



MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

BROWN UNIVERSITY : WINTER 2014 NEWSLETTER : WWW.MIDDLEEASTBROWN.ORG

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am happy to report that the Middle East Studies Initiative at Brown University had an incredibly successful Fall 2013 semester. Hundreds of participants and thousands more online packed the Syria teach-in, the 20th anniversary of Oslo events with Hanan Ashrawi, the first national symposium on Digital Islamic Humanities, and major conferences on Syria and Iran. We also inaugurated a film series alongside our regular lecture, luncheon, and student paper series. The number of concentrators has doubled, and we added faculty and visiting scholars who are offering new exciting courses. Fall 2013 was the first semester for Assistant Professor Faiz Ahmed, department of History; for postdoctoral fellows Mayssun Succarie and Sa'ed Atshan; and for visiting professor Bashir Abu-Manneh.

The Spring 2014 semester will have just as innovative programming and the addition of new scholars and courses. Highlights include the first international conference on the revered Turkish poet, Nazim Hikmet; the first annual symposium of "New Directions in Palestinian Studies"; the second annual conference on Engaged Scholarship; and the third annual Aga Khan conference, titled "Sharia, Government, and Development." Professor Bogac Ergene, who will join us this semester as the Aga Khan Professor in Islamic Humanities, is organizing the latter conference and will be teaching a course on Islam and human rights. We are also very pleased to announce that Mohsen Namjoo, the renowned Iranian musician, will be joining Brown as a visiting professor in Iranian Studies starting January 2014.

The challenge we face is how to raise the resources needed to keep up with the rapid growth of Middle East Studies at Brown, to meet strong student demand for courses, and to institutionalize the Initiative we launched in the Fall 2012. In this regard, I would like to express my sincere thanks to former Chancellor Stephen Robert who endowed a chair to the Watson Institute with preference for a Middle East Historian. This position is crucial for anchoring the growth and sustainability of Middle East Studies at Brown University and we are very appreciative for his vote of confidence. We also appreciate the support of Provost Mark Schlissel for the Iranian Studies Initiative, which we launched this year.

We have more good news. Internationally distinguished philosopher, Adi Ophir, has been appointed as Visiting Professor of Humanities and Middle East Studies in partnership with the Cogut Center. In addition, the Cogut Center Governing Board awarded the Department of Italian Studies and the Middle East Studies Initiative one of two Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships for 2014-2016. We are also fortunate that the Watson Institute has extended for an additional year the post-doctoral fellowship of Sa'ed Atshan who has, in a very short time, contributed so much to Middle East Studies at Brown.

We are well on our way to integrating Middle East Studies into the intellectual life of the campus and to making Brown an international leader in this field. Thank you very much for your support.

Beshara Doumani
Joukowsky Family Professor of Modern Middle East History
Director, Middle East Studies
Faculty Fellow, Watson Institute

FACULTY UPDATES

Faiz Ahmed, assistant professor of history, presented two papers at conferences this fall: "Preaching the Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Introducing Shah Amanullah's Friday Sermons in Qandahar, Autumn 1925" at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA, and "Breaking Ground in the Early Modern Islamic Juridical Field: The Fatawa-i Alamgiri (1675) between Medieval Roots and Modern Legacies," at the American Society of Legal History Annual Meeting in Miami, FL.

Sa'ed Atshan, postdoctoral fellow at the Watson Institute, presented papers at the following academic conferences: the Peace and Justice Studies Association, Middle East Studies Association, Future of NGO Studies, and the American Anthropological Association. He has also delivered public lectures at Yale University, Swarthmore College, and Rutgers University, and he presented a paper at the Transnational American Studies at the American University of Beirut in January.

Ariella Azoulay, visiting assistant professor of comparative literature and modern culture and media, published an article titled "Palestine as Symptom, Palestine as Hope: Revising Human Rights Discourse," in *Critical Inquiry* (2013). Her exhibition "Potential History, Palestine 47-50" was shown in the museum Le Quartier, Quimper France, together with the film "Civil Alliances, Palestine, 47-48." Her film "The Food Chain" was also screened in the Flaherty NYC film series "Global Revolt: Cinematic Ammunition" in New York on November 12th.

Shiva Balaghi. This was an incredibly productive semester in terms of Visiting Professor of Iranian Studies Shiva Balaghi's scholarship. Her article on the 1953 CIA coup in Iran was published in the journal *Biography*. She had two

art reviews in the magazine *Canvas*, which is published in Dubai. She was especially pleased to have an article appearing in the January issue of *Artforum*. Balaghi gave several public talks this term, including a lecture on "Exhibiting Iranian Art in the US and Western Art in Iran" at the Asia Society and a talk on "Art in Conflict Zones" at Wellesley College's Madeleine Korbel Albright Institute for Global Affairs. Together with Beshara Doumani, she organized a conference in December on the broader global implications of the CIA 1953 Coup in Iran.

