



GEMENAS

NEW STAFF



JESSICA HILL RIGGS

Jessica joined the staff of the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies in April 2016. Previously, she supported the the International Institute's Islamic Knowledge Histories & Languages, Arts & Sciences (IKHLAS) Research Initiative and the Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship. She is a former FLAS Fellow in Thai and Indonesian and holds a dual master's degree in Southeast Asian Studies and Public Policy from the University of Michigan. Her research interests center on the role of civil society organizations in creating social change in Myanmar and Thailand. Her work has specifically focused on issues of religious activism, interfaith dialogue, and community-based development.

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

Samer Mahdy Ali, PhD
CMENAS Director

Jessica Hill Riggs
Academic Program Specialist

Mekarem Eljamal
Program Assistant

Rima Hassouneh
Community Outreach Coordinator

Gloria Caudill
Manager, Global South Cluster

Kathy Covert
Office Coordinator, Global South Cluster

Raquel Buckley
*Communications Editor
International Institute*

Cover image: Damascus, Syria



MEKAREM ELJAMAL

In September 2017, CMENAS welcomed Mekarem Eljamal, as the new program assistant. After graduating from the University of Michigan with a dual bachelor's degree in International Studies and Middle Eastern and North African Studies, she spent time in Haifa, Israel working for a research organization that focuses on Palestinian citizens of Israel. Her research interests center on Palestinian citizens of Israel, and, more specifically, how they have navigated issues of identity, belonging, and non-belonging through placemaking.



RIMA HASSOUNEH

Rima Hassouneh is a Palestinian who grew up in the Middle East. She holds master's degrees in English and Arabic literatures, and is a former CMENAS FLAS Fellow in modern Hebrew. She taught Arabic and Arab and Muslim American Studies at U-M for 10 years. She also jointly leads a Global Intercultural Experience for Undergraduates (GIEU) to Palestine and Israel through U-M's Center for Global and Intercultural Study. Her interests are migrant identities, human rights, and justice in the era of imperialism, war, and climate catastrophe.

DEAR CMENAS COMMUNITY:

uring the fall, the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor is bedecked with radiant fall foliage and resonates with the sound of the Bell Tower. However, we cannot turn away as America faces the dual scourge of White Supremacy and the scapegoating of immigrants and refugees from the Middle East.

Since 1961, CMENAS at U-M has promoted a more humane and global understanding of the world. As a National Resource Center funded by Title VI of the US Department of Education, we support faculty in pursuing scholarship about the Middle East and its diverse people. We fund and graduate students who enter the workforce with rare expertise about the region's history, cultures, politics, languages, literatures, and religions. We enrich the classrooms of K-12 educators who go on to inspire young minds and lives. These ventures, together, promote globally-minded citizens who represent the best ideals in America. However, we cannot rest easy that Washington will continue to fund our work; thus CMENAS has endeavored to build up an endowment to secure the long-term viability of our initiatives.

So, once a year, we take stock of our achievements, goals, and priorities, and we ask you to assess what you value most.

The CMENAS Endowment enables us to fund faculty research, undergraduate and graduate study abroad, as well as educational outreach to K-12 teachers who spark the imagination of the next generation.

If you believe in CMENAS' educational vision, we hope you will take a moment to translate your goodwill toward CMENAS into a tangible investment in the future. Your contribution—whether \$5 or \$500—will enable us to inch toward a secure endowment as insurance against the chances of federal cuts.

Can we count on your support?

To donate: www.ii.umich.edu/cmenas/donate

As the new director of CMENAS, I am happy to discuss the Center's strategic plan, and talk frankly about monthly charitable pledges or named benevolent gifts to support the CMENAS initiatives you wish to honor most. Feel free to contact me <samerali@umich.edu> or simply call: 734-764-1401.

Sincerely,
Samer M. Ali
Director

NEW CMENAS DIRECTOR

TALKS ABOUT U-M'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) & MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES



Mekarem Eljamal: *What drew you to Michigan in the first place and what do you work on?*

Samer Ali: In 2015, I was looking for a chance to move back to the Midwest, and I was fortunate to be hired as Associate Professor in U-M's Department of Near Eastern Studies. I was drawn to U-M because of its thoroughgoing support for research and innovation. I conduct research on the intersections (and traffic jams) of ethno-poetics and politics of Arabic-Islamic traditions. I teach courses on Arabic poetry and prose (in Arabic and in English) and on Islamic law. U-M's investment in this sort of research and teaching demonstrates to me a remarkable commitment to the study of Arabic and Islamic cultures, and especially to the *adab*-humanism of the Middle Ages that so informs our world today.

M: *What is *adab*-humanism?*

S: *Adab* is a word that has gained many layers of meanings in Arabic, like an onion, over the past two millennia. In the simplest sense, it means "literatures" or "manners" today, but it has a much older genealogy going back to the Middle Ages and the literary circles of Cairo, Baghdad, Cordoba, and other urban centers in Arabic culture. There, it meant something more like "humanities"—or the Greek notion of "Paideia"—the education that a child needed to acquire in order to grow

up, communicate, and function in a diverse and cosmopolitan society as an adult.

M: *You said that *adab*-humanism informs our world today. How? Why is *adab* important today?*

S: Well, *adab*-humanities (and its -ism) may overlap with religious knowledge, but it didn't need to. Un-tied to religion, *adab*-humanism relied on the creativity of Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Christians (Nestorians, Copts, and other Eastern Orthodox Christians). So, in short, it was a public culture open to anyone to participate in regardless of religion, so long as they knew Arabic. For young men and women, participating meant learning, creating, and performing Arabic poetry for friends and acquaintances in literary gatherings or salons, much like poetry slams today or spoken word competitions. *Adab*-humanism in the Middle Ages helped to document, inspire, and sustain a cosmopolitan and urban culture.

