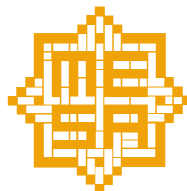


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MESA 2021 Call for Papers

Deadline February 18, 2021

see page 28 for details



Issues in Middle East Studies

November 2020

Vol. 42, Issue 2

Bi-annual newsletter of the Middle East Studies Association

Letter from the President

Dina Rizk Khoury | George Washington University



Photo by Ziad Turki al-Jazzaa

When I last wrote to you in April to update you on developments at MESA, we had just begun to adjust to the changes we had to make to continue our work during the pandemic. I am happy to report that these past seven months have been remarkably productive. Thanks to the creative thinking and hard work of Jeff Reger and the staff at the Secretariat we had a successful first virtual annual meeting. The Board of Directors and the different committees of MESA continued to carry out the responsibility to promote scholarship and teaching and respond to challenges to labor security created by COVID-19 as well as threats to academic freedom in North America and the Middle East.

The October annual meeting attracted nearly 2,200 attendees, a higher number than the meeting attracted in the past two years. The conference was held over twelve days to accommodate participants from the Middle East and Europe. The breadth and depth of our field of study was on display in the wide range of topics and disciplines represented in 322 panels. These included sessions on Arab radio broadcasting in the early twentieth century, genealogies of racial politics in the Maghrib, and classical and medieval Arabic literary traditions. Special sessions addressed the political economy of ethics in social science research in the Middle East, Lebanon in the wake of the August 4 explosion, precarity in the academy, and digital images and archives in the time of Corona. Virtual attendees could stream on demand a variety of films and documentaries for the duration of the conference. I thank the MESA staff and the Program Committee and its chair Mandana Limbert for making this unusual annual meeting a great success. We do hope to meet in person next fall, but the virtual nature of this meeting has alerted us to some of the advantages of using videoconferencing platforms to schedule events.

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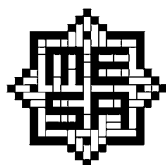
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The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) is a private, non-profit, learned society that brings together scholars, educators and those interested in the study of the region from all over the world. From its inception in 1966 with 51 founding members, MESA has increased its membership to over

2,800 and now serves as an umbrella organization for approximately forty institutional members and forty affiliated organizations. The association is a constituent society of the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Council of Area Studies Associations, and a member of the National Humanities Alliance.

As part of its goal to advance learning, facilitate communication and promote cooperation, MESA sponsors an annual meeting that is a leading international forum for scholarship, intellectual exchange and pedagogical innovation. It is responsible for the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, the premiere journal on the region, the *MESA Review of Middle East Studies* and *Issues in Middle East Studies*, a biannual newsletter. An awards program recognizes scholarly achievement, service to the profession, undergraduate education, and exemplary student mentoring. MESA is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors elected by the membership.

Officers:

President Dina Rizk Khoury, George Washington University
President-elect Eve Troutt Powell, University of Pennsylvania
Executive Director Jeffrey D. Reger

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MESA Membership is available to individuals and institutions who are interested in the study of the Middle East. To learn more about membership, visit mesana.org or contact Sara Palmer (sara@mesana.org).

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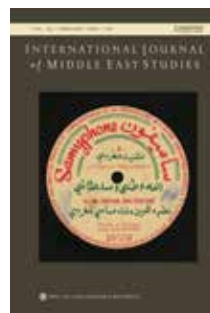
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All MESA Publications available digitally

Login to your myMESA account, select the MESA Publications button to access pdf versions of *IMES* and links to searchable issues of *IJMES* and *RoMES*.



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Full page (7.5" x 10")	\$625
Half-page horizontal (7.5" x 5")	\$375
Half-page vertical (3.625" x 10")	\$375
Quarter-page (3.625" x 5")	\$225

Upcoming Deadlines:

March 15, 2021 for April 2021 issue

November 1, 2021 for November 2021 issue

Please note that due to the earlier dates of the 2020 annual meeting, the October 2020 issue will be published after the conference.



Issues in Middle East Studies is the biannual newsletter (April, October) of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc. and is a benefit of membership. Hard copies are available to members upon request; postage will be collected for those residing outside the United States.

Beginning in March the Board's energies were directed to monitoring the impact of COVID 19 on the students, faculty, particularly contingent faculty, and staff institutions of higher learning. The Board co-signed **statements** (see pages 7-12) with sister scholarly organizations calling on colleges and universities to be flexible and understanding of the personal challenges faced by students, faculty and staff. MESA endorsed a call by Middle East Librarians Association for the continued allocation of funds for collections in libraries.

MESA's membership felt particularly vulnerable to the security threats created by the move to remote learning and the reliance on private corporations for videoconferencing platforms. The Board issued a statement in April to point to the threat to academic freedom that a lack of a secure and safe learning environment presented to teachers and students — particularly those engaged in discussion on controversial topics. More recently, after Zoom cancelled webinars at San Francisco State University, NYU and University of Hawaii, the Board released a statement on the dangers to academic freedom of corporate control of videoconferencing platforms. The statement called on university administrators to ensure that their contracts with platform providers did not threaten the freedom of exchange of ideas.

The protests that began with police killing of George Floyd on May 26 extended nationwide over much of the summer and early fall galvanized faculty and students across institutions of higher learning as it did scholarly associations like ours to commit to addressing racial injustice and anti-black discriminatory practices. While MESA signed a statement with the Modern Language Association committing to fighting for racial justice, our Board issued its own statement. We committed our organization to addressing issues of racism and anti-blackness within our community and in the MENA region and in promoting and encouraging scholarship on race within Middle East Studies. The Board created a **Committee on Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination** (see page 4) headed by President-Elect Eve Troutt Powell and tasked it with developing a plan to implement this commitment.

The Board **Committee on Precarity and Adjunctification** (see page 19) was formed to address the problems facing a growing number of contingent faculty, graduate students and post-docs about the shrinking job market in the academy. It organized a workshop at the annual meeting to gather suggestions from attendees on how MESA can move forward in providing a space for them to connect

and to discuss the challenges they face.

MESA has not had a strategic plan to direct the work of the Board and the Secretariat although there had been talk of developing one for some. The Board formed a strategic planning committee that met over the last year to develop a strategic plan. The plan sets out the goals that the organization hopes to accomplish over the next five years. These goals build on our mission statement, itself now complemented by a vision statement addressing issues of anti-racism and anti-discrimination, in line with MESA's advocacy work as part of its mission. The plan will now be shared with our affiliates for comments before it is finalized. I am grateful to the members of the committee who have given of their precious time to develop the plan.

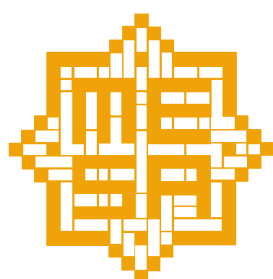
MESA's advocacy work continues apace. The **Global Academy** (see page 17) is hosting twelve fellows for this current academic year drawn from different disciplines. They come from various countries of the MENA region with the majority coming from Turkey. The academy has already organized its first event, and the fellows presented at a special plenary session at this annual meeting. The E-zine *Jadaliyya* has and will continue to feature the work of the Global Academy fellows in its Scholars in Context series. In addition, the *Review of Middle East Studies* and MERIP will be working with some fellows on the publication of their work. Global Academy Committee Chair Ash Bâli has been a tireless advocate for its scholars. MESA is grateful for her commitment and that of the other members of the committee.

The **Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF)** has written upward of twenty-seven letters against threats to academic freedom in the MENA region and North America since April. Members of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) branch of CAF have penned twenty-two of these letters to Turkish, Israeli, Iranian and Egyptian authorities among others. The North America (NA) wing of CAF continues to write to universities urging them to protect the academic freedom and free speech of faculty and students engaged in discussion and activism on the Palestine/Israel conflict. MESA is grateful for the labor of members of CAF and the leadership of Laurie Brand its chair and that of Miriam Lowi and Zachary Lockman the chairs of its MENA and NA sections respectively. They are creating a unique archive and record of the threats to academic freedom. Their work is a reminder of the struggles of colleagues who speak truth to power. You can find more information on CAF's and the Board's interventions on our [website](#) and in this newsletter (see page 15).

MESA's Task Force on Civil and Human Rights (TFCHR) has also been busy (see page 13) issuing statements and organizing advocacy affecting the rights of students and faculty, particularly when it comes to travel and visa regulations and regimes.

MESA works well because of the commitment of its staff, its Board of Directors and members of its various committees. I am privileged to be part of a community of such dedicated individuals. I do hope you stay healthy and safe and enjoy your holiday season.

New Committee on Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination



The Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association has established a Committee on Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination. MESA is committed to the struggles against racism, anti-blackness, discrimination, and the systemic prejudices directed against people of different identities and backgrounds. It aims to move beyond the ambiguous term “diversity” by actively advancing, implementing, and institutionalizing processes within MESA that can help dismantle racist and discriminatory practices within academia. This work extends to all the various marginalized histories, languages, and social groups of the Middle East and North Africa, and the variety of academic discipline we use to study them.

The Committee on Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination is chaired by President-Elect Eve Troutt Powell. She will be reaching out to the MESA community to constitute the members of the Committee. She welcomes comments and input from our members at troutt@sas.upenn.edu.



Announcing New Board Members

Eve Troutt Powell (President-Elect)
University of Pennsylvania

Ziad M. Abu-Rish (Board Member)
Bard College

Aslı Iğsız (Board Member)
New York University

Members' Acknowledgments

Members' announcements about achievements, honors, and awards, as well as for notices of deceased Middle East studies scholars are posted on the MESA website under the **News** tab. We welcome individuals and organizations to **submit** such acknowledgments (<https://mesana.org/news/web-posting-form-for-member-acknowledgments>). Questions and announcements may be directed to Sara Palmer at sara@mesana.org.

News from the Secretariat

Jeffrey D. Reger | Executive Director



What a year this has been.

While 2020 has often felt like we have lurched from crisis to crisis, MESA organizationally has been immensely strengthened by its active and engaged Board of Directors, the leadership of President Dina Khoury and Past-President Judith Tucker, as well as our many active committees. I cannot begin to thank our many members on our committees for their tireless service to MESA and the broader field — particularly given that this past summer like the year as a whole, I venture to guess, must have been one of the busiest in memory for many of us.

For the Secretariat, this year had always promised to be an interesting new challenge, with an early October meeting compressing our own internal planning timelines on top of staffing changes as we continued the transition from Tucson to our offices at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs in Washington DC, which have been closed since March. Kat Teghizadeh took over as our conference coordinator from Mark Lowder following his retirement last December, and she handled this year's challenges with great aplomb. We learned a ton from the experience, and we will apply it in planning for the future.

Sara Palmer is a pillar of the organization, supporting crucial committees and the officers of the organization with unrestrained diligence. Her institutional memory is unparalleled, and so is her willingness to try new approaches when warranted. With coding and programming by our technology consultant Sam Sadat-Wexler, and Sara's keen guidance, MESA was able to update and upgrade our membership and submission database earlier this month, which should make its operations more secure and stable for years to come.

As a microcosm of the challenges MESA as a whole has faced, the MESA Global Academy likewise needed to pivot to virtual for planning this academic year's events, and the Global Academy Committee has fortunately been in great hands, thanks to the staff support by Mimi Kirk.

Looking ahead to 2021, the watchword is flexibility.

MESA remains under contract for our annual meetings with hotels through 2023. The accessibility of the virtual model resulted in record graduate student participation, and greater convenience for scholars outside of North America, both aided by the elimination of travel costs. Quantitatively, attendance at sessions was roughly double what it would be at comparable in-person events. However, others could not get away from their day to day, or otherwise opted not to spend more time on screens, and we all missed the informal exchange that an in-person meeting provides. There is as well the looming issue of our increased dependence on corporate technological platforms that have become essential infrastructure for nearly all of us.

Thank you for your support as a member of MESA. We hope to see you all again soon.



Reflections on Planning for MESA's First Virtual Annual Meeting

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that we could not safely plan for an in-person MESA conference in October this year. We were able to resolve our contractual obligations through negotiations with the hotel and other partners by July, leaving us just August and September to plan for our first-ever virtual meeting.

In planning for a virtual conference, we had to consider a number of new problems: first, fatigue from extended virtual video calls; second, time zones from the West Coast to the Middle East; third, keeping panel concurrency equal to or less than an in-person session (meaning less than 25 panels at the same time); and fourth, offering flexibility to participants who are unable to avoid daily professional and personal routines and obligations.

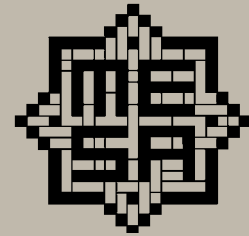
We therefore decided to expand the conference to October 5-17, in order to accommodate the entire accepted program given these parameters, which restricted sessions to a narrow window in the middle of the day on the Eastern Seaboard of North America. October 10-13, the original conference dates, were reserved for special sessions of broad interest across the membership, during which there were no other concurrent events.