Palmira Brummett, visiting professor of history, presented the paper "Encroaching on Christendom: 'Black Infidels' and Islamic Syncretism in the Ottoman Adriatic" for the symposium "Reconsidering the Non-Muslim Other: Internal and External Religious Differentiation," Vanderbilt University, Department of Religious Studies, in September 2013. She also presented a paper entitled "A Typology of Turning," at the "Lure of the Other: Conversion and Reversion in the Early Modern Mediterranean" symposium, St. Mary's University College, London, June 2013.

Melani Cammett. The United States Institute for Peace published a report by Associate Professor of Political Science Melani Cammett on the Syrian conflict's impact on Lebanese politics.

Robyn Creswell, assistant professor of comparative literature, was awarded the Roger Shattuck Prize for Criticism this fall, in large part for his writings on Arabic literature. His most recent article, on the Moroccan poet Abdelatif Laabi, appears in the November issue of *Harper's Magazine*.

Beshara Doumani devoted most of his time to building the Middle East Studies Initiative at Brown University, to teaching, and to adding a new and final chapter to his book manuscript on the social history of family in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Ottoman period.

Katharina Galor, visiting assistant professor of Judaic studies, had a new book, *The Archaeology of Jerusalem: From the Origins to the Ottomans* (Yale University Press), published in 2013. The book covers nearly 4,000 years of history of settlement and building activity in the city of Jerusalem.

Sherine Hamdy, assistant professor of anthropology, was awarded a Greenwall Foundation Faculty Fellowship in Bioethics, which will support her research through 2015. In October, she gave the keynote address for the second annual graduate conference on religion at Harvard Divinity School. Her book *Our Bodies Belong to God* (2012) was awarded the 2013 Clifford Geertz Prize Honorable Mention from the Society for the Anthropology of Religion.

Nancy Khalek, assistant professor of religious studies, has two journal articles forthcoming in 2014, one in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, entitled "Early Islamic History Re-Imagined: The Biography of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz in Ibn 'Asakir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*," and the other in *Der Islam*, entitled "Medieval Biographical Literature and the Companions of Muhammad."

Elias Muhanna assistant professor of Comparative Literature. *Qifa Nabki* is a blog about Lebanese politics, history, and culture was featured as a top source on current developments in Lebanon in the *Economist*.

In addition, Muhanna was featured in a panel discussion on the conflict in Syria on *Al Jazeera*, along with Anna Therese Day and Saleh Mubarak. Muhanna is a frequent commentator on contemporary Middle East political issues and writes for a variety of publications including the *New York Times*, the *Nation*, and *Foreign Policy*.

Muhanna was the driving force behind the highly successful **Digital Humanities + Islamic & Middle East Studies Conference** on October 24th at Brown. The live-streamed event had the most online viewership of any historically recorded at Brown University, save Commencement and the visit of the Dalai Lama.

Anthony Watson, associate director of Middle East Studies and adjunct assistant professor of history, published the chapter "Evagrius and the History of Mar Yaballaha: Preliminary Findings on a Virtue Tradition in the Church of the East" in Li Tang and Dietmar Winkler (eds.) *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity from Central Asia to China* (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2013). Watson also presented the paper "Pedigrees that have grown with the grass: medieval Islamic views of Mongols and Christians," for the symposium "Reconsidering the Non-Muslim Other: Internal and External Religious Differentiation," Vanderbilt University, Department of Religious Studies, in September 2013.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Middle East Studies Initiative at Brown University invites applications for the following:

+ 2014-2015 Aga Khan Visiting Professorship in Islamic Humanities

Search will remain open until the position is closed or filled.

+ Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Italian Studies and Middle East Studies

Closes: Jun 30, 2014

For further information, please visit the Middle East Studies website (<http://www.middleeastbrown.org>), or contact Middle East Studies at CMES@brown.edu

Introducing the 2014 Aga Khan Distinguished Visiting Professor of Islamic Humanities

Bogac Ergene, associate professor of history at the University of Vermont, is the author of *Local Court, Provincial Society and Justice in the Ottoman Empire: Legal Practice and Dispute Resolution in Çankırı and Kastamonu (1652-1744)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003) and editor of *Judicial Practice: Institutions and Agents in the Islamic World* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009). He is the co-editor of the *Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage*, a Brill Publishers book-series on Ottoman and Turkish History. He is working on his monograph, provisionally entitled, *Class, Court and Justice in the Ottoman Empire*.



