



GEMENAS

ABOUT THE CENTER

The study of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region began at the University of Michigan (U-M) in 1889. Since the inception of the Center for Middle Eastern & North African Studies (CMENAS) in 1961, U-M has been committed to area studies and language training. In 1993, the center became a member of the university's International Institute, which seeks to stimulate research and teaching on critical areas of the world and foster cooperation among the university's departments, schools, and colleges.

Samer M. Ali

CMENAS Director and Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature

Ryan Szpiech

CMENAS Associate Director and Associate Professor of Medieval Iberian Cultures and Literatures

Jessica Hill Riggs

Academic Program Specialist

Mekarem Eljamal

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Rima Hassouneh

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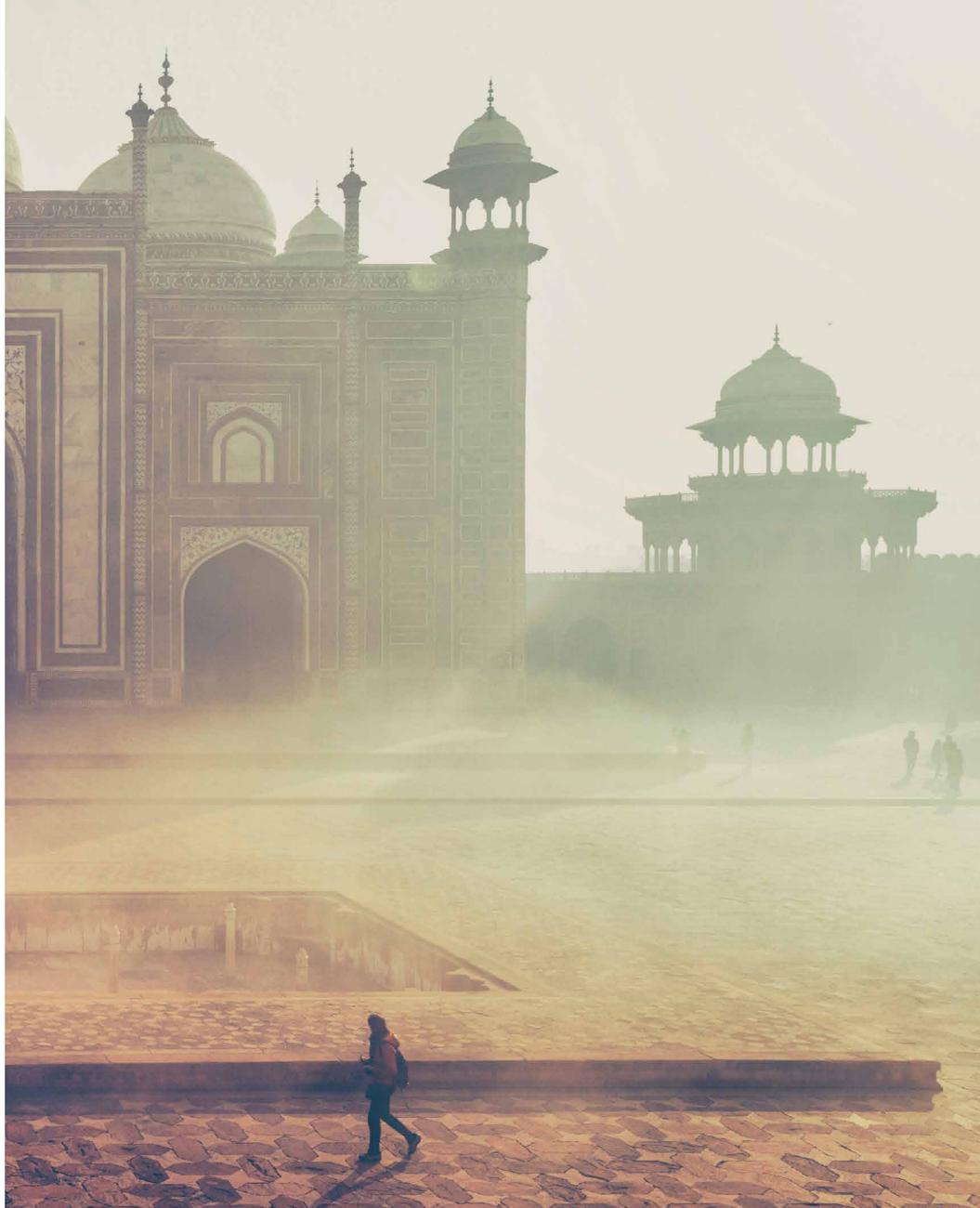
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Raquel Buckley

II Communications, Editor



CMENAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Samer M. Ali (Ex Officio)

Director, CMENAS; Associate Professor, Middle East Studies

Gottfried Hagen (Ex Officio)

Chair, Department of Middle East Studies; Professor, Middle East Studies

Evyn Kropf (Ex Officio)

Librarian, Middle East Studies and Religious Studies; Curator, Islamic Manuscripts Collection

Karla Mallette (Elected)

Director, Global Islamic Studies Center; Professor, Romance Languages & Literatures and Middle East Studies

Cameron Cross (Elected)

Assistant Professor, Middle East Studies



DEAR CMENAS COMMUNITY,

The leaves are changing in Tree Town, USA, and football season is well underway with mounting excitement about Homecoming Weekend 2019. At CMENAS, winter and summer brought robust changes to our offices in Weiser Hall: We hired Rima Hassouneh as the community outreach coordinator who will manage our burgeoning outreach programs to K-14 educators in order to improve school curricula. Ryan Szpiech was appointed as the new CMENAS associate director who will lead student mentoring. Moreover, we are in year two of the four-year Title VI grant cycle, meaning we will prioritize outreach events to K-14 educators and recruiting our distinguished faculty and graduate students to share their unique expertise. As for public events, CMENAS has a tremendous lineup of fall lectures, particularly our 2019 Colloquium themed “Migration in the Islamicate World.” And we will continue to host the Islamophobia Working Group, a unique collaboration of faculty, staff, and students dedicated to addressing anti-Muslim climate issues and creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus for everyone. Join us for our meetings.

And the fall is brimming with promise and potential:

- **Help us welcome** our new MIRS graduate students specializing in the MENA region: Katherine Downs, Nicholas Kolenda, and Danielle Lightfoot.
- **Look out for info sessions** this fall for the FLAS Fellowship to fund the study of our six MENA languages. Remember: both undergraduate and graduate students are eligible. *Application deadline: January 15, 2020.*
- **Help us recruit** our next strong pool of applicants for the MENAS Masters in International Regional Studies (MIRS), which has replaced the MENAS MA. The new degree offers students a wider array of options for capstone projects and for interdisciplinary and interregional work while grounding their studies in area-specific languages, content, and context. *Application deadline: December 15, 2019.*

CMENAS at U-M is on the cutting edge of Middle Eastern/North African Studies education with world-class degree programs, faculty research, and outreach to teachers and the general public. If you would like to invest in our work with moral and material support, please reach out to us. And Go Blue!

Warm regards,
Samer M. Ali, PhD

WELCOME TO
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
RYAN SZPIECH



In conversation with **Mekarem Eljamal**

ME: What do you see as your role as the associate director?

RS: I see my role as being a facilitator of successful student experience and engagement. My role is to mentor students in the program, so they can have the best possible experience at CMENAS. Ideally, I'm not only making known to them all the resources available at U-M, but also providing both administrative and interpersonal guidance, so they'll feel that the program is really designed for their success. I want people to connect on a human level. I think Samer Ali, CMENAS director, and I share this idea that CMENAS is a special program because it's not an academic department; it does something more than simply provide academic resources. In that sense, my philosophy is to provide that human resource to the students and to give a personal face to the leadership of CMENAS.

ME: Thinking back on your own time as a graduate student, what made a strong advisor? What actions of your own advisors have made a lasting impression?

RS: The mentorship relationships that have influenced me the most were those in which I knew that professors were really listening to what I was trying to talk about. The best professors were those who were genuinely willing to give me their ear and work with me through the process of figuring out what I wanted and needed. Only a few people actually did that, but the ones who did took that role seriously. I can think of one concrete

example: a writing professor that I had as an undergraduate at the University of Illinois, at what was the very end of his teaching career; I had him for a class his last semester teaching, and then I took an advanced independent study with him after he had retired from teaching. So I was his very last student. We kept up a relationship not only in that sequence of coursework, but also for years after that. He would meet regularly with me just to talk about our writing and to advise me about my plans. He was a recommender for me when I applied to graduate school, and we're still in touch today, many years later, many decades later. That relationship is one where I felt he was personally invested, not just giving me his knowledge, which lots of professors will do, but giving me his time and a piece of himself, in a way.

