



BROWN UNIVERSITY  
**CENTER FOR  
MIDDLE EAST  
STUDIES**

**Yale** MACMILLAN CENTER  
*Council on Middle East Studies*

## **Decolonizing Kurdish Studies Initiative**

The [MacMillan Center Council on Middle East Studies at Yale University](#) jointly with the [Center for Middle East Studies at Brown University](#) are delighted to invite you to contribute to a new initiative entitled “**Decolonizing Kurdish Studies.**” The initiative will **start in Spring 2021** and will **run for the next two years**, consisting of a number of small workshops and larger public events. The initiative is committed to the project of decolonizing epistemologies and methodologies in the field of Kurdish Studies. We aim to bring together scholars to contribute to the understanding of this understudied field, at a time when Kurds have been the subject of academic, public, and political debates in the Middle East, Europe, the USA and beyond. Through a series of workshops, academic and public events, thematic conversations, research papers, op-eds and scholarly articles, the initiative aims to contribute to the growing literature interested in decolonization processes and epistemologies as well as the emerging scholarship in the field of Kurdish studies.

We plan to discuss the various ways in which knowledge production about the Kurds and Kurdistan has historically been dominated by colonial and orientalist epistemologies applied not only by some western researchers but frequently also by local academics as well. Without falling into the trap of identity politics, we aim to explore possibilities going beyond a simplistic binaries of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider,’ as well as academic vs. activist positions, and highlight the significance of positionality in knowledge production processes. We intend to address the question of how colonial subjectivities (colonizer vs. colonized) have impacted conversations and exchanges within academic spaces as well as alternative spaces of knowledge production. However, we also aim to go beyond a diagnostic of past and contemporary pitfalls in scholarly approaches, to work out significant changes, challenges, and possibilities for decolonized epistemologies and knowledge production. Here we would like to explore what a decolonized Kurdish Studies both within academic and alternative spaces of knowledge production might look like.

### **Questions we seek to discuss in the course of the 2-year initiative:**

- In which ways have Kurdish Studies historically been colonized?
- What has changed? What has remained the same?
- How have Kurdish intellectuals, activists and the Kurdish movements contributed to knowledge production?
- What would a decolonizing of existent praxis inside and outside of academia entail?
- What kind of ontological, epistemological, ethical and methodological shifts are needed to transform our research and knowledge production?
- What can Kurdish Studies contribute to the wider discipline of Middle East Studies and to broader discussions of decolonizing epistemologies?
- How would a decolonizing epistemology shift our research and knowledge production?

## **Format of the Series**

The series will consist of **two workshops** followed by a **conference**. In the workshops, all accepted participants will read pre-circulated papers ahead of the event. Each paper will be assigned to respondents followed by a discussion open to all members. Ideally, scholars who apply will commit to participating in all events, either as presenters or discussants. We plan to turn contributions into an edited volume or a special issue but might also look for alternative ways of circulation, such as a blog.

## **Submission Guidelines for First Workshop:**

### **“What does Decolonizing Kurdish Studies mean?”**

Our first workshop, **rescheduled and now to be held online on Friday, June 11, 2021**, focuses on the question of what we mean by “decolonizing Kurdish Studies.”

We welcome title/abstracts (500 words maximum) and a CV from researchers in the field of Kurdish studies. Your proposal should clearly engage with the themes of decolonizing epistemologies and methodologies and its implications in the field of Kurdish studies, as it relates to the scholarship you produce. We welcome novel approaches, creative strategies, and emerging scholarship informed by first hand data that brings in “the Kurdish voice and perspective” into discussion. Accepted participants will be asked to submit a paper (4000-5000 words) by May 24, 2021.

## **Important Dates:**

Deadline to submit abstracts: February 26, 2021

Notification of acceptance: March 15, 2021

Deadline for paper submission: May 24, 2021

*(Please note that late submissions of full papers may result in your removal from the program. This is to allow all participants to have enough time to read other papers.)*

## **Date of the first on-line workshop and public event : Friday, June 11, 2021**

For any enquiries regarding the program and paper submissions, please contact [CMES\\_Director@Brown.edu](mailto:CMES_Director@Brown.edu) or [mehmet.kurt@yale.edu](mailto:mehmet.kurt@yale.edu)