Registration remained open to attendees throughout the conference. Videos of most, but not all, sessions have been made available to all registrants, shortly after the meeting concluded. Anyone was able to ask for their recording to be taken down at anytime. Additionally, we realized after the initial sessions that any host could pause to skip a presentation, or stop the recording from occurring in the first place. I would like to extend a special thanks to Kat Teghizadeh for not only handling the diversity of requests pertaining to the recordings, but also reviewing and trimming every single one of the successful videos.

In addition to the regular program sessions — which are available through the [meeting platform](#) on the session detail pages once you have logged into the Schedule gallery — the special sessions and plenary videos have also been edited, uploaded, and posted on our website, so are publicly for anyone to view from the [Program](#) page or our [Vimeo](#) page.

To accommodate participants whose employment status had changed, we offered refunds without requiring withdrawal from the program. As a new option (presenting without withdrawing), instituting this option and fulfilling refund requests required a lot of time and labor on the backend for our staff at the Secretariat, with particular thanks due to Sara Palmer, but we felt strongly that we should support our members in their time of need. We wanted as well to ensure that career and research progress should not be impeded or interrupted due to the coronavirus crisis. We thank our members who registered at the full rate, which helped to subsidize the free registration for our colleagues facing unexpected hardships, given the uncertainty and pressures of this year.

Let me conclude by reiterating my thanks to all of the MESA staff members for their tireless, hard work in mounting this meeting, which entailed a whole new slew of logistical challenges.



FUTURE MESA MEETINGS

MESA signs contracts with hotels years in advance in order to secure space and competitive room rates. To honor the requests from members to not have MESA's meetings coincide with AAA, AAR, ASA, and ACTFL, the dates for 2021 and 2022 are outside of MESA's general pattern of meeting in the latter part of November.

October 28-31, 2021

Palais des Congrès
Montréal, Quebec, Canada

December 1-4, 2022

Sheraton Denver
Downtown Hotel
Denver, Colorado

November 18-21, 2023

Marriott Wardman
Park Hotel
Washington, DC

News of the Association

Board Statements and Letters

The MESA Board has released several statements and co-signed others in recent months. Members are sent email announcements when a statement or letter is released. We provide the full text of each statement here.

Statement Condemning Racism and Discrimination Against Asians and Asian Americans during COVID-19

May 4, 2020—In light of increasing reports of pandemic-related cases of xenophobia, discrimination, and racism, including acts of violence, against Asians and Asian Americans, as well as statements by the US President and other high-level government officials that appear designed to incite such sentiments, the undersigned organizations strongly and unequivocally condemn all forms of racism and ethnocentrism, especially recent attempts to scapegoat Asians or Asian Americans for the coronavirus pandemic.

There is a long history in American society of both direct and indirect language demeaning members of some ethnic groups, including unjustifiable stereotypes associating Asian immigrants with disease, in particular. Intentional or unintentional use of such language inflames both explicit and implicit biases against such groups. Terminology such as “Chinese Virus,” “Wuhan Virus,” and “Kung Flu” tend to highlight differences among people rather than making any kind of meaningful designation about an organism or a disease.

Let us support the Asian and Asian American members of our communities by rejecting all forms of xenophobia and racism, treating Asians and Asian Americans with dignity and respect, and encouraging all individuals (especially government officials and leaders within civil society), organizations (especially governmental agencies), and media outlets to use the official designations from the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization to refer to the virus as SARS-CoV-2 and the disease as COVID-19.

American Philosophical Association
American Folklore Society
American Historical Association
American Sociological Association

American Studies Association
Medieval Academy of America
Middle East Studies Association
Rhetoric Society of America
Society for Ethnomusicology
Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study

The above [statement](#) was drafted by the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies.

Statement Deploing Systemic Racism

June 3, 2020—The Executive Council of the Modern Language Association condemns in the strongest possible terms the wanton destruction of Black life in the United States. We deplore the horrific murders of Black people by the police and the systemic racism in police forces, in educational institutions, and throughout society. It has never been more important for educational institutions to support and expand Black and Africana studies, Latinx and ethnic studies, and Native American studies and to teach the literatures born of struggle against racist violence. During the time of pandemic, the lives of Black Americans are disproportionately at risk of illness and death because of a historical and ongoing deprivation of adequate health care. Whether Black lives are extinguished by police forces or by a broken and unjust health care system, it is clear that they are treated as dispensable lives. We call for an opposition to racism throughout society and for an understanding of the history of racism and lynching as it assumes a freshly brutal form in the present. We urge departments of language and literature to engage with the art and criticism that reflects on history and envisions another future. We call on educational institutions to renew their commitment to actively undo structures that limit access to and hinder the full participation of Black Americans and other nonwhite people at all levels.

We stand in solidarity with all those who

are trying to make a world of racial equality and justice. We oppose the lethal ignorance and hatred that animates racism, and we affirm educational projects that expose (and seek to overcome) the scourge of white supremacy.

Endorsements:

American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Medieval Academy of America
Middle East Studies Association
Shakespeare Association of America

Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the time of COVID-19

June 23, 2020—The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced significant operational and financial challenges for libraries and other institutions committed to preservation and access for documentary heritage.

As library specialists engaged in the work of collection development and collection access in support of the study and appreciation of the communities, cultures, and languages of the Middle East (Southwest Asia), North Africa, and their diasporas, we in the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) share the concerns around equity, representation, and access raised by our colleagues in the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) in their Task Force Resolution issued 10 June 2020.

[SALALM Resolution: Collection Development in the Time of COVID-19](#)

As is the case in Latin America and the Caribbean and elsewhere across the Global South, the majority of publications from the Middle East (Southwest Asia), North Africa and the diasporas are print-only, and are not available in electronic formats. Therefore, collecting policies which prefer electronic acquisitions at the ex-

pense of print risk excluding from their growing collections a significant portion of the cultural and scholarly production of these regions. Such policies threaten the diversity of representation in library collections by further marginalizing already marginalized voices.

Furthermore, such policies jeopardize the work of regional vendors. The strength and excellence of our collections rely on the expertise of vendors who have been working in the region for decades. Many of these vendors are small businesses. Failing to continue acquiring from these vendors puts them at risk of folding. Losing these vendors will considerably weaken our libraries' ability to meet the needs of our users.

Therefore, MELA urges libraries to preserve funding allocations for acquiring material from the region (particularly directly from regional vendors) and for expertly processing this material for better access and discovery.

We endorse the SALAM Resolution and offer the following addenda for consideration:

Whereas funding for expert library specialists responsible for selecting and processing collections might be under threat;

Whereas libraries have significant print collections which are not easily accessible to off-campus and international users;

Whereas the impending budget cuts are expected to reduce travel funding;

- We urge libraries to protect funding to maintain the expert staffing necessary to conduct rich collection development and the processing required to ensure that collections are accessible;
- We urge libraries to expand collaborative efforts toward digital and enhanced physical access to collection materials through partnerships and consortia focused on cooperative collection development, cooperative cataloguing, and digitization. To this end, we applaud CRL's proposed initiative of focused community conversations about collections, budgets, and collabora-

tion. Furthermore, we urge libraries to maintain their commitment to existing collaborative initiatives such as CRL's Middle East Materials Project (MEMP), Arabic Collections Online (ACO) and the Library of Congress's Cooperative Acquisitions Program, to name a few. Doing so will ensure diversity and access to collections from a region often underserved and misunderstood.

- Further, while travel in the midst of a pandemic presents a serious risk, we urge libraries to preserve funding for international trips intended for collection development and networking. Such trips are necessary for acquiring books, journals, videos, sound recordings and ephemeral materials, and for the development of strategic partnerships furthering collection access through potential digitization projects.

We also encourage collaboration and further discussion with other organizations working with international collections at a national and international level. MELA is calling on the Middle Eastern Studies Association, the American Oriental Society, Middle East Medievalists, and other scholarly associations and organizations whose members are working in and on the Middle East, North Africa, and the diasporas to advocate for the need for strong national collections of materials from the region.

In these uncertain times, strong national area studies collections allow researchers to continue their scholarly and creative work. Moreover, strong national collections in terms of coverage and number of available copies enable better access to materials from the Middle East (Southwest Asia), North Africa, and the diasporas. This access can contribute to increasing equity in the field of Middle Eastern studies and well beyond. We are particularly concerned that research materials and resources will be concentrated in a handful of wealthy, often private, institutions. Commitment to area studies in general and to Middle East studies librarianship in particular is also instrumental for maintaining diverse and inclusive collections that reflect and support the wide ranging scholarly and creative interests of our users.



MESA Board Statement in solidarity with the uprisings against systemic racism and anti-Blackness

June 29, 2020—Black lives matter. We deplore the state-sanctioned murders of George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and the countless Black people dying and suffering from systemic racism and police brutality in the United States. We stand in solidarity with the global and national uprisings demanding basic freedoms and human rights for Black people. We condemn the U.S. government's violent response to these protests and the police brutality that preceded them. The militarization of U.S. streets, the state-sponsored attacks on journalists and the free press, and the destruction of Black lives in America resonate with the experiences of people living under authoritarian regimes and U.S. imperialism in the Middle East.

We stand in solidarity with our Black American members, as well as with Black and Afro-Diasporic members in the United States, Canada, the Middle East and North Africa. We recognize the daily threat of violence that Black people face from the police, the state, and society.

Declaring our solidarity is not enough. MESA pledges to oppose anti-Black racist violence by addressing the structural injustice at work in our own organization, in the field of Middle East studies, and among communities in the region. As scholars in Middle East studies, Africana studies, and Islamic studies have taught us, this is a moment of reckoning with anti-Blackness and its entrenched history in our fields, classrooms, and communities in the region and diaspora. Now is the time to turn to anti-racist activists, as well as colleagues in Black Studies and Indigenous Studies for guidance on dismantling white supremacy.

This work extends well beyond the United States. We cannot speak out against the murders of Black people on U.S. soil without also condemning those occurring

in the Middle East and North Africa. We cannot decry the systemic racism in the United States without also condemning it in the Middle East and North Africa. Black citizens of Middle East and North African states face legal, social, economic exclusion and discrimination on a daily basis. Furthermore, it is urgent to say the names of women like Faustina Tay, a Ghanaian domestic worker in Lebanon, subject to the systematic abuse of her employers, and left to die in a parking lot. Confronting the systematic racism and injustice of indentured labor in the Middle East and North Africa is a core component of the struggle against anti-Blackness.

Guided by the principles articulated here, we commit to eradicating anti-Blackness in our organization and in the knowledge we produce. We commit to reckoning with the long-marginalized history of Black slavery and its afterlives in the Middle East and North Africa.

Letter to Immigration and Customs Enforcement Concerning Its Decision to End Visa Exemptions for International Students

July 8, 2020

Deputy Director Matthew W. Albence
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
By email to matthew.albence@ice.gov

Dear Deputy Director Albence,

The higher education community represented by the undersigned disciplinary societies urges Immigration and Customs Enforcement to revisit its decision to end temporary visa exemptions for international students whose upcoming coursework will be entirely online. Colleges and universities alike depend on the presence, physical and online, of international visa holders, and many undergraduate and, especially, graduate students cannot complete their work without access to the archival, library, laboratory, and technical resources of their institutions, whether classes are being held entirely online or not.

International students are an important element of our institutions' vitality and diversity, and the exemptions that were in place for spring and summer under the Student Exchange and Visitor Program allowed many students to remain connect-

ed to their US institutions during this unsettled time. Revoking those exemptions now will end the possibility of US study for international students, affecting both their futures and the futures of the institutions that have depended on and benefited from their contributions. These new restrictions will affect the futures of international students and will as profoundly affect the futures of the colleges and universities that depend on and benefit from their contributions. The increased financial burdens on US universities will be significant.

Please reinstate the temporary visa exemptions for international students and faculty members while we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, including at least the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. The U.S. system of higher education has long attracted students from all over the world, and for good reason. Please do not refuse access to our colleges and universities for the estimated one million international students who would be affected by this change in policy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

African Studies Association
American Academy of Religion
American Anthropological Association
American Comparative Literature Association Executive Committee
American Folklore Society
American Historical Association
American Musicological Society
American Political Science Association
American Schools of Oriental Research
American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
American Society for Environmental History
American Sociological Association
American Studies Association
Archaeological Institute of America
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Jewish Studies Executive Committee
Association for Research on Nonprofit Associations and Voluntary Action
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Bibliographical Society of America
Latin American Studies Association
Medieval Academy of America
Middle East Studies Association
Modern Language Association
National Communication Association

National Council of Teachers of English
National Council on Public History
North American Conference on British Studies
Organization of American Historians
Phi Beta Kappa Society
Shakespeare Association of America
Sixteenth Century Society and Conference
Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study
Society for Ethnomusicology
Society for Biblical Literature
Society for Classical Studies
Society for Music Theory
Society of Architectural Historians
World History Association

ACLS Joint Statement: COVID-19 and the Key Role of the Humanities and Social Sciences in the United States

August 13, 2020—Consider the spread of COVID-19, global environmental degradation, and the deep divisions around race in this country. Our collective responses to these and other challenges arise from understanding human behavior, the stories and beliefs that guide us, the cultures and values that we build and share, and the visionary aspirations of thinkers past and present. "Where there is no vision," James Baldwin wrote, drawing from the book of Proverbs, "the people perish."