M: *What is the major question or issue that you grapple with in your scholarship?*

S: In my scholarship, I notice that human societies have grappled with questions of diversity and identity differences since the earliest civilizations. And I am often boggled by the peaks and valleys of inter-cultural understanding: What seems like cultural understanding often amounts to misunderstanding in the end. As George Bernard Shaw notes, "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." I'm interested in documenting these breakdowns and positing alternative approaches rooted in language and interaction. I have published two volumes, co-editing *The CALICO Journal: Special Issue on Hebrew and Arabic* and authoring *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages* (U of Notre Dame Press, 2010), which is the only Anglophone study of Arabic salons in medieval Islamic culture. The book introduces performance theory to the field of classical Arabic studies, illustrating how people enjoyed poetry and tales in these special gatherings while forming friendships, falling in love, venerating the holy, and having fun. In doing so, they adjusted the tradition in each setting, thus invigorating the literary canon. I'm fascinated by how *adab*-humanities cultivated ethical, creative, (but sometimes naughty) human beings in a culture of sociability, promoting mixed "exogenous" friendships across lines of identity difference. These salons come down to use through the

"We as a country...cannot afford to sideline the talents of our under-represented men and women.... U-M's DEI Initiative is not a matter of feel-good political correctness, but reflects a dire need to make better use of our society's full talents."

sources tinted with a sepia-tone nostalgia and lyrical emotion. From the sources, you can see that the salons were like a second family for many folks, a place where people affectively felt like they belonged, despite life's ups and down. Those friendship and second families are crucial I think to a healthy diverse society.

M: *What did you do before U-M and what are you most proud of?*

S: Before U-M, I worked at the U of Texas at Austin and the Free University in Berlin also in the fields of Arabic and Islamic cultures. However, at UT, I served as Graduate Advisor in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. With the help of colleagues and the institutional supports, I recruited 42 graduate students and raised \$500,000 to fund them. I'm proud of our results: of the 42 students,

“Culture is more paradoxical (and less linear) than our modernist theories admit. Embracing paradox is the first step in scaffolding toward inter-cultural understanding.”

12 met UT diversity criteria, meaning women and minorities burgeoned in the Department from zero to 29% in four years. I am particularly dedicated to mentoring women, minorities, and first-generation students. I know from the social science evidence that organizations make better decisions when stakeholders come from diverse backgrounds, and we as a country—as a society—cannot afford to sideline the talents of our under-represented men and women. That's why U-M's DEI Initiative is not a matter of feel-good political correctness, but reflects a dire need to make better use of our society's full talents.

M: *How does your educational background shape your interest in diversity issues?*

S: I received my BA at The University of Chicago, and my MA at the University of Utah, and PhD at Indiana University: And, I graduated from one of the most diverse high schools in Chicago, Whitney Young Magnet School, where nearly half of the students were African-American, and my friendships quickly diversified to include people who identified as black, cajun, mixed, LGBTQ, Jewish, Asian, Latinx, Indian, Arab, Sikh, and Hindu. I witnessed daily a level of genius in school that I could not reconcile with the structural bias and indignities of minority life on the streets of the city. That same paradox continued in college and beyond as I sought diverse institutions and settings for education and work. Public (inclusive) institutions are key to making those settings possible. I am the product of public education and I am indebted to public grants, like Fulbright Awards, which have supported my research on five occasions in Germany, Spain, Kuwait, Egypt, and Morocco. I thus support government investment in the humanities, especially when it cultivates diversity and mutual understanding.

M: *How does U-M's DEI initiative influence your work at CMENAS?*

S: Well, in a sense my being at U-M is a testament to those recruitment and mentoring efforts. I was told that I am the first American Muslim to serve as Director of CMENAS at U-M. That's a mixed bag: it shows that U-M has made progress in mentoring and recruiting diversity, but also how far we need to go to move past the structural barriers that marginalize talent. To me, the question is what are we going to do to improve access and support for those who are historically sidelined in America's Middle Eastern studies? First, at CMENAS, we're going to work harder and smarter at reaching underrepresented students who are interested in the Middle East, early when they're in high school. We need to make it absolutely normal and natural for them to think of U-M as a place where they belong, where they can thrive, and get a first-rate educational experience that opens

up the doors of lifelong opportunity. Second, we need to organize and sponsor events that humanize the people of the Middle East. So many of our brothers and sisters from the Middle East, at home and abroad, have been demonized and scapegoated because of their color and identity, while US foreign policy blunders get a pass. The DEI Initiative invites us to explore how racism at home (like in Ferguson) validates racism abroad (like in Palestine). In many ways, America's history of slavery/genocide stems from the West's history of colonialism from 1492 onward, and we reopen old wounds whenever we erase or sideline human talent today.

“The DEI Initiative invites us to explore how racism at home validates racism abroad.... We reopen old wounds whenever we erase or sideline human talent today.”

