

BROWN UNIVERSITY  
**CENTER FOR  
MIDDLE EAST  
STUDIES**

# Middle East Studies

Middle East Studies (MES) at Brown University promotes greater understanding of the cultural, social, and political dynamics that have impacted and continue to impact the Middle East and the people who inhabit it. MES seeks to increase knowledge and informed discussion of the region and its societies through research, teaching, and public engagement.

MES focuses faculty and student interest in this region by building a cutting-edge research community, producing innovative programming, and offering an exciting array of courses and opportunities for undergraduate concentrators. Through thematically-driven collaborative initiatives, MES taps into Brown's tradition of critical and engaged scholarship to integrate the Middle East into the DNA of the university.

*"The Middle East Studies Department has been central to making my experience at Brown positive and meaningful. The faculty, staff, students, classes, (numerous!) events, and research opportunities have all contributed to shaping my intellectual views and creating a sense of community. I feel grateful that the CMES has been part of my experience at Brown, and I know that I will carry the knowledge that I have gained and the relationships that I have built long after graduation."* – Rita Slaoui '23.5



# About the Concentration

The concentration in Middle East Studies (MES) seeks to build a strong, interdisciplinary understanding of historical and contemporary issues within the Middle East, broadly defined. Requirements are intentionally flexible to accommodate the focused interests of students in understanding the diverse dynamics, histories, and societies of this region. A variety of courses from departments across the University expose students to methods and materials of different disciplines and help them build a framework for understanding the Middle East in a historical and contemporary context. Concentration requirements are structured around four major cornerstones: language, foundational knowledge and methods, multidisciplinary area studies, and research.

## 4x Intermediate to Advanced Language Seminars

Concentrators are expected to achieve basic competence in at least one of the modern Middle Eastern languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, or Turkish. This entails the completion of at least four semesters of Brown language coursework in one of these languages.

Students who have reached proficiency in a Middle Eastern language but have not received four credits at Brown (including transfer and/or study abroad credits) can fulfill this requirement:

- through advanced reading and writing courses in a Middle Eastern language;
- by taking courses in a second Middle Eastern language;
- or through courses in a non-Middle Eastern language to be used in a senior capstone project (for example, Spanish for the study of Andalucía or French for the study of North Africa).

## 2x Foundational Courses

Students are required to take both MES 0100 The Middle East: Cultures and Societies and MES 1968: Approaches to the Middle East.

### • MES 0100 The Middle East: Cultures and Societies

This interdisciplinary course is offered every spring and provides an overview of major historical, cultural, religious, and social developments within the region presently described as the Middle East. It is intended to provide concentrators with a shared baseline of knowledge about the region and to begin forming an intellectual community of MES concentrators.

### • MES 1968 Approaches to the Middle East

This seminar offered every fall introduces students to the interdisciplinary field of Middle East studies in the broader context of the history of area studies in the humanities and social sciences. It is designed to solidify the intellectual community of MES concentrators by introducing them to core texts and debates, as well as to new research trajectories, in the field.

## **5x Electives**

These are chosen from the list of elective courses selected in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students must take at least one course in the humanities (offered within the departments of Archaeology and the Ancient World, Classics, Comparative Literature, History of Art and Architecture, Modern Culture and Media, Philosophy, or Religious Studies) and at least one course in the social sciences (offered within the departments of Anthropology, History, International Relations, Political Science, Sociology, or Urban Studies). Examples of recent courses that would fulfill these requirements include:

### *Humanities:*

- COLT 1310J The Arab Renaissance
- HIAA 0041 The Architectures of Islam
- RELS 0015 Sacred Stories

### *Social Sciences:*

- ANTH 1911 Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East
- HIST 1960S North African History: 1800 to Present
- MES 1400 The Middle East in Berlin

## **1x Capstone Project**

All concentrators are required to conduct a capstone project within their senior year. The purpose of the capstone is to synthesize and apply the skills and knowledge that concentrators have acquired through the Middle East Studies curriculum to particular interests developed through the concentration. All students are expected to present their capstone research in the final semester before graduation.

