

BATTAW

CINEMAS



ABOUT THE CENTER

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

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DEAR CMENAS COMMUNITY,

As the university and CMENAS face historic challenges posed by COVID-19, now more than ever we reflect on who we are as a center, our values, and our fundamental purpose for being. Since 1961, CMENAS has served as an intellectual nexus for world-class scholars of the MENA region, who educate and graduate leading experts. For 59 years, our promising graduates have gone on to work in the government, corporate, academic, and nonprofit sectors serving society and the world.

This time of year, our greatest pride and joy are the CMENAS graduates receiving Masters and Bachelors degrees. Yet, due to precautions, their richly deserved commencement has been sadly canceled, and many feel disappointed understandably. In the face of that irreducible reality, we dedicate this issue of the CMENAS Newsletter to them, their achievements, and their distinguished potential as responsible thoughtful human beings and citizens. To the CMENAS class of 2020, may the principles and experiences you've gained propel your aims and your dreams in the world.

While much remains unknown, the challenges of global pandemic and political breakdowns illustrate clearly the overarching importance of global and regional knowledge to connect the world's people in shared purpose. As MLK wrote, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." As we honor the class of 2020, we come together in solidarity as an intellectual community to learn from the past, reflect upon this moment in history, and plan for a better tomorrow.

As we celebrate our graduates, we also thank Dr. Lois Aroian for establishing a bequest for the Lois A. Aroian Scholarship Fund to support CMENAS student excellence and potential. In an interview, Dr. Aroian noted her vision: "What I am doing now with this bequest is just a continuation of my commitment ... to give back to the center, to strengthen it, and to make it possible for students of the future to benefit from its outstanding faculty and programs... If we support CMENAS, it will have a bright future."

To invest in excellence at CMENAS, reach out to us. And Go Blue!

Warm regards,

Samer M. Ali, PhD

CMENAS Director

Associate Professor of Middle East Studies

A NEW FACE AT CMENAS

AN INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN WATERBURY

In January of 2020, CMENAS welcomed Kristin Waterbury as the new academic program specialist. CMENAS talked with Kristin to learn more about her past work and academic experiences, what she brings to the center, and how she hopes to see CMENAS grow.

What were you doing before coming to CMENAS?

Prior to CMENAS, I was a graduate student at Wayne State University in Detroit, where I received my Masters in Public History. While I was a student, I was a curatorial intern at the Arab American National Museum. I also collaborated with Professor Sally Howell at the University of Michigan-Dearborn on an exhibition that focused on Iraqi refugees from the first Gulf War. Prior to graduate school, I also worked in development and research with the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) in Dearborn.



What did you enjoy most about that work?

My work experience and background have included many opportunities and I really think I enjoyed the variety my work has given me over the years. No day is ever the same in any of the work that I've had the privilege of doing, and that means I am never bored! I have also enjoyed working with different communities, listening

to the stories of each person that I've had the opportunity to collaborate with over the years. I always learn something new and I try to take that knowledge with me wherever I go, personally and professionally, to make the world a better place.

What drew you to public history as a field and to archival and museum work?

I had been working in event planning and development for a number of years, and knew I wanted to pursue an advanced degree, but I was unsure of what to choose. In 2016, I was working on a ground-breaking project with the ISPU (Institute for Social Policy and Understanding), which sought to quantify contributions that Muslims were making in the state of Michigan. We collected information on civic engagement, philanthropic and medical contributions, along with other information on economic development, athletes, artists, and educators. In addition to collecting statistical data on these topics, we also curated a photo exhibition of individuals from around Michigan to pair with the data. This allowed us to create dynamic public presentations all around the country to educate the public. It was during this project that I realized I was interested in working with institutions that sought to educate both students and the public. With that in mind, I began looking for programs that would give me the opportunity to sharpen my programming skills in spaces where public education happens. Although I love digging around in the archives or visiting museum spaces, the skills I gained in graduate school will serve me well as I embark on this position at CMENAS.

How has the transition been to CMENAS so far?

I started this position just after the new year started, which I felt was very fitting. Coming off of the holiday break, I felt refreshed and ready to jump into all that CMENAS was doing. The transition to CMENAS has been fantastic so far, with such a warm welcome from the other staff members.

What are you looking forward to at CMENAS?

I am looking forward to continuing the outreach and event programming that CMENAS plans and promotes. Additionally, I am excited about meeting students and faculty members at various events, and hearing about their research and work!

ASMA NORAY

BLENDS VOLUNTEER,
CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE TO
EXAMINE FOREIGN POLICY

By **Matthew Harmon**, Graduating Senior, Program in International and Comparative Studies, U-M

Graduate student Asma Noray is not just comfortable with change. She is invigorated by it, approaching shifting research questions and life post-graduation with a dedication to making a positive impact on individuals worldwide.

Growing up in Nairobi, Kenya, Noray moved with her family to Seattle, Washington, and completed her undergraduate program at Swarthmore College in 2017 with a B.A. in Political Science and Arabic. (During her Arabic studies, Noray's instructor was Khaled Al-Masri, an alumnus from U-M's Department of Middle Eastern Studies.) Noray's academic interests lie at the intersection of these two departments — how to support marginalized communities from the Middle East both domestically and abroad.

In order to see how her undergraduate coursework manifests itself outside of the classroom, Noray served as an AmeriCorps volunteer at World Relief Seattle, an organization that helps refugees settle in their new home, find employment, improve their English skills, and more. Working with WRS's Preferred Communities Program, Noray taught at an after-school program for refugee girls and also ran a summer program.

"One of the most memorable aspects of coordinating refugee youth programs for me was seeing the connections that my students and their families were making with one another despite language barriers and cultural differences. Being uprooted from your home can be an alienating experience for many refugees and World Relief provided an opportunity for families from all across the world to support one another through this process and start envisioning themselves as integral parts of their new community," Noray said.

While working for AmeriCorps, Noray noticed consistent trends in the stories of the refugees and knew some institutional or societal discrimination was creating these problems. The

next step was figuring out what form said discrimination took and how to stop it.