M: *What are your major plans for the center?*

S: The Center promotes the study of the Middle East, past and present, broadly across disciplines and I plan to advance that mission by building up our development efforts, reaching out to our constituencies in the Midwest, including K-12 teachers, community college educators, local Middle East immigrant communities, and nurturing relationships with interested units on U-M campuses. Beyond that agenda, however, I hope to use my fleeting term as Director to highlight the role of languages and arts in the lives of the people of the Middle East across history. We have our work cut out for us, but we also have an amazing team of staff at CMENAS, who make coming to work each day inspiring. ❁

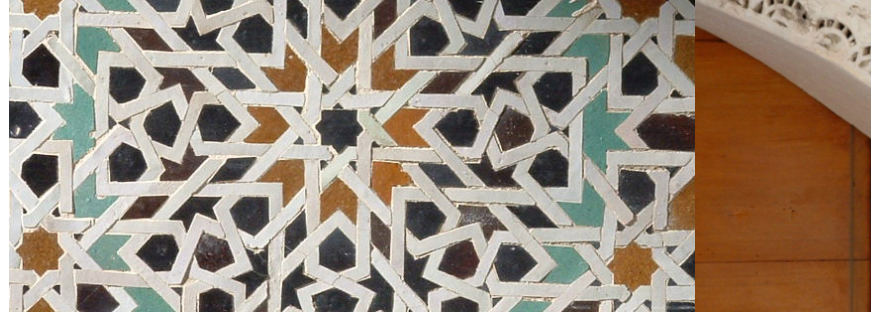
WE'VE MOVED!

The International Institute has moved to a new building, Weiser Hall. Formerly known as the Dennison Building, Weiser Hall was renamed in 2014 in recognition of U-M alumni and donors Ronald and Eileen Weiser. Located in the heart of central campus at U-M, Weiser Hall has undergone extensive renovations and has reopened in Fall 2017.

A \$49 million renovation of approximately 106,000 gross square feet has created spaces that facilitate faculty collaboration and enhance opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students. The renovated space is organized efficiently with sharing of staff, space, and core facilities among 12 different units housed on 9 floors. Other interdisciplinary and internationally-focused units within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts are housed in the building, where collaboration and engagement among students, faculty, and staff are encouraged.

The key features of Weiser Hall include a living green wall, a premier event space on the 10th floor with remarkable views of campus, and “active learning” classrooms. The International Institute occupies the third, fourth, and fifth floors; CMENAS is located on the fifth.

To learn more about the design and vision of the building please visit: <http://sites.lsa.umich.edu/weiserhall>. We look forward to welcoming you to our new office space, Suite 500, during the fall and winter semesters.



CMENAS COLLABORATES WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO

Prash Naidu

As part of our Title VI grant initiative from the US Department of Education, CMENAS has been proud to foster sustainable links with the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPR), an institution serving an under-represented population.

In addition to a symposium held every year for K-16 educators at UPR, a key component of this collaboration is expanding the university's library collections in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) materials. Based on their relevance to courses taught at UPR and graduate research programs, CMENAS has purchased over 140 books between 2014 and 2017 for UPR's Biblioteca Lázaro's Middle Eastern and North African Collection. Titles include both classic and innovative works, such as the Spanish translation of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Mona Eltahawy's *Headscarves and Hymens*, Joseph Kostiner's *Middle Eastern Monarchies*, award-winning journalist Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, political theorist Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt*, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam*. These titles will serve the academic needs of UPR's Departments of History, Linguistics, Political Science, and Economics.

As a result of our collaboration, CMENAS has strengthened UPR's institutional holdings in MENA materials and provided instructional resources to faculty, while contributing toward more equitable and inclusive training in MENA studies for undergraduate and graduate students. We view our partnership as pivotal to sharing with the UPR community the diversity of the MENA region's cultures, societies, and their socioeconomic and political realities.

Over the coming years, CMENAS hopes to continue to foster this partnership and dialogue between U-M and UPR's faculty, students, and community. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and the humanitarian crisis on the island, CMENAS encourages donations to support communities' recovery and rebuilding. The Puerto Rican Family Institute accepts donations at: <http://prfi.org>, and the Humane Society of Puerto Rico at: <http://www.hspr.org>.



ENDANGERED HERITAGE CONFERENCE

Janelle Fosler and Mekarem Eljama

War, climate change, globalization, and economic development pose significant threats to the world's natural and cultural heritage. Societies around the world share many of the same concerns, even as specific regions, countries, and communities face unique challenges.

CMENAS collaborated with the Museum Studies Program, African Studies Center, and the Centers for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, South Asian Studies, and Southeast Asian Studies on a two-day symposium to host a dialogue surrounding global heritage. International experts and the U-M community were invited to identify threats to heritage and develop strategies to mitigate these dangers in both global and local contexts.

The conference began with a film screening of *Destruction of Memory*, which tells the story of the “war against culture” in Syria and Iraq, featuring the ongoing actions of Daesh (ISIS), but also revealing past decisions that played a role in the destruction of heritage sites. Continuing the conversation on this topic, Salam Al Kuntar, a visiting faculty member with the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Anthropology, talked about the current reactions and responses to the destruction of important cultural heritage sites in Iraq and Syria.

The conference was comparative in scope, with speakers representing South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. They presented on topics related to preserving global heritage in their various regions. Shadia Mahmoud, a visiting scholar with U-M's Department of Near Eastern Studies, participated in a panel discussion about expanding heritage across the globe. This conference provided a much-needed conversation on the complexities and challenges of protecting heritage around the world.

The Endangered Heritage Conference was made possible by the Departments of Anthropology, Asian Languages and Cultures, History of Art, Near Eastern Studies; the International Institute; Kelsey Museum of Archaeology; Museum of Anthropological Archaeology; and the Museum Studies Program. This conference was also funded in part by Title VI federal grants from the US Department of Education.

LIBRARY NEWS

The following library resources have been obtained during 2016 and 2017 with the support of CMENAS NRC Title VI grant funds:

RECORDS OF THE KURDS

Online version of the Cambridge Archives Editions collection of documents (Records of the Kurds: territory, revolt and nationalism, 1831–1979) drawn chiefly from the British archives. Presents images of the document reproductions as they appeared in the 13 volume print edition with searchable text functionality.