In the spring 2014 semester, Bogac Ergene will teach a seminar on "Islam and Human Rights." He will also deliver the annual Aga Khan lecture on "Making the Case for a Quantitative Approach to Ottoman Legal History," and organize the Aga Khan workshop titled "Sharia, Government, and Development."

The workshop will explore the relationships between Islamic law, governance, and socioeconomic development in various early-modern and modern settings.

Increased Concentration Numbers

The number of Middle East course offerings has grown substantially as has the number of our concentrators. Two-thirds of our 28 concentrators are MES single concentrators, up by a third from last year.

New MES Courses in 2014

The following is a sampling of courses offered in the spring 2014 semester both through our core faculty and as newly created MES-coded courses.

PALESTINE VERSUS THE PALESTINIANS / HIST 1978D

Beshara Doumani, Joukowsky professor of modern Middle East history

ISLAM AND LIBERALISM / COLT 1440G

Elias Muhanna, assistant professor of comparative literature

ISLAM AND MODERNITY / RELS 0600

Nancy Khalek, assistant professor of religious studies.

THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST. 1750 TO THE PRESENT / HIST 1455

Faiz Ahmed, assistant professor of history

THE ANGLO-ARAB NOVEL / MES 1996A

Bashir Abu-Manneh, visiting professor of Comparative Literature.

THE ARAB SPRING / MES 1998

Sa'ed Atshan, Watson postdoctoral fellow

CULTURES OF NEOLIBERALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST / MES 1999A

Mayssun Succarie, Cogut postdoctoral fellow

ISLAM AND HUMAN RIGHTS / MES 1997A

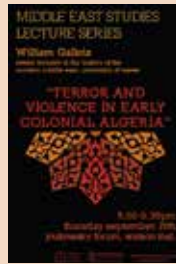
Bogac Ergene, 2014 Aga Khan Distinguished Visiting Professor of Islamic Humanities

TRADITION AND PROTEST: PERSIAN AND IRANIAN MUSIC / MES 1000

Mohsen Namjoo, Visiting Lecturer in Middle East Studies

RETROSPECTIVE OF FALL 2013 EVENTS

Lecture Series



12-Sept., 2013: Kirk Johnson, founder of the *List Project*, and author

"To be a Friend is Fatal: Saving The Iraqis America Left Behind"

19-Sept., 2013: William Gallois, senior lecturer in the history of the modern Middle East, Exeter University, UK

"Terror and Violence in Early Colonial Algeria"

17-Oct., 2013: Lisa Hajjar, professor of sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

"Classified Memories: Trying To Try Terror Suspects Who Were Tortured by The CIA"

31-Oct., 2013: Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister of Italy, Professor-at-Large, Brown University

"European Mediterranean and Middle East Policy"

14-Nov., 2013: Rabab el Mahdi, associate professor of political science, American University Cairo

"Challenges to Democratization in the Arab Uprisings"

LECTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Lisa Hajjar, professor of sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

Classified Memories: Trying To Try Terror Suspects Who Were Tortured by the CIA

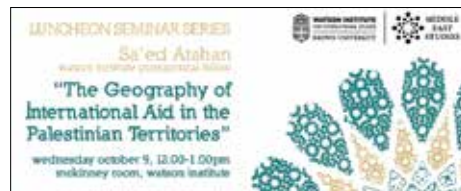
On October 17, Lisa Hajjar talked about two high-profile cases being prosecuted in the military commissions at Guantanamo that raise exceptionally challenging problems for the US government and the civilian and military

lawyers defending the suspects. One of the most confounding issues is whether the government can classify as secret the defendants' own memories of their treatment at the hands of the CIA. Hajjar analyzed the relationship and contradictions among three larger issues—torture, secrecy, and governmental unaccountability—and the larger question of what "justice" can mean under these circumstances.

Rabab el Mahdi, associate professor of political science, American University of Cairo.

"Challenges to Democratization in the Arab Uprisings."

Looking at the tumultuous path of the Arab uprisings since 2011, the talk examined five main challenges that continue to face the Arab people in their aspiration towards freedom and justice. While the talk underscored the differences between various countries undergoing changes in the region, it deduced some common patterns within the recent wave of revolts.



Luncheon Seminars

11-Sept., 2013: Omur Harmansah, assistant professor of archaeology and Egyptology and ancient western Asian Studies, Brown University

"Cities and Desire: The Making of Urban Space between Politics and Cultural Imagination in the Ancient Near East."