At this critical moment in history, humanistic knowledge – the study of languages, history, culture, the arts, anthropology, archaeology, communication, philosophy, political science, psychology, religious studies, rhetoric, sociology, regional studies, and interdisciplinary areas – is crucial to envisioning and realizing a better future for the world. For this reason, we believe that humanistic education and scholarship must remain central to campus communities and conversations.

On behalf of the thousands of students, faculty, and members of scholarly societies devoted to the study of humanity, we call on all leaders of institutions of higher education to uphold the central importance of the humanities and the social sciences as you make important decisions that will shape the institutions under your stewardship for years and perhaps generations to come.

This is a time for institutions to explore

new modes of organization that facilitate innovation while maintaining the integrity of a diverse range of academic disciplines, and to do so with a full embrace of American higher education's tradition of shared governance.

COVID-19 and its economic consequences are placing immense pressures on college and university budgets across the United States. Preparing for decreases in tuition revenue or state funding or both, many institutions have announced freezes on hiring, reductions in numbers of contract and adjunct faculty, and cuts in funding for research. Some are considering eliminating entire departments and programs.

We respect the autonomy of every institution of higher learning and the good-faith efforts of administrators forced to make difficult decisions in historically unprecedented conditions of uncertainty and financial shock. With that respect must come an urgent reminder of the vital contribution made by the humanities and social sciences to the public good – a keystone of charters and mission statements adopted by colleges and universities across the country.

Humanistic study in American colleges and universities provides communal contexts in which students, increasingly diverse in background and experience, learn together about human reasoning, beliefs, and aspirations, social and political systems, and acts of creative expression produced across centuries and around the world. Humanistic study compels us to wrestle with complex questions, with difference and conflict as well as similarity. It furnishes us with diverse visions of the world and encourages us to refuse to take things for granted – capacities necessary to sustain a just and democratic society.

Humanistic education provides not only skills for democratic life, but also skills sought by employers, such as the analysis of conflicting evidence, complex problem-solving, clear communication, and the ability to judge matters in cultural and interpersonal context.

As stewards of humanistic scholarship, we are in a position to share our knowledge of our fields, their condition, current directions, and value to students and to global society. To sustain the centrality of

humanistic studies in one of our nation's greatest assets – our private and public system of higher education – we offer our support to colleges and universities seeking the best path forward in difficult times.

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American Association of Geographers
American Folklore Society
American Historical Association
American Oriental Society American
Philosophical Association
American Political Science Association
American Schools of Oriental Research
American Society for Eighteenth-Century
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American Society for Theatre Research
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American Society of International Law
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American Studies Association
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Association for Asian Studies
Association for Jewish Studies
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Eurasian Studies
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National Communication Association
National Council on Public History
Renaissance Society of America
Rhetoric Society of America
Shakespeare Association of America
Sixteenth Century Society and Conference
Society for Classical Studies
Society for Ethnomusicology
Society for French Historical Studies
Society of Architectural Historians
Society of Biblical Literature

Signatories as of August 12, 2020

See updated letter dated August 23,
2020: <https://www.wearehumanistic.org/>



MESA Statement on Academic Freedom and Corporate Control of Digital Platforms

October 29, 2020—The expanded use by institutions of higher learning across the United States and Canada of corporate-controlled videoconferencing platforms poses threats to the free and safe exchange of ideas. To uphold their commitment to the principles of academic freedom and vigorously protect freedom of expression and exchange of ideas – the hallmark of the academy- university administrators must address such threats promptly and decisively. The threat posed by corporate control of media platforms is apparent in the recent unilateral actions taken by Zoom to shut down events about Palestine at US universities.

On 23 September 2020, Zoom cancelled a virtual open classroom titled “Whose Narratives? Gender, Justice, Resistance: A Conversation with Leila Khaled,” organized by San Francisco State University (SFSU) Professors Rabab Abdulhadi and Tomomi Kinukawa and sponsored by SFSU’s Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diaspora Studies Program and its Women and Gender Studies Department. The communication technology company apparently shut down the program in response to pressures from groups based outside the university seeking to further their political agendas: among them, to limit open discussion of the Palestine/Israel conflict. Zoom claimed that the webinar violated its terms of service with the SFSU even as it affirmed its commitment to the free exchange of ideas. It is ironic, that despite that assertion, Zoom also cancelled two webinars organized at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) and New York University (NYU) to discuss Zoom’s censorship of the event. The UHM webinar, cosponsored by the Department of Ethnic Studies and Political Science, and the Students and Faculty for Justice in Palestine, was cancelled two days before it was to take place, while the webinar titled “Against the Censorship and Criminalization of Academic Political Speech,” organized by the

NYU chapter of the American Association of University Professors and cosponsored by several NYU departments and institutes, was unilaterally cancelled without knowledge of the NYU administration and without prior warning to the organizers on 23 October, the day it was scheduled to be held.

Zoom’s cancellation of the SFSU event poses a threat to the constitutionally protected rights to free speech and the free exchange of ideas within the university. Zoom’s subsequent censorship of academic webinars held to protest its earlier act of censorship is even more egregious; it displays the company’s apparent willingness to suppress the expression of certain viewpoints. While the Palestine/Israel issue is emerging as a testing ground for contestation of academic freedom within corporate-controlled meeting platforms, Zoom’s cancellation of these webinars carries wider implications for the academy. As the Association for Asian Studies’ 20 July 2020 statement has warned, the move to digital platforms for videoconferencing raises concerns about security and academic freedom, particularly for faculty and students teaching and learning about China.

Lynn Mahoney, SFSU’s president, claimed to disagree with Zoom’s decision to cancel the webinar at her university. However, she affirmed its right as a private company to enforce its policies. Her response speaks to the untested terrain that universities must navigate in their dealings with vendors of online meeting platforms. It also underscores the responsibility of university administrators and faculty to educate themselves about how the terms of service of these companies may be at odds with core values of academic freedom. Universities must remain vigilant in protecting the security and academic freedom of their faculty and students.

MESA’s Board of Directors calls on university administrators to robustly defend the academic freedom of their faculty, students, and staff within Zoom and other corporate-controlled virtual meeting platforms.

Statement on Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping

October 30, 2020—The board of officers of the American Philosophical Association is deeply concerned about threats to academic freedom posed by President Donald J. Trump’s executive order of September 22, 2020, which claims to “to promote unity in the Federal workforce, and to combat offensive and anti-American race and sex stereotyping and scapegoating” by banning workplace trainings and other instruction aimed at advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion that include what the order calls “divisive concepts.”

The administration has made repeated statements targeting the research and teaching of experts on race and gender, including critical race theorists. In his remarks at the National Archives Museum on September 17, 2020, the President said, “Critical race theory...is toxic propaganda, ideological poison that, if not removed, will dissolve the civic bonds that tie us together. It will destroy our country. That is why I recently banned trainings in this prejudiced ideology from the federal government and banned it in the strongest manner possible.”

In this context, the executive order serves to suppress the evidence-based research and teaching of highly regarded scholars. We draw the attention of the administration and the academic community to three concerns in particular.

First, the executive order crassly caricatures the work of scholars of race and gender. Ideas such as “one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex” and “an individual’s moral character is necessarily determined by his or her race or sex” are not widely accepted among scholars today. We deeply regret that the executive order appeals to the noble ideal of unity while having the effect of undermining the potential for unity, fomenting division by promoting a misunderstanding of efforts to examine and address prejudice.

Second, though section 10(b) of the order allows “discussing, as part of a larger course of academic instruction, the divisive concepts,” it specifies that teaching these ideas is acceptable only provided that they are not endorsed. This is a bla-



MESA's Task Force on Civil and Human Rights has released statements of concern and calls to action recently. We provide the full text of each statement here.

Statement on DHS Proposed Rule Imposing New Limits on Student Visa Duration

September 29—On Thursday 24 September 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) proposed a new rule that, if adopted, would represent the most far-reaching change to the regulations affecting international student visas in decades. The proposed rule would set fixed terms on student visas that for many will not cover the full duration of the period of study required to complete their degree. Students would therefore be forced to apply for extensions, and would thus be deprived of the certainty that they could complete their studies. Moreover, for many students from the developing world, additional restrictions apply that would, in effect, cut off their access to degree programs in the United States.

MESA's Task Force on Civil and Human Rights was established by the MESA board of directors in November 2016 to supplement the work of the MESA Committee on Academic Freedom by addressing threats to the civil rights, human rights and political freedoms of the Middle East Studies community. We condemn this proposed rule, which will not only damage academic institutions in the United States but also limit access for future generations of international students, including many from the Middle East and North Africa, to higher education in this country.

Currently, student visas are issued to cover the duration of the visa recipient's status as a student, so long as they remain enrolled in school and comply with relevant immigration rules. This flexible system has enabled the United States each year to attract hundreds of thousands of talented international students to the higher education sector in this country. As a result, American universities are among the most attractive and competitive in the world, enabling them to sustain their reputation for cutting-edge research and

yielding enormous collateral benefits to the U.S. economy.

The newly proposed rule sets a maximum four-year term on visas, which would not cover the duration of a typical Ph.D. program and, for many students, may not even cover the full period required for the completion of a baccalaureate program. Requiring students to apply for a discretionary extension while in the midst of a program would impose new burdens and uncertainties on these students, potentially undermining their ability to successfully complete programs in which they are otherwise making good progress.

Moreover, the proposed fixed-term rule imposes additional limits on visas for certain students based on country of origin. Students from nearly sixty countries would be limited to a two-year visa on the grounds that visa overstay rates from those countries exceed ten percent.[1] For these students, the initial term of their visa would not be sufficient to ensure legal status for the minimum duration of most degree programs in the United States. This restriction disproportionately affects students from Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, all regions that have previously been targeted for far-reaching travel restrictions by the Trump administration.

The unmistakable message being sent by the current administration is that the United States no longer welcomes international students. If this rule were to go into effect, students from much of the world would face severe disincentives in considering degree programs in the U.S. Depriving international students of lawful status for the duration required for most doctoral programs, and restricting students from much of the developing world to two-year visas insufficient even for undergraduate study will inflict broad harms on the intellectual life and economic viability of American universities, future generations of students, and the sectors of the economy that require highly qualified

researchers and professionals. We call on DHS to withdraw this proposed rule.

[1] The fifty-nine countries included in the list of those subject to two-year visas are: Afghanistan, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Rwanda, Samoa, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen and Zambia.

Update: Call to Action (October 11, 2020)

The public notice and comment period for the rule change is currently open. The deadline to submit comments is: Monday, October 26, 2020 at 11:59pm EDT. In other words, there is a window of opportunity in the next two weeks to present DHS with comments opposing the rule change.

NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, has put together very helpful resources to assist any individual or institution with the process of submitting a comment: <https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/media/document/CommentTemplateDSRule.pdf>

The link for submitting a comment is here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/09/25/2020-20845/establishing-a-fixed-time-period-of-admission-and-an-extension-of-stay-procedure-for-nonimmigrant>

We encourage all members to consider the potential impact of the proposed change to students visas for their institutions and, if so inclined, to submit a comment or to

communicate with university administrators about submitting a comment on behalf of their institution.

MESA Task Force on Civil and Human Rights and MESA Committee on Academic Freedom Statement on the Circumstances of the Arrest and Detention of Iranian Materials Scientist Dr. Sirous Asgari

September 25—The Middle East Studies Association Task Force on Civil and Human Rights and the Committee on Academic Freedom join together in expressing our shock and outrage at reports concerning the arrest and detention of Iranian materials scientist Dr. Sirous Asgari. According to a widely-circulated and very detailed article, Dr. Asgari was apparently the victim of an operation by the United States government designed to entrap him, coerce him into espionage, prosecute him without valid cause and, ultimately, detain him on false pretenses, possibly as a bargaining chip to negotiate a prisoner exchange with the Iranian government.

The reported details of Dr. Asgari's case include not only the issuance of a deceptive visa, the fabrication of outlandish charges, prolonged criminal detention and prosecution, but then—after he was acquitted in federal court—an apparently retaliatory transfer of Dr. Asgari to immigration detention by the FBI. The terrifying odyssey of detention in the hands of competing

authorities in the United States, reportedly often without recourse for weeks or months to any form of review, highlights the injustice to which Dr. Asgari—who traveled in June 2017 to the U.S.—was subjected. But it also underscores the horrific circumstances and conditions to which tens of thousands of individuals are routinely subjected by the callous and broken immigration detention system to which federal officials regularly consign people seeking asylum, pursuing valid claims for residency and in other circumstances that do not warrant confinement under international human rights laws to which the United States is a party. The squalid conditions of immigration detention and the negligence with which immigration officials have exposed detainees to the risk of infection in the midst of a pandemic reportedly resulted in Dr. Asgari contracting COVID-19 during his unwarranted detention. That he was eventually freed in June of this year (after three long years) as part of a prisoner exchange only serves to support the view that he was subjected to this ordeal as a bargaining chip.

MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom regularly reports on cases of scholars being subjected to unlawful detention and denial of procedural protections in Iran (see, for example, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Dr. Asgari's case suggests that the United States government may be engaging in similarly lawless conduct, which we deplore.



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MESA Executive Director

MESA Guidelines for Evaluating Digital Scholarship

MESA has prepared a set of guidelines to encourage fair and adequate evaluation of digital scholarship. These MESA guidelines point to best practices that are being widely adopted and is provided as a resource for members and to the field. Posted here: <https://mesana.org/resources-and-opportunities/guidelines-for-evaluating-digital-scholarship>



MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom comprises two sub-committees: MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and NA (North America). The mission of CAF is to address violations by protesting them at the highest government and diplomatic levels of the country where the violation occurs. If you learn of human rights or academic freedom violations please email the committee at caf@mesana.org.

Below are summaries of letters sent to heads of state, other high-ranking officials, or educational officials in response to an issue of academic freedom. The country listed represents the country receiving the letter. To view the full content of the letter, please see MESA's website (mesana.org).

4 May 2020 (Saudi Arabia)—Letter to Saudi authorities protesting the death in custody and after medical negligence of scholar, rights advocate, and political detainee Dr. Abdullah al-Hamid.

11 May 2020 (Israel)—Letter to Israeli authorities regarding the recent sentencing and continued imprisonment of Mais Abu Gush, a Birzeit University student who has been detained since August 2019.

19 May 2020 (Iran)—Letter to Iranian authorities expressing our grave concern over the well-being of Australian-British dual national, Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who has been imprisoned in Iran since 2018.

20 May 2020 (Turkey)—Letter regarding recent developments affecting Istanbul Sehir University that have compromised the university's governance and autonomy and now threaten it with closure as a result of an apparently politically motivated campaign by the Turkish government.

26 May 2020 (US)—Letter to the vice provost/vice president of Duke University criticizing the summoning of a student for questioning over her social media posts.

28 May 2020 (Egypt)—Letter to Egyptian authorities protesting the arrest and extended pre-trial detention of Kholoud Said, a translator at Bibliotheka Alexandrina, and calling for reform of the criminal code that allows for multiple renewals of the pre-trial detention period.

3 June 2020 (US)—Letter to the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison protesting the David Horowitz Freedom Center's Scurrilous Attack on Professor Samer Alatout. [Response received 25 June]

8 June 2020 (Turkey)—Letter regarding the recent amendments made to Turkey's Higher Education Law that enable arbitrary and unconstitutional forms of punishment against faculty and politically motivated closures of private universities.

19 June 2020 (Israel)—Letter to the Government of Israel protesting the ongoing obstruction of Palestinian higher education through the persistent targeting and detention of Palestinian students and the most recent spate of arbitrary arrests.

20 July 2020 (Turkey)—Letter regarding the case of Professor Bülent Şık whose research focuses on public health, food safety and the right to a healthy environment, and who was given a prison sentence for making public his research on industrial pollution.

30 July 2020 (Israel/Palestine)—Letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the most recent arrest and administrative detention of Dr. Imad Barghouti of Al-Quds University without charge or trial.

5 August 2020 (Iran)—Letter to Iranian authorities protesting the transfer of Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert from Evin to Qarchak prison and expressing grave concern for her safety and well-being.

5 August 2020 (Turkey)—Letter regarding the case of Dr. Kayihan Pala, a Public Health professor at Uludağ University, who faces a disciplinary investigation for sharing his scholarly views on the numbers of reported Covid-19 cases and fatalities in Bursa.

13 August 2020 (Israel)—Letter to Israeli authorities condemning the detention and conditional release of Rania Elias, Suhail Khoury, and Daoud Al-Ghoul, directors of cultural institutions in occupied

East Jerusalem, and the infringements on educational and cultural rights of Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem.

17 August 2020 (US)—Letter to the President of USC criticizing her recent message conflating anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. [Response received 21 August 2020]

31 August 2020 (Turkey)—Letter regarding a new social media law in Turkey that endangers academic freedom by further expanding government censorship.

9 September 2020 (Egypt)—Letter to Egyptian authorities expressing deep concern regarding the verdict against Bahey eldin Hassan, in absentia, on 25 August 2020. Hassan is a leading human rights advocate in Egypt and founder of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS). CAF also urges the authorities to drop all charges against Hassan.

21 September 2020 (Israel)—Letter to Israeli authorities protesting the continued detention of Imad Barghouthi, Professor of Theoretical Space Plasma Physics at Al-Quds University, and the order to place him under administrative detention.

22 September 2020 (Iran)—Letter to Iranian authorities protesting students' detention, and reports according to which they are being pressured into make televised false confessions in order to escape the death penalty.

22 September 2020 (Canada)—Letter to the president of the University of Toronto protesting the rescinding of the offer of employment to Dr. Valentina Azarova.

26 October 2020 (Turkey)—Letter regarding the restrictions on Kurdish language rights and studies in Turkey—undergraduate enrollment, research and writing in the language of study, recognition of publications towards scholarly promotion and employment opportunities for graduates.

27 October 2020 (Turkey)—Letter to President Erdoğan regarding the detention of Cihan Erdal, a doctoral candidate at Carleton University, apparently due to his having signed a letter in 2014 addressing events in Kobane, Syria while serving as a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

3 November 2020 (Morocco)—Letter to Moroccan government protesting its ongoing harassment and efforts at defamation of Dr. Maati Monjib, scholar and human rights activist.

4 November 2020 (Egypt)—Third letter to Egyptian government regarding the ongoing mistreatment of Walid Salem, doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, who is being prevented from travelling and leaving Egypt despite cancellation of “probationary measures” imposed on him following his release from pre-trial detention.

6 November 2020 (US)—Letter to president and dean at Cornell University protesting treatment of Professor Ariella Azoulay.

18 November 2020 (Israel)—Letter to Israeli authorities condemning ongoing prevention of Palestinian students in Gaza from studying abroad through denial of exit visas and travel permits.



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Resources on Academic Freedom

CAF has assembled a listing of materials that provide definitions, general information and links on academic freedom and campus speech that MESA members may find useful.

[READ MORE](https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2019/08/01/resources-on-academic-freedom)

<https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2019/08/01/resources-on-academic-freedom>

If you would like notification when CAF releases a letter, join the CAF listserv by emailing **CAF@mesana.org**

Or follow CAF on Twitter **CAF4MESA**



MESA's Global Academy is an interdisciplinary initiative to sustain essential research collaborations and knowledge production among MENA-focused scholars from the region of the Middle East and North Africa and their counterparts outside the region. By awarding competitive scholarships to displaced scholars from the MENA region to attend meetings, workshops, and conferences, the project harnesses the strengths of MESA's institutional and individual members to support the careers of individual researchers who study the Middle East and North Africa, but whose academic trajectory has been adversely affected by developments in their home countries.

Solidarity in Challenging Times

The MESA Global Academy is an initiative that sustains research collaborations and knowledge production among MENA-focused scholars in the humanities and social sciences from the Middle East and North Africa and their counterparts outside the region. Spearheaded by MESA, the project is an expression of the scholarly field's commitment to and investment in scholarship in and from the region. By awarding scholarships to displaced scholars from MENA currently located in North America to attend meetings, workshops, and conferences, the project supports individuals whose academic trajectory has been adversely affected by developments in their home countries.

The idea for the Global Academy emerged in 2016 out of a conversation held during the Center Directors' meeting at MESA's annual meeting that year. Directors discussed the large uptick in inquiries from academics in MENA looking for an affiliation with a North American university as a way of leaving—if only temporarily—circumstances that were either inhibiting their work or endangering their security. These were often academics who had had impressive careers in their home countries but were now finding them upended by circumstances such as war, censorship, and threats of imprisonment. As center directors shared stories and recognized the increasing urgency of coordinating efforts to find North American placement for colleagues from the region, a committee formed to explore the possibility of using MESA's remarkable network as a vehicle for offering support and expressing solidarity.

Of course, conditions that were placing scholars in the region under pressure also pointed to another set of serious concerns. Increasingly, MENA-focused scholars based in North America were also facing greater restrictions in their ability to travel to their research sites to work or to meet with colleagues, hampering scholarly production. Connecting scholars displaced from the region and specialists unable to reach the region was an obvious opportunity to address both sides of the coin and benefit the field of Middle East Studies.

Building collaborative ties among scholars at the global level has long been one of the great advantages of MESA, with an annual meeting that attracts international participation. And this network tying scholars in North America to those in the Middle East has only become more essential to the growth of the field as conditions are damaging the ability of MENA-based scholars to sustain their careers and North America-based scholars to travel to the region.

The conversations that began in 2016 eventually resulted in a proposal in 2017 for a fundraising initiative under MESA's umbrella. With the support of its Board and then President, Beth Baron, MESA agreed to launch what would become the Global Academy. The committee led by Ash Bali (then Director of the Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA) and her colleague Greta Scharnweber (then Associate Director at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University) next set out to secure funding for the project. In meeting with other scholarly groups and potential donors, it became clear that this would require raising awareness of the magnitude of the problems facing scholars in MENA.

The proposal that emerged from this work highlights the investment in knowledge production made possible by supporting displaced scholars in partnership with major Middle East research centers at universities across the United States. This framing allowed the Global Academy to receive a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York that has allowed for a three-year pilot project, currently in year two.

Since the fall of 2019, the Global Academy has awarded 24 scholarships to displaced scholars based in North America. Before COVID-19, it distributed travel grants to the awardees to present their research at universities across the US and attend and participate in the MESA annual meeting. In the spring of 2020, with the spread of the pandemic, the project shifted to awarding grants to support displaced scholars' academic output and organiz-

ing virtual events at universities as well as at the 2020 MESA annual meeting.

In partnership with the Arab Studies Institute, the *Jadaliyya* e-zine, MERIP, and MESA's own publications—*RoMES* and *IJMES*—the Global Academy also provides publication support and opportunities to its awardees. In addition, it hosts or organizes professional development workshops on topics ranging from journal and book publishing to careers outside academia.

The Global Academy has faced many difficulties, from the Trump “Muslim ban” to the pandemic, but the project is flourishing and has plans to incrementally build on its current success. This fall has already witnessed a rich array of programming by Academy scholars, and there remains much more ahead, including a conference at UCLA in the first week of December, a roundtable at the University of Chicago in January, and conferences and panels throughout the winter and spring at Columbia, Cornell, Georgetown, George Washington, Harvard, NYU, SUNY Bing-

hamton, Syracuse, and USC.

For more information about upcoming events, please check the Global Academy page on the MESA website, where you can also find recordings of past events. All MESA members are invited to attend these events and join in the community supporting this project and benefiting from the research presentations and collaborations it makes possible. The next round of application for Global Academy scholarships will take place in the spring of 2021, and we encourage MESA members to reach out to displaced scholars in their orbits to bring this opportunity to their attention.

More broadly, MESA has set a standard with the Global Academy that can serve as a model in the field and beyond of proactive solidarity for fellow scholars in precarious times. By becoming a central part of what MESA does and a permanent MESA program that has the ongoing and enthusiastic support of the Board, the hope is for the Global Academy to attract support from additional donors as well as MESA's own membership.



Global Academy Committee

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New York University
Greta Scharnweber
Independent Scholar
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MESA Elections

MESA election participation is on par with or better than comparable scholarly societies, yet our level of turnout means that an individual's vote has substantial importance. Your vote in our elections very much matters! Thank you for helping set the direction of your association by casting your vote.

Board of Directors Election Statistics, 2012-2020*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Membership at Election	2549	2963	2861	2667	2802	2634	2230	2675	2621
Eligible Members (F & S)	2445	2861	2770	2570	2735	2584	2172	2604	2550
Valid ballots	764	606	769	469	795	427	565	504	550
% of voting membership	31.25	21.28	27.76	18.25	29.07	16.52	26.00	19.35	21.57

* President-elect is elected in even-numbered years. Students are elected for two-year terms in odd-numbered years.

Notes on the Misery of the Academic Job Cycle

Tylor Brand | Trinity College, Dublin



It's no secret that navigating today's academic job market is a spectacularly unpleasant experience.

On a practical level, the application process is at its best a time sucking exercise in redundancy. Multiple websites must be scanned continuously for months to catch

potential new openings. Opaque job postings must be interpreted and arcane details must be clarified – for instance, what is a statement of teaching purpose and how does it differ from a statement of teaching philosophy? And why does a department need both for a job that pays \$42,000 a year to teach a 5:5 load? Letters and statements must be written, copied, pasted, edited, and triple checked to ensure that the letter for Ohio no longer contains references to Michigan.