## **Honors Requirements in Middle East Studies**

As above with the following differences:

### **Grades**

To be eligible for honors, students will have earned an 'A' or 'S\*' in the majority of courses for the concentration.

### **1x Honors Thesis**

Two semesters of thesis writing, the first in a thesis writing workshop (MES 1971) supervised by the DUS or other MES faculty, followed by a second semester of Independent Study (MES 1970) to complete the thesis under the guidance of the thesis advisor.



# Sample MES Courses



## **HIST 1948 Global Palestine**

Palestine is often imagined as being locked into a national conflict with Israel over a territory slightly larger than the state of Vermont. This class seeks to break out of this framework, considering Palestine within larger—global, even—structures and processes of colonialism and decolonization; 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.

## **PRSN 0720 Modern Iran: Literature, Media & Pop Culture**

From the world-famous novels of Shahrnosh Parsipour to the subversive rap lyrics of Hichkas; from the Oscar-winning films of Asghar Farhadi to state-sponsored TV propaganda of the Islamic Republic – this course takes a wide-ranging approach to understanding contemporary Iranian culture and society. Through a broad selection of sources translated into English, students will familiarize themselves with recent historical events in Iran and become more acquainted with various aspects of Iranian culture. The chronological focus will be from the 1979 Iranian Revolution to the present and will be organized around a number of social and political themes, including corruption, authoritarianism, multiculturalism, race, social class, religion, and gender relations.



# Undergraduate Research Travel Awards

Grants are available to students concentrating in Middle East Studies to defray the costs of transportation for undergraduate research projects that focus on Middle East-related topics. Recent awards have supported student research on the role of women during the 2011 Tunisian Revolution and on the struggles of historically marginalized Muslim diasporic communities in cultivating spaces to engage in spiritual life.

## MES Undergraduate Fellowship

Middle East Studies offers two competitive Undergraduate Fellowship awards to rising seniors writing an Honors Thesis and concentrating in MES. The fellows are expected to play an active role in MES life and assist with outreach efforts to current undergraduates and alumni.

## Undergraduate DUG

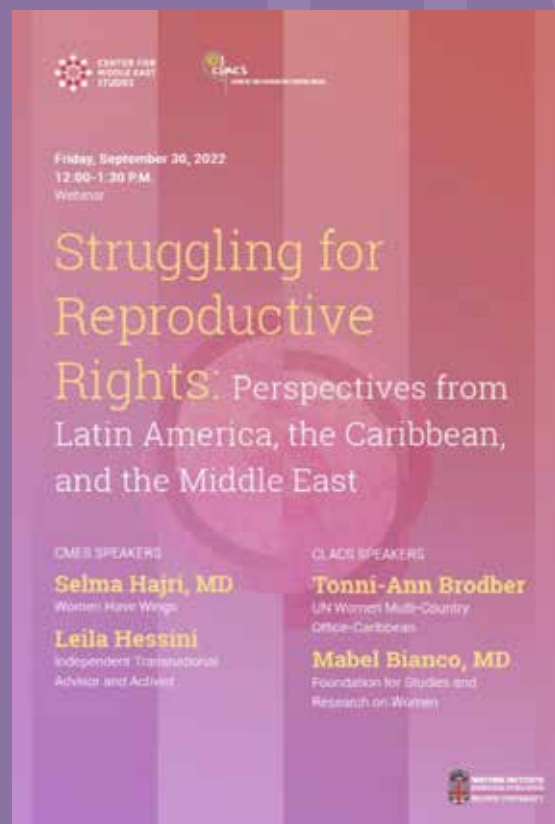
The Middle East Studies Departmental Undergraduate Group (DUG) is run by MES concentrators who host events and activities in addition to advising their peers and endeavoring to build community both inside and outside of MES. The DUG-organized Undergraduate Paper Series provides opportunities for MES concentrators to showcase their work within the Brown community. All students are welcome to attend and participate in the DUG regardless of concentration.

