Supported by the Center for Middle East Studies, MESGSA 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. This year, MESGSA organized two graduate student research presentations. Led by Robert Kashow, PhD student, Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean, in 2020, and Ayşe Şanlı, PhD student, Anthropology, in 2021.

"Criticality in thought and a justice-oriented consciousness are the two greatest lessons that the Middle East Studies community has bestowed upon me in the last four years. The staff, faculty, alumni, and current and prospective concentrators—all integral constituents of the vibrant community nurtured by the department—have molded who I have become at Brown.

If I had to hand-select my favorite experiences of college life, I would find that each memory is inevitably associated, in one way or another, with a course, idea, or person affiliated with MES.”

- ANCHITA DASGUPTA ’21
ANCHITA DASGUPTA is a Middle East studies and history concentrator from Kolkata, India. In her research in the department, she focused on restorative justice and human rights. Her thesis is a critical examination of the concept of restorative justice and its application in the context of human rights abuses.

MATHILDE BARLAND is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and international relations from France. Throughout her undergraduate studies, she has taken various courses, an international internship in Colombia, and most recently a research internship with CAIR-Chicago. During the Spring 2021 semester, she worked as the International Students Program intern, participated in Professor Patsy Lewis’s project “Addressing Systemic Racism” as a research assistant, and volunteered as an ESL tutor and Spanish intern with CAIR-Chicago. During the Spring 2021 semester, she worked as the International Students Program intern, participated in Professor Patsy Lewis’s project “Addressing Systemic Racism” as a research assistant, and volunteered as an ESL tutor and Spanish intern with CAIR-Chicago.

MATHILDE BARLAND

JACK JOHNSON is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and history from Boise, Idaho. He will return to the research he began in the summer of 2020 concerning early childhood literacy for children with learning disabilities in the MENA region. In conjunction with the Lee Pesky Learning Center and a team of professors at the University of Qatar and the American University of Cairo, Jack helped to develop a better Arabic literacy program for 1st and 2nd graders in both the United States and the MENA region.

CLARIE DAVIDSON MULLER is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and Judaic studies from Washington, DC. Her senior project, “(Re)Constructing My Grandmother: An Exploration of Family and Identity through the Lenses of Zionism, National Identity, Religion, Gender, Class, and Language,” is a student assistant for the Center for Middle East Studies and a teaching assistant for the course Cybersecurity and International Affairs. Academically, she has studied social movements and political violence, broader trends, her research interests inclu...
"My encounter with the Middle East Studies department at Brown over the past four years has been humbling and inspiring. The endless support, encouragement, and advice that I have received from faculty members, staff members, and students have shaped my academic and personal journeys with lessons about patience, integrity, and purposefulness. Without a doubt, the MES community has given me the drive to hold myself accountable as a lifelong learner who wishes to bridge the gap of understanding between different communities, and for that, I am grateful to call MES my second-home."

- Huma Ramazan Ali '21.5
STEERING COMMITTEE

NADJE AL-ALI
ROBERT FAMILY PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
Feminist activism and gendered mobilizations in the Middle East (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and the Kurdish regions), as well as the gendered dimensions of transnational migration and diaspora mobilization (with reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, and the Kurdish political movement).

OMER BARTOV
JOHN P. BIRKELUND DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF EUROPEAN HISTORY
Nazi indoctrination and the crimes of the Wehrmacht; links between total war and genocide; the role of stereotypes in representations of violence; interethnic relations, communal massacres, and the politics of memory in Eastern Europe; coexistence and strife in Israel-Palestine.

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BESHARA DOUMANI
MAHMOUD DARWISH PROFESSOR OF PALESTINIAN STUDIES
Social history of groups, places, and time periods marginalized by mainstream scholarship on the early modern and modern Middle East, as well as displacement, academic freedom, the ethics and politics of knowledge production, and the Palestinian condition.

BANU OZKAZANÇ-PAN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF ENGINEERING
Postcolonial and transnational feminist perspectives on organizations, migration, and entrepreneurship. Secular and Islamic feminist entrepreneurship in the context of neoliberal development agendas and authoritarian regimes in Turkey.

EMILY DRUMSTA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
Modern Arabic literature with a focus on the politics of literary form in both poetry and fiction, from Egypt to the Levant and Iraq, as well as translation studies. Her book, Ways of Seeking: the Arabic Novel and the Poetics of Investigation, is forthcoming with the University of California Press.