9-Oct., 2013: Sa'ed Atshan, Watson Institute post-doctoral fellow, Brown University

"The Geography of International Aid in the Palestinian Territories"

6-Nov., 2013: Kevin DeJesus, adjunct professor in social sciences, Johnson & Wales University

"Signifying Geographies, Mapping Violent Contestations: The Making of Symbolic Landscapes."

4-Dec., 2013: Faiz Ahmed, assistant professor of history, Brown University

"The Sultānis of Kabul: Ottoman Experts in Afghanistan, 1877-1923."

LUNCHEON SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS

Faiz Ahmed, assistant professor of history, Brown University

"The Sultānis of Kabul: Ottoman Experts in Afghanistan, 1877-1923."

Faiz Ahmed argued that the historiographical emphasis on confrontation with the west has overshadowed more subtle internal processes and connections linking modern Muslim populations across geographic and political boundaries. Challenging conventional tropes of warring tribes and barren frontiers, Ahmed located Afghanistan in particular as a crucial but overlooked juncture for transnational conversations and networks centering on law, constitutionalism, and statecraft.



Film Series

27-Sept., 2013 / ABU DHABI, *Sea Shadow*

25-Oct., 2013 / BEIRUT, *Caramel*

15-Nov., 2013 / JERUSALEM, *Eyes Wide Open*

13-Dec., 2013 / TEHRAN, *A Separation*

Middle East Studies has launched a film series this year, the theme of which is "**Love and the City: Urban Lives in the Middle East.**" With eight films being screened from countries spanning the region, students, staff, faculty, and members of the Providence community have been attending the screenings with great enthusiasm.

Middle East Studies Undergraduate Students

The fall of 2013 saw the creation of a Middle East Studies Departmental Undergraduate Group (DUG) under the leadership of Nazim Azizgolshani, Kathryn Thornton, Lauren Rouse, and other Middle East Studies concentrators. With funding from the Middle East Studies Initiative and additional support from the Dean of the College, the DUG is dedicated to building a close-knit community of concentrators, to reaching out to students interested in the Middle East, and to collaborating with Middle East Studies to promote the Initiative's events among undergraduates. Building on the strength of the highly successful paper series showcasing undergraduate research – a first at Brown – that was introduced last year, the DUG has quickly become one of the more active groups of its kind on campus. In addition to the paper series, which regularly draws audiences between 20 and 45 people from across the university, the

DUG kicked off the year with a Middle East Studies "Conversation on campus." This conversation, which brought together the leaders of close to a dozen varied student groups from across the university with interests in the Middle East ranging from advocacy to arts, was the first of its kind and has led to increased undergraduate collaboration in Middle East Studies.

The DUG has also maintained a familiar presence at several of the university-wide concentration and activities fairs. This outreach was capped off by several peer-advising sessions held during the pre-registration period for spring semester. Reaching out in the virtual world, the DUG also developed a Facebook page, which has grown to encompass almost fifty regular undergraduate followers of Middle East events.

Retrospective on Fall 2013 Undergraduate Events

24 Sept., 2013 Middle East Studies Departmental Undergraduate Group: The Middle East Studies Conversation on Campus

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES UNDERGRADUATE PAPER SERIES

October 8, 2013: "Scenes from the Gezi Park Protests." Christina Kata '14 and Farzanah Ausaluth '14.

October 22, 2013: "My Name is (Wo)man:Voices of Istanbul." Amanda Chew '14.

November 5, 2013: "Two Revolutions:Tahrir Square and the American Military Online." Lucy Fernandez '14 and Lauren Rouse '14.

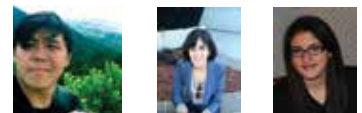
November 19, 2013: "Israel on the Map." Doron Shiffer-Sebba '14 and Kyle Zurcher '14.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AWARDS

Middle East Studies was pleased to announce that two students, Marc Briz '14 and Reva Dhingra '14, received undergraduate awards for winter break research. Reva traveled to Amman, Jordan, to conduct research on refugee integration and urbanization in Amman's social geography for her senior thesis in Middle East Studies. Marc traveled to Fez, Morocco, to conduct gender studies research with Professor Slaoui Souad at the University of Fez.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

For their invaluable contribution and passion to making MES a success –



Graduate Student, Phil Lai; Undergraduate MES assistants, Reva Dhingra and Tiffany Zarabi-Aazam.

DUG members Nasim Azizgolshani, Lauren Rouse, and Kathryn Thornton.



