



UNC CENTER FOR
MIDDLE EAST &
ISLAMIC STUDIES



UNC
GLOBAL

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Programming.....2

- Event on US-Israel Relations Sheds Light on Current Politics in Israeli and Electoral System
- Experts Discuss the Background, Process, and Potential Impact of U.S.-Taliban Negotiations
- Public Talk on Iran Helps Make Sense of Current Events in the Middle East
- Carolina Seminar on Middle East Studies Series Highlights

Faculty.....5

- Grants Awarded to UNC and Duke Faculty for Research in Middle East Studies
- New Course on “Arabic Sources on American Slavery” Taught Fall 2019

Students.....6

- Student Spotlights
- Honors Carolina Students Learn About Foreign Policy in the Middle East
- Carolina Global Photography Competition Winner

Outreach.....9

- Workshop on Andalucia Explores History and Culture of Islamic Spain
- K-12 Teachers Explore Women and Gender in the Middle East with “She Who Tells a Story” Exhibition
- 2020 Cohort of Middle East and African Cultures Teacher Fellows Program Kicks Off with Spring Webinars
- Center Supports Arabic Program at Durham Technical Community College

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

The tasks confronting international education have suddenly become much more difficult. Among the many unprecedented consequences of the outbreak of the coronavirus, scholars and students now confront a situation in which international travel will be drastically reduced for the foreseeable future. Study abroad programs and international conferences have been put on hold. Classes at college and universities are being conducted online, and instructors are struggling to adapt interpersonal teaching styles to new forms of technological mediation.

Middle East and Islamic studies have always seemed to present a greater degree of difficulty than the study of other regions and cultures. Conflicts across the Middle East have limited opportunities for undergraduate students to have immersion experiences overseas, not to mention the difficulties facing graduate students seeking to do archival research or fieldwork in the Middle East. Conferences, faculty research, and course content in Middle East and Islamic studies have been the target of external ideological criticism to a higher degree than other fields of study. The restrictions caused by the current crisis are undoubtedly a cause for additional concern.

It is therefore all the more important for us as faculty, staff, and students in Middle East and Islamic studies to affirm the values of intellectual community that will be essential to our future. In recent weeks I have received numerous inquiries and messages from people around the world who have had academic interactions with UNC, and these contacts reinforce my hopes for sustaining the projects to which we are dedicated. Closer to home, we especially need to support our students as best we can during this difficult time. We also must maintain our focus on the outreach programs for teachers so successfully developed by CMEIS staff, adapting as necessary to the new educational environment. And it is important to welcome the new faculty and staff who are joining UNC to assist in our long-term commitment to teaching and research in Middle East and Islamic studies. Keeping our focus on these priorities may be one of our most important strengths in dealing with the new challenges.

-Carl Ernst, Co-Director

PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Event on US-Israel Relations Sheds Light on Current Politics in Israeli and Electoral System

Stephanie Jeselson, UNC 2020

On October 29, 2019, CMEIS hosted Amir Tibon, current Washington correspondent for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, for a discussion of United States-Israel relations and the recent elections in Israel.

Tibon is currently two years into a three-year assignment in the United States to cover the Trump administration and affairs in Washington, D.C. This was his second visit to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, previously giving a talk in April 2019 on Israeli politics, government, and elections.



Amir Tibon at UNC Chapel Hill.

Tibon’s presentation addressed three main issues: the current state of politics in Israel, United States policy and American interests in Israel, and the role that Israel plays in United States politics. He presented background information on the Israeli electoral system, political parties, and key political figures. Tibon also summarized key events and factors related to Israel’s two elections within a span of five months. His presentation was followed by an engaging discussion about the role of religion in Israeli politics, and speculations about future elections.

At the time of writing, neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor challenger Benny Gantz were able to create a governing coalition. Tibon outlined possible impacts if neither candidate were to form a majority with at least 61 votes. When discussing the party split preventing a clear majority, Tibon explained that “religious vs. secular votes are the biggest dividing line in Jewish society today.”

Experts Discuss the Background, Process, and Potential Impact of U.S.-Taliban Negotiations

Stephanie Jeselson, UNC 2020

CMEIS hosted a panel discussion on United States-Taliban negotiations on November 12, 2019. Three experts were invited to speak on the background of the negotiations, how they were conducted, and their potential impact.

Panelists included Annie Pforzheimer, former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Afghanistan, US Department of State, and Deputy Chief of Mission in Kabul, 2017-2018; Palwasha Kakar, Senior Program Officer for Religion and Inclusive Societies at the United States Institute for Peace, and former Afghanistan director for Women’s Empowerment and



Panelist Palwasha Kakar responds to an audience question.

Development for The Asia Foundation; and Prof. Barnett Rubin, Associate Director and Senior Fellow, Afghanistan-Pakistan Regional Program, Center for International Cooperation at New York University.

Each panelist first introduced their work, experience in the region, and their expertise on the relationship between the United States, Afghanistan, and the Taliban. The panelists' presentations were followed by a robust question and answer period with the audience facilitated by center co-director, Charles Kurzman.

Two important points emerged from the discussion: the first was the three-day ceasefire between the Taliban and the Afghan government in June 2018 for the celebration of Eid-al-Fitr at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Kakar, an Afghan-American who has spent time in Afghanistan researching how religion and culture can be used to establish peace, emphasized that this celebratory time allowed for conversations between two groups that often do not communicate with each other. "As the Afghan civilians and Taliban came into the city for Eid, it was clear how thirsty everyone is for peace," she remarked.

The second focal point of the discussion was the November 2019 decision of the Afghan government to release three high-ranking Taliban prisoners in exchange for two hostages held by the group, one American and one Australian. While theorizing different consequences of this prisoner swap, all panelists agreed it would be a significant event in the trajectory of negotiations with the Taliban.