ME: How does the role of mentor/student and advisor/advisee change between undergraduate and graduate years?

RS: It really depends on the student. An undergraduate can need much more intensive guidance than a graduate student does, but in some cases a young student might be overwhelmed by too much mentoring. Some don't want to feel like university is their whole life, whereas graduate students have already made a commitment to do a certain type of academic program. It is something they are working towards as a vocation, finding their career path. Again, though, it depends on each student; some graduate students might also come into

the masters program and not really know why they are there yet; they may still be exploring and can also be overwhelmed by too much focus on career planning. So it's not about undergraduate or graduate, but about each student's relationship with the program and what each is trying to do at this moment in their life.

ME: What do you see as your place in developing community between the various parts of the CMENAS community?

RS: I'm hoping that during this year's orientation period I'm going to get a chance to engage with each student individually, but also have some time to be with them as a group. I'm also hoping many will take the CMENAS Speaker Colloquium (MENAS 493). It's a very exciting lineup of speakers. Ideally, I would like everyone to feel comfortable coming to me with any questions, whether intellectual or otherwise.

ME: What impression do you want to leave on the CMENAS community, faculty, staff, students, etc.?

RS: Intellectually, I'm hoping to bring a new angle to what is being presented, especially in the colloquium this year since my interests are slightly different from Samer's, with my focus on Spain and the Western Mediterranean. I'm really interested in bringing more of North Africa, and especially Western North Africa, into the conversation. Even though we are called "Middle Eastern and North African Studies," I want to think even beyond that. After all, North

WELCOME LETTER FROM THE INCOMING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Africa and Spain were linked under a number of different rulers and empires in history. The idea that there is an essential division between Europe to the north and North Africa to the south, I think that's something I want to challenge. As I tell my students in class, there was some form of Islamic government in the Iberian Peninsula for longer than there have been Europeans in the Americas. I think people are often shocked when they see the subject from that perspective. Eight centuries of Islamic government in "Europe"—not just presence but Islamic rule—is really quite extraordinary. I'm also interested in discussing not just Islamic civilizations, but also other cultures that lived under Islamic rule, including Jewish, Christian, and other communities in some times and places. And finally, beyond these intellectual questions, I also want to bring a down-to-earth enthusiasm to the program. CMENAS is a program with many different facets, fostering intellectual growth, as well as supporting human and career development. CMENAS does not just cover one historical period but takes a broad view of history. That breadth is something featured in the Speaker Colloquium (MENAS 493), which includes topics spanning from the very origins of Islam all the way up to the present day. Our very last visitor is going to talk about trafficking of ancient cuneiform tablets in modern Iraq. I want students to see that this is not just an issue of Islamic or Middle Eastern history, but of human history itself.

To all students, staff, and faculty in CMENAS, greetings! And to all incoming students in the 2019–2020 academic year, welcome! I am pleased to introduce myself as the incoming associate director of CMENAS, working alongside the ongoing director, Samer Ali.

This is an exciting time for our center. On every front, from politics and economics to religion and language and beyond, our world is changing rapidly, growing in positive ways while also struggling as it meets the serious challenges of globalization. The diverse cultures from across the Middle East to North Africa are participating in those global changes in vital ways.

In my capacity as associate director, my goal is to help facilitate and enhance the mission of the center by providing guidance and mentorship to our students at all levels and from all backgrounds as they deepen their understanding of the cultures and peoples of North Africa and

the Middle East. I encourage all new students to consider enrolling in the core curriculum course I am offering this fall, MENAS 493 (Comparative Perspectives of the Middle East and North Africa), which will explore the timely topic of "migration in the Islamic world."

We have an exciting lineup of speakers covering topics ranging from the spread of legal traditions in North Africa, to refugees of the war in Syria, to the illegal trafficking of antiquities looted from the Iraq Museum in 2003.

And I am happy to invite all students, new and continuing, to feel welcome to contact me (szpiech@umich.edu) or stop by my office (4140 Modern Languages Building) with any questions relating to curriculum, course and career planning, or resources provided by CMENAS. I look forward to talking with you!

Sincerely,
Ryan Szpiech



Thanks to Title VI funds from the U.S. Department of Education, CMENAS hosted its first American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview Workshop during the last week of August. We were excited to have participants representing a range of languages and at various stages in their careers.

Top Row (left to right): Tariq Farghal (MSU), Ehud Hareven (U-M), Nasr Abdo (U-M), Kamal Gasimov (U-M), James Vizthum (U-M). Bottom Row (left to right): Liana Reading (U-M), Nilay Sevinc (U-M), Tara Beebani (U-M), Hiba Safah (Schoolcraft College)



A TRIBUTE TO

PROFESSOR

MICHAEL BONNER

By Kathryn Babayan

Associate Professor of Iranian History & Culture
Departments of Middle East Studies & History

With the passing of Michael Bonner on May 25th 2019, our community has lost its pillar. Michael joined the Department of Near Eastern Studies in 1989 shortly after he received his PhD in Medieval

Islamic History from Princeton University. He laid the foundation for our program in Islamic history and religious studies with the hiring of Alexander Knysh, Gottfried Hagen, and me, thus turning a department that was world renowned for Ancient Near Eastern Studies into one similarly recognized for Islamic History/Studies. Michael was a colleague and teacher beloved for his erudition, generosity, and humor, and whose loss has left us all bereaved.

First, as director of CMENAS (1997-2000 and 2001-2003) and then, as chair of the Department of Near Eastern Studies (2010-2014), Michael reimagined the collective pasts that we researched and taught to make them relevant for the twenty-first century. As a keen philologist with a knack for picking up languages, hearing them, mastering their grammar and syntax, and then performing them with an ear for their rhythms and cadences, Michael focused on the core of what we offer as a department, the knowledge and close reading of texts in multiple languages of the Middle East. At a time when the

value of area studies with its connection to policy was being questioned, we as a department were divided into clusters of Mesopotamian, Egyptology, Biblical, Judaic, and Islamic Studies. Michael challenged us to create synergies and exchanges across these temporal and geographic fields. In a brilliant thought piece he shared with us during a 2011 department retreat, he wrote "...our collective subject-matter constitutes a unity, including and beyond that of 'area studies.' Yes, we should reach out to other units and disciplines, but we should also reach out to one another. This way we can achieve the long historical perspective that is unique to Near Eastern Studies. Highlighting the elective affinities that bring us together, together with doses of intellectual adventure and again (why not?), fun. What I am proposing is a cluster that we might call 'lingua franca studies' or 'language in history' or 'lingua franca in history.'"

Michael began his travels in the Medieval Islamic world at the Arab-Byzantine frontiers, entering the field from a rather unconventional route. While working on his MA in Classics and Comparative Literature at Berkeley University, he became interested in Islam and was drawn to the other side of the Mediterranean. It is through this Greek and Latinate journey that Michael came to discover the Islamic world. Beginning with the practice of jihad, he historicized the evolving concepts of reciprocity and reward from their Quranic representations to their juridical interpretations that came to legitimate violence and the establishment of Muslim

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Michael Bonner's intellectual legacy lives on with his students, the Banu Bonner, and will continue to inspire generations who read his work.



principalities in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. Michael's trajectory then took him to Arabia to explore the interrelated rituals of piety, charity, and trade. His intellectual pursuits were grounded in a desire to uncover the prehistory of Islamic Arabia, a world where markets and trade were central to an economy that melded politics together with religiosity. Michael not only mapped out the centers and cycles of trade, he confirmed the critical role Mecca and the Quraysh played in the economy of the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Ocean. Michael brought the economy of poverty and piety to life through discursive tensions that unfolded between Muslim scholars who wrote out ideals and those social groups who enacted change. Whether frontier warriors, merchants, or shaykhs, Michael gave voice to their experiences that shaped the collective rituals of reciprocity and gift-giving in early Islam. During his last hours, Michael was working on an article, titled "In Search of the Early Economy," that will be published posthumously in the

journal, *al-Usul al-Wusta*. This was to be Michael's first installment of a larger project that situated the first two Muslim empires, the Umayyads and Abbasids, within the global economy of Eurasia.

