Dear colleagues, students, and friends of CMES,

As the academic year comes to a close, I want to convey a few words of gratitude to all of you who have been participating in, attending, and supporting the Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) over the past year. Thanks to my inspiring guests and the wonderful help of our Center manager, Barbara Oberkoetter, we managed to cover a wide range of issues and connect with audiences across the globe. Last year we had over 9,000 viewings of our on-line events in addition to those we hosted on campus. We have created a substantial archive of events and conversations that you can access on our website.

Amongst the range of different events we hosted, I would like to highlight the Herbert H. Goldberger-funded lecture series titled Queering the Middle East, to which we invited academics and activists to discuss the various ways queer approaches and activism further our understanding of the Middle East and its diasporas, while also contributing to our aim to de-exceptionalize the Middle East.

I am excited to announce a new series we have launched jointly with the Columbia University Middle East Institute (MEI) titled Gender and Body Politics: Arts in the Middle East and its Diasporas. In conversation with artists from the Middle East and North Africa as well as its diasporas, the series examines intersecting inequalities and body politics expressed, represented, and transgressed in both visual and performance art. Against the backdrop of war and conflict, the rise of authoritarian regimes, displacement and diaspora mobilization, Islamophobia, ongoing orientalist depictions, and challenges linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, this series explores the ways in which artists are informed by and/or contribute to anti-racist, transnational feminist, and queer praxis.

The series will feature artists both online and in-person. Exhibitions and performances will complement the series in locations around Providence and New York City. On April 26, we launched the series with two Palestinian artists, Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas, in an online conversation named “May Amnesia Never Kiss Us On The Mouth,” followed by an in-person event on May 5 titled “The Politics of Queer Bots.”

I was particularly happy to welcome our three visiting Darwish Fellows in Palestinian Studies, Professors Rema Hammami, Ruba Salih, and Noura Erakat. Next academic year, we will be fortunate to have Abed Takriti join us for one academic year as Darwish Visiting Professor in Palestinian Studies. We have also appointed our first CMES / Watson Alomran postdoctoral fellow in Middle East studies. Fulya Pinar will be with us for two years following completion of her PhD at Rutgers university.

Our annual report provides more details about our activities, projects, and initiatives.

I hope you all have a healthy, fulfilling, and interesting summer. We look forward to connecting with you in the new academic year.

Best wishes,

Nadje Al-Ali
Director, Center for Middle East Studies
Robert Family Professor of International Studies
Professor of Anthropology and Middle East Studies
Through an annual conference, lectures, and a book series, Islam and the Humanities explores the relationship between Islamic studies and larger debates in the disciplines of history, religious studies, comparative literature, philosophy, contemporary art, and the humanistic dimensions of anthropology and sociology. This initiative is led by Shahzad Bashir, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Humanities and professor of history and religious studies.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES

NDPS brings together an international community of researchers and practitioners to promote and shape knowledge production on Palestine and the Palestinians. Founded in 2013 by Professor Beshara Doumani, NDPS invests in emerging scholars through programming, an endowed postdoctoral fellowship, and a book series with the University of California Press. In 2020, NDPS also succeeded in raising an endowment for the establishment of the Mahmoud Darwish Chair in Palestinian Studies, the first of its kind. Beshara Doumani became the inaugural chair.

With generous funding from the Darwish Chair in Palestinian Studies, the Center for Middle East Studies hosted three internationally acclaimed female Palestinian academics, Professors Rema Hammami, Ruba Salih, and Noura Erakat. Each not only gave a public lecture and organized a workshop but also visited undergraduate student classes and met with graduate students.
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.

In 2021-22, Herbert H. Goldberger Lectureship funding supported a lecture series titled “Queering the Middle East and its diasporas.” The series used non-normative gender and sexuality as a lens to discuss identity contestation, political transformations, authoritarianism, protest and resistance, war and conflict as well as forced displacement and everyday lives. We invited academics and activists to discuss the various ways queer approaches and activism further our understanding of the Middle East and its diasporas, while also contributing to our aim to de-exceptionalize the Middle East.

In conversation with artists from the Middle East and North Africa as well as its diasporas, the Gender and Body Politics: Arts in the Middle East and its Diasporas series examines intersecting inequalities and body politics expressed, represented, and transgressed in both visual and performance art. Against the backdrop of war and conflict, the rise of authoritarian regimes, displacement and diaspora mobilization, Islamophobia, ongoing orientalist depictions, and challenges linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, this series explores the ways in which artists are informed by and/or contribute to anti-racist, transnational feminist, and queer praxis.