BRITISH CAMPAIGN IN MESOPOTAMIA, 1914–1918

Archives Unbound

Digital archive of British documents pertaining to the British/Indian Army expedition to Iraq during World War I. Sourced from The British Library.

LIBYA: RECORDS OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 1796–1885

Archives Unbound

Digital archive of U.S. documents pertaining to the American consulate in Tripoli during the 19th century. Sourced from the U.S. National Archives.

ISLAM AND MODERNITY: CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLOGY

New York, NY: Routledge, 2016

FRENCH MANDATE IN THE LEBANON, CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS, AND THE U.S. CONSULATE AT BEIRUT, 1919–1935

Archives Unbound

Digital archive of communications from and to the American consular post in Beirut during the period of the French Mandate in Syria-Lebanon. Sourced from the U.S. National Archives.

IRAQ: RECORDS OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 1888–1944

Archives Unbound

Digital archive of U.S. government documents pertaining to Iraq from Ottoman rule through British colonial occupation and independence. Sourced from the U.S. National Archives.

To access these resources and learn more, please visit: www.ii.umich.edu/cmenas/resources

Thanks to these outright purchases, these incredibly valuable resources will be available to our students, faculty and other affiliate researchers well into the future.

Evyn Kropf

Librarian for Near Eastern and Religious Studies

Curator, Islamic Manuscripts Collection



THIRD ANNUAL CMENAS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

Enriching Perspectives on the Middle East and North Africa

On April 4, 2017, CMENAS hosted the 3rd Annual Graduate Student Symposium, “Enriching Perspectives on the Middle East and North Africa.” In keeping with the mission of CMENAS, graduate students from across the globe gathered to discuss the nuances and complexities of the Middle East and North Africa. Following the opening remarks by Hakim al-Rustom, Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History, participants and audience members dove right into cross-disciplinary discussions on the Middle East and North Africa.

The panel themes ranged from regional politics and religion to the humanities and the construction of the public sphere. For each of the panels, an organizing committee member chaired the discussion and facilitated lively conversations between the panelists and the audience. In selecting submissions and presentation proposals that focused on a multitude of countries and themes, the organizing committee reiterated the importance of conference discourses on the Middle East mirroring the vast array of human experiences, beliefs, and perspectives that exist in the region.

Fostering a space for students to gather and contribute to an ever-evolving discourse on the Middle East and North Africa required the dedicated work of CMENAS graduate students Mohammad Al-Ansari, Erin Collins, Emily Dittmar, and Will Hall; CMENAS and International Institute staff Jessica Hill Riggs, Raquel Buckley, and Kathy Covert; and the co-sponsorship of the Rackham Graduate School. LSA Instructional Support Services provided vital assistance with BlueJeans technology, which allowed two presenters, one from Iran and the other from Israel, to participate in the symposium.

The Graduate Symposium affords graduate students the opportunity to make connections with their peers from around the world. With a track record of success and positive community engagement, the symposium has become a staple of the CMENAS graduate experience and a vital part of the program. The center looks forward to announcing the 4th Annual CMENAS Graduate Symposium.

The academic year of 2016–17 was a busy year for Iranian Studies! We kicked off the fall semester with the inaugural Iranian Film Festival, curated in partnership with the Iranian Graduate Students’ Association. The festival lasted a period of five weeks and featured a guest lecture by film scholar Amir Ganjavie. This was followed by a year-long program of weekly lectures and discussions conducted in Persian, known as the *Mizegerd-e Farsi*, or the Persian Roundtable. These sessions were greatly enriched by two new members to our community: Shahla Farghadani, a first-year graduate student in Near Eastern Studies (NES), who focuses on the intersection of poetry and culture in early-modern Iran and India, and Hojjat Rasouli, Professor of Arabic at Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, who is in Ann Arbor for a year as Visiting Scholar. Professors Rasouli and Cameron Cross gave talks at the 25th annual meeting of the Persian Cultural Association, Golshan-e Parsi, which convened in September 2016.

In the spring of 2017, five of our undergraduate students in Persian, coached by our Lecturer Behrad Aghaei, performed selections of Persian poetry ranging from Ferdowsi to Sohrab Sepehri at the NES Annual Poetry Night. Our graduate student Jonathan Brack received an Honorable Mention by the Foundation for Iranian Studies Best PhD Dissertation of 2016 for his dissertation, entitled *Mediating Sacred Kingship: Conversion and Sovereignty in Mongol Iran*. And to cap it all off, our undergraduate student in Persian, Ryan Strong, was awarded both the Dr. Najmabadi Persian Language Award from the Persian House of Michigan and the George G. Cameron Award in NES. Finally, we would like to thank Marjorie Luther for her continued support of the Luther Fund, established in the name of her spouse, the late U-M Professor of Iranian History, Allin K. Luther.

"ISLAM IN PEACE, PEACE IN ISLAM"

THE INAUGURAL ISLAMIC PEACE STUDIES CONFERENCE

**Mekarem Eljamal / Juan Cole /
Jessica Hill Riggs**

The Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, with funding from the International Institute Enterprise Fund, launched the Islamic Peace Studies Initiative, that will promote academic research

on the subject, as well as the professionalization and recognition of the subfield.

On March 16-18, 2017, CMENAS hosted its inaugural Islamic Peace Studies Conference, "Islam in Peace, Peace in Islam." This three-day event brought scholars and community members together to share ideas and discussions around the field of Islam and peace.