To manage the multiple moving parts simultaneously, the applicant must devise a 4 dimensional calendar system to monitor deadlines and allot time to particular applications, as well as to alert them when it is time to politely harass colleagues who so generously offered to provide letters of reference at earlier, more peaceful points in the semester. Naturally, application materials must be completed while the applicant continues teaching, writing, occasionally sleeping, and trying to piece together the tatters of their personal life.

Those of us who specialize in the Middle East have additional burdens to bear. In a good year, a maximum of 15 positions might be advertised that could be reasonably be deemed suitable for those with the broadest specializations. Perhaps 5 of those might be actual fits for any given candidate. In a bad year the pickings are slim. For many applicants, their fantastic dissertation topic might inadvertently pigeonhole them in the minds of committee members, getting them scratched from the list in favor of a candidate working on something more amenable to the vagaries of the committee. Applications to non-specialized departments will inevitably fall into the hands of committee members who have little to no knowledge of the region, let alone current debates in the field. Many such jobs will contain "Islamic" in the title, and will have nothing to do with theology.

Alas.

The process is also an emotional meat grinder. Applicants must approach advisors, colleagues, and peers for recommendations, knowing in advance that their referee is likely writing the same letter for several colleagues applying to the same positions. After several job cycles, the applicant will cease to feel like a wretched Dickensian urchin asking for more and will merely feel like a burden on the lives of their letter writers. While early in one's job hunt the rejections can be crippling painful to bear, time and experience dull the sting of rejection. Eventually the applicant will be pleasantly surprised to find the rare rejection email in their inbox, even when it is a form letter that still contains the item "[insert name here]." As applicants move deeper into the hiring season without word from prospective schools, fit and location become less important than finding something to keep them afloat in the coming year.

This process is even more difficult for those who have taken non-traditional paths through academia, which despite its ideals still rewards the prestigious and the familiar over equally qualified candidates from a lower track.

A lucky few will get tenure track positions. Many who do will acquire a case of survivor's guilt to complement their usual early-career impostor's syndrome. Another lucky few will find temporary stability in multi-year visiting teaching positions or fellowships. Many others will find themselves farther down the scale of precarity, forced to start the process over again in a few short months. Many will find nothing.

I am particularly sensitive to this process because I have taken a particularly roundabout route into the field. I earned my Ph.D. in the Middle East and have spent most of my career in the region – partly by choice, partly by necessity. Over a four year period, I submitted close to 40 applications across three and a half job cycles. In my position in the United Arab Emirates, I also either chaired or sat on 7 different hiring committees. Though each encounter I had with the job cycle was unremittingly miserable, my experience on both sides of the hiring table gradually helped me hone my sense for what made some applicants successful and others not – excluding luck and circumstance, which secretly play an outsized role in any hiring process.

Over the years, I developed a few principles that helped me as I worked my way into the system. They may not apply to all cases and are not exhaustive by any means. Some are little more than detailed explanations of academic job hunt truisms, whereas others are simply based on personal observations. I like to share them whenever I feel they might be useful.

They are as follows:

1. Only apply to programs and jobs that are a good fit for you and tailor each application to the job call in a way that shows you know what you are applying for.

This is hard when you need a job, but it is important. Most job listings get dozens, if not hundreds of applications, and the committee's first task is to pare the initial pool down to a manageable list of a few dozen candidates. Unless your CV is too good to be true, statistically it is likely that you will not even reach the stage where anyone will actually read your meticulously prepared teaching statement.

Getting past this stage involves some luck, but it helps if you are a clear fit for the position. When I applied to my position in the Emirates, the committee initially listed me as unqualified because of my international Ph.D. However, one future colleague considered the fact that I had lived and studied in the region to be an advantage rather than a defect and convinced the rest of the committee members to add me back to the pool. Once I passed the initial hurdle, I could do more to help my candidacy, but the nebulous category of "fit" played a huge role in both of my tenure track hires. Likewise, as a committee member, it was easy to eliminate candidates for a position focused, say, on the Arab Middle East, if they solely specialized in Anatolian history.

In general, I learned to not waste time I did not have applying to positions I did not fit (or want). This relates to my second point.

2. Spend lots of time on your application materials, especially your letter.

I am sure you would be shocked to know that members of hiring committees are sometimes distracted, lazy and prone to bias. They will scan your CV to see where you went to school and what you published, and maybe glance over your letter in search of typos or main themes in case someone asks them about you in a committee meeting.

They will also toss your application the first chance they get. As petty as it may sound, typos and small errors can be fatal to an otherwise good application. For instance,

shortly after submitting an application to a top tier school, I noticed that I prominently misspelled something in the FIRST LINE of the letter (I somehow did not wither and die from my mortification).

To reward your committee members, your letter should be clear and strategically organized. It should have something approximating a thesis that shows what you want to do and why you want to be there. Above all, it should show how you will be useful for the school and the department. Highlight things like life experiences and skills that are not on your CV to show how you will be a good little cog, but avoid narrating if the story does not boost a specific argument in favor of your candidacy.

Letter structure is also key, and for this you will need to be able to interpret the job call accurately. If the position is at a research institution, put your research focus at the front of your letter. If you are clearly applying to a teaching school, put your teaching first and emphasize this as a strength. Avoid overselling yourself as a researcher at a teaching school, because paradoxically someone may see your talent and assume you will be disgruntled or unwilling to contribute in the classroom. Always include something about your service or administrative skills and how you fit as a colleague.

Remember, the committee members, not other applicants, are the real enemy here. Avoid controversial statements or anything that may be construed as a red flag. Definitely refrain from attacking particular styles of research or teaching, even if they deserve it, because one of those people will inevitably be on the hiring committee.

The time required to create a truly effective application is yet another good reason to apply to fewer, better fitting posts.

Two related points: I have an anecdotal theory that the worst jobs will require the most application materials. Likewise, your last letters, which will always be for the positions you want least, will be the best. Alas.

3. Have a range of colleagues who can provide letters of recommendation.

Ideally choose people with professional or scholarly opinions of your work rather than your advisors, who may be tempted to talk about you as a student. I tried to have 5 people who I could ask for letters at any one time to avoid overwhelming any of them. My magic combination was: 1. Department head, 2. Prestigious scholar in the field who for some reason held me in high regard, 3. Colleague who could speak to my strengths as

a teacher and administrator. These particular references would respectively corroborate my claims in the teaching, research and service portions of my application letter.

I truly do not know if anyone ever read the recommendations.

4. Make sure you represent yourself as a willing and able colleague.

One of the reasons I got my last job was that I made it clear several times that I am a team player who wants to help the department run smoothly (not a lie!). The wolfish look that this statement put on the dean's face should have been a warning sign. Alas.

Whether you like it or not, you are going to be saddled with tiresome service obligations if you are hired, so it is good practice to at least pretend that you would be happy – nay – eager, to take on a service role in your letter and interview if (knock wood) you get one.

5. Think internationally.

Looking at jobs across the globe will not only open up new options, it might provide interesting life experiences that you would never have imagined if you stuck to the States. In the final year of my Ph.D., I applied to 15 positions and got one interview, but no job offers. I managed to secure a temporary post, which allowed me to remain in Beirut, which I loved. In the next round, I was rejected by 14 schools, got one interview, and got a job in the UAE after the first candidate for the position dropped out. While I had never planned to live in the Gulf before I applied, my experience in the Emirates was personally and professionally rewarding and it allowed me to develop myself as a candidate for future applications.

The European job cycle is worth watching, especially if you miss out on the Fall jobs. There, postings will often begin to emerge, groundhog like, around February, but they can continue to roll out much later. I forwarded one post in Amsterdam to a colleague as late as April. While some of the jobs pay worse than positions in the US, they are worth the effort if you are either a good fit, or if the job may provide a good base from which to plot future moves.

The late application season means another several months of misery, but it may also offer opportunities that you

may miss if America is your only option. All of my jobs have been outside of America, and I couldn't be happier.

6. Keep your spirits up.

I hesitate to say that it's a game, but it is one. Success and failure are really just a matter of chance and luck. Many applicants are equally qualified, or differentiable by shades of preference rather than ability. I know amazing scholars and teachers who may never get a tenure track position and I have known people who never should have been hired in the first place who will occupy seats in the academy until they die.

You will not hear back from most jobs, but do not let that depress you or affect your self-worth. This is all a matter of odds, and those odds are never in your favor. However, that says more about the system than it does about you.

My final comments are about that system.

The academic job gauntlet disproportionately affects fresh graduates and young scholars stuck in short term positions. Those of us who are no longer either may feel as though this is no longer our problem. Some may even celebrate the wretchedness of the process as a final rite of passage into the ranks of our field. We must resist this.

While few of us bear any responsibility for the system as it was constructed, or of the alarming slide towards the normalization of cheap grad students and short term academic labor, we must still consider what we can do to mitigate the negative effects of this system on our colleagues entering the field. This is especially important since many of them have experienced two once-in-a-lifetime shocks in a single generation in the 2007 financial crisis and the COVID pandemic. Not only is the job market increasingly precarious – the job seekers are increasingly living in precarious, debt ridden situations as well.

In the absence of a clear path towards structural change, perhaps incremental change in the application process might minimize its impact on early career scholars. Where we can, we should push for a simplified application process that does not penalize scholars for missing the tenure track on their first tries. Moreover, we should try to limit the paperwork that applicants submit in the initial round of the hiring process. (If a candidate passes the first round, then the committee could request additional

documents like syllabi, letters of recommendation, teaching statements, and the like.)

Understandably, forcing change may be difficult, if not impossible. Some aspects of the application process are legally or institutionally mandated to prevent corruption and nepotism. Some of the more irritating bugs in the system (such as excessive application documentation) were likely intended to make the process fairer, or at least less openly biased in favor of Oxbridge and Ivy League graduates – though I may venture to suggest that if that was the goal, it has failed to produce the intended outcome.

Above all, we need to be empathetic and supportive despite our own time commitments and struggles. I would not be where I am without colleagues and mentors who were willing to take the time to help me succeed, and I am sure I am not the only one. If we forget this, we certainly do a disservice to our potential colleagues. However, we also do one to the field if it means we lose out on a future of brilliant scholarship over a process that is clearly problematic.

(Note: This article is an expanded version of my contributions to a discussion on a listserv about the application process)



MESA's Committee on Precarity and Adjunctification was approved at the January 15, 2020 MESA Board Meeting and charged with developing new approaches to advising and supporting precarious and contingent faculty and their allies. Many of the crises aggravated by Covid-19 have their roots in structural inequality and histories of discrimination and exclusion. The issues with the growing contingent majority in the professoriate have been a focus for MESA since at least 1990. These issues are not unique to Middle East studies, but impact higher education in the United States overall.

The MESA Precarity Committee pivoted in March of this year to focus on support for adjuncts on temporary contracts, which were often the first cuts for universities taking austerity measures. The MESA Secretariat conducted a survey on behalf of the precarity committee in March 2020 as well, which garnered about three dozen responses, reflecting widespread anxiety over economic insecurity, particularly among advanced graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. At the 2020 Annual Meeting, the committee convened a special session as a followup, aiming to ensure this is a collaborative process as the committee continues to meet and develop recommendations for MESA to implement.

Committee on Precarity and Adjunctification

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MESA's Committee for Undergraduate Middle East Studies is a forum within MESA for sharing best practices in teaching and learning. CUMES sponsors panels on pedagogy, curriculum development, technology in the classroom, international study and other aspects of teaching and learning at the MESA annual meeting.

Active Pedagogies in Middle East Studies



Victoria Penziner Hightower
University of North Georgia



James Worrall
University of Leeds



Kristi Barnwell
University of Illinois-Springfield



Alyssa Miller
Scripps College



Nir Boms
Tel Aviv University



Chelsi Mueller
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical
University

In 2020 CUMES sponsored our panel *Critical Skills for the Fake News Age: Active Pedagogies in Middle East Studies*, which explored active pedagogies in the Middle East Studies classroom. We kicked off the panel by posing a basic question: What is meant by “active pedagogies”? Is it simply a synonym for role-playing or in-class simulations? We concluded that there is a lot more to active pedagogy than simulations—although simulations are perfectly useful, too! Our roundtable explored several ways that active pedagogies could be introduced to the classroom. Our experiences represented research-oriented and liberal arts-focused universities, majors and non-majors, upper level and lower-level courses. Our positions are tenured, tenure-track, and contingent. Our experience demonstrates that these strategies are widely applicable and that it does not require the reader to completely re-vamp the entire course to incorporate them, which makes them more accessible.

Although active pedagogies are highly prized in academia today, literature on the intersection between active learning pedagogies and teaching in Middle East Studies / Area Studies remains sparse. Often, this literature is discipline-specific, or focuses on how to acknowledge students’ positionalities and the challenging nature of the subjects at hand (Kirschner 2012). Our strategies are applicable across disciplinary boundaries, learning levels, and schools.