"Working in Direct Services, I felt as though I came across the same issues and problems over and over again. It was wonderful having that personal connection with people and really seeing the impact you're making on an everyday level but I wanted to understand the issues they were facing on a more systemic level and see if there are any ways I can make a contribution that would go beyond problem-solving on a one-on-one basis," Noray said.

Following this drive to understand the root causes of issues affecting refugees and Middle Eastern communities, Noray began her graduate studies with CMENAS at

U-M. While she was originally interested in researching modern Iraqi fiction, her current studies revolve around human rights issues, specifically U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. This switch may seem jarring to some, but Noray accepted that her interests were shifting and leaned into the change.

"I started my program with a focus on Arabic literature because of my interest in exploring the ways in which literature provides a more holistic perspective on the experiences of historically marginalized communities, particularly in regions that have experienced long term political instability and violence... From there, I started looking more into specific policies that have led to conflict and human rights abuses in the Middle East and wanted to shift my research focus to policy and law as a way to both critique and find solutions for these issues," Noray said.

Despite all near-graduates shuddering to the question *What's next?*, Noray said she plans to approach each opportunity with careful consideration instead of setting years or decades of her career in stone so early. As for her options, Noray said she'd like to focus on careers that will allow her to enact policy change, either with a government agency or contributing to research with a think tank. Given her new research, she mentioned law school as a possibility as well.

As she exits her graduate studies, Noray is ready to embrace large-scale change once more, moving into a space where she can improve the lives of others.

"I'm excited about finding pathways to put my work into action because I love writing and I love researching but sometimes it feels like I'm writing for myself. I've appreciated these two years, having a lot of time for introspection, figuring out what I believe in and what I'm interested in and what spaces I would do well trying to have an impact in. I'm excited to actually try putting that in action," Noray concluded.

AT THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND (POST-)COLONIALISM IN NORTH AFRICA



In an effort to highlight the diversity of research and knowledge production about the Middle East and North Africa happenings at U-M, CMENAS connected with one of its affiliated students, Daniel Williford, who is currently completing his Ph.D. in history.

Mekarem Eljamal: What drew you to Michigan for your graduate studies?

Daniel Williford: I was initially attracted to the sincere commitment to interdisciplinarity, the rigorous training provided for graduate students, and the resources available for everything from language training to establishing new student-led workshops. The specific faculty members whom I came to Michigan to work with of course played a major role in the decision. I have to say I was also very drawn to the fact that there is a deeply rooted tradition of graduate student unionization and activism here. After I arrived in Ann Arbor, what struck me the most was probably the sheer volume of intellectual activity. The proliferation of workshops, reading groups, speaker series, research collectives, etc., gives an intensity to academic life here that is sometimes overwhelming but also profoundly enriching.

ME: How would you describe your research interests? Have they changed and shifted since you first entered the program? How so?

DW: I am a historian of technology and a historian of colonialism in North Africa. These two fields have always been at the center of my research, but during my time in

graduate school, I have become more attuned to questions in science and technology studies, environmental history, critical geography, urban history, and anthropology. My work uses oral and archival research methods to analyze technologies for managing crisis in colonial and post-colonial Morocco. For some of these technologies—like cinder-blocks and prefabricated housing units—I look at colonial engineering practices. For others—like state-backed mortgages and housing cooperatives—I consider financial and organizational techniques. I am interested in how these technologies worked in a colonial and post-colonial context to transform urban ecologies, forms of knowledge production and extraction, and strategies for governing Moroccan residents.

ME: How did you become interested in these topics?

DW: I have been traveling, living, and working in Morocco on and off since 2012. I have long been interested in the seemingly oversized role that large scale technological projects play in the kingdom and in how these projects—especially those related to housing and infrastructure—become sites for political mobilization and contestation. When I was first doing exploratory research for my dissertation on the period of the French Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956), I started to notice what I considered striking similarities between colonial ways of talking about “crisis” and much of the contemporary discussion in Morocco about urban problems, slums, and megaprojects. I think at one level, I have been working since then to make sense

DW: I did most of my research in Morocco and a portion in France where the archives for the Protectorate are located. In Morocco, I was working in archives, going back and forth to state ministries and other institutions, interviewing architects and planners, and eventually conducting oral histories. Probably one of the more exciting moments from my perspective was when I got to record an oral history with a group of former cement plant workers in the Hay Mohammadi neighborhood of Casablanca. We were in one of the classrooms of a school that the company had built at the center of a housing project for workers and their families. The workers I spoke with were stationed at different phases of the production process and would constantly correct each other about the details of the plant's operations. For the most part, they spoke in similar, essentially laudatory, terms about their experiences with the company, but there were also subtle tensions between them—mild expressions of dissatisfaction and minor arguments over the long-term consequences of certain decisions, such as the one to turn the housing project over to the municipality. Grasping and trying to disentangle the ambiguities of this

DW: At Michigan, I have had the opportunity to work with some experienced and creative instructors in courses on global environmental history, science and technology studies, and the history of terrorism. Last year, I was able to design and teach my own course on the environmental history of natural disasters. Given that I have been involved with a number of courses that take a critical approach to science and technology as well as to policy, I tend to focus on getting students to think reflexively about how the forms of knowledge they are expected to master reproduce racialized, gendered, and class-based forms of power. I am currently developing a number of new courses—including one on the environmental history of the Middle East and North Africa.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

CMENAS caught up with **Donia Jarrar**, an alumna of CMENAS who earned her doctorate in music composition in 2017, to hear what she has been doing since leaving U-M.

Mekarem Eljamal: What were your research and work on? How did you arrive at that focus area? What influenced you as you moved through graduate school?

Donia Jarrar: As an artist, my work is primarily focused on the musical representation of contemporary Palestinian women's narratives from a decolonial, transnational, and intersectional feminist lens. As a former refugee of war, born to a Palestinian father and an Egyptian-Greek mother, I grew up between Kuwait, Egypt, the West Bank, and the United States. My personal experiences have strongly shaped my compositional voice, leading me to explore the universal themes of memory, identity (politics), exile, displacement, femininity, and cultural narrative. More specifically, I have worked extensively in documenting the voices of marginalized communities within Palestine and in juxtaposing contemporary media narratives of these communities with

collected oral histories. The resulting research is both interdisciplinary and collaborative in its aims to expose contemporary Palestinian narratives and theorize Palestinian culture within the realm of contemporary classical composition and performance.