The academic conference explored themes of peace in the Islamic tradition, considering topics such as scripture and theology, the role of Muslim women, pacifist social movements, and the centrality of conflict resolution to the tradition. Panelists on the first day explored the practical and theoretical definitions of peace. Rudolph Ware, Associate Professor of History at U-M, and Samer Ali, present Director of CMENAS, looked at West African contributions, specifically taking into account Sufi understandings of pacifism and nonviolence. Lamin Sanneh, Professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale University, continued the discussion on West Africa by closely looking at the concept of *jihad* in French West Africa during the colonial period. Karla Mallette, Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Romance Languages and Literatures at U-M, alongside A. Rashied Omar, Research Scholar of Islamic Studies and Peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of

Notre Dame, set a foundational outline of the intersection between tolerance and various definitions of peace. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Professor of Law at Emory University, gave the conference's keynote session, highlighting the pitfalls of Orientalism in peace studies and the potential issues facing current students of conflict resolution.

The second day took a more comparative approach to unpacking understandings of peace. Alexander Knysh, professor of Islamic Studies at U-M, examined peace through a Sufi lens. Mohammad Khalil, Director of the Muslim Studies Program at Michigan State University, looked at non-Muslim salvation from the perspectives of a variety of Muslim scholars and their opinions upon notions of tolerance. Elizabeth Thompson, Mohamed Said Farsi Chair of Islamic Peace at American University in Washington D.C., considered the impact of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference on establishing the norm of juxtaposition between "Western" liberalism and Islamism. Sherman Jackson, King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture at the University of Southern California, focused his attention on Egypt and, more specifically, on the nonviolent actions taken by Egyptian al-Gamaa al-Islamiya.

The Arab American National Museum hosted the final day of the conference. Thompson, Omar, Jackson, and Khalil all returned to the topics they had discussed in the conference, addressing the past's role in confronting current problems in conflict-resolution and peace studies. After the presentations, there was a reception with community members from Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Detroit.

Current plans are underway to turn the conference paper presentations into a book that can be used as a teaching aid in the classroom. To learn more about the initiative and conference, please visit our website here: ii.umich.edu/cmenas/islamic-peace-studies.html 🌐

AN EXPLORATION OF CO-RESISTANCE AND COEXISTENCE

U-M students have been visiting Palestine and Israel since 2016 as organized groups under the auspices of the Global Intercultural Experience for Undergraduates (GIEU) led by Alice Mishkin, Lecturer at the School of Social Work and Intergroup Relations, and Rima Hassouneh, Community Outreach Coordinator at CMENAS. In learning about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, participants engage with the many communities who hold stakes in finding solutions to the situation, and listen to their narratives and strategies for nonviolent activism.

The program has attracted students like Azhar Aboubaker, a senior majoring in international studies and sociology with a minor in CMENAS, who said that she had “always wanted to go to Palestine, even as a kid,” as well as Mark-Anthony Lingaya, an anthropology alumnus, who had only possessed cursory knowledge of the conflict.

To truly understand the complexities of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, participants spent the three weeks visiting places across Israel and Palestine, including Tel Aviv, which boasts world-class beaches and a vibrant nightlife, and Susya, which perseveres despite continuous home demolitions. It was this variety and multiplicity that Aboubaker enjoyed. “I liked the fact that

The program’s success hinges not only upon exploring the intersections of co-resistance and co-existence, but also upon recognizing the loci and dynamics of power.

we went to many different areas within Palestine,” she said. “A lot of other programs don’t give students the opportunity to go to the West Bank in addition to Israel.”

Highlighting the conflict’s nuances required learning about the many narratives and perspectives on belonging to and ownership of the land. For Lingaya, the opportunity to interact with Palestinians, Israelis, and refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea was both humbling and enlightening. “We were able to engage in reciprocal cultural exchanges,” he said.

Some inter-group encounters, though, could have been further complicated. “We talked to one, really hard-core Israeli settler who was on the extreme



side,” said Aboubaker, who thought that hearing the narratives of settlers who had moved to settlements due to financial or familial reasons would have enriched the conversation.

The program’s success hinges not only upon exploring the intersections of co-resistance and co-existence, but also upon recognizing the loci and dynamics of power. The program’s two tour guides, Husam, a Palestinian, and Yuval, an Israeli, “perfectly exemplified,” said Lingaya, “what it means to have two differing perspectives but still respect and honor one another’s perspectives.” Additionally, “Yuval often acknowledged the power dynamic of having a privileged voice as an Israeli in our tour group, and deferred to Husam for certain topics.”

Yuval and Husam exposed the students to multiple narratives of the conflict in ways that disrupted the existing power imbalances and that Aboubaker hopes to bring back to U-M classes. Aboubaker believes it is important to hear the various perspectives about the conflict, but no less important is “highlighting the facts alongside the many emotional and political narratives.”

The benefits from participating in programs like the GIEU to Palestine and Israel are immense. Students directly experience the realities that they read about in books and articles in history and political science classes, actively partaking in experiential pedagogy. Additionally, they bring back knowledge and skills that cannot be gathered from classroom education, which further challenges how university campuses can talk about issues such as this one. 🌍

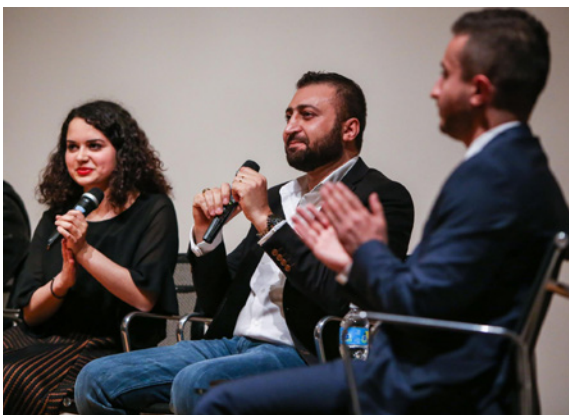
Photos of Tel Aviv, Israel, courtesy of Danielle Rabie, CMENAS alumna



RS-123



**BUILDING
COMMUNITY AND
COMPLICATING
DISCOURSE
THE MICHIGAN
REFUGEE
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM**



Since its founding in September 2016, the Michigan Refugee Assistance Program (MRAP) has bridged the gap between university students and refugees recently resettled in Southeast Michigan. Nicole Khamis, MRAP's founder and an alumna of CMENAS, started to develop the initial structure for MRAP while working with urban refugees in Jordan during the summer of 2016. The xenophobic rhetoric of the 2016 U.S. presidential election came up in conversations with various individuals in Jordan. "They kept asking me why Americans hated them so much," said Khamis. MRAP was born as a result of Khamis' desire to push back against such negative rhetoric.