Michael Bonner's intellectual legacy lives on with his students, the Banu Bonner, and will continue to inspire generations who read his work. Many students have shared their memories of his exacting rigor, his wit, and generosity as a teacher and mentor. I will end with one anecdote shared by Robert Haug about his time as an MA student in CMENAS, when Michael was the director.

"When I arrived in Ann Arbor in Fall 1999, Michael was the first faculty member I met. He was the director of CMENAS and he met with all the incoming MA students to talk about the program and advise us on courses. At the time, I thought I wanted to study something more modern, but the more I worked with Michael in the CMENAS office, took his courses, and especially when we started reading Arabic texts together, his enthusiasm was contagious and I slowly became a medievalist. At the end of my MA, I started working with Michael on a project mapping pilgrimage routes and markets in the Arabian Peninsula using GIS for what would become his articles on the Markets of the Arabs. The whole thing seemed like a big puzzle or mystery we were trying to solve, even though we were talking about places well known historiographically if not geographically. Doing the research was fun. One of my favorite memories of that project came from an attempt to map the Darb Zubayda (the pilgrimage route from Baghdad to Mecca) and we were completely stumped on one stop until I simply tried Googling it. Lo and behold, I found a reference to an ATM at a highway rest stop in a town in Saudi Arabia with the same name, a town we could not find in any of the gazetteers or other reference works. The bank website was the only result that came from our search. I remember showing the results to Michael and his eyes went wide, his mouth shut tight holding in a laugh. He threw his hands up and exclaimed that it must be it. We were eventually able to find the coordinates by following up on this ATM and it fit the rest of the locations we had uncovered. The absurdity of it all left us both in stitches, but, in my memory, it highlighted the sense of fun and excitement Michael brought to working with him and why I decided to become his PhD student."

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TOGETHER

SOLIDARITY AT THE U-M-UPR SYMPOSIUM

By Ahmed Mitiche

March 7th marked the beginning of the fifth symposium of the U-M and UPR outreach collaboration in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Ten U-M graduate students and faculty joined five of their peers from the University of Puerto Rico-San Piedras, as well as teachers from the surrounding areas, for two days of curriculum-based workshops, knowledge-sharing, discussions, and project collaboration.

While all of the presentations were tied together by the symposium's theme, "Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Across Borders," it was the broader imperative of the conference to go beyond merely introducing new area-studies-based research, and, rather, to create space for conversation between academics and local K-12 teachers, that served as my primary motivation for applying. As an aspiring academic, I found this attempt to bring academic research out of the often exclusionary confines of the proverbial ivory tower extremely important, and, personally, as a good practice to habituate myself to. When I read more on the project and learned of its commitment to many of the pedagogical teachings of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, I became convinced that this could be an opportunity to work towards more liberatory knowledge production writ large. Finally, that the symposium coincided with International Women's Day and massive teachers' protests that have since merged with broader popular demands to oust sitting Governor Ricardo Rosselló



solidified my own professional commitment to stand in solidarity with the legitimate demands of protestors, as I study political and social mobilization.

I was among the fortunate few selected to spend their spring break in beautiful San Juan. While I had submitted a proposal based on fieldwork I conducted on a Moroccan political movement, the objective here was to create a lesson plan that could be used in a high school classroom and which would also introduce students to a broader theoretical topic. In my own presentation, for example, I discussed how the Moroccan state was able to weaponize notions of a racialized Muslim rooted in the War on Terror to punish dissidents who challenged the state's political hegemony. In designing the lesson plan, I began thinking back to my own learning experience as a high school student, and recalled how it was lessons that allowed me to interact with real world evidence that were most effective. I thus dove into a catalogue of primary source materials that I had collected while

Some architecture on the beautiful University of Puerto Rico-San Piedras campus is reminiscent of styles and building facades across North Africa and Andalusia. Photo courtesy of the author.

conducting fieldwork in Morocco, and found two sets of very different, yet in some ways similar, documents that I would include in the lesson plan to be analyzed by students. The first was a set of tweets by a popular social media activist during the 2011 Arab Spring that were used as evidence by a kangaroo court to land him in jail on bogus terrorism charges. The second was a 1930 French-colonial document that legalized segregation between racialized groups of Arabs and Berbers, and which was based on notions of perceived religiosity not unlike the logic of the War on Terror. I hoped then that students could analyze these two documents and create knowledge together (in the Freirian sense) on the relationship between power, race, religion, and the creation of unjust social and political systems.

In this way, and as a student working and living in the Global North, I was able to leverage and share the institutional support and material resources that I have access to with teachers living in a U.S. unincorporated territory often lacking many of these same resources. Reflecting this commitment, the lesson was designed to introduce students to the particularities of the Moroccan case as well as to the concept of racialization and its relationship to political power. After we completed our lesson plans with help from the School of Education at U-M, they were published on-line in a publicly accessible format to be used by high school teachers across Puerto Rico, the U.S., and globally.

Reflecting on this process, it is the publicly accessible format that is the most successful part of the project, as it made the lesson plans which emerged from the conference accessible to anyone with internet access, and in a small way addresses the problem of accessibility that emerges out of imbalanced global political and economic systems of power, as exemplified in the current political status of Puerto Rico in relation to the U.S. That the symposium coincided with a general teachers' strike in Puerto Rico made this issue ever more pertinent. When we arrived in March, mass anti-austerity protests had been on-going for seven months, starting after Puerto Rican officials, with pressure from a U.S. Congress-appointed financial oversight and management committee, initiated austerity measures that allowed publicly funded, independently run charter schools and a private school voucher program to pull badly needed funds from an already suffering public school system, leading to a shuttering of dozens of public schools. On March 8th, these demands were connected to

A mural located in Old San Juan. The Spanish means, "Promise is poverty." Photo courtesy of the author.



demands around women's rights, and, as I write in late July 2019, the teacher's strikes have merged with broader protests against corruption, mis-management of public resources, and rising poverty rates. And on July 24th, the streets erupted in celebrations after a massive protest march led to the resignation of Governor Rosselló.

While as academics our collaboration with the teachers was limited to information and resource sharing, I couldn't have imagined a more timely opportunity to do so. Between the format of the conference and its coincidence with the protests, the imperative to challenge, in whatever ways possible, the real and metaphorical walls that prevent groups of people from accessing knowledge held by those in position of political and economic power (and which coincide with constructed racial hierarchies) couldn't have been clearer. Considering the continuation of these policies into the foreseeable future, and, in solidarity with unions, teachers, students, and parents, I hope the results of this symposium will be useful moving forward as well.

Ahmed Mitiche is an MA student at CMENAS and a Rackham Merit Fellow. He can be found on Twitter at @azmitiche or by email at amitiche@umich.edu.



A LESSON IN SHARED COLLECTIVITY

By Fareah Fysudeen

I spent only three weeks this past spring in Morocco, but those three weeks seem to have decided the destiny of my life. It is difficult to put your finger on what is paradigm-shifting in your life while it is happening, as most epiphanies about yourself happen in retrospect, but when I was in Morocco—saturated with the richness of my Islamic heritage, my stomach in sync with millions of other fasting stomachs during the month of Ramadan, rediscovering my narrative with people I am likely never to forget in my life—I was acutely aware that those moments were profoundly shaping the person I would be and how I would see the world.

In May of 2019, sixteen other students from U-M and I enrolled in “Islamic Peace and Cultures,” a study-abroad course based in Rabat, Morocco. We would be living with host families, but also taking several excursions to some of the country’s most beautiful cities: Chefchaouen, Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Fez. Our course focused on how the basics of Islam gave rise to one of the world’s greatest civilizations and communities, the Muslim ummah, and how [Islam] has manifested in the past and present in creating culture, art, politics, intellectual history, and the world as we know it today. With the crazy amount of traveling and sightseeing we did throughout the trip, we were thoroughly immersed in Moroccan culture and life alongside all the intellectual work, making it one of the most balanced, engaging, and stimulating academic experiences I’ve ever had.

I remember our first night in Morocco tinged with delirious excitement and fatigue. Our host sisters ran into the room to greet us, flinging their arms

around our necks and giving us polite kisses on each cheek. My roommate and I tried desperately to communicate in whatever scraps of Arabic and French we could muster between the two of us, attempting to make at least one whole sentence with two of our broken languages, which ended up with all four of us dissolving into fits of giggles and belly-laughter.

Moments like this strike me with such clarity when I look back on them now: trying to buy ice cream from hanut vendors at 11:30 pm, breaking our fast with our new Moroccan friends on the shores of the Atlantic, discussing world politics in a crowded hipster café in the old madinah—it’s a series of millions of moments of witnessing and engaging with people being human differently from you.