In producing "Seamstress" [definition below], my hope was to provide fresh perspectives on Palestinian women's culture and histories, where much of the previous and current work has been guided by the political landscape in relation to Israel and limited by the preferences of many researchers and professionals who work there in collecting stories and data on the subjects of terrorism, occupation, and the two-state solution.

Based on over two years of fieldwork in Ramallah and the surrounding villages of the West Bank, focusing on autobiographical documentation, contemporary cultural production within rural and urban communities,

and the artwork of Palestinian women contemporaries, I aim to re-theorize Palestinian women's narratives as more complex, nuanced, and humanized against an otherwise dominant Israeli narrative by providing an audio-visual exploration of their voices and emotionally powerful episodic memories drawn from their collected oral histories.

My friendships and collaborations with other students from the Ph.D. programs in American studies and anthro-history provided me with the community and understanding I needed to move forward as an interdisciplinary, queer woman, and artist. Because research is not typically what is found within traditional music composition environments or school, I actually felt quite isolated within my cohort in music and grew beyond that framework. I also worked with Anton Shammas, professor of Middle Eastern literature, Department of Middle East Studies, in refining my narrative, and I was supported by my colleague and then dissertation advisor Evan Chambers in creating a Palestinian opera, as he was and still is a strong ally and incredibly supportive faculty member and human being.

I also won the Rackham Predoctoral fellowship in 2016, which allowed me to stay an extra year to complete my degree and provided me with financial support for my research.

ME: What were some of your favorite memories about graduate school?

DJ: My favorite memory about U-M was the community I forged. The large Arab-American population, the solidarity with other PoC students in different departments, and all of the incredible events, concerts, and talks I would attend at Michigan Theater—like Pussy Riot and The Vijay Iyer trio—really stand



out. My other favorites include the time I spent studying piano with Dr. Geri Allen, may she rest in power. I am so fortunate to have worked with her as she was the first woman who encouraged my growth as a pianist outside of classical music and because she was a legend in the jazz community.

ME: Since finishing your program, what have you been doing? What lessons have you learned in the transition from academia to the job market?

DJ: Since finishing my degree in April 2017, I landed a job out in Los Angeles at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), as an admissions counselor for their music school. I think every person working in academia should understand the ways in which higher education administration functions, in order to better serve the community of staff, students, and faculty. I was responsible for local and national recruitment efforts and liaised between administration and faculty. I reviewed portfolios, streamlined the review and acceptance processes, and worked closely with families at community colleges who were transferring into CalArts. I also helped create an official transfer agreement between the School of Music at Los Angeles Community College (LACC) and the School of Music at CalArts in order to make such an expensive private education more accessible to prospective students. The transfer agreement involves assuring high-scholarship priority to LACC transfers after two years at LACC and curriculum development to ensure their success upon entering CalArts in their third year of the BFA program. I also won a major opera award last year for my opera, "Seamstress," a documentary multimedia piece based on the collected oral histories of women and girls (seamstressproject.com). I also released my debut album under my experimental sound project "Phonodelica." Last month I resigned from my full-time administrative position in order to pursue

my career as a musician and independent artist full-time.

ME: What are some of your hopes for your career in the future?

DJ: I have now transitioned into freelancing full-time as a composer. I have started a piano and drums duo with Yemeni-American artist Yasmine Diaz and we will be releasing our first vinyl EP this spring as part of the annual Arab AMP gathering founded by dancer and artist Leyya Mona Tawil. I will also be releasing a new album this summer and finishing up the second act of my opera, recording with several musicians such as Chrystia Cabral, Pitchfork's rising star, as well as working on fundraising for my project "Muslim Witch," a collective and communal space featuring and supporting the work of womxn artists of Muslim heritage, and Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous People of Color. It is a way for artists of Muslim heritage in Los Angeles to connect and build with other marginalized communities and strengthen our resources. It started as the name of my independent record label when I released my album back in November before I realized it was so much more than that! My vision board for "Muslim Witch" includes a storefront space in LA with rooms for meetings, classes, a recording studio, and performance space. Most importantly this will be a business, not a non-profit organization or non-governmental organization. We want to be able to pay folks properly and use the money we make for our community. I will be organizing grant writing workshops, fundraising, promoting, and planning the releases and concerts of our community. I am using the money I won from Opera America as a starting point for our first show in June/July, an interdisciplinary operatic performance of my work in collaboration with local artists, musicians, and vendors. LA is the home city for this project but I hope Detroit will be next. I am really proud of the vision I've created and look forward to planning our first

festival and launch party for this summer. As people of Muslim heritage, we are often demonized and dehumanized. Here's to reclaiming the narrative. Here's to casting spells and making magic!

ME: What advice would you give current students working in and on the Middle East and North Africa?

DJ: To reclaim the narrative. You can research and write about any subject. You don't have to worry about making it more digestible for academia. Now is our time to thrive! Our voices and our bodies matter! You will find the most support within your own community and through building those relationships. Due to the colonial nature and history of academia, there may be a lot of personal setbacks involving feeling unseen or unheard, but remember that U-M is a campus that is here to support its MENA and Southwest Asian and North African students and you have the right to take up space and ask for what you need. Those resources are yours! Don't be afraid to apply to scholarships, residencies, and ask for what you need. The worst thing that will happen is people will say no, but eventually, the right person will hear you and say "YES!" I would also add that community care exists beyond the walls of the institution and that your work will be valued whether or not there is a degree attached to your name.

ME: Where can people keep up with your work?

DJ: Follow @muslimwitch and @phonodelica on Instagram and Facebook to stay up to date with our projects or contact me, and if you want to offer donations for our upcoming Kickstarter page.

Amidst all of the change and upheaval surrounding the coronavirus, Jarrar also published *Preludes for Social Distancing* in March as a reflection on the global pandemic.

FRAMES OF EGYPT

Photo Essay by Hana Mattar

Academic Program Specialist, Global Islamic Studies Center, U-M





CAPTIONS CORRESPOND CLOCKWISE,
STARTING AT THE BOTTOM PHOTO
ON PAGE 10.

En Route to Giza on Ring Road.
Cairo, Egypt.