The Brown University Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) and the Columbia University Middle East Institute (MEI) joint series features artists online and in-person events. Exhibitions and performances complement the series in locations around New York City and Providence.
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 understudied 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 has 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. In collaboration with Yale’s Macmillan Center, two closed workshops were held on October 22 and April 8 titled “Decolonizing Kurdish Studies.” In March, the Center for Middle East Studies hosted a panel with Isabel Käser on her recent book, *The Kurdish Women’s Freedom Movement: Gender, Body Politics, and Militant Femininities.*

Racialization and Racism in the Middle East and its Diasporas

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 understudied 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.

Israel-Palestine: Lands and Peoples

This multi-year project, led by John P. Birkerlund Distinguished Professor of European History Omer Bartov, seeks to provide a forum for a deeper understanding of the region and its peoples. The century-long conflict over the land of Israel/Palestine has raised a plethora of questions about historical narratives and rights of possession, the morality of return and the injustice of displacement, the correction of past wrongs and the imponderables of reconciliation, the promises and conundrums of coexistence, and the centrality of self-determination. Precisely because this is a dispute over attachment and belonging to a place that both sides consider to be their historical and spiritual home, it is exceedingly difficult for each of them to recognize the other’s longing for, yet ongoing inability, to feel at home.
Academic sampling of courses

Brown University’s Center for Middle East Studies has earned an international reputation as an interdisciplinary gateway to Middle Eastern culture, politics and society. Affiliated faculty research and teaching reflects Middle East studies’ growth as a discipline in recent years, pushing the geographic and temporal boundaries of the field while engaging key themes such as gender and sexuality, displacement and refugees, law and society, and the politics of heritage. Brown students, as well as prospective students and transfer students, are drawn to Middle East studies by the opportunities to study the region’s languages, cultures, and societies, as well as the ways in which the Middle East is connected to other parts of the world. Language study often serves as a gateway for students to become interested in other aspects of the Middle East, and Middle Eastern language offerings have expanded in recent years. Middle East electives offered by various departments expose students to different disciplinary perspectives and research methodologies, which they apply in their own research (including, when conditions permit it, in the region itself) with the support of Brown faculty and librarians and with research and travel funding from CMES. Inside the classroom and beyond it, through a diversity of academic, cultural, and artistic events, Middle East Studies forging a tight-knit community of scholars—students and faculty—whof bring their wide-ranging interests and perspectives together in the service of greater understanding.

Anthropology: Gendering Migration and Diasporas

NADJE AL-ALI

This course employs a decolonial and transnational feminist approach to explore gender and sexuality as central lenses in our understanding of different forms of migration and diasporas. Students address the various ways that experiences, processes and consequences related to different migrations are gendered. The course introduces a range of geographical contexts and empirical examples/case studies with the aim to challenge the US centrist assumption in many academic debates. The class analyzes relevant power relations and forms of oppression, as well as resistance strategies by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The course uses an intersectional lens to explore the ways in which power configurations interplay in specific contexts, paying particular attention to patriarchy, heteronormativity, nationalism, racism, transphobia and class-based inequalities. The course engages economic, political, social and cultural dimensions, but also the politics of non/belonging, and cultural productions.

Comparative Literature:

A Classical Islamic Education: Readings in Arabic Literature

ELIAS MUHANNA

This seminar introduces students to the essential texts of a classical education in the Arabic-Islamic world. Their works of poetry, literary criticism, belletristic prose, biography, geography, history, and other disciplines were considered staples of a well-rounded education in medieval Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, or Fez.

Egyptology:

Magic, Mummies, and Drugs: Medicine and Physicians in Ancient Egypt

DID YOU KNOW the ancient Egyptians would rub crocodile fat on their heads to treat baldness? Or that an eel warmed in oil would supposedly combat the smell of sweaty feet? If you would like to know more about the practice of medicine in ancient Egypt (including treatments that actually worked), then welcome to Magic, Mummies, and Drugs! In this course, students read through medical papyri (in translation) and examine ancient mummies to learn how the Egyptians understood and treated the diseases that afflicted them. The course also looks at how physicians were trained, which instruments they used, and how much they knew about human anatomy. Lastly, the class explores such specialized branches of medicine as gynecology, dentistry, ophthalmology, surgery, and veterinary medicine.