More than anything, though, this trip and the class helped me discover parts of myself that I had never known before. As an Indian-Muslim woman in America, I find myself constantly in flummox with eastern and western values. In the west, we implicitly cast ourselves as the centers of the modern world, the histories and cultures of practically every other society cast into the margins of our story. This fallacy came to life for me in Morocco: how ignorant and egotistical to overlook histories and cultures positioned as the protagonists in their story. This experience of watching another narrative in humanity unfold for me was deeply humbling, and also empowering—this was our shared narrative, and I was so thankful to be included in it, and to be handed the pen.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

CMENAS caught up with two of its alumni: Christopher Pumford, who earned his BA from the center in 2019, and Farah Erzouki, who was an affiliated student while completing her BA and MPH degrees in 2014 and 2016, respectively.

Christopher Pumford spent his final semester as a U-M student in Washington, D.C., interning with the Internship Center for Religion and Diplomacy; he obtained the position

partially through an interest grown out of a CMENAS course.

“Initially, I took the ‘Peace and Nonviolence in Islamic Cultures’ course because I needed the credits, not necessarily because I thought the

class would be interesting,” Pumford honestly confessed. “But throughout the course I became well-acquainted with Professor Ali, who I would now consider an advisor and a friend. He suggested that for the class I write about deradicalization programs in Malaysia. I became very intrigued by the topic, and later used that research to secure an internship with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy.”

After graduating, Pumford moved to Amman, Jordan, where he continued his Arabic language training and worked at a local NGO, Partners-Jordan. There, he helped write grant proposals for a World Bank project looking to reform Jordan’s education system. Thinking back to when he first arrived in Amman, Pumford said that he felt CMENAS prepared him well for a smooth transition to living and working in the country.

“Even though my parents always impressed upon me the importance of

appreciating and learning about other cultures, decades of negative press about the Middle East incorrectly influenced my understanding of the Arab world,” he said. “CMENAS showed me how nuanced and beautiful the region really is, contrary to what we see in American media. In fact, at CMENAS I was so exposed to Middle Eastern cultures and traditions, that when I arrived in Jordan the place felt almost familiar.”

Beyond the language and area studies coursework, Pumford valued the social events hosted by CMENAS.

“Every semester, one of the CMENAS faculty and staff would open their home for the center to come by for a Middle Eastern meal and chat,” he noted. “The food was excellent, and the company even better. At these events, I befriended student and faculty, who are friends that I continue to interact with to this day.”

This fall, Pumford began his Masters of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; there he will concentrate in conflict resolution, building off of his interest in deradicalization programs that was first fostered during his time at CMENAS.

After earning two degrees from Michigan, **Farah Erzouki** went on to work at the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS). Based in Dearborn, MI, ACCESS is the largest Arab American community nonprofit in the United States.

“I worked at ACCESS from 2016 and most recently served as the public health programs manager,” Erzouki said. In this position, she had the opportunity to represent ACCESS in local, state, and national conversations around healthcare

policy and accessibility.

As she moved from the classroom and into the professional field, Erzouki called on the knowledge she gained through CMENAS coursework and courses in the Arab and Muslim American Studies Program.

“The lessons learned from my CMENAS studies have been invaluable in my role at ACCESS. In my most recent role, I oversaw programs that work directly with the Arab American community, which includes a population ranging from first or second generation Americans to recent immigrants to refugees and asylum seekers. The community is both unique and diverse,” she said. “Much of what I’ve learned in the classroom as it relates to history, contemporary issues, the impact of policies, discrimination, and other cultural nuances have been extremely important for me to keep in mind while at ACCESS.”

Beyond the courses and knowledge she gained while a student, Erzouki found the community atmosphere built at CMENAS to be incredibly important in her own personal growth.

“I was able to build lifelong friendships and form a space where I felt that I could be my true, authentic self,” she said. “I felt a strong connection and sense of support with nearly every CMENAS professor in ways that did not exist in my other studies. The instructors are not only extremely knowledgeable and established experts in their fields, but they also ensured a positive and comfortable space for learning and oftentimes went the extra mile to make sure their students felt supported.”



FROM THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

By **MENAS Librarian Evyn Kropf**

In the library, we are honored to continue a strong commitment to supporting and partnering in scholarship and instruction for Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS).

In addition to our regular collecting efforts targeting secondary scholarship and publications from across the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey, this year with CMENAS-allocated funding we have acquired several digitized primary source collections including *Palestine and Transjordan Administration Reports 1918–1948*, *Arab Dissident Movements 1905–1955*, and the important serial *La nation Arabe*. We were also thrilled to partner with CMENAS and the University of Puerto Rico on the acquisition of ebook titles.

As far as wider cooperative collecting efforts, we are renewing our participation in the important Middle East serials project, OACIS (Online Access to Consolidated Information on Serials) and collaborating to see the digitized Islamic Manuscripts preserved at U-M Library federated within the Digital Library of the Middle East (DLME).

As librarian for MENAS, this year I have been particularly involved in digital scholarship initiatives within the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA), proposing and inaugurating a MELA digital scholarship interest group, leading a thematic conversation at the pre-MESA 2018 MELA meeting, and chairing the interest group steering committee. We are thrilled to be partnering on an incredibly important project to further advances with Arabic script OCR (the Open Islamicate Texts Initiative Arabic-script OCR Catalyst Project). As library specialists we contribute crucial infrastructural work for digital scholarship—creating (or acquiring) and maintaining digital collections, creating and maintaining metadata and digital catalogues, negotiating access to image and text data sets, advising on long-term preservation and sustainability issues, and otherwise partnering on a wide range of projects targeting particular research questions and digital methods.

In my work as a manuscript specialist, I have been especially active in Islamic manuscript studies instruction—teaching introductory workshops on campus and at UCLA in addition to tailored sessions for courses. I have also continued my service on the Board of Directors for The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA) and the advisory group for the Manuscripts of the Muslim World project, among other activities.

Looking forward to another year of partnership with CMENAS!

FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND AREA STUDIES FELLOWSHIP AWARDEES

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the FLAS fellowships support students studying less commonly taught languages. The 2019–2020 Academic Year recipients are:

Graduate Students

Leila Abdelrazaq
Arabic

*Master's Degree Student,
Middle Eastern & North
African Studies*

Michelle Al-Ferzly
Arabic

Doctoral Student, Art History

Katherine Downs
Arabic

*Master's Degree Student,
International and Regional
Studies*

Kelly Hannavi
Turkish

*Doctoral Student, Women's
Studies and History*

Matthew Liberti
Turkish

Doctoral Student, English

Hannah Roussel
Hebrew

Doctoral Student, History

Leah Squires
Arabic

*Dual Master's Degree
Student, Public Policy and
Middle Eastern & North
African Studies*

We also want to say congratulations to **Leah Squires** for earning a scholarship from the Center for the Education of Women+ (CEW+)!

Undergraduate Students

Nikki Farahanchi
Persian

*Bachelor's Degree Student,
Business Administration and
Middle East Studies*

Nisreen Khokhar
History and
International Studies

*Bachelor's Degree Student,
Middle Eastern & North
African Studies, and Islamic
Studies*

Muhammad Mojaradi
Arabic

*Bachelor's Degree Student,
Economics*

Huzaifa Piperdi
Arabic

*Bachelor's Degree Student,
Cellular Molecular Biology,
and Arab & Muslim
American Studies*

Summer FLAS Recipients

Ali Al Momar
Persian

*Master's Degree Student,
Middle Eastern & North
African Studies*

Amelia Burke
Arabic

*Doctoral Student,
Anthropology and History*

Timothy Jones
Arabic

*Doctoral Student, Political
Science*

Noor Sulieman
Arabic

*Master's Degree Student,
Biomedical Engineering*

CMENAS 2019 COHORT

CMENAS is excited to welcome three students into the inaugural Masters in International and Regional cohort. Please join us in welcoming them to their new home.



Katherine Downs is a master's student pursuing a dual degree in social work and Middle Eastern and North African Studies. Her research interests include the societal and individual trauma inflicted by colonialist policies, attitudes, and doctrines in the Middle East, particularly the trauma and resilience of Palestinian women. Before coming to U-M, Katherine volunteered as a facilitator of psychosocial support activities for adolescents in Amman, Jordan, and worked as an editor at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C. She received her undergraduate degree in Middle Eastern Studies from the College of William and Mary.