U-M has abundant resources for students. MRAP, by virtue of its mission, connects students with local refugee communities; through the development of personal relationships, MRAP has been able to nuance conversations about refugees, break down stereotypes, and "show students that these individuals can never be grouped into one thing and only one thing—that each person is so much more than that." While

CMENAS programming initiatives and other campus communities helped Khamis “meet individuals and administrators who would later be instrumental in getting MRAP off the ground,” she notes that the reception and success of MRAP were largely a result of the U.S. political atmosphere and events of 2016. Due to the high emotions after the presidential election, the decline in the Government’s acceptance of refugees, and the governmental ban on Muslims’ entry, students sought opportunities for involvement and impact, which MRAP provided. It connected students with local refugee agencies and facilitated their learning about the conflicts that have contributed to the refugee crisis and about the intricacies of refugee resettlement in the U.S.

MRAP’s main programming initiative is the “Welcoming Liaison Program.” This joint effort between MRAP, the Detroit Mayor’s Office, and Samaritas assigned students to assist recently resettled refugees with integration into their new environments. In addition to bi-weekly visits to the refugee families, many students used the Arabic language skills they learned at U-M or in their youth to translate and interpret. This year, the organization hopes to top the 242 volunteer hours tallied last year and increase beyond \$5,000 their fundraising amount for local refugee resettlement agencies. MRAP’s programming schedule has already begun with its co-sponsorship of CMENAS’ event in late September, “Syrian American Medical Society: Saving Syrian Lives at the Frontlines,” its annual “Freedom 5K,” and a letter writing campaign on behalf of Rohingya refugees in Myanmar. 🌸

FLAS AWARDEES

2017–2018

Sarah Gerges

MA MENAS, Turkish

Surmeet Gill

BA Statistics, Persian

Elizabeth Ledbetter

PhD Art History & Art, Persian

Manuel Melendez

BA Political Science, Arabic

Jonni Mills

BA Business, Arabic

Christopher Pumford

BA Political Science, Arabic

Shireen Smalley

MA Public Policy, Arabic

Richard Smith

PhD Ethnomusicology, Arabic

Justin Stucki

MA MENAS, Arabic

Summer 2018

Jane-Marie Anderson

BA, Arabic

Tyler Coady

BA Public Policy, Arabic

Sarah Gerges

MA MENAS, Turkish

Elizabeth Ledbetter

PhD Art History & Art, Arabic

Manuel Melendez

BA Political Science, Arabic

Terra Schroeder

BA International Studies, Persian

2016–2017

Tina Al-Khersan

BA International Studies, Arabic

Emily Dittmar

MA MENAS, Arabic

Golriz Farshi

PhD Near Eastern Studies, Arabic

William Hall

MA MENAS, Persian

Sarrah Hakim

BA Business, Arabic

Emily Joseph

BA Near Eastern Studies and Comparative Literature, Turkish

Paige Milligan

PhD Near Eastern Studies, Arabic

Raha Richardson

MA MENAS, Persian

Terra Schroeder

BA International Studies, Persian

Melissa Strauss

BA Political Sciences and MENAS, Arabic

Ryan Strong

BA Economics and Near Eastern Studies, Persian

Madeline Turner

BA History, Arabic

Saqib Usman

PhD Anthropology, Arabic

Summer 2017

Zahir Allarakhia

BA Near Eastern Studies, Arabic

Kristen Canavan

MA MENAS, Arabic

Erin Collins

MA MENAS and JD, Arabic

Emily Dittmar

MA MENAS, Arabic

Cassidy Goldblatt

BFA Violin, Arabic

Nicole Khamis

BA International Studies, Arabic

Michael Martin

MA REES, Uzbek

Samuel Rentschler

BA International Studies and Political Science, Arabic

Saqib Usman

PhD Anthropology, Arabic

CONGRATS TO THE 2017 GRADUATES!

On April 28, 2017, CMENAS, along with five other International Institute centers, hosted its annual graduation ceremony and reception.

Degrees in modern Middle Eastern & North African Studies were conferred upon the following:

Master of Arts

Mohammad Al-Ansari
Erin Collins
Emily Dittmar
Alexander Scott

Bachelor of Arts

Tahany Alsabahi
Natalie Bloom
Aaron Cahen
Mekarem Eljamil
Nicole Khamis
Danielle Rabie
Seif-Eldeen Basheer Saqallah
Jillian Smith
Melissa Strauss

Minor

Janelle Jajou
Graham Steffens

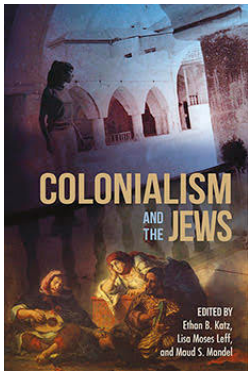
We would also like to welcome our incoming Fall 2017 MENAS MA cohort:

Sarah Gerges
Samiah Haque
Derek Lief
Seif-Eldeen Basheer Saqallah
Justin Stucki

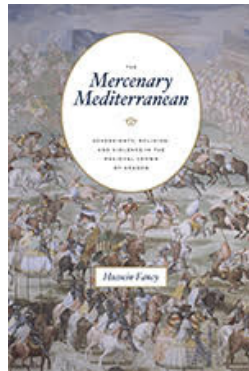
Academia is burgeoning with new information and knowledge, as well as critiques of historic perspectives and norms.