*"The MES department is not only one of the most genuine and responsible centers of learning I've been part of on campus, but has also been intentional in building a wonderful community."*

– Zachary Federman '23.5



# Highlighted Events



Center for Middle East Studies logo and CMCES logo are at the top left. The date and time are Friday, September 30, 2022, 12:00-1:30 PM, Webinar. The title is Struggling for Reproductive Rights: Perspectives from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. The speakers are listed in two columns: CMES SPEAKERS and GLACS SPEAKERS. The CMES speakers are Selma Hajri, MD (Women Have Wings) and Leila Hessini (Independent Transnational Advice and Activist). The GLACS speakers are Tonni-Ann Brodber (UWI Women Multi-Country Office-Caribbean) and Mabel Bianco, MD (Foundation for Studies and Research on Women). A small logo for the Watson Institute is at the bottom right.

Center for Middle East Studies  
CMCES

Friday, September 30, 2022  
12:00-1:30 PM  
Webinar

**Struggling for Reproductive Rights: Perspectives from Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East**

CMES SPEAKERS  
**Selma Hajri, MD**  
Women Have Wings  
**Leila Hessini**  
Independent Transnational Advice and Activist

GLACS SPEAKERS  
**Tonni-Ann Brodber**  
UWI Women Multi-Country Office-Caribbean  
**Mabel Bianco, MD**  
Foundation for Studies and Research on Women

The Center for Middle East Studies hosts a range of events featuring leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners speaking on important issues in the study of the Middle East and on developments in current events.

Recent highlights include a book panel examining the role of gender and body politics in the Kurdish Freedom Movement; a panel examining the intersectionality of struggles from Ferguson to Palestine; engaging lectures on topics like reproductive rights in Latin America and the Middle East and a teach-in on the earthquake in Turkey and Syria; the eighth annual New Directions in Palestinian Studies workshop; a micro-festival of Moroccan gnawa music; and scholarly symposiums, photography exhibits, and film screenings such as "Thinking Algeria at 60: Images from a Revolution," a month-long series commemorating the 60th anniversary of Algeria's independence.



The poster features a background image of a Gnawa band performing. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical manner. At the top left is the Center for Middle East Studies logo. The date and time are FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2022 | FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. The title is Maghrebi Micro-Festival of Moroccan Gnawa Music, Culture, and History. The panel and concert times are listed: PANEL 4:00-5:30 p.m. and CONCERT 8:00-10:00 p.m. The panel title is Gifts of the Gnawa: A Conversation among Musicians and Scholars, and the concert title is Live Performance. The panelists are Brahim Fribgane | Hassan Hakmoun and Richard Jankowsky | Mike Rivard. The concert artists are Club d'Elf and Hassan Hakmoun. The location is Repair Atelier, 16 Church Street, Providence, RI, 02903. The organizers are Cyril Benouna (PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science) and Richard Snyder (Professor of Political Science, Brown University). The poster also mentions the support of the Center for Middle East Studies, the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, and the Repair Atelier. Logos for the Center for Middle East Studies, the Watson Institute, and the Repair Atelier are at the bottom.

Center for Middle East Studies logo and website are at the top left.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2022 | FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

**Maghrebi Micro-Festival of Moroccan Gnawa Music, Culture, and History**

PANEL 4:00-5:30 p.m.  
**Gifts of the Gnawa: A Conversation among Musicians and Scholars**  
Brahim Fribgane | Hassan Hakmoun  
Richard Jankowsky | Mike Rivard

CONCERT 8:00-10:00 p.m.  
**Live Performance**  
Club d'Elf and Hassan Hakmoun  
Repair Atelier, 16 Church Street, Providence, RI, 02903

Joukowsky Forum, Watson Institute,  
111 Thayer street

ORGANIZERS:  
CYRIL BENNOUNA  
PHD CANDIDATE, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
RICHARD SNYDER  
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, BROWN UNIVERSITY

WITH THE SUPPORT OF  
THE CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES, BROWN UNIVERSITY  
THE WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
THE REPAIR ATELIER

Logos for the Center for Middle East Studies, the Watson Institute, and the Repair Atelier are at the bottom.



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