Nicholas Kolenda graduated from U-M in 2018 with a dual-major in political science and Near Eastern Studies, and he had the honor of receiving the George G. Cameron Award in Near Eastern Studies. Nicholas' previous research experience was in the field of critical discourse analysis, wherein he researched the discursive and rhetorical changes in the New York Times' coverage of Muslims and Islam following 9/11. Nicholas has several fields of interest ranging from political theory, discourse studies, religious studies, and modern Levantine history. In a combination of all of these fields, Nicholas hopes to research Ba'athism in both Syria and Iraq as a convergence of various ideologies found in the Levant in the mid- to late-20th century.



Danielle Lightfoot's research interests lie in the history of international law and humanitarian law— focusing on the law of military occupation, the U.S. role in carrying out and supporting humanitarian violations (particularly in the Middle East), and the role of social movements in international criminal justice. Danielle is also an anti-war activist, most recently campaigning with NYC DSA to end U.S. funding for Israeli military detention of Palestinian children. Danielle's research languages are Arabic, English, French, and Latin.



II Graduate Studies Director Pär Cassel congratulates Audrey Gilmour on her graduation.



From left to right: Rima Hassouneh, Bryon Maxey, Derek Lief, Sarah Geroges, Audrey Gilmour, and Jessica Hill-Riggs.

On May 3, CMENAS and all the regional centers of the International Institute gathered to celebrate the 2019 graduates from the multiple centers. Congratulations to Zahraa Ahmad (BA), Alyiah Al-Bonijim (BA), Sarah Geroges (MA), Audrey Gilmour (BA), Derek Lief (MA), Bryon Maxey (MA), and Christopher Pumford (BA)!

MIGRATION AND MOVEMENT

A CONVERSATION WITH PROFESSOR DEVI MAYS



For Devi Mays, an assistant professor of Judaic Studies focusing on modern Sephardic history, interpersonal connections weave their way through her own educational trajectory and research interests. Mays graduated with a bachelor's degree in religious and Near Eastern studies from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

"I studied Biblical Hebrew for four years and I studied classical Arabic, but that was it. There was no Turkish language program," she said. "But my math teacher in seventh grade was Turkish and always talked about how amazing Turkey was. So when I was in college, I became fascinated with Turkey and went to this eight-week summer program at Bogazici University in Istanbul and that hooked me."

Unsure of what to do after finishing her undergraduate degree, Mays returned to Turkey.

"I wasn't set on academia, but once I was [in Turkey] I realized that I missed learning and wanted to have a career where I could be learning all the time," she said. "So I applied to graduate school, not fully aware of the scope of graduate programs."

Mays continued, "I got there and realized I loved people's stories, and that is what drew me to history. For me, it's all about the stories, the individuals, how to make sense of peoples' lives, how they make sense of their own lives, how are individuals connecting and interacting with each other, and how do people maintain connections and contacts across vast distances as they migrate between the Ottoman Empire, France, Mexico, Cuba, and the United States."

To Mays, Jewish history is not just about how people observe dietary laws, or when a synagogue was built. Instead, her attention to the individual shapes how she sees Jewish history and religious studies interact.

"I'm interested in a broader way of thinking about how a religious studies framework can be something much larger than synagogue attendance or certain life cycle events, but how it is about who you're in contact with, who you're marrying, who you're in business with, who you take photographs with, or who you carry letters for across the ocean when your migrating," she said. "So I want to think about Judaism as how individual connections make community; a community doesn't exist just by itself, it has to be made and constantly re-made through connections and contacts and disputes."

In her own movements across oceans and continents, she participated in building communities that ultimately helped develop and blend her interests in everyday history and religion.

"The first time I was in Istanbul, I met an elderly gentleman who owned a silk store on Istiklal Caddesi, one of the main pedestrian thoroughfares, and he was a Turkish Sephardic Jew," she said. "A few years later, when I went back to Istanbul, I went back to the store and he remembered me and we became friends. Every week I would go in and we would drink Coke together, and he would tell me about his life and his history, and I got really interested in this question about the place of Jews within modern Turkey."

As she delved into Sephardic history, her language skills in Turkish, Biblical Hebrew, and Arabic needed to be augmented with Spanish, and, in travelling to an international Spanish language program, Mays made more connections, continued to grow her community, and solidified her research focus.

"When I started graduate school, I hadn't studied Spanish at all, and for Ladino, Judeo-Spanish, which is what most Sephardi Ottoman Jews spoke, I needed to learn Spanish; so I went to Mexico because there were affordable language programs there," she said. "Then I met the Turkish-Jewish grandmother of the fiancé of one of my really good friends in college, a Mexican Jew of Syrian descent. When I met the grandmother, I thought 'Oh, I didn't know there were Turkish Jews in Mexico; I wonder how they got here.' I couldn't find anything, and thought, 'Well, this is a research topic!'"

To talk about Sephardic history is also to talk about movement and migration.

“The people that I research, their lives existed in this state of movement. But in my research, I found that too often when historians write about migration, they think of it as this linear thing. You go from one place to another, and you might return to where you came from or you might stay where you moved to,” she said. “For the people I research, I dealt with a lot of immigration records and naturalization petitions from various countries, and they were moving quite a lot. So it destabilizes what we think of migration. It is not linear, it is circular, but it has all these different permutations.”

Restrictions, often rooted in racism, are also part and parcel of Mays’ research into Sephardic history.

“The people I research were moving at a time when states were increasingly concerned with cutting off movement, or in restricting movement to certain types of desirable people. For example when we are looking at Mexico, people from the Ottoman Empire, or its successor states by the late 1920s, were no longer seen as desirable people,” she said. “And if you look at the Turkish side of things, religious minorities in the early period of the Turkish Republic were not particularly desirable populations either. So there were all of these mechanisms put into place in the 1920s and 30s in Turkey to strip people of their citizenship, mostly Christians and Jews, and some Kurds.”

These conversations about restricted movement have reverberations in today’s society, parallels that Mays and her students easily notice.

“A responsible historian wouldn’t say that history is repeating itself, but there are definitely aspects that are recurrent, and we have to consider how do we talk about those parallels, and how do we understand them,” she said. “There is so much attention today, in the United States and in Europe, as well, this discourse over certain types of migrants as being undesirable. In some cases the language is literally reproduced from popular discourse in the 20s or even legislative discourse in the 20s and 30s. Students are very observant and they can definitely draw these parallels themselves.”

This fall, Mays will teach her “Global History of Jews in Spain” course. Compared to other courses she teaches, this course is most aligned with the research she completed for her PhD. Looking at the history of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, Mays takes her class through the 1492 expulsion of Jews from the Peninsula all the way to the present day.

“It is sweeping, and we move really quickly, but it’s actually one of my favorite courses to teach because we touch on things like different empires, whether it’s the Spanish or Portuguese Empires, the development of different racial systems in the Americas, and the Atlantic World economy,” she said. “We look at a few contemporary cases of Ottoman Jewish migration throughout the world, such as a discussion of people in the American Southwest who are recovering Sephardic heritage and talking about how they are descended from conversos, secret

“Jews do not exist isolated from what is going on around them, but Jews are part of society around them and part of the histories of these larger moments.”



Jews, who came to the Americas as part of the Spanish Empire and continued to craft some form of Judaism living in the Southwest.”

In addition to the course content, this class is a favorite of Mays’ because it gives her the opportunity to emphasize the interconnected nature of society.

“Oftentimes Jewish history can be taught in a way that just focuses on Jews, but Jewish history is really a global history,” she said. “You can use Jews as a way of understanding different forms of colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, and exclusion, as well as different forms of religion and understandings of gender and sexuality. Jews do not exist isolated from what is going on around them, but Jews are part of society around them and part of the histories of these larger moments.”

Outside of teaching, Mays is part of a 5x5 Incubator Grant team alongside Evyn Kropf, the librarian for MENAS and the curator of the Islamic Manuscripts Collection; Professors Debora Dash Moore and Bryan Roby in Judaic Studies; Professor Hannah Smotrich from the STAMPS School of Art and Design; and Professor Kira Thurman from Germanic Languages and Literatures. The grant aims to bring together scholars across different fields to work collaboratively on a project of mutual interest.

“All of us are interested in forms of migration and people moving, and we are thinking about how to have a discussion that thinks more about the human stories behind migration,” she said. “We are asking ourselves what can we, as historians and people who have done all this research on migration, do to help students think about migration, what you bring with you, what you leave behind, what are the tangible things that you bring, and what are the songs or recipes that you don’t physically carry but remain with you.”