CMENAS faculty and affiliates continue this tradition through research and scholarship. Here is a selection of recent publications and upcoming presentations by our faculty and affiliates.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



Joshua Cole, Professor of History, contributed to *Colonialism and the Jews* with his article, “Derek Penslar’s ‘Algebra of Modernity’: How Should We Understand the Relation Between Zionism and Colonialism?” This article is a reflection on Derek Penslar’s earlier essay, “Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?” Cole takes a close look at the use of the term “colonial,” and continues to unpack various understandings of resistance, inclusion, and assimilation. Cole was also recently cited in a Washington Post article discussing the impact on the EU should individual countries gain more autonomy over immigration and trade policies.



Hussein Fancy, Associate Professor of History, published his book, *The Mercenary Mediterranean: Sovereignty, Religion, and Violence in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, which was deemed a “Choice Read” in the *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*. He presented on this book at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as part of the Annual Nehemia Levitzion Lecture. In early 2017, Fancy also published an article titled, “Of Sovereigns, Sacred Kinds, and Polemics” with *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*. For his work on Medieval Studies, Fancy won an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Rome Prize from the American Academy of Rome in 2016.



Karla Mallette, Director of the Islamic Studies Program and Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, published “Translation in the Pre-Modern World” with *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20(1). With this article, Mallette looks at the “shifting relationship between language and territory, contrasting modern languages as territorially bound by the nation-state with pre-modern cosmopolitan languages that transcended territorial location.” She also gave the Distinguished Visiting Lecture for the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of California-Los Angeles entitled, “Fortune, Hazard, Risk: Thinking About Contingency in the Pre-Modern Mediterranean.”



Yasmin Moll, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, recently published an article entitled, “Subtitling Islam: Translation, Mediation, Critique” in *Public Culture* 29(2). The piece explores subtitles as a “site of struggle between competing epistemologies not only of translation and mediation but also of critique.” At the American University of Lebanon, Moll presented “Islamic Media: History of a Concept,” where she developed a more complicated understanding of the intersection of media and Islam.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS



Melanie Tanielian, Assistant Professor of History, has published her book, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East* with Stanford University Press. In this book, she examines the deep and expansive impact of wartime famine through analysis of various institutions: religious, communal, and international. Building on the important discussion of academic freedom, Tanielian presented “An Abandoned Wretch, a Meddlesome Crank, and a University Scandal?: Academic Freedom in Times of War at the University of Michigan (1917-1918).” Additionally, she led a workshop called, “Rescue or Internment?: Orphans of the Armenian Genocide,” for U-M’s Armenian Studies Program.

Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting

Samer Ali

Director, CMENAS and Associate Professor, Near Eastern Studies

Why does Shahrazad Succeed?: Disrupting the Scapegoat Cycle with Cold Hard Cachet

Jean Lachapelle

Fellow, Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies

Protests and Police Responses in Egypt between 2004 and 2011: a Comprehensive Dataset

Fatma Müge Göçek

Professor, Sociology and Women’s Studies

Confronting Sexual Harassment in the Academy

Mark Tessler

Professor, Political Science

Arab Public Opinion Research: Challenges and Prospects

Ana Vinea

Assistant Professor, Near Eastern Studies

Debating Law, Culture, and Mental Health: A View from Contemporary Egypt

Bryan Roby

Assistant Professor, Judaic Studies

Repatriation and Transgressive Migrations of Mizrahi Jews from Israel to the Arab World

Melanie Tanielian

Assistant Professor, History

Nourishing Bodies and Souls: The Maronite Church’s Relief Effort in Mount Lebanon during the Great War

American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting

Andrew Shryock

Professor, Anthropology

Islam and Economic Theologies

Ana Vinea

Assistant Professor, Near Eastern Studies

Tradition, Ethics, and the Everyday: Transcending a Divide in the Anthropology of Islam

American Historical Association Annual Meeting

Ian Moyer

Associate Professor, History

Identity and Belonging in Premodern Imperial Discourses: A Roundtable

American Studies Association

Evelyn Alsultany

Director, Arab and Muslim American Studies and Associate Professor, American Culture

**Dissenting Pedagogies: Teaching in an Age of Islamophobia, Chair of Panel
Dissenting Rights, Chair**

Charlotte Karem Albrecht

Assistant Professor, American Culture

Teaching Refusal in the Arab American Feminist Classroom

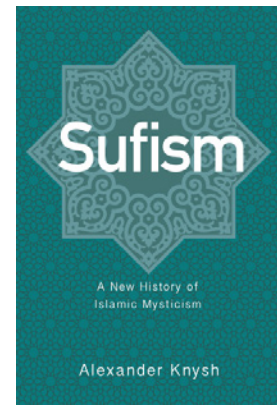
ALEXANDER KNYSH



Born and raised in South Russia, Professor Alexander Knysh attributes his interest in Islam to the large, majority-Muslim population of Circassians (Adyghe) amongst whom he lived during his youth. Conversations with local Muslims, however, could not fully satisfy his curiosity about the customs and religion of this local population. Given the political climate and “brainwashing of the former Soviet Union, [the Circassians] could not enlighten me about Islam as much as I would have liked,” explained Knysh.