Ras Mohamed Nature Reserve,
Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

Haret Bab Al-Louq, corner store in
Downtown Cairo, Egypt

Al-Rahman Al-Rahim Mosque,
Cairo, Egypt.

In front of Egyptian Endowments
Ministry General Bureau,
Sherif Basha Street, Cairo, Egypt

Ras Mohamed Nature Reserve,
Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

The Giza Pyramids at sunset.
Cairo, Egypt.

BEIRUT

A TRIP 17 YEARS IN THE MAKING

Text and Photos by **Diana Paez**

It is hard to pinpoint when my obsession with the Middle East began.

It probably started as a high school student in my hometown of Monterrey, Mexico, but it certainly flourished during my time in France, from 2000 to 2003, while I was pursuing graduate studies in International Law. One of the topics that most interested me was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its broader implications; this became a frequent topic of discussion in our class, of late night research and borderline obsession. Through it I became more and more interested in the history of the region as a whole, and started learning as much as I could about it. The discovery of its incredible food didn't hurt either, and I quickly learned about—and often frequented—the best falafel stands in Paris, the grocer with the freshest dates, and the teahouse where I could enjoy my favorite rendition of thé à la menthe, just slightly sweetened and with pine nuts floating on top, served in exquisitely adorned tea glasses.

As time passed, I began to make new friends, many of them from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). My world grew exponentially through our time together, learning about their culture, sharing about mine, and delighting at the many similarities: we shared a deep love for and attachment to family; food is everything; and tradition runs deep. In my second year of graduate school, I decided to focus on Lebanon as part of my Master thesis project, diving deep into its troubled history, its fascinating mélange of cultures, religions, and people. I learned about the 15-year-long civil war, the Hariri family and its influence, the post-war reconstruction plan and

Solidere, and the cultural renaissance that Beirut was enjoying. Fascinated by my findings, I wanted to visit Beirut during the summer of 2002, and do some field research for my project, but these were the times of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and travel to the region was not advisable.

I had wanted to visit Lebanon ever since.

Fast forward to September 2019, 17 years later, and I am sitting on a plane, destination Beirut.

The years in between took me back to Monterrey and then to Washington, DC, and, as fate would have it, I was now living in Ann Arbor, MI, farther into the American Midwest and even farther from Beirut.

I have the privilege of working at the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at U-M, an independent non-profit research and educational organization that works in the education, energy, financial, and healthcare sectors. One of our education programs is the new Business & Culture virtual exchange course offered by the U-M's Ross School of Business. This course aims to help students bridge cultural differences and navigate the real-world challenges of collaborating internationally by working together on projects and experiencing a global classroom. The course connects U-M students with peers from three MENA countries: Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon. Our partner in Lebanon is the American University of Beirut (AUB), a leading university in the region. As we prepare to launch the program, I pack up my bags and join two of my WDI colleagues on our first trip to Lebanon.



Dates and nuts at a local market in Beirut.



Delicious vegetarian appetizers at Tawlet in Beirut.



The traditional Lebanese hummus and fattoush salad at a local restaurant.

Our schedule in Beirut includes two days of meetings and discussions with our partners at AUB, a group of incredibly talented faculty and leaders interested in cross-cultural learning opportunities for their students. We were there to refine the course design and curriculum, discuss implementation plans, and finalize the details of the virtual exchange. All of this against the backdrop of Beirut—a city famed for its history, charm, chaos, and contrast. I like my charm with a side of chaos, so I eagerly step off the plane and into the city in the middle of the afternoon, ready to explore.

And to eat all the foods...

Upon arrival and before work begins, I join a free walking tour of Beirut, and the guides regale us with historical tidbits (who knew that over ten civilizations passed through this region?), interesting anecdotes about Beirut (it's the only city in the Middle East without a proper *souk*—the *souk* here now is a Westernized shopping mall), and three hours of walking. Best way to see the city, if you ask me. Charm, chaos, and contrast—they all combine to make the city so unique.

The charm is evident everywhere. I spot the radiant fuchsia of the bougainvillea, just like the ones we have back home in Mexico. People go out of their way to help, whether it is navigating the busy streets as we look for the best place to buy baklava, or welcoming us with strong, fragrant coffee when we reach the beautiful AUB campus in Ras Beirut, right by the waterfront. Charming cafés, bookstores, shops, al fresco restaurants, art galleries, and design stores are found across the neighborhoods, each with a distinct



ABOVE
The beautiful campus of the American University of Beirut.

LEFT
Mohammad Al-Amin Mosque and St George Maronite Cathedral in Beirut.



View of “La Corniche” (seaside boardwalk) from the AUB campus.



La Raouché, Beirut.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Beirut *souks*.

Ashtalie, a Lebanese cream pudding
with pistachios and rose jam.

Spinach dumplings with yogurt and
sumac at a local restaurant.

personality: Hamra, Gemmayzeh, Mar Mikhael, and more—names that conjure mystery and exoticism. The perfect backdrop for one of those novels you just can’t put down.

The chaos is evident in the city’s traffic, “ultra flexible” driving styles and risk-your-life street crossings—and I feel right at home. In Mexico, we also favor unconventional ways of navigating the city. It is hard to ignore the pollution and urban noise though—from early morning to late at night, the buzz of the city does not stop. There is chaos in politics and government, too—corruption, inequality, lack of economic opportunity—as in many other places. Indeed, just a month after our visit, anti-government protests would erupt and lead to Prime Minister Hariri’s resignation and an economic and political crisis that, as of this writing, still continues. Despite the chaos, I never felt unsafe during my time there and only experienced kindness and hospitality.

As for contrast, it is everywhere. Beautiful high rises dotted with urban gardens have been erected mere steps from the bullet-riddled Holiday Inn, a towering reminder of some of

Charm, chaos, and contrast—they all combine to make Beirut so unique.

the darkest days of the Civil War. Lamborghinis and Harleys are parked across from the ancient Roman baths; mosques and churches have been built side by side—the minarets at the exact same height as the church towers, to symbolize that no faith is above the other.

Back at AUB, we learn a lot more from our partners, discussing academic life, business and entrepreneurship trends, virtual exchange, and educational opportunities for Lebanese youth. We dive into the details of our joint course and get to meet the faculty and administrators who will be involved in our partnership.