For Dr. Worrall, active pedagogies helped students understand the goals and aims of teaching, and can be deployed to actively engage students in the development of crucial skills. We often talk about skills building in our teaching and model the behaviors and skills that we want students to develop. Dr. Worrall presented an analytical framework that asks students to consider events and ideas in a multi-level pyramid. At its base was the domestic politics of a country. Above the domestic level, students are asked to compare within the region (Comparative Politics), intra-regional relationships (International Relations), the international influences (International Relations), and finally the global environment and context (Comparative Politics and International Relations). This model helps students move fluidly across different aspects of political analysis. This helps struggling students make their analysis systematic and concrete and helps already advanced students become more diligent and focused in their analysis.

Active pedagogy makes curriculum design and delivery transparent. It should provide them with clear tools and opportunities to discuss the development and application of key skills which strengthen students’ abilities to analyze in a more complex and nuanced manner. Students are thus far more aware of the value of what they are learning, more confident

in their abilities, more aware of the requirements of our courses and thus far better equipped to tackle the assessments we set for them.

In addition to presenting how to help students become more actively involved in the conception of the material, our panelists presented ways of adapting traditional assignments for greater engagement, as well as assignments that include simulations and projects drawing on visual analysis to establish students as active learners and participants.

Dr. Barnwell presented assignments designed for creating interactive learning online, which she has subsequently adapted to enrich in-person active learning, building on Conrad and Donaldson's (2011) "framework for engagement." A weekly discussion board assignment identifies specific engagement goals for students. Students are provided with multiple questions to choose from and must post a minimum number of responses, with at least one post providing a substantive response to the discussion-in-progress. The professor models these responses on the board providing the initial discussion questions and participating in the conversation to push the conversation forward. In subsequent weeks, students are assigned weeks to generate questions and moderate discussion, using conversational moves to help extend the conversation when discussion posts lag. As student discussions progress, the instructor can become removed from the conversation, allowing students to take full ownership of their learning each week.

Dr. Miller's presentation highlighted the use of archival materials (photographs and video testimonials) to teach students to decipher visual rhetoric and integrate images into their research. The lesson was organized around representations of migrants and refugees following 2011 Arab Spring. Prior readings helped students recognize popular media tropes that dehumanize mobile populations, which they then contrasted with video testimonials and photographs of everyday life in refugee camps. The workshop culminated in a writing exercise, which challenged students to engage with a single photograph using the method of "thick description." Not only can such workshops help students to experiment with their writing style, but they can break-down perceived institutional barriers, encourag-

ing them to explore archives on campus and take ownership of the research process.

Dr. Boms presented a way to structure role-play assignments to help set up a larger simulation. In this context, the students are asked to learn the course also from the perspective of their expected role play (e.g: a regional leader or a head of state) and hence analyze the material from another perspective which will might become more 'personal' and engaging as the student needs to represent not only a personal understating but also a perspective of a living figure that plays a role in shaping a given chapter of history and reality.

This type of assignment was also discussed by Dr. Mueller who, uses short term simulations to engage students who might not complete the reading and to help aloof students engage in real time with the material. For her, presenting the information in lecture, then assigning roles, and having groups construct responses in a single class period helped her students understand the complexities of 19th century Persian Gulf politics.

Dr. Mueller uses role play activities to engage non-major students with the history and politics of the Persian Gulf. Her role play activities are designed as a means by which to incorporate active learning inside of a single class period. For example, one of her role play activities begins with a mini-lecture which briefly introduces students to the intersection between tribes, non-tribal groups, regional actors, and international actors in 19th century Gulf. Then she introduces a hypothetical scenario in which the different historical actors are required to respond to a crisis. She divides the class into groups and asks each group to play the role of one of the actors.

Each group is asked to step into the shoes of the actor it is assigned, to consider the scenario and to respond to two questions: Given the scenario, what are your goals and what actions will you take? The groups discuss how they will answer and appoint a spokesperson. When the students endeavor to see the scenario from the perspective of one of the historical actors, they begin to open a window for themselves into the complexities of 19th century Persian Gulf history.

Dr. Hightower presented on how active pedagogies make students co-creators of knowledge and help them take control of their learning. This begins with the framing

Active pedagogy addresses the preparation and delivery of content as well as assignment/assessment creation. It goes beyond incorporating simulations and does not always entail a complete overhaul of existing teaching practices.

of the question and its purpose. Taking James Lang's Small Teaching insights and combining it with Paul Handstedt's "wicked questions," she talked about how she initially started asking different, bigger, and more difficult questions that required students to master nuance, take into account different perspectives, and to compromise in order to make evidence-based arguments. Using an example from a simulation in her Arab-Israeli class, she explained how she gave students the assignment to find peace in order to help her students recognize the challenges to this model. The students walked into class thinking peace was simply a matter of drawing a line, and walked out, understanding the conflict in more nuanced terms.

Introducing active pedagogies require the faculty member to establish rapport with the students and the ability to build a relationship of trust. Active pedagogies insert a dimension of creativity and gaming that often serves as a positive stimulus for the learning process. Active learning strategies depend on careful planning and thoughtful implementation, but the effort pays off in increased engagement and deeper learning. Most of us thrive on constructing those deep, challenging relationships and finding the puzzle piece that not only helps a student learn, but also turns them into a life-long learner. Active pedagogies bring a different dimension of learning to the table. It enables faculty members to reveal the process of learning to students, empowering them to learn the process of learning in new ways – on their own and from each other – and overall, provide useful tools for their futures and so, they are worth a try.



**Committee for Undergraduate Middle East
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Bland Addison
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Emma Harver
Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies

Victoria Hightower
University of North Georgia

Youness Mountaki
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Steve Tamari
Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville

Jeff VanDenBerg
Drury University

Time to Renew Your MESA Membership

New automatic renewal option and updates to myMESA

NEW! Automatic Renewal

If you would like to sign-up for automatic renewal or contribution, complete the form available at https://mesana.org/pdf/Automatic_payment_form_fillable.pdf and return to Sara Palmer (sara@mesana.org).

Updated Demographic Options

To understand and best serve our membership, MESA's Board and relevant board-constituted committees would like to have the most up-to-date demographic data. With the recent myMESA database upgrade, we have expanded the options for professional positions and titles, added additional options for gender fluidity along a nonbinary spectrum, as well as for self-identification by ethnicity.

You may always of course opt out of having your name appear publicly, but your member record provides important data for statistical and planning purposes. Any demographic data shared with MESA committees is anonymized and confidential.

If you have a public profile, it is also important to maintain your membership profile so that you can be found as an expert in your field.

Thank you for allowing us to capture a current picture of the state of the field (membership by discipline, area of focus, and so forth), which requires up-to-date data in myMESA. Simply provide any changes to your contact information, research interests, and other details, with appreciation once again.

From the Desk of the *IJMES* Editor

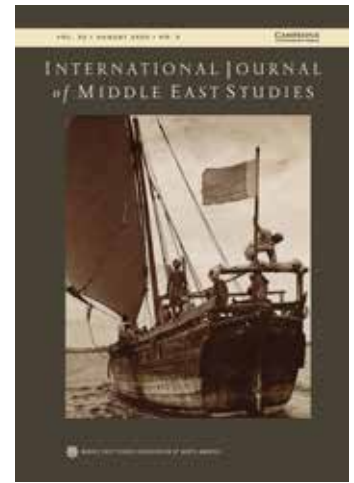
Joel Gordon | *IJMES* Editor | University of Arkansas

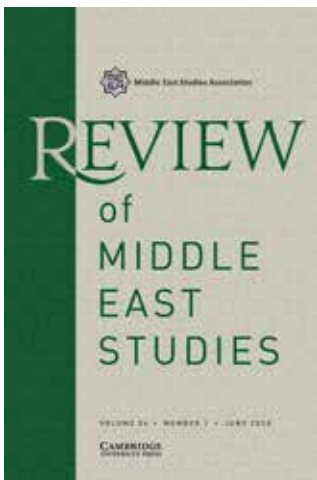
When I last wrote for *IMES* a global pandemic and Oran were on my mind. This week I am thinking back to a trip to Egypt in January 1993. Bill Clinton had been handed the keys to the White House by its departing, one-term occupant, George H. W. Bush. Viewing the scene from afar, many average Egyptians, always ready to share an opinion, were taken aback that a successful wartime leader – he who had trounced Saddam Hussein, and with Arab support – had been ousted from power. I kept trying to explain that “It was the economy [stupid]” that undid the suddenly ex-president. But what I remember most clearly is how impressed – and envious – Egyptians were at a peaceful, even gracious transition. I can well imagine their knowing, sympathetic looks today.

IJMES has survived a brief hard copy moratorium: as Issue 2/May 2020 was in final preparation for publication, Cambridge University Press determined to proceed with an online only version, at least until the wheels of the print industry could be set spinning. Fortunately by the time Issue 3/August 2020 came out things were back to normal. Those of us who do not/can not visit our departments regularly should find both volumes waiting in their campus mailboxes.

Too many publishers (not our parent company CUP, fortunately) have taken the opportunity to further ambitions to dispense with hard copies as much as possible. For us this means an ever-growing struggle to access print books for review. Some publishers understand our argument, that a nice bound book, cloth or paper is the least we can offer to prospective reviewers; some sent immediate e-books but promised hard copies as soon as possible. Others expect us, like too many of our libraries to jump at an e-book. In some cases, especially during pandemic lockdown phases, the e-book facilitates the process: they are easy to “post” to anyone anywhere. And a portable library of downloaded texts may have its advantages for some these days. Still, we urge you, established and forthcoming authors, to lobby your publishers to make your books available in print.

For those of you who could not attend the virtual publishing workshop that Heather Ferguson (*ROMES*) and I convened during the recent annual meeting, a recording is available via MESA [<https://vimeo.com/466945874>]*—*and soon on the CUP *IJMES* website. With slightly different missions, but corresponding goals, we hope to make the process of submission and review as clear as possible. At *IJMES* we are pleased to see an ever-widening global pool of successful applicants producing memorable work in an expanding geo-cultural field representing inter- and multi-disciplinary coverage across time. And we are trying our hardest—recognizing that authors and reviewers may be pre-occupied with other duties and/or cut off from their sources—to keep the review process, however it may end, punctual.





From the Desk of the *RoMES* Editor

Heather Ferguson | *RoMES* Editor | Claremont McKenna College

I often wonder if former Editors of *RoMES* faced their computer screens and pondered how to craft their announcement blurbs and Letters from the Editor with the same sense of unease and trepidation. It can't really be the case that, since June of 2017 when I climbed aboard the *RoMES* publication timetable, we have lived in a state of emergency (to pilfer from Agamben) unique to our time? As scholars, teachers, and practitioners living in or dedicated to that amorphous thing "the MENA region" we have surely become accustomed to fraught regional, trans-regional, and global dynamics? Certainly representatives of fields in the social sciences and humanities could point to cataclysmic upheavals that disrupted lives and disciplinary paradigms in whichever historical period defines their research. Yet, as we ponder a global reality convulsed by yet another pandemic and yet more precipitous challenges to social and racial justice that test the exclusionary frameworks of the nation-state system, it seems incumbent upon us, as members of the Middle East Studies Association, to recognize and respond to this moment directly.

We designed the "Special Focus" section of *RoMES* in the past few years as a mechanism for achieving just this goal: to shine a spotlight on contemporary events or disciplinary interventions so as to illuminate marginalized or misrepresented dynamics and groups. Sometimes this has meant analyzing rising authoritarianism in Turkey, tracing new configurations of refugees and displaced persons, or reflecting on the consequential decision to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Yet, the "Special Focus" section has also highlighted the importance of popular culture and cinematic studies and debates concerning the aesthetics of modernism in MENA's art and artistic movements, thereby indicating the importance of humanistic studies in this broader commitment to re-shaping the conversation about the challenges we face around the globe. In 54.2 we turn our attention to the field of religious studies as part of our effort to embody MESA's disciplinary diversity.

The "Special Focus" roundtable for the January/February *RoMES* issue emerged from two international workshops at Columbia University's Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life entitled "Pluralism in Emergenc(i)es: Movement, Space, and Religious Difference. The workshops took place at Columbia Global Centers in Aman, Jordan and in Tunis, Tunisia and sought "to bring together a diverse group of local experts, students and with regional specialists and practitioners from academia, the art world, and the business community, as well as experts from civil society and the NGO sector" to interrogate the meaning of "pluralism" as a technology of power that activates religious difference within a moment of forced global migration with dramatic consequences for questions related to housing, the built environment more generally, collective memory, minoritization, and identitarianism. Organized by Sami Al-Daghistani (Columbia University), A. George Bajalia (Columbia University), and Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi (University of Oslo) and guest edited by our Associate Board Member Bassam Yousif (Indiana State University) the contributors move across geographies to address precarity at the intersection between religious belief, identity politics and technologies of power.