As Mays thinks of new ways to bring stories of migration and movement to life with the 5x5 Incubator Grant, she wraps up her book manuscript in the coming months. Her research process for the book involved moving between fourteen archives in six different countries.

“A lot of my research has been trying to track different people across archives in newspapers or memoirs,” she said. “Rather

FRAGMENTS AS ARCHIVE AND SILENCE AS KNOWLEDGE

U-M offers a wide array of coursework on the MENA, and CMENAS faculty affiliates are constantly creating new classes, exposing students to different ways of thinking about and understanding the region. CMENAS spoke with Hakem Al-Rustom, the Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History, about his course, “History, Memory, and Silence in the Middle East.”

Mekarem Eljamal: What drew you to create this course? How has this course evolved over the years?

Hakem Al-Rustom: I have been thinking of the issues in this course for well over a decade since the time when I was still doing my doctoral research. Researching the past of marginal and undocumented populations whose history remains largely without archives has pushed me to appeal to theories and methods of historical anthropology as well as critical theory. Now, the population that I focus on, the Armenians who remained in Turkey in the aftermath of the genocide, has always intrigued me, because I, like the majority of people, thought that Anatolia had been emptied of Armenians. So to discover that Armenians remained living there decades after the genocide pushed me to pose questions as to how they survived, where did they remain, and what prompted them to leave Anatolia decades later. Questions that I could not find answers for in traditional archives, which pushed me to look into ways to collect fragments of this past and expand our notions of the “archive.” Now when I speak about Armenian history being fragmentary, I don’t mean it only metaphorically, but also physically. Travellers to Anatolia or Western Armeni, encounter large numbers of Armenian buildings in ruins. These have set the stage for the approach I took in my research. The Surp Giragos Church of Diyarbakir, [Turkey], which I saw in 2007 before its renovation (see pictures), was a major source of inspiration in this regard.

ME: Compared to last year’s syllabus, there is more of a MENA focus. How does situating the Armenian genocide as the main case study within greater MENA ethnographies enhance students’ understanding and thinking?

than focusing on how different archives or states classify these people, I look at how they present themselves to these different types of authorities, whether in a newspaper article, an immigration petition for naturalization petition, or as somebody else’s reference for migration.”

Her book concludes with the story of Maurico Fresco, whose life brings together these themes of movement and interpersonal connections that are incredibly important to Mays’ approach to history. The youngest of nine, Fresco was born in Constantinople to a Sephardic family.

“Maurico left Constantinople around the age of nineteen, so the age that he would have been conscripted into the Ottoman army. I don’t know how he left, but he made his way to Mexico in 1924,” she said. “He petitioned for Mexican nationality, but never followed through with it. He switched tactics and got a fake birth certificate that said he was born in Mexico to Mexican parents, so instead of being a Turkish Jew he was now a Mexican Catholic.”

Mays follows Fresco across the globe, from Turkey to Mexico to Shanghai where Fresco was the Mexican honorary consul, and then to Paris during the Nazi occupation. There he was the last person in the Mexican consulate and had to box everything in the office up before fleeing.

“Delving into his life and who he was in contact with made this fascinating story that does not wrap up nicely. When he was stationed in France under Nazi occupation, he wasn’t openly Turkish or Jewish, and I don’t know if in a religious sense he was Jewish at that point,” she said. “But he was able to get somebody release from the Drancy internment camp in Paris before that person was deported to Auschwitz, and it turns out that Mauricio had written a letter of support for that person’s naturalization petition. Mauricio wrote a book about being in France under Nazi occupation and releasing that person from Drancy, but he doesn’t mention that he had known this person for decades at that point.”

Having spent much of his career in the Mexican diplomatic corps, he interacted with a variety of people and institutions and reminds us of the vital role these other people have in allowing or preventing movement.

“The people he worked with must have known that he wasn’t who he said he was, but they didn’t care because of what he was doing and what he could offer them by virtue of his language skills and other skills,” said Mays. “In thinking about migration, even the people in charge of regulating it don’t always care or apply rules consistently. Historically migration wasn’t as set in stone as people like to think it was, even though these regulations existed. There was a lot of room for people looking the other way, which was also precarious for people who relied on officials to look the other way.”

HA: I consider this course an intellectual laboratory for ideas and for enticing me to read new material, so the reading list keeps changing every year! It started while I was at the American University in Cairo, where I taught a straightforward course, “History and Memory.” Then the following year I taught with a psychoanalysis twist. When I returned to Michigan in 2016, I introduced the analytical term “silence” to “History, and Memory” as an Anthropology-History course that navigates the silences in oral transmission, archives, and ethnographic practice. This year’s syllabus is completely new! It is the first time to offer it with a Middle East focus and to take the Armenian genocide as a case study, framing the theoretical approach through the work of Walter Benjamin, Edward Said, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot. This move came out of the need for a theoretical course on the contemporary Middle East, thus serving students in all the departments and programs where the course is cross-listed: History, Anthropology, Middle East Studies, and Armenian Studies.

ME: What do you hope students will get out of the class?

HA: In many instances what is not spoken about from the past keeps “flashing up” in the present—to use Walter Benjamin’s metaphor. By looking at historical and anthropological works, students will learn to consider silences not as mere absence but as a source of knowledge about the past. The course also scrutinizes the Middle East and the Balkans as categories of inquiry that emerged in the context of empire and colonialism and therefore we probe into the ways in which colonial rule and the subsequent exclusionary nationalist movements have shaped the region, population boundaries, and state borders. So they are not to be taken for granted and must be critically

historicized. It is for this purpose that the course looks at the Middle East “globally,” by bringing in adjacent areas for comparative purposes, especially the Balkans, which was part of the same geopolitical region up until World War I, when European colonial regimes--both political and intellectual--invented the “Near East,” the “Middle East,” and the “Balkans.” So by mapping what Edward Said calls the overlapping territories and intertwined histories between peoples and regions, the course grapples with the question of what it means to decolonize knowledge production about this region, and, by extension, the world.

ME: Why is it important to use memory and silence as lenses through which to understand violence, destruction, and history, especially in the case of the Armenian genocide?

HA: The Armenian intellectual Marc Nichanian has stated that genocides kill the very witness to the crime. So in the absence of the witness, how could we write about such a past? Given that the Armenian genocide, unlike other atrocities in global history, remains highly politicized and swings between denial and acknowledgements of governments, which makes it an important case study to contemplate the relationship of power to the production of historical knowledge. Now, this becomes especially important when the genocide remains marginal to the established canon of Middle East history, which makes it an important case study for a course on silences. Finally, the genocide allows for a space to reconsider the Middle East and the Balkans, or what I prefer to call the “post-Ottoman space,” contextually and theoretically bringing together critical theory and postcolonial critiques in conversation to approach the past with a contemporary critical eye.



FLUIDITY OF EDUCATION

By Tara Beebani and Mekarem Eljamal



Tara Beebani applied to the Arabic for Professional Purposes (APP) Program in the Department of Middle East Studies with a clear plan. “I thought I wanted to work for the Department of State, move to D.C., and travel the world.”

Those initial plans changed after being nominated by Raji Rammuny, then director of the Arabic Language Program, for a graduate student instructor (GSI) position in Arabic.

“I knew this offer meant I could quit my job in Detroit as a research assistant,” said Beebani. “After I started teaching, it felt like a natural place to be, and I realized I really liked teaching!”

To be eligible to teach Arabic at the university level, Beebani had to complete the courses required for her APP master’s degree, as well as the core courses for the program in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language.

“I really enjoyed my graduate studies because I got the best of both worlds; I was able to learn the uses of Arabic in business and hone my skills in Arabic composition, in addition to taking classes geared specifically towards Arabic curriculum design, and methodologies of teaching Arabic,” she stated. “I also ended up making some awesome, life-long friendships.”

Once she graduated, Beebani contacted the chair and Arabic language coordinator. “I got really lucky because there was a last-minute open teaching position for which I was hired, and I have been happy at my work. Here I am, about to start my seventh year of full-time teaching!” she said.

Beebani has taught all levels of Arabic at U-M. “We call the first year of Arabic the honeymoon year. Students are infatuated by the language, and are eager to be in class, even if they are not doing great,” Beebani said.

Beebani described the three different levels as a funnel: at the top of the funnel are the first-year students from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences with Arabic, then at the neck is the third-year, more uniform student body in terms of language proficiency.