IN MEMORIAM

Michael Dawkins '13.5
1990-2013

On November 15 at 4 p.m. in Manning Chapel, Brown University Chaplain Janet Cooper-Nelson held a Service of Thanksgiving to remember Middle East Studies concentrator and talented musician, Michael Dawkins '13.5, who died tragically earlier this semester while traveling. Dawkins, who was set to complete graduation requirements this December, was a dynamic presence who will be missed by all members of the Middle East Studies community.

LECTURE SERIES

joukowsky forum, watson institute.
5:00-6:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 13

ELIAS KHOURY

global distinguished professor of middle eastern and islamic studies, new york university
"A Letter to Edward Said"

MARCH 13

FRED DONNER

professor of near eastern history, university of chicago

"An Enigmatic Arabic Papyrus from Early Islam"

A discussion of some of the problems scholars face in studying the origins of the Islamic period, and the importance of documentary evidence for understanding early Islamic history

APRIL 3

BOGAC ERGENE

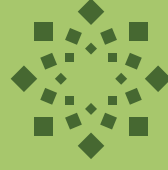
aga khan distinguished visiting professor
"Making the Case for a Quantitative and Economic Approach to Ottoman Legal History"

This lecture will explore the possibility and potential benefits of applying quantitative and economic tools of analysis to the study of Islamic legal practice in the context of Ottoman history.

"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."

— Beshara Doumani, director of MES



brown university

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES lectures & events in spring 2014



WATSON INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
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www.middleeastbrown.org

MAJOR EVENTS

FEBRUARY 11

"NAZIM HIKMET: ONE POET,
ONE NATION, ONE WORLD"

The first North American conference on a giant of modern poetry, whose work on the ultimate triumph of the human spirit over the forces of tyranny is more relevant than ever.
watson institute.

FEBRUARY 27

"AFTER OSLO: CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS
ON PALESTINE/ISRAEL"

A continuation of expert presentations and public discussion of possible futures for Palestinians and Israelis.
panel discussion. joukowsky forum, watson institute.
4:00-5:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1

"NEW DIRECTIONS IN
PALESTINIAN STUDIES"

This international symposium, organized around the theme of political economy, is the first in a series of annual symposia on the state of the art in Palestinian studies. The purpose is to bring together established

LUNCHEON SEMINARS

mckinney conference room, watson institute.
12:00-1:00 p.m.

FEBRUARY 5

MAYSSUN SUCCARIE

coqt postdoctoral fellow in international humanities and modern arab culture and society

"Arab Culture and the Colonial Present"

How notions of Arab Culture(s) are mobilized in the colonial present encounter, and the role of different classes in such an encounter.

MARCH 5

ADI OPHIR

visiting associate professor, coqt center for the humanities

"The One State Condition"

Reflections on the structure of the Israeli regime and its unusual resilience.

APRIL 2

DANYA QATO

graduate student, public health

"Pharmaceutical Policy and Patient Safety in the Middle East, North Africa, and the US."

Against a backdrop of soaring global pharmaceutical use and expenditures, Qato will discuss the principal challenges to promoting patient and drug safety in the Arab world.

APRIL 16

NIKOLAOS PANOU

visiting assistant professor of comparative literature

"Against Tobacco: An Eighteenth-Century Debate"

What was at stake in problematizing tobacco consumption in the Ottoman East at the beginning of the 18th century? Why should we be interested in that obscure debate today?

APRIL 30

ANTHONY WATSON

adjunct professor of history, associate director of MES

"Ideologies of Power and Minority Status in Medieval Persia: the case of the Church of the East"

An examination of the medieval Church of the East as a minority religion in Persia.

FILM SERIES

LOVE AND THE CITY: URBAN LIVES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

joukowsky forum, watson institute.
5:30 p.m. Fridays, once a month.

FEBRUARY 21 CAIRO

"THE YACoubIAN BUILDING"

Based on the best-selling novel, this film features the diverse lives of Egyptians who inhabit the same apartment building in downtown Cairo.

MARCH 14 DIASPORA—LONDON

"MY BROTHER, THE DEVIL"

Two brothers, who belong to an Arab immigrant family in England, come of age in one of London's most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

APRIL 18 NABLUS

"PARADISE NOW"

This film traces the journey of two Palestinian men in the West Bank as they prepare to carry out violence in Israel while considering the relationships that they are leaving behind.

MAY 2 TRANSNATIONAL

"A JIHAD FOR LOVE"

This documentary features the lives of LGBT individuals in countries across the Islamic world as they grapple with the reconciliation of their faith and sexuality.

and emerging scholars in a workshop environment to identify promising new questions and to encourage networking across disciplinary boundaries.
watson institute.