RoMES 54.2 further builds on these themes in its Pedagogical Perspectives and Curator's Corner columns, with essays that explore how to teach mapping projects within the constantly evolving geopolitical space of Iraq and the curation of Palestinian student films as part of a class on cinema studies. Further, our "Middle East Studies in Action" section highlights MESA's Global Academy initiative to sustain global scholarship in the MENA region. It is our hope that these varied components of the *Review* will model an online presence capable of shaping academic and public discourse within this period of heightened global anxiety.

We look forward to working with MESA members to ensure that the *RoMES* pages consistently serve as means to interrogate the global structures that shape our lives.

Interested in reading the latest from *RoMES*? Read the latest issue from the Publications link at MESA, and follow us on Twitter at @RevoMES. Any questions or inquiries concerning content or potential submissions should be sent via email to Editor Heather Ferguson and Managing Editor Blaise Malley at romes@cmc.edu.

CALL FOR PAPERS

MESA 2021

October 28-31, 2021

Palais des Congrès
Montréal, Quebec, Canada

The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) calls for proposals for its 55th annual meeting to be held in the fall of 2021. MESA is primarily concerned with the area encompassing Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Israel, Pakistan, and the countries of the Arab World and their diasporas from the 7th century to modern times. Other regions including Spain, Southeastern Europe, China and the former Soviet Union, also are included for the periods in which these territories were parts of the Middle Eastern empires or under the influence of Middle Eastern civilization. Comparative work is encouraged.

Detailed Call for Papers instructions, including the all important review criteria used by the program committee, will be posted on MESA's website. All prospective participants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with what is expected of submissions. Proposals must conform to the guidelines listed in the Call for Papers instructions.

Requirements to Participate

- Only current MESA members for 2021 may submit. If your dues are not paid, you cannot access the submission section of the site. (Make it easy on yourself - renew your membership today and save time and hassle later!)
- All submissions must be made through MESA's electronic submission system: <https://mesana.org/mymesa/login.php>
- Meeting registration is not required until May 15, *after* the program committee decisions are released.

Submissions accepted January 8-February 18, 2021

You may submit proposals beginning January 8, 2021 and must be complete by **midnight on Thursday, February 18, 2021 (Eastern Standard Time)**, at which time the electronic submission system will be deactivated. **Late submissions—for any reason—will not be considered.**

Membership News

New & Returning Members

MESA welcomes 708 new members (225 full, 423 students, 60 associates) for 2020, and 841 returning members who were not members last year. The total membership as of November 20 is 2,846.

MESA's Institutional Members

We recognize the following organizations as institutional members of MESA. Our institutional members share with MESA a commitment to recognizing excellence in the field, encouraging the growth and vibrancy of all the different disciplines within Middle Eastern studies, and defending the rights of scholars and academics around the world.

American University in Cairo	Ocean County College
American University in Dubai	Portland State University, Middle East Studies Center
AMIDEAST Education Abroad	Princeton University, Department of Near Eastern Studies
Arab Center Washington D.C. (ACW)	Simon Fraser University
Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies	Syracuse University, Middle Eastern Studies Program
Brown University	University of Arizona, Center for Middle Eastern Studies
Columbia University, Middle East Institute	University of Arkansas, King Fahd Center for Middle East & Islamic Studies
Cornell University, Department of Near Eastern Studies	University of California, Berkeley, Center for Middle Eastern Studies
Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies	University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Near Eastern Studies
Foundation for Iranian Studies	University of Chicago, Center for Middle Eastern Studies
George Washington University, Institute for Middle East Studies	University of Michigan, Center for Middle Eastern & North African Studies
Georgetown University, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies	University of Pennsylvania, Middle East Center
Georgetown University, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding	University of Southern California
Harvard University, Center for Middle Eastern Studies	University of Toronto, Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations
ILEX Foundation	University of Washington, Middle East Center
Indiana University, Center for the Study of the Middle East	Vanderbilt University
Marquette University	Yale University
McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies	
Middle East Institute at the National University of Singapore	
New York University, Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies	

To apply for institutional membership, an institution should submit to the Secretariat a letter of interest, a list of directors, and descriptive information about the institution and its programs (e.g. brochures, sample publications). Submit materials to secretariat@mesana.org. Institutional membership annual dues are \$1100.



2020 Awards Ceremony

Some of the best in Middle East studies were honored at the 2020 Awards Ceremony held October 11, 2020 virtually. MESA's awards program began in 1982 by honoring the best dissertations in the field. Since then it has grown into a diverse program that includes:

MESA Academic Freedom Award
Jere L. Bacharach Service Award
MESA Mentoring Award
Undergraduate Education Award (presented odd-number years)
Albert Hourani Book Award
Nikki Keddie Book Award
Fatema Mernissi Book Award
Roger Owen Book Award (presented odd-number years)
Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award in the Humanities
Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award in the Social Sciences
MESA Graduate Student Paper Prize

MESA thanks the following review committees

2020 MESA Book Awards Committee

Akram Khater (North Carolina State University)
Jeffrey Byrne (University of British Columbia)
Nancy Khalek (Brown University)
Elizabeth Holt (Bard College)
Zakia Salime (Rugters University)

2020 Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award Committee in the Social Sciences

Sean Foley (Middle Tennessee State University)
Nicola Pratt (University of Warwick)
Hosna Sheikholeslami (Denison University)
Max Weiss (Princeton University)

2020 Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award Committee in the Humanities

Liat Kozma (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
Joel Blecher (George Washington University)
Nova Robinson (Seattle University)
Levi Thompson (University of Colorado, Boulder)

2020 Graduate Student Paper Prize Committee

Karen Eugenie Rignall (University of Kentucky)
Sara Farhan (American University of Sharjah)
Austin O'Malley (University of Arizona)

The chair of each committee is listed first.

2020 MESA Mentoring Award

The MESA Mentoring Award was established in 1995 and first given at MESA's 1996 annual meeting. The award recognizes exceptional contributions retired faculty have made to the education and training of others.



Renata Holod, University of Pennsylvania

This year's mentoring award is given to Renata Holod in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to the training and support of others in Middle East studies.

Her nominating materials included letters of support from some of Holod's earliest — and some of her most recent — students. Over her almost fifty years of teaching at the University of Pennsylvania as professor of Islamic art and architecture in the History of Art department, she has directly advised 24 Ph.D. dissertations, and has served as a committee member for at least 27 more. Her former students are placed in universities, museums, and cultural heritage organizations throughout the globe.

These facts of quantity bear little witness to the quality of her engagement with her students: the personal time, the focused support, and the urging forward which characterizes her mentoring of each one of her students. Holod consistently puts forward her students, not herself.

Meeting a prospective advisee for the first time, Holod leaned back in her chair, looked the student right in the eye, and said "Look, I need you to understand one thing: I am not here to send out copies of myself into the world. You will have your own interests, and my job is to help you figure out what those are and become whoever you are meant to be in the field."

With deep appreciation for her extraordinary mentoring of an entire generation of scholars, many of whom are now modelling her practice in their careful mentoring of their own students. Cross-disciplinary dialogues and collaborations do not just happen on their own, but need to be actively cultivated and maintained. She has largely instilled this lesson by example, with her own research projects trending toward team-based efforts drawing on the expertise of archaeologists, philologists, historians, engineers, architects, and archivists.

It is an honor to recognize Renata Holod — an outstanding art historian of Islamic architecture, archaeologist, and mentor — who has constantly encouraged the finest of Middle East studies scholarship by training multiple generations of academics at every stage of her career.

2020 Jere L. Bacharach Service Award

The MESA Service Award was established in 1996 and was first awarded at MESA's 1997 annual meeting. In 2004 the award was named for Jere L. Bacharach in honor of his extraordinary service to MESA, many of her sister societies, and the field overall. The award recognizes the contributions of individuals through their outstanding service to MESA or the profession. In 2020, two individuals were honored.



Dale F. Eickelman, Dartmouth College

Dale Eickelman is honored and recognized for his exceptional service to the field of Middle East Studies. Over 18 years at NYU, 27 at Dartmouth College, and continuing past his retirement in 2016, he has worked to build the intellectual infrastructure of interdisciplinary Middle East Studies: He co-founded and served for six years on a joint committee of the ACLS/SSRC for comparative study of Muslim societies in the 1980s. He also served as external reviewer for Middle East Studies centers and on anthropology and other program panels for NEH, Fulbright, and SSRC. He organized and secured grant funding for conferences and workshops that brought the work of Middle East scholars in countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, on (NEH), path-breaking conferences and workshops on print Islam and the public sphere (Rockefeller), on liberal arts in the Arabian peninsula (Rockefeller) and university

development in Gulf countries (American U of Kuwait), Summer Seminars for College Teachers (NEH) and graduate students (SSRC), and a multi-year German-American Young Scholars Program of workshops (funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation) for two dozen near and new doctorates from European and Turkish universities. He also contributed to a multi-year project for modernizing Islamic and Middle East studies in Japan that brought a significant number of new scholars into the field. He organized non-credit seminars for graduate students in Morocco, where his own research began, as well as meetings of Turkish, Middle Eastern and European doctoral students in social sciences and history of Muslim societies, as well as two Gulf Research Center meetings at Cambridge featuring equal participation by Gulf state nationals, both of which resulted in publications. Many also benefited from how he turned otherwise routine editorial tasks on journals and for university presses into opportunities that forwarded the careers of scholars in Islamic and Middle East Studies.

In the past 15 years, he has served an entire new university in his role as principal advisor for the creation and staffing of the American University of Kuwait, the first in the Middle East since Cairo and Beirut to explicitly embrace a liberal arts model.

In sum, he has brought people from all over the world into conversation with one another and into professional Middle East studies, advancing new people and new topics together, graduate students, post-doctoral students, colleagues, and institutions in the U.S. and many other countries. Eickleman succeeded in getting brilliant new scholars and exciting new scholarship into circulation that otherwise would have remained at geographic and academic margins. His is a history of full-spectrum, multi-modal service to others and to his profession that is extremely rare, appreciated by many, and deserving of recognition by the profession to which he has given so much of himself.



James F. Goode, Grand Valley State University

Perhaps the best demonstration of Goode's service is his outstanding internationalization work at Grand Valley State University that spanned decades of commitment and vision. In the early 1990s, he served as the Director of the Michigan Committee on US-Arab Relations. He led the process to establish a Middle East Studies Program at GVSU in 1997 and served as the Coordinator of the program from 1997 to 2006. His vision transformed an idea into an interdisciplinary academic minor, led to the hiring of faculty in Arabic and History, the establishment of several study abroad programs, and the annual hosting of the Model Arab League Conference during the Winter semester, which GVSU has hosted for more than two decades now. Throughout his tenure as the

Coordinator of the Middle East Studies Program, he invited outstanding guest speakers and performers to promote understanding of a largely misunderstood region. His work was always motivated by a strong commitment to educating our campus community and enriching the intellectual life of our students, faculty, and community alike.

Goode served on GVSU's International Education Committee and three university-wide task forces relation to internationalization.

In addition, he took the lead in establishing study-abroad programs to Egypt and to Turkey.

Last but not least, his outreach to the local community is exemplary, working closely with others to put together programs to reach nearby libraries, schools, churches, and institutions. He put together these talks and workshops as a volunteer, motivated by a deep desire to educate and demystify the Middle East region.

2020 Academic Freedom Award

The MESA Academic Freedom Award was established in 2001. It is presented on appropriate occasions in recognition of sustained contributions in support of academic freedom in the Middle East and North Africa, and/or in North America.



Photo by Mona, taken September 2010

Activist Laila Soueif in September 2010

Leila Soueif, Cairo University

Dr. Laila Soueif is a professor in the Department of Mathematics at Cairo University. A respected professor known for her dedication to her students and to the highest standards of scholarship, she has also been an activist since her days as a university student. Over the years, she has been a part of numerous movements among faculty members in Egyptian universities aimed at raising their status, protecting the teaching profession, and enhancing academic exchange among scholars across disciplines. She has also long been a passionate supporter of student movements at the university and a courageous defender of them against administrative violations and state repression. Furthermore, she has been a staunch defender of political prisoners, among them, many academics.

Dr. Soueif is perhaps best known as one of the key founders of the March 9 Movement for University Autonomy in Egypt, a group that has been active through conferences, protests and other engagements in defending academic freedom and the independence of the university, and which thereby also played a role in paving the road to the 2011 revolution.

Her involvements have included membership in other organizations that have sought to expand social dignity, document the repressive reality of contemporary Egypt, and nonviolently resist state violence -- even as such violence has too often targeted her and her family.

Laila Soueif has always insisted that academic freedom is part and parcel of respect for human and civil rights. As a member of a family of prominent activists, she has consistently used her platform to advocate for these rights. While no one person can be said to embody the Egyptian people's struggle against social, economic and political repression, Laila Soueif and her tireless work in defense of academic freedom, human rights and dignity are exemplary of a deep commitment that refuses to acquiesce in injustice.

CAF is honored to recognize Dr. Laila Soueif's decades of courageous activism with its Academic Freedom Award for 2020.