NANCY KHALEK
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
Specializes in Late Antiquity and Islam; hagiography, biography, and material culture related to the Companions of Muhammad; medieval material culture; currently researching the history of emotions and medieval (Arabic) Islamic pietistic literature.

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FACULTY IN 2020-21

RUTH ADLER BEN YEHUDA, Judaic Studies
FAIZ AHMED, History
NADJE AL-ALI, Middle East Studies, Anthropology, Watson Institute
ARIELLA AZOULAY, Modern Culture and Media, Comparative Literature
OMER BARTOV, History
SHAHZAD BASHIR, Religious Studies, History
ELSA BELMONT FLORES, Center for Language Studies
LAUREL BESTOCK, Archaeology, Epigraphy 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, Epigraphy and Assyriology
LISA DICARLO, Sociology
BESHARA DOUMANI, History
EMILY DRUMSTA, Comparative Literature
MILED FAIZA, Center for Language Studies
LINA FRUZZETTI, Anthropology
KATHARINA GALOR, Judaic Studies
YANNIS HAMILAKIS, Archaeology, Classics
JAE HAN, Religious Studies, Judaic Studies
JO-ANNE HART, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
ALLA HASSAN, Center for Language Studies
SUSAN ASHBROOK HARVEY, Religious Studies, Early Cultures
STEPHEN KINZER, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs

FACULTY ANNOUNCEMENTS

BESHARA DOUMANI
named Mahmoud Darwish Professor of Palestinian Studies

FAIZ AHMED
named Joukowsky Family Distinguished Associate Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History

ARRIVING IN 2021-22

ASHJAN AJOUR,
Postdoctoral Research Associate in Palestinian Studies

PAUL KOHLBRY, Middle East Studies
VIRGINIA KRAUSE, French Studies
SREEMATI MITTER, History, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
OURIDA MOSTEFAI, Comparative Literature, French Studies
ELIAS MUHANNA, Comparative Literature, History
PAUL NAHME, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies
SAUL OLYAN, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies
ADI OPHIR, Cogut Center for the Humanities, Middle East Studies
ESRA OZDEMIR, Center for Language Studies
AMY REMENSNIKER, History
RACHEL ROJANSKI, Judaic Studies
FELIPE ROJAS SILVA, Archaeology, Epiigraphy and Assyriology
MATTHEW RUTZ, Epigraphy and Assyriology
KENNETH SACKS, History
MICHAEL SATLOW, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies
HOLLY SHAFFER, History of Art and Architecture
JOHN STEELE, Epigraphy and Assyriology
SAMINE TABATABAEI, Middle East Studies
NINA TANNENWALD, International Relations, Political Science
PETER VAN DOMMELEN, Anthropology, Archaeology
ALEX WINDR, Middle East Studies
VAZIRA ZAMINDAR, History
MEMBERS

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MOSA ALOMRAN P’23
SALEH AL-TURKI P’03, P’05 AND FAWZIA ALGOSAIBI P’03, P’05
HASAN ALASHBAND P’15
AMMAR A. ALKHUDAIRY P’17 AND RASHID F. ALKHUDAIRY P’17
NADIM ASHI P’22
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FOUAD DAJANI ’95
RIYAD K. DAUD ’99
FARUK R. ECZACIBAŞI P’14 MFA ’17 AND FÜSUN ECZACIBAŞI P’14 MFA ’17
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OSSAMA M. EL BATRAN ’97
NATHALIE F. FARMA-FARMA ’90
ALI FAROUKI AND RASHA ABU GHAZALEH FAROUKI
DANA FAROUKI ’03
GLORIA I. GALLAGHER ’91, P’24, P’24
KAMAL G. JABRE ’90, P’20, P’22
SAMYA KHAJAVI ’94, P’23
SAMER M. KHALIDI ’90
TAREK M. KHANACHE ’03
KAZIM KÖSEDOĞU ’97
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AYSHA SHOMAN ’04
OMAR E. SHOMAN ’91
E. PAUL SORENSEN ’71 SCM ’75, PHD ’95, LHD ’19, P’06, P’06
MUSTAFA N. ZAIDI ’90
JAMES K. SAMS ’82 AND LISA SAMS

YOUNG ALUMNI MEMBER

KAWTHER ALKHUDAIRY ’17

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO
OUR NUMEROUS PARTNERS AND COSPONSORS