APRIL 4-5 AGA KHAN DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSOR WORKSHOP

"SHARIA, GOVERNMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT"

This conference is supported by the Aga Khan Visiting Professorship in Islamic Humanities. It brings together renowned scholars from multiple fields in order to explore the relationships between Islamic law, governance, and socioeconomic development in various early-modern and modern settings.
joukowsky forum, watson institute.

MAY 1-2 ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP WORKSHOP

"EMBEDDED! ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS IN MODERN LANDSCAPES OF CONFLICT"

In recent years, archaeologists and anthropologists who work in war zones in the Middle East have collaborated with military forces via initiatives such as Human Terrain Systems or by adopting military technologies or funding. This workshop will provide a platform for a critical discussion of the ethical implications of fieldwork in conflict zones and what it means to be embedded in the military complex.
mckinney conference room, watson institute.

UNDERGRADUATES

THE PAPER SERIES

mckinney conference room, watson institute.
6:30 p.m.

JANUARY 28, FEBRUARY 23,

MARCH 11, APRIL 1, APRIL 22

OTHER EVENTS

FEBRUARY 25

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

DEPARTMENTAL

UNDERGRADUATE GROUP:

"What to do with an MES Degree"

APRIL 10

WELCOME TO THE

CONCENTRATION

MAY 7

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

CONCENTRATOR UNDERGRADUATE

THESIS/CAPSTONE PRESENTATIONS

joukowsky forum, watson institute.
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

MAY 25

COMMENCEMENT/MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

UNDERGRADUATE DIPLOMA CEREMONY

After OSLO

September 2013 brought the 20th anniversary of the **Oslo Peace Accords**, and the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) on the White House lawn. The agreement signed between the Israeli government of Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat marked the creation of the Palestinian Authority. However, the Oslo Accords did not settle issues of statehood, borders, refugees, or settlements.

To mark this historic moment, Middle East Studies has planned a yearlong series of events related to this issue. The events explore such questions as: What is the "Peace Process"? What changed on the ground? And what are the possible futures of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

Hanan Ashrawi: Process vs. Peace



To kick off the series, **Dr. Hanan Ashrawi**, acclaimed Palestinian leader, legislator, activist, scholar, and key participant at the Oslo talks, gave a lecture titled "Process vs. Peace" on September 25, 2013. Provost Mark Schlissel opened the event with words of praise for the newly

launched Middle East Studies Initiative headed by Beshara Doumani, and welcomed Hanan Ashrawi to Brown. Beshara Doumani warmly greeted Hanan Ashrawi as a friend and colleague. Speaking to an audience of hundreds who filled Salomon 101, Dr. Ashrawi addressed the major structural, procedural, and substantive flaws inherent in the "process" launched at Oslo and how the "process" took over to displace peace as an objective. The role of the United States as a third party, as well as suggestions for rectification, was also addressed.

This event received additional funding through the Starr and the Bigelow Lectureships.



September 26, 2013, Watson Institute, Kim Koo Library. Dr. Hanan Ashrawi and Professor Beshara Doumani share a lighthearted moment.

Excerpt of the Introduction by Provost Mark Schlissel

"It is a real pleasure to witness the growth and excitement surrounding Middle Eastern Studies at Brown. The arrival of Professor Beshara Doumani to help head up this program has really marked a turning point.

I would also like to say in advance of allowing Beshara the honor of introducing today's speaker that visitors such as Dr. Ashrawi and topics such as the topic under discussion today is one of the reasons why great universities exist. We exist in part to provide a forum or place where people can come together to share their ideas on topics that are interesting, important, timely and often controversial. It is very hard for many people to discuss issues in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. That forum is something that the Brown University community prides itself in providing. And we like to think that amongst the contributions the university can make to society are the ideas that come from interactions such as the ones we'll have today that hopefully will fuel future progress."



Panelists: Hanan Ashrawi, and Brown faculty Omer Bartov, Ariella Azoulay, Sa'ed Atshan, Adi Ophir, Beshara Doumani

AFTER OSLO: CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ON PALESTINE / ISRAEL

On **September 26, 2013**, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi took part in a panel discussion hosted by Middle East Studies titled "After Oslo: Critical Conversations on Palestine/Israel," which brought together Brown faculty to talk about lessons learned from the Oslo experience. Panelists included Hanan Ashrawi; Beshara Doumani, director of Middle East Studies and professor of modern Middle East history; Adi Ophir, visiting associate professor at the Cogut Center for the Humanities; Omer Bartov, professor of history; Ariella Azoulay, assistant professor of comparative literature and modern culture; and Sa'ed Atshan, Watson Institute postdoctoral fellow in international studies.