2020 Albert Hourani Book Award

The Albert Hourani Book Award was established in 1991 to recognize outstanding publishing in Middle East studies. The award was named for Albert Hourani to recognize his long and distinguished career as teacher and mentor. The Albert Hourani Book Award recognizes a work that exemplifies scholarly excellence as well as clarity of presentation, in the tradition of Albert Hourani.

Winner

Waste Siege: The Life of Infrastructure in Palestine

Stanford University Press



Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, Bard College

This book offers an outstanding and novel contribution to the study of Palestinian life as a waste siege. Through a rich ethnography and a sophisticated theoretical analysis this book focuses on the governance and governing power of waste. Professor Stamatopoulou-Robbins explores waste at the intersection of geography (space/infrastructures) policies, science, technology, and quotidian management and governance. How it feels to live in between two absent states, one of abandonment and one of absence? How to understand Palestine through waste, and how to understand waste as occupation of a physical “empty” space, after the metaphorical empty space of occupation?



Honorable Mention

What is 'Islamic' Art? Between Religion and Perception

Cambridge University Press



Wendy M. K. Shaw, Free University Berlin

Professor Shaw's book is a bold and successful attempt to reconceptualize the historiography of Islamic art outside the current Euro-centric and colonial paradigm. She problematizes the Christian origins of art historical analysis in the Western academy, linking the hegemonic tendencies of the field to an epistemic violence that inherently dominates and colonizes the art of the non-western “other.” To do so Shaw takes “Islam” seriously as a category of analysis, arguing that it drives the production of Islamic art, rather than being incidental to it. In the process she places in generative tension the Islamic and Western paradigms for understanding agency and subjectivity.



2020 Nikki Keddie Book Award

The Nikki Keddie Book Award was established in 2017 to recognize outstanding scholarly work in the area of religion, revolution, and/or society. The annual award was named for Nikki Keddie to recognize her long and distinguished career as a scholar and teacher.

Winner

Drugs Politics: Managing Disorder in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Cambridge University Press



Mazyar Ghiabi, SOAS, University of London and University of Exeter

This is a remarkable and groundbreaking study of Iranian modernity that explores the politics of substance abuse. Professor Ghiabi investigates how drug use has been linked to questions of modernization, Islamization and regimes of sociability in contemporary Iran. The book highlights ethical contradictions as part of the political articulations that are essential to the maintenance and reproduction of political prerogatives, and preservation of state interests. At the same time, he highlights the limits of state power in containing and controlling drug consumption, and by extension Iranian society. Ghiabi's book is theoretically sophisticated and methodologically sound, and based on extensive and rich research.



Honorable Mention

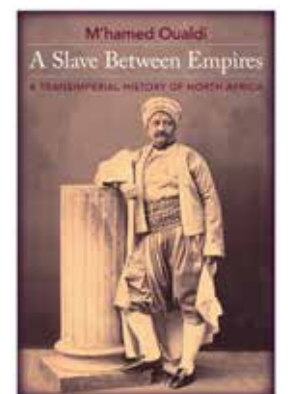
A Slave Between Empires: A Transimperial History of North Africa

Columbia University Press



M'hamed Oualdi, Sciences Po

Oualdi's book stands out among several impressive books that de-center and reorient Middle Eastern history by following illuminating travelers. It is focused on a former Caucasian slave who becomes an Ottoman dignitary in Tunisia, from where he is posted to Italy. The book examines the complex arbitration of his estate following his death there. Oualdi's historiographical positioning of this story shows that the Ottoman era in Tunisia did not simply cease with the arrival of the French. This represents a considerable intervention into the periodization and conceptualization of North African history. The book is admirably readable and creatively insightful in its use of a rich evidentiary base.



2020 Fatema Mernissi Book Award

The Fatema Mernissi Book Award was established in 2017 to recognize outstanding scholarship in studies of gender, sexuality, and women's lived experience. The annual award was named for Fatema Mernissi to recognize her long and distinguished career as a scholar and as a public intellectual.

Winner

Sacrificial Limbs: Masculinity, Disability, and Political Violence in Turkey

University of California Press



Salih Can Açıksöz, UCLA

A study of the contemporary Turkish gazi, or injured military veteran as non-normative masculinity, *Sacrificial Limbs* impressed the committee with the rigor of its theoretical perspective, and the nuance and care with which Açıksöz approaches this community. The discourse on prosthesis was particularly generative and inspired. Revealing the far-right politicization of disability and masculinity through a sophisticated theorization of non-binary gender, Açıksöz renders an ethnographic study with significant comparative potential, both within the Middle East as well as other global militarized societies, not least the United States.



Honorable Mention

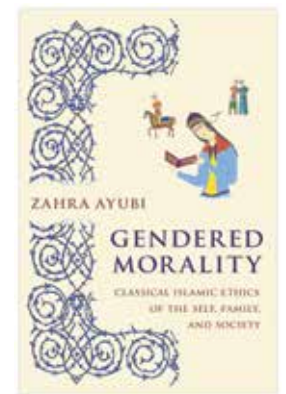
Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society

Columbia University Press



Zahra Ayubi, Dartmouth College

Ayubi's work finally puts gender into a study of medieval Islamic philosophy and ethics, fields of study about male medieval scholars and peopled almost exclusively by modern male scholars. Ayubi tackles issues of personal rather than political ethics, exploring how theories of moral responsibility and familial and communal living were gendered and hierarchized. In addition to being conversant with theory on femininity and gender, Ayubi looks at how Islamic ethics constructed masculinity in terms of a tension between hierarchy and egalitarianism, or, in her terms, between justice and power, and she examines men's ethical engagements with women and men's construction of homosocial relationships as well.



2020 Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Awards

The MESA Dissertation Awards were established in 1982 to recognize exceptional achievement in research and writing for/of dissertations in Middle East studies. In 1984 the award was named for Malcolm H. Kerr to honor his significant contributions to Middle East studies. Awards are given in two categories: Social Sciences and Humanities.

Humanities Winner

Mu'taqal Machine: Power, Gender and Identity in Egypt's Political Prisons, 1948-1981



Hannah Elsis Ashmawi, University of Oxford, Faculty of History

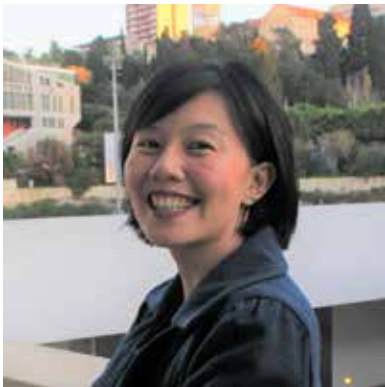
Dissertation Examiners Committee: Prof. Marylin Booth and Prof. John Chalcraft

Supervisors: Prof. Robert Gildea and Dr. Lucie Ryzova

The Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Award committee unanimously chose Hannah Elsis Ashmawi's *Mu'taqal Machine: Power, Gender and Identity in Egypt's Political Prisons, 1948-1981* (University of Oxford, Faculty of History) as the best humanities dissertation. Timely, theoretically sophisticated, meticulously researched, highly courageous and ethically committed "Mu'taqal Machine" examines the role of gender as a site of contestation in Egyptian political imprisonment, which leaves its imprint on Egyptian culture and society. The author shows how prison authorities use gender to strip prisoners of their identity, as individuals, parents, and spouses, and how prisoners employ gender to maintain their personhood and human dignity. The author meticulously weaves in a careful reading of prison journals, photographs and interviews. Her empathy and respect for her research subjects particularly impressed the committee. The work's innovative theoretical and methodological framework can serve as a model for scholars in other fields.

Social Sciences Winner

The Sublime Post: A History of Empire and Power through the Ottoman Post Station System, 1600-1839



Choon Hwee Koh, Yale University, Department of History

Supervised by Professor Alan Mikhail

Dr. Koh's dissertation, completed at Yale University, carefully excavates previously ignored archives of the postal station system to revolutionize our understanding of the Ottoman Empire and other centralized states in the Middle East and the wider world. Through her use of Ottoman fiscal registers, imperial decrees, provincial, and judicial records, Koh deftly shows how the Empire's postal station system, which has been overlooked in the scholarly literature, was essential to the Empire's administration between 1600 and 1839. Although that system exclusively served Ottoman elites, Koh demonstrates that it reflected a set of interesting relationships among disparate groups across the empire: bookkeepers, couriers, judges, postmasters, sultans, and ordinary villagers. Overall, her dissertation demonstrates that studying logistical networks and the people who maintain them provides essential new insights into social change, politics, and the networks that link the most isolated communities to centers of power—from early-modern Ottoman Empire to contemporary Iran.

Social Sciences Honorable Mention

Drones, Sirens, and Prayer Calls: Unheard Consequences of a Politics of Sound



Michelle D. Weitzel, New School for Social Research, Department of Politics

Supervised by Rafi Youatt

This highly original dissertation, which was completed at the New School, explores how sound acts as a form of political power. Building on almost two years of fieldwork, her study compellingly shows that aurality has been a central concern of a wide range of political actors in the Middle East and Europe since the early nineteenth century. Through extensive case studies of sound in the politics of Israel, the Palestinian territories, Algeria, and France, she links individual, often unconscious, perceptions of sound to larger socio-political issues along with mass campaigns of control, entertainment, intimidation, mobilization persuasion. Strikingly, Weitzel's argument uniquely blends a host of disciplines, from international affairs to psychology to military affairs, and is certain to pave the way for a fresh generation of scholarship that recognizes the role of sound in Middle East politics.

2020 Graduate Student Paper Prize

The MESA Graduate Student Paper Prize was established in 2004 and first given in 2005. The purpose of the award is to recognize the work of young scholars. The award is given to the paper that shows the best control of the subject matter and adept methodology, good use of sources and evidence, coherence and elegance of argument and good writing.

Winner

Language in Medical Worlds: The Politics of Hearing Technology, Speaking, and Arabic for Deaf Children in Jordan



Timothy Y. Loh, MIT, Doctoral Program in History, Anthropology, Science, Technology, and Society

The winner is Timothy Y. Loh's *Language in Medical Worlds: The Politics of Hearing Technology, Speaking, and Arabic for Deaf Children in Jordan*. Disabilities studies remains underexplored in MENA and this paper addresses that gap with theoretical sophistication and sensitive ethnographic observation. Loh convincingly shows how state and NGO management of disability shapes the politics of cochlear technologies, informing how children and their families experience therapeutic processes for hearing loss as a form of biopower.

Honorable Mention Student Paper Prize

'This Our Cousin Does Not Yet Understand,' The Arab 'Cousins' in the Early Zionist Imagination



Guy Yadin Evron, New York University, Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies

Our honorable mention goes to Guy Yadin Evron's paper, *This, our cousin does not yet understand*. This lively analysis of the contradictions embedded in Zionist articulations of Jewish-Arab relations highlights the diverse ways "the Arab" was positioned in Zionist imaginaries

2021 MESA Awards Program - Call for Nominations

See our full list of awards and procedures on our website: <https://mesana.org/awards>

Albert Hourani Book Award April 1, 2021

This award is to honor work that exemplifies scholarly excellence as well as clarity of presentation, in the tradition of Albert Hourani. The winner receives \$1000.

Nikki Keddie Book Award April 1, 2021

This award honors outstanding scholarly work in the area of religion, revolution, and/or society. The winner receives \$1000.

Fatema Mernissi Book Award April 1, 2021

This award recognizes outstanding scholarship in studies of gender, sexuality, and women's lived experience. The winner receives \$1000.

Roger Owen Book Award April 1, 2021

This award recognizes the very best in economics, economic history, or the political economy of the Middle East and North Africa scholarship. The winner receives \$2000.

Jere L. Bacharach Service Award June 1, 2021

This award honors extraordinary service to MESA or the field. The winner receives \$1000.

MESA Mentoring Award June 1, 2021

This award honors contributions of a retired individual as mentor/teacher.

Malcolm H. Kerr Dissertation Awards July 1, 2021

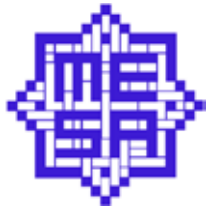
For students completing their dissertations between June 16, 2019 and June 15, 2020, nominations should be from the author's sponsor or advisor. Winners in each category - Humanities and Social Sciences - receive \$1000.

Undergraduate Education Award August 1, 2021

This award recognizes outstanding scholarship on teaching or other material contributions to undergraduate education in Middle East Studies. The winner receives \$250.

Graduate Student Paper Prize August 15, 2021

For graduate students whose research papers on any aspect of post 600 CE Middle East studies. The author of the winning paper receives \$250 and the paper will be submitted for publication in the *Review of Middle East Studies*. The winner receives \$250.



Middle East Studies Association
3542 N. Geronimo Ave.
Tucson AZ 85705
USA



MESA 2021 CALL FOR PAPERS

October 28-31, 2021

Palais des Congrès
Montréal, Quebec, Canada

Submissions accepted
January 8-February 18, 2021

MESA MEMBERSHIP
IS A REQUIREMENT TO SUBMIT

RENEW TODAY!