We conclude our meetings on a high note, with excitement about this collaboration and energy about the opportunity that our joint course will offer to MENA and Michigan students to learn about each other.



As we make our way back to the hotel, we stop at La Raouché, or Pigeon's Rocks, located in the westernmost tip of the city. Looking into the distance, I can almost picture Cyprus, a bit farther west, and I breathe in the beautiful blue expanse of the Mediterranean Sea.

Later that night, over dinner, we reflect on everything we have seen and experienced, and on the privilege of being here. I think about the hospitality of the Lebanese people, the many meaningful interactions we've had during our visit, and about how much more there is to see and experience across the region.

With this longtime dream come true for me, I think back at the students that very soon will have the opportunity to learn about each other virtually, and hope that, one day, they will also be sitting somewhere they learned and dreamed about, soaking in the moment.

Only in their case, I hope it doesn't take 17 years to make the journey.

CMENAS AT MESA

The 2019 Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, this past November. Between dashing off to panels, roundtables, National Resource Center meetings, and picking up books from the Book Exhibition, CMENAS staff was able to get out of the conference hall and explore the city!



Former CMENAS Outreach Coordinator Betsy Barlow reflects on experiences reforming the Middle East, North African K-12 curricula

By Matthew Harmon



LEFT TO RIGHT
Mary Mostaghim (CMENAS Administrative Associate 1980–2000),
Rima Hassouneh (CMENAS Outreach Coordinator), and Betsy
Barlow (CMENAS Outreach Coordinator 1982–2000).

In order to facilitate conversations and peacebuilding between members of different cultures, an understanding of said cultures' history, geography, and identity is a crucial first step. In foundational textbooks and curriculums for K-12 students in the U.S., lessons on other countries and the citizens that reside in them are few and far between.

Betsy Barlow understands the necessity of providing young learners with narratives from a wide array of Middle Eastern cultures. As outreach coordinator at CMENAS from 1982 to 2000, Barlow dedicated her professional career to changing the way schools implement cross-cultural curriculums and continues to support CMENAS' efforts today.

Prior to accepting the position with CMENAS, Barlow was teaching in Lebanon and traveling across the Middle East and North Africa, to Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and more. As she traveled, she began to understand just how little students in the U.S. knew of the Middle East and North Africa and the hundreds of cultures housed within it.

"It was quite important to get people to see the land as it really was," Barlow said.

Upon returning to the States and being hired as the new outreach coordinator at CMENAS, she immediately went to work, reaching out to local high schools and improving education efforts on MENA cultures. In her mind, a broader understanding of how people live in a region often vilified by U.S. governments and media would allow students to empathize with the experiences of strangers, eventually leading to stronger peacebuilding movements.

"It was an exciting place to be at that time because so much was happening. The reason that there were outreach coordinators at that time was because our country after World War II had more responsibilities in the world," Barlow explained. "We had not been paying much attention before ... to what was going on elsewhere. It was their business and we didn't want to bother with it. [With] the formation of the United Nations, it became apparent that if you didn't want another war, it would be a good idea to understand what was happening in the world."

According to an article Barlow wrote for the *Journal of the International Institute* in 1995, educational textbooks in the U.S. are often riddled with historical inaccuracies and large-scale generalizations about non-white cultures both domestically and abroad. In regards to MENA, Barlow and her team found "almost from the first introduction, Islam is associated with violence ... [and] writers too often fall back on an assertion of Islamic fanaticism to 'explain' what they don't know." In response to this misinformation, Barlow pushed for updated, accurate textbooks in local K-12 classrooms.

However, Barlow also understood that new textbooks would be ineffective without knowledgeable teachers leading the classrooms. As a result, Barlow started a program that brought local K-12 teachers on trips to Middle Eastern countries to show them the importance of accurately teaching cross-cultural lessons.

"We tried to get trips for teachers overseas. We'd take them all for two weeks or a bit longer to different areas and we would take anybody who applied. Some of them came on more than one trip. We went to North Africa the first time and two years later, we went to Israel, Palestine, and Egypt, and our third trip was to Syria and Jordan. ... [The teachers] who actually came on the trips overseas were most confident of what they saw and would come back and say, 'Your book says this but that isn't actually the way it is,'" Barlow said.

When Barlow looks back on the work she and her team accomplished at CMENAS, she is filled with pride. Beyond the institutional innovations her team created, she has also enjoyed following the careers of the students she worked with.

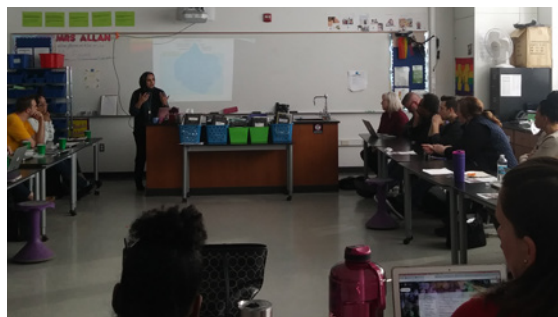
"We had some wonderful students. They worked in the center and because of their activity, we could do an awful lot more. They were usually willing to help and offer ideas and they came from a lot of different places. I stay in touch with a lot of them and I read their books, I watch their presentations at [the conferences of the Middle East Studies Association], and a lot of the people in the field now were people who were our students," Barlow concluded.

BACK TO SCHOOL: CMENAS AT THE AAPS

By Rima Hassouneh

In the fall of 2019, a number of middle- and high-school counselors at the Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) approached CMENAS to request training workshops in culturally and religiously informed interventions to support their Muslim students. A few situations had arisen during the academic year in which these and other counselors had felt ill-equipped with the knowledge and skills to support their students' psychosocial wellbeing. After some discussion, we decided on a basic introduction to Islam, followed by a specific address of Muslim adolescents' mental health needs. "This is amazing! Thank you so much!!!" wrote Heather Schimmel, a Skyline High School counselor and our AAPS liaison. "We are very much looking forward to all of this wonderful PD!"