As a young man, Knysh moved to Leningrad, now renamed St. Petersburg, to study Arabic. Describing his education, Knysh said that there was “very little study of Islam because it was seen as a relic of the past to be abandoned in favor of socialist ideologies. But you cannot escape Islam when you study Arabic.” As he pursued his BA and MA in Modern Arabic Literature, Knysh found numerous references to Islam in the Arabic books he was reading; most notable were the works of Naguib Mahfouz, within which Knysh found numerous allusions couched in Islamic symbols.

Knysh uses Sufi discourses, communities, institutions, leaders, and practices as the framework to present **Sufism as “Islam in miniature.”**



Mahfouz served as a bridge between Knysh’s earlier interests in literature and his current focus on Islamic mysticism since several of Mahfouz’s novels, such as *Adrift On the Nile*, *The Thief and the Dogs*, and *The Beggar*, included symbolic references to Islam and Sufism. This exposure proved useful when his former advisor invited him to join an Islamic studies research group in which he focused on the ascetic-mystical movement in Islam commonly known as “Sufism.”

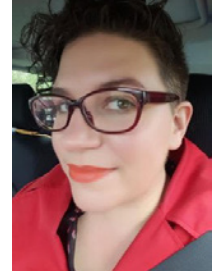
While Knysh’s first book, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, focuses on the “meat and potatoes” of mysticism—the main players, the overall timelines, and institutional developments of Sufism—his newest book, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton

University Press, 2017), takes a more theoretical approach. Knysh uses Sufi discourses, communities, institutions, leaders, and practices as the framework to present Sufism as “Islam in miniature.” Knysh asserts that the movements, ideals, mindsets, and range of Quranic interpretations that characterize Islam generally also exist within Sufism specifically. The main goal of the book is to reassess the distinctive status of Sufism within Islam and to show that pre-modern Muslims anticipated modern Western scholarship in emphasizing some aspects of Sufism’s development (e.g., its formalization and institutionalization). Knysh’s account concludes with an examination of the modern and ongoing confrontation between the Sufis and the Salafis with case studies from the North Caucasus and the Hadhramaut (Hadhramawt) region of South Yemen.

Writing and publishing, Knysh argues, require the rigorous process of gathering and evaluating information in order to produce a balanced and, to the extent possible, objective understanding of such a complex and controversial phenomenon as Sufism. Knysh described writing the conclusion after eight years of work as an “almost mystical, Sufi experience.” He realized how the process of writing this book “disciplined the thought” and forced him to re-evaluate his own initial stereotypes and pre-conceptions.

Knysh’s next book project, also to be published by Princeton University Press, traces the history of Islam in the Northern Caucasus, and is entitled *Islam and Empire in the Northern Caucasus*. 🌸

NEW FACULTY



Charlotte Karem Albrecht (PhD, University of Minnesota) joined U-M in 2015 as an assistant professor of Women’s Studies and Arab and Muslim American Studies. Her research interests center around questions of power, narrative, and cultural production for Arab Americans. Karem Albrecht also serves as the chair of Mizna, an Arab American arts organization, and is an editorial board member for *Mashriq & Mahjar: A Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies*.



Hakem Al-Rustom (PhD, London School of Economics) joined U-M in fall 2016. Al-Rustom is an assistant professor of history with a background in anthropology. His work sits at the intersection of the two fields, focusing on “post-Ottoman societies.” For his upcoming book, he is looking at the Armenian citizenry of Turkey.



Dris Soulaïmani (PhD, University of California Los Angeles) started at U-M fall 2017 as Lecturer III and Coordinator of the Arabic Language Program. His research interests center on the fields of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and Arabic-language pedagogy. Soulaïmani has published several articles about the intersection of North African identity (specifically Amazigh and Moroccan identities) and language. His research provides important insight as U-M works to expand discussions on biases within Arabic-language teaching.



Bryan Roby (PhD, University of Manchester) is Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies as of fall 2017. His work focuses on Mizrahi Jewish history in the modern era. Roby has looked at various modes of resistance by Mizrahi Jews in Israel; currently, he is working on a project that addresses the role of Blackness in shaping Israeli society, as well as on how African-American intellectual traditions have influenced activism in Israel.

Syrian American Medical Society: Saving Syrian Lives at the Frontlines

September 29 & 30

This two-part event examined the Syrian crisis and explored the leadership of volunteers from the Syrian American Medical Society. Through the lens of medicine, Dr. Jihad Shoshara, Dr. Hisham Bismar, and Ms. Lara Zakaria raised awareness of the current situation in Syria, their invisible patients, and their experiences of engaging in medical relief and humanitarian work.



Peace and Nonviolence in the Middle East: Arts, Humanities, and Activism

CMENAS Fall Colloquium Series

CMENAS' Fall Colloquium Series featured guest appearances and films that explored a critical issue. Scholars, artists, and activists presented their angles on nonviolence and peace in Middle Eastern societies, yesterday and today: tactics, strategies, and long-term structures for truth, justice, and reconciliation.



Rabbi Brant Rosen, Midwest Regional Director of the American Friends Service Committee and Rabbi of Tzedek Chicago, speaks to a full house about the growth and evolution of nonviolent resistance and solidarity around Palestine.



Thanks to the generous donations from those listed below and our anonymous donors.

MENAS is dedicated to promoting a broader and deeper understanding of the region—its histories, cultures, languages, and people—through research, education, and outreach programs. **CMENAS is committed to creating a supportive environment where scholars, educators, students, and the community have the opportunity to engage in dialogue and to study current and historical events related to the Middle East and North Africa.**

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

HOW TO GIVE

www.ii.umich.edu/cmenas/donate.html

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