“I enjoy teaching second and third year more. In general, second year is the most challenging to teach in terms of subject matter. It’s a formative year of language learning; [students] are compiling all the vocabulary they’re learning and putting it together with all the new grammar to create with the language.”

“Third year is where we can get into the nuances of the language. The students know the structure of our program, they are older, have some maturity, and have gained some life experiences,” Beebani said. “It is very cool and rewarding to listen to students in class and read their essays when they try to express their abstract ideas; it’s the culmination of all these years of students’ hard work. There is a great sense of accomplishment in third-year Arabic courses for instructors and students.”

Beebani has ideas about how the department can grow. “Right now, the Arabic Language Program centers around the communicative approach, and there has been a lot of argument about different methodologies and philosophies and which is better,” Beebani said. “I wish the department would administer long-term surveys to our student population, and design different tracks based on the outcome of the surveys [and] grounded in sound pedagogical methods, and [then] repeat surveying students every decade.”

“There is no one right or wrong approach in teaching Arabic as long as it is grounded in sound methodology,” concluded Beebani.

In addition to teaching Arabic in LSA, Beebani is also a master’s candidate in the School of Public Health’s Nutritional Sciences Department.

“I have always had an inclination towards wellness and learning about [its] different facets.” With this degree, Beebani hopes to improve the human condition “by integrating [her] educational and professional backgrounds.”

Beebani’s own trajectory exemplifies that educational and professional careers are not linear, and this fluidity contributes to the integration of different fields, bringing new and unique perspectives that in turn advance those respective disciplines.

BRINGING IT HOME

Islam Across the Globe: from Southeast Asia, to the Middle East and the American Midwest

By Rima Hassouneh



Bryon Maxey, a recent CMENAS MA alum, gives teachers at the global-Islam workshop an introductory lesson about the religion.

At top: Moniek van Rheenen, a doctoral student in Anthropology specializing in Indonesia, opens with an engaging game testing the participants' knowledge about the spread of Islam.

On Friday June 28, 2019, CMENAS and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) hosted an all-day workshop entitled “Islam Across the Globe: from Southeast Asia, to the Middle East and the American Midwest.” Held on the tenth floor of Weiser Hall, the workshop introduced Grade 6-12 teachers to Islam in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the U.S., and offered four State Continuing Education Clock Hours. Experts in the field, as well as members of Michigan’s Muslim community, led the workshop and discussions. U-M co-sponsors included the Global Islamic Studies Center, the African Studies Center, the International Institute, Arab and Muslim American Studies, and the Islamophobia Working Group.

In a pre-workshop survey, teachers reported that they were “especially interested in ways to support students practicing Islam in my own classroom community.” Though it was officially summer, twenty-eight educators, some from as far afield as Kalamazoo and Traverse City, came to the workshop, whose greatest strength, by many accounts, was the diversity of presenters and their enthusiasm to share various information and perspectives.

The first speaker was Bryon Maxey, a CMENAS alum who spoke about the origins and basic tenets of Islam. “I would love to learn an entire semester class from him!” said one member of the audience.

Moniek van Rheenen, PhD candidate in linguistic anthropology at U-M, followed with an interactive lecture about Islam and youth culture in Indonesia. “I loved learning about Islam in Southeast Asia,” exclaimed another teacher in response to van Rheenen’s presentation. “That kind of informed anecdotal info is really wonderful.”

More than 90% of participants plan to integrate into their teaching the content from the workshop’s third presenter, Jaye Starr, who is an aspiring hospital chaplain and active organizer in Ann Arbor’s Muslim community. Starr spoke about the history and practice of Islam in the U.S; she also addressed Islamophobia,

its consequences on students and families, and strategies for responses. “I learned a lot in Jaye’s session that can be helpful to my current teaching practices,” wrote a teacher afterwards. “Bringing the information ‘home’ as it were is critical in education.” The teachers also were introduced to an array of cultural and religious artifacts from the three regions, including primers in Islamic faith and practice, Qurans, and prayer rugs.

To help teach the new information, CMENAS and CSEAS partnered with U-M’s Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER). Darin Stockdill of CEDER presented strategies for integration across grade levels and subject-matters, to much praise. Stated one educator, “Stockdill made the transfer into the classroom seamless, which is most helpful to teachers.” He and his team also produced for the workshop a 76-page booklet of resources that included lesson plans on all three regions.

For many, the highlight of the day was the last session of the afternoon. According to one teacher, the “various experiences and ages of the panelists made the discussion incredibly interesting.” Members of the local Muslim community Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mahmudi, Hadil Ghoneim, Leenah Safi, and Nur Sarah Shuhaizan shared candidly their experiences and perspectives. “The stories of the panel were powerful,” one educator wrote. “[They] help us understand what they are going through as people.”

All teachers reported gaining, at the end of the day, insight and confidence in teaching about Islam in each of the three geographic regions. In addition to the wealth of knowledge at the workshop, each teacher took home an extensive bibliography of multi-media resources and two books: *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace Amid the Clash of Empires*, by U-M Professor Juan Cole, and *How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America*, by Moustafa Bayoumi.

To learn about similar workshops in the future, please contact me at: rhassoun@umich.edu.

Falafel, Frijoles, and Flan: The Middle East to Latin America

By Rima Hassouneh

CMENAS and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS) at U-M—both Title VI National Resource Centers—partnered with the U-M Museum of Art (UMMA) on April 17th, 2019, to host a four-hour teacher workshop entitled, “Global Intersections: Middle Eastern Diaspora and Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean.” The workshop was the creation of Alana Rodriguez (LACS Academic Programs Manager), Jessica Hill Riggs (CMENAS Academic Programs Specialist), and Rima Hassouneh (CMENAS Outreach Coordinator), who wanted to organize a training experience that highlighted the historic and cultural linkages between the two geographic regions. Bridging the two regions in this teacher workshop was particularly innovative, as they typically receive separate attention in Michigan’s curricula. The workshop was funded in large part by two Title VI grants awarded to CMENAS and LACS by the U.S. Department of Education. Thirty educators attended the workshop, receiving three State Continuing Education Clock Hours from Michigan’s Department of Education.

After an afternoon meal from a local favorite, Zingerman’s Delicatessen, Bryon Maxey, who acquired an MA from CMENAS and previously taught social studies in Chicago and Detroit, gave an overview of migration patterns and of push and pull factors in the past four centuries. Teachers learned that, in the 1500s, the Iberian Peninsula’s edicts of expulsion, forced conversion, and conquests and settlements pushed “Moriscos, conversos, and conquistadors” into the Americas. In the 19th and 20th centuries, economic opportunity and industrialization pulled Arab communities into the Americas; they contributed robustly to local economies, civic life, and even to politics. Several presidents, in fact, were or are of Arab origin, including Carlos Menem, prime minister of Argentina 1989-1999, and Nayib Armando Bukele Ortiz, the 46th and current president of El Salvador.

Against the backdrop of the collective migration of Jews from Europe, the Balkans, and Anatolia into Cuba between



1906 and 1961, and using a remarkable array of material and nostalgic objects that included photos, posters, newspaper clippings, and even her first-grade school uniform, Dr. Ruth Behar evoked a multi-sensory and intimate account of her family’s life on the “beloved island.” The Victor Haim Perera Collegiate Professor of Anthropology at U-M, Dr. Behar spoke of childhood memories and Cuban-Jewish inheritances, like the flan, blintzes, and borekas of her Ashkenazi and Sephardic grandmothers. Dr. Behar knows “the important role that an inspiring teacher can play in a young person’s life.” She was the first in her family to graduate from college, and wants to “support teachers who seek to continue their studies and expand their understanding of society and culture so they can pass on that knowledge to their students.”

Professor Juan Cole is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at U-M and a “big believer in outreach.” “So many teachers,” he later remarked, “are interested in our academic research findings, and it is important to communicate them in a form that can be used in high school classrooms.” His lecture explained why 1.2 million Ottoman citizens—mainly Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians—migrated to the Americas and the Caribbean between 1860 and 1914. These immigrants significantly influenced local culture and religion. To illustrate this, Dr. Cole spoke of Shakira, singer and daughter of a Lebanese immigrant in Colombia; she popularized Arab dance and music in Latin America and beyond. And, in twentieth-century Guyana, the Shi’ite Ashura processions were appropriated and localized into Carnival as Hosay. Dr. Cole also shared a saying that epitomized the phenomenon of



Far left: Anthropology Professor Ruth Behar portrays Jewish Cuba, integrating her own personal experiences into the historical background of the island's Jewish community.