The event took place at the Watson Institute, whose Joukowsky Forum was filled to capacity, with more watching in the overflow room, and a global audience following the conversation online, streamed live.

The panelists discussed the foremost issues facing the peace process and the potential for both a two-state solution as well as a one-state representative solution. Their discussion was followed by a question and answer session.

The webcast links to both events and the interview may be found on the Middle East Studies website, www.MiddleEastBrown.org



Crisis In Syria: Teach-In

On September 6, 2013, just ahead of the announcement by President Obama as to whether the United States would actively intercede in the situation in Syria, the Middle East Studies Initiative called for a teach-in on Syria to provide an understanding of the historical background and the complexity of the situation, using these to discuss the merits of the options available for American involvement.

The timely event, organized at short notice, evoked a huge and passionate response. ListArt 120 was unable to accommodate all the audience, neither in the auditorium nor in the overflow room, with many more following the session online. Cogut Postdoctoral Fellow **Mayssun Succarie** began by outlining the transition in Syria from popular protests to an internationalized sectarian civil war that has left 100,000 dead and

displaced 7 million people. Director of Middle East Studies and History Professor **Beshara Doumani** followed by discussing the conflict's roots in the territorial partition and "divide and conquer" sectarian division employed by the French in Syria during the early twentieth century mandate system. Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature **Elias Muhanna** then outlined the muddled geopolitical influences at play in Syria, noting the role of private donors as well that of state actors in fueling the numerous armed groups involved in the conflict. Associate Professor of History **Naoko Shibusawa** concluded the presentations by discussing the social, economic, and political implications of the US involvement in Syria, cautioning against continuing the historic pattern of military interventions. The presentations were followed with a question and answer session, in which audience members asked questions ranging from the humanitarian implications of nonintervention to the roadmap for a diplomatic solution. Following the event, a vigil for the people of Syria took place on Brown's College Green.



REACTIONS BY STUDENTS TO SYRIA TEACH-IN

I'm currently in Ankara for the start of my Fulbright year and I just finished watching the Syria teach-in with several other Fulbrighters. I think it helped a lot of people get a better understanding of a crisis that is definitely going to impact our time here. It was lovely to feel like a Brown student again, even just for a couple of hours.

Meghan Koushik '13 / MES Concentrator

BEYOND GEOPOLITICS: SYRIA FROM THE GROUND UP

On November 7, 2013, the Middle East Studies Initiative presented a conference titled "**Beyond Geopolitics: Syria from the Ground Up**," with a couple of panel discussions aimed at elucidating some of this confusion as well as integrating perspectives from individuals with firsthand experiences of the conflict and the Syrian people. This event was cosponsored with funding through a Pembroke Center Seed Grant for Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research.

The first panel, titled "**Economy and Daily Life**," featured Alex Pollock,

director of microfinance at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), author and civil rights lawyer Alia Malek, and Bassam Haddad, director of the Middle East Studies program at George Mason University.

The second panel on "**Public Health and Displacement**" included discussions of the health consequences of the conflict by associate professor of political science Melani Cammett and health policy consultant Adam Coutts. Yasser Munif, scholar-in-residence at Emerson College,

discussed the experience of the conflict in a northern Syrian town.

Each panel was followed by an extended question and answer session in which audience members raised thought-provoking questions that sought to explore the everyday experiences of Syrians and international actors struggling to reach a peaceful conclusion to the ongoing conflict.

The US, Iran, and the Cold War: Global Perspectives of the 1953 Coup



2013 was the 60th anniversary of the US-British coup that overthrew the government of Iran and transformed the Middle East. A daylong conference on December 6, 2013, organized by Professors Beshara Doumani and Shiva Balaghi revisited this seminal moment and explored its impact on U.S. involvement in the region. The first panel, chaired by Beshara Doumani, featured the leading scholar on modern Iranian history, Ervand Abrahamian (CUNY), who provided new insights and details about the 1953 coup. Irene Gendzier (Boston University) began the panel with a paper on "US Imperialism in the Middle East," and Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet (University of Pennsylvania) spoke on the 19th century roots of US-Iranian relations. In the

second panel, chaired by Michael Kennedy, Shiva Balaghi (Brown University) used art as a window on Iranian politics and culture during the Cold War. Naoko Shibusawa (Brown University) shared the research of one her Brown students on representations of Iran in the US media and analyzed the Orientalist imaginings of Iran. Samah Selim (Rutgers University) offered a comparative perspective in a paper titled "The Ghost of Nasser and Egypt." Vigorous discussion followed the third panel, chaired by Shiva Balaghi, on the role of the media. The panel featured journalist Malihe Razazan (KALW Public Radio, San Francisco), and Stephen Kinzer (former *New York Times* correspondent, and Visiting Fellow, Watson Institute).