History: Global Palestine

ALEX WINDER

Global: Palestine is often imagined as being boxed into a national context with Israel over a territory slightly larger than the state of Vermont. This course seeks to break out of this framework, considering Palestine within larger—global, even—structures and processes of colonization, de-colonization, forced displacement and securitization; and shifting modes of temporality and spatialization. The goal is not only to provide useful and nuanced approaches to Palestinian history, but to use the histories of Palestine and Palestinians to examine more closely the workings and effects of global dynamics.

History: Debates in Middle Eastern History

SREENATH MITTEN

This seminar investigates the historical bases of some of the major debates which continue to dominate contemporary discussions on the Middle East. These include debates on colonialism and its legacies; problems associated with the post-colonial Middle Eastern state (the “democracy deficit”; human rights; political Islam); and arguments about the causes and consequences of some of the major events in Middle Eastern history (the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the Iranian revolution; the Lebanese civil war; 9/11 and the Iraq invasion; and the Arab Spring).

Judaic Studies: Jewish Women: Between Conformity and Agency

KATHARINA GALOR

This undergraduate seminar studies Jewish women in different temporal and geographical contexts, internally within their own communities and externally with other neighboring religious groups. Visual and material sources (iconography, archives, architecture, film) are examined in dialogue with texts (biblical, rabbinic, Talmudic writings, medieval and modern commentaries, contemporary literature) to explore the binary of male authority and female agency. Case studies encompass the Middle East and Europe from antiquity to the present.

Turkish: Understanding Modern Turkey Through Film and Literature

ESRA ÖZDEMIR

This course introduces students to modern Turkey and offers a wide range of perspectives on the society and its culture. Each week, students focus on a single theme such as: family and gender; social classes and their interaction with each other; standard and neighborhoods; Turkey’s role within Europe; ethnic identities and their recognition by Turkish society; Turkish media and entertainment—institutional levels.

Sociology: Migrants, Refugees and the Mediterranean

LISA DICARI

The Mediterranean Sea is one of the deadliest bodies of water on the planet at cross. It is also one of the most frequently crossed for migrants and refugees. This course examines the history, the origins, the destinations, and the definitions of human population flows across the Mediterranean. Students explore push and pull factors as well as sending and host country classifications of people as they cross from one side to the other. The class focuses in particular on the tensions between sending and host countries from individual, societal, and institutional levels.

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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 a graduate student research symposium, as well as discussion groups with Darwish Visiting Fellows Rema Hammami (Birzeit), Ruba Salih (SOAS), and Noura Erakat (Rutgers). PhD candidate in Modern Culture and Media Adel Ben-Bella invited Brown alumna Tala Hadid ’95 to campus for a discussion and screening of her film House in the Fields.

MESGSA is led by Joe Leidy, a PhD candidate in the History department specializing in modern Middle Eastern history. His dissertation explores the history of youth as a political category in Lebanon and its diaspora. He has an MA in Middle Eastern studies from the University of Texas at Austin and a BA from Williams College.

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 leaders were Alexandra Wells ‘22 and Jaylim Aboneaaj ‘22.5. They were undergraduate student ambassadors disseminating pertinent announcements to their peers and organized an Undergraduate Paper Series, among other outreach events.

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LUISA BOCCONCELLI
graduated in December 2021 with a concentration in Middle East studies. Over the winter and spring, she worked as an intern at an international development firm in Brussels, Belgium. This summer, she will travel to Ankara, Turkey, to participate in the Critical Language Scholarship program.

Capstone Project:
On the Siege of Homs: Blurring the Lines Between Truth and Fiction

HUMA RAMAZAN-ALI
is from Québec, Canada, and is a double concentrator in Middle East Studies and South Asian Studies. Her interests include Persian literature and advocacy for Afghanistan. Following her graduation, Huma will return home, as she dearly misses her mother’s Afghan food and her father’s jokes. Huma will also continue campaigning for a socialist-green party to be appointed for the first time in the province’s upcoming elections.