Left: Jessica Hill-Riggs (CMENAS), Alana Rodriguez (LACS), and Rima Hassouneh (CMENAS) show copies of the books given to the participants.

Bottom: On display at the UMMA during the workshop was a poignant exhibit about migrants.

migration and settlement: "In every village in Chile there's a Palestinian, a priest, and a policeman."

In the fourth session of the workshop, "Reimagining the Migrant Experience," Dr. Pamela Reister and Grace VanderVliet of UMMA Education used a visual archive of photos and prints to challenge portrayals of suffering and anonymous migrants and to instead appreciate them as multi-dimensional agents. Besides skills in visual literacy, the training stressed culturally responsive teaching, which recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.

To align the teaching of the new content with Michigan's academic standards, CMENAS and LACS contracted the expertise of the Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER) at U-M's School of Education. In the final session, its design coordinator, Dr. Darin Stockdill, explored pedagogical strategies for integrating the content into multiple-grade curricula. CEDER also produced for each teacher a 42-page packet of resources and "ready-to-go" middle- and high-school lessons based on historical case studies. Lastly, the teachers each received *Lucky Broken Girl*, by Professor Behar and a companion educator guide; *Arabs in the Americas*, edited by Darcy A. Zabel; and *So Far From Allah, So Close to Mexico*, by Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp. Afterwards, five teachers received grants from LACS to develop curricular units exploring the intersections between the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The workshop ended on high notes of enthusiasm and confidence. "This was one of the best examples of professional development I've had in my career," wrote Barbara Gazda of Hartland High School the next morning. "[We] were given great content and then some ideas about how to teach it." Referring to how the pieces of information fit together, another teacher remarked, "I loved learning how the different religions traveled, and what the push and pull factors were. Now I understand why my first ESL student was a Palestinian from Venezuela!!"

THE MENA-SEA TEACHER PROGRAM

This academic year CMENAS launched the Middle East & North Africa-Southeast Asia (MENA-SEA) Teacher Program in partnership with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS). Throughout the school year, the nine-session program trains a cohort of Grade 6-12 educators from around the state, deepening their understanding and appreciation of religious and cultural diversity in both regions. The program is largely funded by Department of Education Title VI grants awarded to the two National Resource Centers.

Once a month, the cohort of six teacher-fellows convenes on U-M's Ann Arbor campus to participate in expert-led workshops, and read and discuss assigned literature. They also attend world-class performances and cultural events, visit houses of worship and museums, and meet with religious leaders and community representatives. By the end of the program in June 2020, the teacher-fellows will have each produced two lesson plans that will be publicly and freely available. They will also receive an \$1000 honorarium and be eligible for State Continuing Education Clock hours from the Michigan Department of Education.

The MENA-SEA Teacher Program is open to Michigan and regional teachers from public, private, and charter secondary schools, as well as school leaders, librarians, and other school-based educators. Teachers new to the profession are especially encouraged to apply.

If interested in the 2020-2021 MENA-SEA Teacher Program, expect the application announcement and materials on CMENAS' website before January 2020. Or contact me, the outreach coordinator, at rassoun@umich.edu.

MEET THE FELLOWS

IN THE MENA-SEA TEACHER PROGRAM



Alison Sullivan
Traverse City East
Middle School,
Traverse City, MI

Twenty-three years ago, I became a teacher for the most

selfish of reasons: it guaranteed that I would always have an excuse to learn. It is especially inspiring for me to return to my alma mater through the MENA-SEA Teacher Program. My students in northern Michigan have few opportunities to personally experience diverse cultures. I want to bring diversity to them by creating specific units focusing on the history of world religions, the role of culture in international issues, and how one's worldview shapes life's decisions. I do not want to simply "cover" this information for my students. I don't want to just teach tolerance, but to create advocates for diversity in our community.



Amy Perkins
Lakeshore High
School, Stevensville,
MI

I am thrilled to join the 2019-2020 cohort of the MENA-SEA Teacher

Program! My World History students have very little direct exposure to diverse viewpoints and religions. Their knowledge of the "outside world" is often limited to details presented in the news and content we discuss in class. To date, I have explored Buddhism and Shintoism in my travels to Japan and South Korea. I have examined the political and economic dimensions of religious conflicts during my tours of Israel and the West Bank. And this summer I joined Qatar Foundation International on an exploration of the Bedouin culture and religious sites of Jordan. These experiences, paired with my participation in the MENA-SEA Teacher Program, will excite my

students' interest in world religions and introduce them to the various ways in which these diverse faiths shape identity, alter geography, inspire nation-building, provoke wars, and enable peace.



Colleen Kalisieski
All Saints Catholic
High School,
Canton, MI

I'm excited to share in the experience and enthusiasm of

my fellow educators in the MENA-SEA Teacher Program. I pursued teaching as a career after studying Art History at Vassar College. So much of what excites me about literature is the same as what excites me about art: its ability to both reflect the larger societies that produced it and impact those who continue to engage with it. As an English Literature teacher, I have a unique opportunity to present my students with difference, to encourage them to participate in pluralistic inquiry and explore this ability of literature to create discourse. I'm looking forward to strengthening myself not only in terms of my content knowledge of the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia, but also pedagogically, creating opportunities for my students to engage with difference in a way that helps them make sense of these experiences and further reflect upon their own.



Gabrielle Popp
Beacon Day
Treatment,
Southgate, MI

I am an English teacher at Beacon Day Treatment, a school for

children with behavioral difficulties. There are so many things about the MENA-SEA Program that I am looking forward to: the content, field trips, and meeting and collaborating with other educators. The

most exciting aspect of this program for me is the ability to be in the role of a student and explore the rich cultural landscape of southeast Michigan. I am passionate about bringing global education into the classroom; it provides my students with a chance to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and learn about cultures other than their own. I plan on incorporating the new information into existing units and creating units based on my experiences throughout the year. Teaching and traveling are two of my greatest passions; international educational experiences have been a wonderful way for me to combine both of those passions. I have previously taught English as a Second Language in Oaxaca, Mexico, and in Hangzhou, China. I also recently completed a Fulbright Fellowship to New Zealand, where I looked at best practices to increase school engagement for children with behavioral disorders.



Greg Dykhouse
Black River Public
School, Holland, MI

I have taught at Black River Public School since its inception in 1996-1997. Throughout

the years I have taught many courses in secondary school, additionally serving for eleven years as Academic Dean. I work with the College Board as a table leader for scoring AP European History examinations since 2002, and with the Big History Project as a Mentor Teacher Leader since 2013. I am excited to participate with the MENA-SEA Teacher Program because of the opportunity for my students to explore more deeply the history and culture of world communities, which contribute to the life of Michigan in substantive ways. My own international study experiences appear limited to Europe, where I completed undergraduate and graduate work (Freiburg,

Germany; Salzburg, Austria; Vienna, Austria). I have traveled extensively with my family throughout Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime provinces (including Newfoundland and Labrador). I look to infuse my Big History and AP European History courses with material that reflects exchanges with Middle Eastern and North African groups, as well as with Southeast Asian people.



Kiersten Gawronski
Saline High School,
Saline, MI

I am really excited to explore the Middle East, North Africa,

and Southeast Asia with the MENA-SEA Teacher Program! Having the opportunity to learn about the countries, cultures, and vibrant peoples through the program will be life changing. I am open to whatever opportunities are presented and then transferring those opportunities into personal and classroom application. It seems trite, but I love history, travel, cultures, religions, food, and personal connections. I have chaperoned multiple trips to Europe with students and some of my classes have a world focus (“World Mythology” and “The Bible as/in Literature”). The more I can learn the more my students can learn. Knowledge is power and powerful. When we open our eyes through travel and learning, we simultaneously expand and contract our view: we expand through seeing humanity’s interconnectedness and we contract because we internalize and transform through the learning. I hope to take what I learn into my classroom and school by opening students’ (mostly white and Christian) eyes to the beautifully complex world within and beyond Washtenaw County.



MENAS is dedicated to promoting a broader and deeper understanding of the region—its histories, cultures, languages, and people—through research, education, and outreach programs.

The center is committed to creating a supportive environment where scholars, educators, students, and the community have the opportunity to engage in dialogue and to study current and historical events related to the Middle East and North Africa.

CMENAS gifts help support internships, student groups, faculty and student travel, workshops and lectures, visiting scholars, artists and performers, and special courses related to the Middle East and North Africa.

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