CMENAS partnered with the Islamic Network Group (ING) Midwest and with Sura Shlebah of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) to deliver the first training session on December 4th, 2019, to an audience of 33 educators at Community High School. Aisha Arshad is the founder of Noble Muslim and an ING Midwest certified speaker. In her presentation, she listed the major beliefs and practices of the faith, including its theological relations to Judaism and Christianity. Arshad pressed for accommodations for students who perform ablutions (*wudu*) and pray while at school, and who fast the month of Ramadan, which will certainly fall during the academic calendar. However, she also stressed that Muslim teenagers were not different from their peers; many of their concerns (e.g., "Will my friends still like me in hijab?") were run-of-the-mill. Shlebah, an alumna of U-M's School of Social Work and herself the child of Iraqi immigrants, spoke about the trauma of war and displacement and its inter-generational effects upon children. She shared her personal story of migration and assimilation to American culture generally and to public-school culture specifically.



Dr. Saba Marouf speaks to the counselors about Muslim adolescents

The counselors' second training was held on March 4th, 2020, at Northside School. Child psychiatrist and ING Midwest certified speaker Dr. Saba Marouf spoke at length about the cognitive and emotional development of children. Acknowledging that many families, fearful of the stigma, deny or downplay their adolescent children's depression, she shared resources and addressed counselors' multiple concerns. (Q: "What do I do when my student asks me not to involve his parents?" A: "Communicate regularly with parents about their children's successes to facilitate difficult communication about challenges.") But she pointed out the undue pressure upon children as cultural and religious mediators/liaisons between their teachers and guardians. Dr. Marouf also emphasized the diversity in Islamic identity, practice, and observance, exhorting the counselors to avoid the pitfalls of stereotypical understandings and expectations of students' and families' attitudes and behaviors about a range of issues, such as sexual orientation. She concluded the training with admiration and thanks for the counselors' hard work to ensure a safe environment for their students' learning and development.

"The feedback for the workshop was excellent! Everyone is very excited for your group to return," later reported Schimmel. CMENAS thanks its individual and organizational partners for making the professional development at the AAPS such a success, and looks forward to many future collaborations.

A LINGERING LESSON

By Amy Frontier

One of the most important experiences an educator can have is to be a student again, even just for a few hours each year. After 15 years of teaching, there is nothing more important to me than continuing to learn. For me, learning is the ingredient in my teaching life that staves off the dullness of routine, that keeps my mind fresh, sharp, and current, and that reminds me what it is like to sit in a classroom and listen. Just as it took many years and numerous adjustments until I felt satisfied with my annual gingerbread cookies, my daily literature and writing lessons undergo the same process. Tinker with and tweak that lesson, add a pinch of this here to that writing assignment; my work as a teacher is always undergoing change and evolution. Luckily for me, many extraordinary institutions have helped contribute to my ever-changing recipe to keep my lessons current, rich, and new. As a teacher on the East Coast for five years, I spent hours at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Studio Museum of Harlem, grateful to be learning from artists and museum educators about the best ways to integrate art and image, photography and collage, so my students would understand history, people, culture, and the story even more deeply.

When I relocated to Ann Arbor, I was delighted to learn of many exciting opportunities that allow teachers to add to their proverbial tool kit and enrich

their lessons. With luck (and thanks to the fact that the U-M departments collaborate), I landed on a distribution list for several departments that host U-M educator events. After an enlightening workshop hosted by the U-M Museum of Art, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and the CMENAS, I found myself with two compelling emails in my inbox: One offered an opportunity to attend a “Global Islam” workshop, the other shared an invitation to apply for a trip to Palestine to learn about the Palestinian people and their culture. As a Contemporary World Literature teacher, I found both opportunities too exciting to pass up.

I applied to participate in both. The “Global Islam” workshop, on a late June day a couple of weeks into the summer break, proved inspiring, educational, and quite simply food for the mind. With a clear mind and the rest of the summer holiday to process and reflect, I sat on the tenth floor of Weiser Hall and let the presenters’ slides, knowledge, and stories seep into my consciousness. It was wonderful to be a student again. We learned about the history of Islam from a scholar’s point of view, we heard from a graduate student about her relationships with Indonesian Muslim high schoolers, and we listened as a panel of local Muslim men and women delighted us with personal experiences, stories, and wisdom. I left with a hunger for even more international experience. Just a few short days later, the second opportunity to sample and taste more of the Middle East and a world so different from our own landed in my inbox. An American Federation of Ramallah representative reached out to me to request an interview for their October trip to Palestine. After two rich and exciting interview sessions, I was selected to travel to Ramallah and to learn more about the Middle East. On October 18th, I set off with seven other delegates to visit Jerusalem, Ramallah, and many other cities and sites in the West Bank and beyond. The experience was nothing short of remarkable.

After two Skype preparatory sessions, our delegation met in person for the first time at Newark Airport in New Jersey. We discovered quickly that we comprised a motley crew of adventurers. We were to become close friends after only seven days together, and, looking back, it’s no surprise. We experienced something extraordinary together: a cultural feast shared with us by Palestinian hosts, citizens, educators, and community organizers—all who

warmly welcomed us and told us their personal stories. They fed us amazing foods; they met and accompanied us to schools, on city tours, to musical concerts, and to schools; and they coordinated visits to places off-limits to the average tourist. We were fortunate to visit refugee camps, holy sites, personal homes, and several schools. Each day, we rose early and met in the bright breakfast room of our hotel in Ramallah before setting off on another adventure into the heart of Palestine. We weaved our way through the markets of Jerusalem, ducked into a bakery to watch and learn how the famous Jerusalem bread makes its way from the darkened space a few steps down from street level into the hands of eager bread-lovers. We stood on Lionsgate Street as we waited for security clearance, donned borrowed long skirts, placed our scarves over our heads, then walked into the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Our Palestinian guide worked out a special entry for our group to visit the Al Aqsa Mosque, a right usually reserved only for Muslims wishing to pray. After a visit to a cultural center and music school in East Jerusalem—with a stop into a children's dance class and a high-school instrumental rehearsal—we visited with the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem and learned about the ways the church works with and supports Palestinian citizens.