Iranian artist **Mohsen Namjoo** gave an electrifying performance to an enthralled audience at the Granoff Center for the Creative Arts on December 7th at 7:00 p.m. Over 200 visitors from as far as Boston and New York City as well as Brown community members attended the sold-out show, in which Namjoo performed a selection of his classics in addition to new music. Audience members rose in a standing ovation for the artist who has been hailed as "Iran's Bob Dylan."

Namjoo's unique musical style demonstrates a range of influences, from blues and rock to Iranian folk music. The lyrics of his songs are combinations of Persian classical poems, his own lyrics, and contemporary poetry. Namjoo endows his lyrics

with irony and humor, and provides a sense of freestyle in the manner of his singing. Yahya Alkhansa, the gifted percussionist for the popular Iranian rock band 127 whose drumming lent the music a casual and upbeat air, accompanied his performance. The concert was described as a "celebration of Iranian culture" by attendee Tiffany Zarabi-Aazam '13.5, who noted that Namjoo's performance was ideal for both longtime fans of his music and for newcomers.

Namjoo returns to Brown in spring 2014 as an artist in residence, and the Middle East Studies Initiative is pleased to welcome him into the Brown community.

Digital Humanities and Middle East Studies

The Digital Islamic Humanities Project

is a research initiative made possible by the Brown Humanities Research and Teaching Fund. On October 24-25, 2013, the Middle East Studies program at Brown University hosted a very successful international conference on the Digital Humanities & Middle East Studies headed and organized by Elias Muhanna, assistant professor of comparative literature. The event, which was also live streamed, had record-breaking online global viewership. This pioneering conference brought together 16 scholars from around the world to discuss digitization, visualization, text mining, mapping, and other digital topics relevant to the study of the Islamic world. In the future, the intent is to sponsor frequent gatherings, workshops, symposia, and other kinds of research projects, all oriented around the digital study of the Islamic world.

Excerpt of article *New Methodologies for Old Texts Raise Eyebrows* written by Sam Adler-Bell, Watson Institute Student Assistant

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The vast majority of work presented by attending scholars attested, unambiguously, to the rich new world of research questions provoked by combining digital innovations with Islamic and Middle East studies scholarship. For example, for her project on "The Geography of Readership in Early Modern Istanbul," Harvard historian Meredith Quinn compiled a database of probate inventories from 17th century Istanbul, paying special attention to those that listed books among the possessions of the deceased. Using quantitative analysis, she worked to identify correlations among book ownership, gender, class, and occupation.



She then integrated that data with a map of the city to identify the more "bookish" neighborhoods of 17th century Istanbul.

Projects like Quinn's, which elegantly combine archival sources with digital mapping and quantitative analysis, are so natural, grounded in good research, and plainly productive of new scholarly knowledge and questions, that any resistance from the digital humanities skeptics seems misguided: purist methodological traditionalism. Or worse, the resentful Luddism of a generation of scholars who "had to do it the hard way, so why don't you?" On the other hand, one can more easily understand humanists chafing a little at the title of Bryn Mawr graduate student Alex Brey's algorithm-dependent presentation on "Quantifying the Qur'an," despite the fact that it addressed core issues of humanist concern, such as book history and scribal practices.

Professor Muhanna notes that scholars in the digital humanities might occasionally have a romantic, emotional, or religious reticence about converting a sacred text into points of data to yield historical knowledge. "There's an understandable resistance to construing the tremendously complex object of one's research, whether that's a literary or a religious text, as basically a corpus of data. It has the association that it becomes just ones and zeroes." And even more resistance about "the idea that we can somehow

perform complicated analytical operations that might replace the very careful, painstaking work of interpretation."

A self-critical debate over the proper scope of the digital humanities popped up at various moments throughout the conference. "Is this a new paradigm?" Muhanna asked, "Does digital, data-driven scholarship tell us anything qualitatively new? Or does it just give us these tremendous tools to confirm what we already intuitively know, and that we had already arrived at through old-fashioned interpretative scholarship?"

At some point during one of these self-reflective flare-ups, one scholar remarked, somewhat pugnaciously, "So we're historians with computers. That's enough for me!"

Muhanna's conclusion is somewhat nuanced: "The best way to think about it is that we're just dealing with different sets of questions. And that one set doesn't invalidate the other set."