Capstone Project:
Tajik-Pamiris and the breakdown of the Afghan-Tajik border: The power of imagination in resisting the grip of the Tajik-State

ADRIANA LORENZINI,
a North Carolina native, is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and international relations. In Middle East studies, her focus has primarily been on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and she has spent several years studying Arabic. In international relations, her regional focus has been both the Middle East and western Europe. Adriana’s capstone focuses on the way states use language to define and create belonging. After graduation, Adriana will move to Vienna, Austria, where she will use her fluent French and German to work in logistics at the Viennese branch of the French energy company TotalEnergies.

Capstone Project:
Language Management Policies as Tools for Producing the Nation: the Cases of Turkey and Israel

ALEXANDRA WELLS
is a senior from New York City double concentrating in history and Middle East Studies. She is interested in solidarity and shared experiences between Arab-Jewish and Palestinian communities, as well as the intersections between art, social justice, and education. She is also involved in activist circles advocating for the rights of marginalized communities in the Middle East and throughout the globe. After graduation, she plans to return to New York City to seek an MA in art history and pursue a career in museum work.

Capstone Project:
Tracing Cross-Cultural Solidarity and Conceptions of Indigeneity through Indigenous North American and Palestinian Artwork
STEERING COMMITTEE

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

MAAN ALSAHOU
JOUKOWSKY FAMILY MIDDLE EAST STUDIES LIBRARIAN
AND ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF FRENCH STUDIES
Specializes in French and Francophone literature, dealing particularly with the representation of otherness in contemporary French and Levantine francophone fiction. Two of his books were published in 2020: JMG Le Clézio et les miroirs de l’autre and a translation of JMG Le Clézio’s Trois Villes Saintes into Arabic. He recently published a translation into Arabic of Jean-Christophe Rufin’s Checkpoint.

KATHARINA GALOR
HIRSCHFELD SENIOR LECTURER IN JUDAIC STUDIES
AND SENIOR LECTURER IN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
Mediterranean and Near Eastern art and archaeology with a focus on the visual and material culture of Israel/Palestine. Urban landscapes with a theoretical interest in religious and ritual practice, ethnicity, gender, and interactions and differences among Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

SREEMATI MITTER
KUTAYBA ALGHANIM ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY
AND INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
She is completing her first book, A History of Money in Palestine. Her work examines the economic, financial and monetary history of Palestine, and, more generally, the modern Middle East.

ELIAS MUHANNA
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
Classical Arabic literature and Islamic intellectual history; more specifically, the history of encyclopedic writing in the Islamic world and Europe, the cultural production of the Mamluk empire, and the problem of the vernacular in different literary traditions.

BANU OZKAZANC-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.
### Faculty in 2021-22

**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, 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 Copec**, Modern Culture and Media  
**Leo Depuydt**, Egyptology and Assyriology  
**Lisa Dicarlo**, Sociology  
**Beshara Doumani**, History  
**Miled Faiza**, Center for Language Studies  
**Lina Fruzzetti**, Anthropology  
**Katharina Galor**, Judaic Studies and Middle East Studies  
**Yannis Hamlakis**, Archaeology, Modern Greek Studies  
**Jae Han**, Religious Studies, Judaic Studies  
**Jo-Anne Hart**, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs  
**Martha Joukowsky**, Archaeology  
**Nancy Khalek**, Religious Studies  
**Stephen Kinzer**, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs  
**Virginia Krause**, French Studies  
**Sreemati Mitter**, History, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs  
**Ourida Mostefai**, Comparative Literature, French Studies  
**Elias Muñanna**, 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  
**Elsa Ozdemir**, Center for Language 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  
**Peter Van Dommeelen**, Anthropology, Archaeology  
**Alex Winder**, Middle East Studies  
**Vazira Zamindar**, History  

### Arriving in 2022-23

**Abdel Razzaq Takriti**, Darwish Visiting Professor in Palestinian Studies  
**Fulya Pinar**, Alomran Family Postdoctoral Research Associate in Palestinian Studies  

### Awards and Fellowships

**Alomran Research Award Recipients**  
**Lee-Or Ankori-Karlinsky**, Political Science  
**Adel Ben Bella**, Modern Culture and Media  
**Aseel Azab**, Religious Studies  
**Carolina Mendoza**, Religious Studies  
**Kate Elizabeth Creasey**, History  

**Critical Language Scholarship Recipient**  
**Luisa Boconcelli**, Turkey
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