After our whirlwind tour of East Jerusalem, we boarded mini-buses to Ramallah, noticing the unfamiliar sites out the window and learning more each moment from our Palestinian tour guides, who never once tired of answering our never-ending questions. We passed by checkpoints, took in the graffitied walls that separate Palestinian and Israeli spaces, and noticed the architecture and the landscape at every turn. It was astonishing how much we learned each time we simply stepped onto the bus for transport between locations. Our six days in Ramallah were filled with visits with so many wonderful hosts, all eager to show us their schools, their community centers, their cultural centers, and to tell us about their lives. We met women in a small village who started a shop so any woman could sell her homemade crafts and feel a sense of empowerment. We met an olive farmer and his daughters, who showed us how to harvest olives and then invited us back to their home. We marveled the sites and stories of Bethlehem; a visit to the Church of the Nativity gave us a glimpse into its rich religious history and beauty while a stop at Banksy's Walled Off Hotel and Museum gave us even more insight into the power of graffiti and

the history of separation barriers and their impact on the people of Palestine. In Hebron, we were hosted by leaders working to revitalize the city and walked through the eerily quiet street that was once filled with shops in order to further understand the history of Hebron and the conflicts that have led to daily tensions. And there were so many more places we visited that gave us even more insight into the complex place that is Palestine.

While all of our day trips and visits helped us understand Palestinian culture, we quickly began to understand the depth and complexity of daily life for Palestinians. Each evening, our group reflected on the weight that many citizens carry each day: the routine of waiting in line at lengthy checkpoints; of looking at separation barriers as people go to work, school, and out to eat; and of carrying an identification card that dictates where each individual is permitted to go. But just as we learned that these difficult routines are a

We learned about the history of Islam from a scholar's point of view, we heard from a graduate student about her relationships with Indonesian Muslim high schoolers, and we listened as a panel of local Muslim men and women delighted us with personal experiences, stories, and wisdom. I left with a hunger for even more international experience.

part of Palestinian culture, we also learned how much the people we met treasure the cultural elements that they can control. They delight in sharing the amazing food that tastes like a bite of heaven, the musical performances that are magic to the ears, and the stories of daily life that represent perseverance, patience, and hope. My visit to Palestine was a gift of the highest order: one that continues to linger and remind me that we all have so much more to learn about people's lives. I am grateful for the Palestinian people's willingness and generosity to share their stories with us. Now, equipped with the rich stories and memories from my travels to Ramallah and Palestine, I can offer a taste of what I have learned to my high school students for many years to come.

Lakeshore High School Students at Lecture by Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Former UN Commissioner for Human Rights

By Rima Hassouneh

Amy Perkins teaches AP World History and U.S. History at Lakeshore High School in Stevensville, Michigan. A dedicated teacher and veteran traveler, she has visited Jordan, amongst other destinations, and applied the knowledge and skills acquired experientially and firsthand to her teaching. She is also a valued member in the cohort of the 2019–2020 MENA-SEA Teacher Program, CMENAS' year-long Title VI-funded initiative that provides in-depth and nuanced training about the MENA to Grade 6-12 educators from across our state.

When Perkins learned about the visit to U-M in November 2019 of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights (2014-18), Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein of Jordan, she rightly saw it as a singular opportunity for her students. On the sixth of the month he would give a distinguished lecture, "Global Challenges to Human Rights Today," organized by the Donia Human Rights Center (DHRC) and co-sponsored by CMENAS. What better opportunity to extend what her students were learning in her classes, Perkins thought, than to listen in person to Al Hussein discuss real-world threats of racism, xenophobia, nationalism, and authoritarianism to human rights and stability across the world?

Perkins and I communicated over the next few weeks about the details and arrangements of the all-day excursion. "My students are looking forward to meeting you. ... Thank you so much for helping me make this event a reality for them!" she wrote. Of course, of paramount importance for the out-of-towners was a dinner plan: "Please send me a list of your favorite 2–3 restaurants in Ann Arbor that serve ethnic cuisine and can seat a group of 15 people."

On the morning of the lecture, Perkins, Assistant Principal Jason Holok, and 13 students drove eastward in two school vans from Stevensville, about 150 miles away from Ann Arbor. They came bearing gifts: a thank-you card signed by each visitor, and a box of honey walnut baklava made the day before by Perkins



herself, who had followed the family recipe of an unexpected baker: her Dutch-American grandmother! My colleagues at the International Institute (II) all confirmed (through eager trial) that the baklava was delicious. More than a few came back for seconds and thirds.

Before the lecture, scheduled for 4 p.m., we took a tour of the II, and I introduced the group to my colleagues at all the centers on the three floors. A mix of juniors and seniors, the students were curious and excited about Al-Hussein's upcoming lecture and about U-M; some even aspired to attend our university. Clearly, they loved learning about other cultures and languages; amongst them, more than six languages (including Arabic and Dari!) were spoken.

By the time the lecture began on the tenth floor of Weiser Hall, the Lakeshore High visitors were on the edges of their reserved seats near the podium. The DHRC's Distinguished Lecture series invites illustrious speakers with both expertise in, and skill

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein of Jordan (center) with Amy Perkins (in blue), her students, Jessica Hill Riggs (far left), and Rima Hassouneh (to her left)

Young people must lead the fight for human rights. "We need people with a deep reservoir of ethical thinking and a conscience that will make a difference," said Al Hussein.

to speak generally about, human rights. Introducing Al Hussein, DHRC Director and Sociology Professor Kiyoteru Tsutsui said, “I can’t think of a better spokesperson” to address this critical issue in today’s world. To an audience of about 200, Al Hussein argued that the safety and future of humanity would be secured only through vision, energy, and generosity of spirit. He identified nine main threats to human rights today, including authoritarianism, white supremacy, and economic elitism. “The devil of violence [slivers] through all of us,” he said. Codifying protections into law is more urgent than ever nowadays. Young people must lead the fight for human rights. “We need people with a deep reservoir of ethical thinking and a conscience that will make a difference,” concluded Al Hussein.

After the Q&A, DHRC’s benefactor, Bob Donia, was delighted to meet the students, impressed by their commitment to engage thoughtfully with global and real-world issues. We were all quite tickled when he asked for a photo with them. Admiring their zeal and determination about global justice, Al Hussein graciously and lengthily spoke to the students. He told them they reminded him of his own teenage daughter and applauded their exemplary and youthful leadership.

The impact and inspiration of the entire experience for the Lakeshore High students are best captured by Perkins herself, whose words conclude my account:

“As we drove home last Wednesday, I had a chance to listen to our students’ conversations about the evening. They felt honored by both your warm welcome and Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein’s willingness to engage them in direct, meaningful conversation.

“Thank you for investing in my students, for allowing them to attend the event, and for making the evening so memorable. Too often our youngest generation is disregarded by adults. Their opinions are undervalued, and they feel powerless to provoke positive, lasting change. This trend discourages leadership and activism among our youth.

“Thankfully, your warm welcome and Zeid’s investment of time demonstrated a different reality. My students left Ann Arbor feeling valued, respected, and inspired. Your interest in my students was sincere, and your actions showed them that you value them as scholars, leaders, and global citizens. I frequently tell them that they have the power to change the world, but your kindness and Zeid’s words did more to convince them of this reality than my lectures ever will.”



THE BRIDGE OF MUSIC

By Rima Hassouneh

Michael Ibrahim is the founder and director of the National Arab Orchestra (NAO), a nonprofit organization that performs the classical and contemporary traditions of Arab music. He also teaches at Dearborn’s Henry Ford Community College, a CMENAS partner in outreach. This is how Ibrahim ended up at Mr. Nathaniel Lampman’s second-period music classes in Saline High School’s band room on March 3rd, 2020. “It was a wonderful presentation. The students and I learned a great deal,” shared Mr. Lampman.

Born to Syrian immigrants, Ibrahim grew up in Sterling Heights. Church music featured in his childhood; he was struck by the chanting during Greek Orthodox services of his grandfather, who was a priest. Not surprisingly, Ibrahim and the NAO use music to bridge cultural differences.

For his visit with the band members at Saline High, he wrote a musical arrangement that, according to Mr. Lampman, “we were able to collaborate on and the students had a great time improvising and making music.” As the conductor and director of the NAO and as educator, Ibrahim strives to instill wide appreciation for Arab music and its heritage.

“Mr. Ibrahim’s skill as a musician and presenter ... was great. We are already discussing future collaborations,” wrote Mr. Lampman. “Thank you to everyone who made it happen.”

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

GANI MANELLI

By **Alexandra Card**, Graduating Senior, History and Political Science, U-M

Gani Manelli's love for learning history began at an early age, sparked by the experience of his parents. His parents immigrated from Albania in the aftermath of World War II and were privy to the period's political upheaval. "My father was very small at the time, but he can remember some of the things that were going on during World War II, such as when the British were there, when the Americans were there, when the Germans invaded." Hearing these stories and reading the newspaper clippings that his father had saved, Manelli became fascinated with history and its relevance to the current day. "Maybe it wasn't the kind of thing every eight-, nine-, or ten-year-old found fascinating, but I'd be lying if I told you I didn't find it interesting when I was growing up. I played Wiffle ball and stuff like that too, but it was one of those things that stopped me and made me think, "Wow, it's unbelievable to look back at those things."

As immigrants to the United States who grew up in a place without many opportunities for education, Manelli's parents heavily stressed the importance of learning. This influence inspired Manelli's lifelong passion for academics. "Anything and everything I've done is all attributed

to my parents, especially my father, who has worked hard for a number of years."

His love of history and learning led Manelli to the Middle East. News stories about the region spurred independent reading and research while still in high school. His interest in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, including its history and present-day implications, continued into his studies as an undergraduate at Boston University, where he wrote a senior honors thesis on the conflict during the World War I. Upon graduating with his bachelor's degree, he decided to apply to CMENAS' master's program at U-M.

Even as a kid growing up in Connecticut, Manelli always had an intuition that he would go to U-M one day. "I have a strong affinity for Michigan, even long before I went there. ... I've been watching Michigan football games from the time I was six or seven years old. I always saw thought someday I'm going to go there." Manelli remembers his time at CMENAS fondly. "It was a nice warm and friendly kind of atmosphere. I just felt at home, which was nice."

After earning his master's degree, Manelli returned to his home state of Connecticut. He decided to get his teaching certificate and pursue a career

as a school teacher. "I always loved being a student, I always loved being in an academic environment and learning, so I thought maybe just turn the tables and instead of being a student, teach." About two years after obtaining his teaching certificate, Manelli got a job teaching history at Masuk High School in Monroe, Connecticut. Twenty-seven years later he is still in this same position, though he has also taken on the role of adjunct professor teaching nights and weekends at Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Manelli's love for teaching stems from his affinity for being in an academic environment. "At the high school level, they are learning, they are ambitious, and they are trying to advance themselves in some way. That rings through my head and reverberates a lot of the values my parents instilled in me while growing up because that is something they always stressed in a big way."

Even after becoming a teacher, Manelli has continued to advance his education by doing post-master's study in history, taking courses on diplomatic history, Middle East history, and international relations. He has incorporated his passion for the region into his work. He mentions,

in particular, a Yukon World History course he teaches. “In that class, there are opportunities to focus on different areas regarding the Arab world and, in particular, the Arab-Israeli Conflict. ... One of the things that we do that incorporates the Modern Middle East is to set up delegations. We have a discussion and debate about the Arab-Israeli Conflict, structured with lectures, notes, and documents.” Manelli notes that this activity results in a very lively and dynamic discussion. Students often will reach out to him after taking the course and note how the material that was learned through the discussion has allowed them to understand and connect with news stories from the present moment.

Despite including the content in his classroom, Manelli notes there is room for improvement for the school system as a whole. “In some school systems, there is not enough leeway to individualize and go off-script. Some of the higher-ups feel that it is too off-script and perhaps too volatile.” Manelli maintains hope that in the future there will be more active efforts to emphasize the relevance of history to current day events. “Relevance is something I can’t walk away from. It has a lot to do with who I am and where I am. I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for those things and why I grew up here and had the opportunity I did.” With regards to the curriculum, Manelli hopes for “more opportunities to forge connections between the past and the present.” He wants teachers to be able to clearly emphasize the importance of history to the present.

In addition to his work of educating students about the Middle East, Manelli has been a consistent donor to CMENAS, generously making a contribution every year since he graduated from its program. “It’s always on the to-do list. I don’t see that ever stopping,” he says.

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

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

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

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