While the negotiations and proposals for peace in Afghanistan are ongoing, the panelists' presentation and ensuing discussion shed light on the complexities of the Afghan peace process.

Public Talk on Iran Helps Make Sense of Current Events in the Middle East

Stephanie Jeselson, UNC 2020

On January 14, 2019, CMEIS hosted a pop-up event on the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani. Dr. Charles Kurzman, professor of sociology and co-director of the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, provided an in-depth presentation about the context for the General's assassination and its implications for Iran and the United States going forward.

To provide important context, Kurzman began with an overview of the history of relations between the United States and Iran, beginning with the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 when Iranians demanded democracy and looked to the United States for support. Kurzman then addressed the coup d'état organized by the United States and Britain in 1953, the hostage crisis of the US embassy in Iran, the Iran-Contra Affair, and the 2015 Nuclear Agreement. Following his discussion of these events, he examined the significance of the general's assassination and provided possible consequences for the future.

Throughout the presentation, Kurzman emphasized that it is in neither country's best interests to pursue war. Following the talk, there was a lively discussion with members from the audience about US interests in the Middle East, Iraq's position as a host for this conflict, and Soleimani's successor.

As the future of relations between the US and Iran continues to unfold, the event provided important information on the relationship between the countries.



Audience members attend talk on current events in Iran.

Carolina Seminar on Middle East Studies Series Highlights

The Carolina Seminar on Middle East Studies, established in 2016, continues to provide forum events at UNC to explore current research and engage students in Middle East studies.

November 4, 2019 - Book Talk: "Domestic Violence, Islam and Feminism: A Difficult Conversation" with Dr. Juliane Hammer

Dr. Hammer spoke on her newest publication, *Domestic Violence, Islam and Feminism: A Difficult Conversation*. Using research from interviews with Muslim advocates, service providers and religious leaders, she detailed different strategies that Muslim American organizations use to address domestic violence within their communities, and the effects that Islamophobia has on this important work. Hammer linked Muslim advocacy efforts to the larger domestic violence crisis in the United States, and demonstrated how advocates participate in debates about family, gender, and marriage in global Muslim communities including in the Middle East.



November 12, 2019 - Global Careers Meet and Greet: Focus on Work in Afghanistan

Students joined a conversation with two experts in global diplomacy and service about careers in the State Department, global non-profits, and international development. Annie Pforzheimer, Senior Associate at Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Palwasha Kakar, Senior Program Officer, Religion and Inclusive Societies, United States Institute of Peace, discussed their career trajectories with a focus on experiences in Afghanistan, as well as the skills most useful for their professional paths.



February 11, 2020 - NGO Careers Meet and Greet with Mohammad Al Abdallah

The center hosted a discussion with the executive director of the NGO Syria Justice and Accountability Center based in Washington, DC. Over coffee and pastries, Mr. Al Abdallah discussed ways in which graduates can obtain work with NGOs focused on the Middle East, what employers are looking for, and what students can do in advance to graduating to position themselves for success.

February 19, 2020 - Kitab Talk: Lunch & Learn with the New Middle East and Islamic Studies Librarian: Rustin Zarkar

The center hosted a lunch event to welcome Rustin Zarkar, the new Middle East and Islamic Studies Librarian. Zarkar discussed his new role with the UNC Libraries as well as his work on the Ajam Media Collective Project, an online multimedia platform covering culture and politics in Iran, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South Asia. An open conversation followed on student and faculty research interests and needs. This inaugural "Kitab Talk" was first in a series of events to connect students and faculty with resources and updates from the UNC Libraries.

April 1, 2020 - Kitab Talk Webinar: Digital Scholarship & E-Resources during the COVID19 Closures

This virtual session of Kitab Talk was hosted to provide resources to students and faculty conducting research from home as universities close and courses move online with the outbreak of COVID19. The Middle East and Islamic Studies Librarian, Rustin Zarkar, explored the various digital resources available through UNC Libraries, which include new databases, online archives, open access websites, and e-publications.



FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Grants Awarded to UNC and Duke Faculty for Research in Middle East Studies

With support from the Title VI program of the U.S. Department of Education, the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies is pleased to offer small grants to faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, and state-wide Schools of Education. Congratulations to the following faculty for receiving grants to work on these projects:

Course Development:

- Erica Weinthal & Rebecca Stein (Environment & Cultural Anthropology, Duke) for travel to Jerusalem in preparation for co-teaching a new course focused on the city, “Jerusalem: Human Rights in a Contested City.”
- Bud Kauffman (Asian Studies, UNC) – To develop a new Arabic ‘Languages Across the Curriculum’ course, “Media Perspective on the War in Iraq.” The course will introduce students to multiple perspectives on the War in Iraq since 2003 through the lens of media coverage.
- Benjamin Arbuckle (Anthropology, UNC) – for travel to Ankara, Turkey to develop a course on “Imagining the Past: Archaeology in the Republic of Turkey.” The course will introduce students to the rich archaeological record describing the (pre)history of the Anatolian peninsula and explore the social and political contexts in which archaeology is practiced in Turkey.
- Omid Safi (Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, Duke) – To develop a course on “Middle Eastern Mystical Literature,” focusing on prominent figures in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish mystical literature.
- Claudia Nickolson (UNC-Pembroke School of Education) - To travel to Antalya, Turkey to conduct a collaborative teaching and learning project with faculty at Akdeniz University. The collaboration will result in modules on peace education and global awareness aimed at increasing understanding of the Middle East for the ELE 4030 Course “Living in a Global Society.”



Dr. Claudia Nickolson at a high school in southeastern Turkey.

Language Pedagogy Training:

- Maha Houssami (Arabic, Duke) – To attend Arabic pedagogy-related sessions at the annual Middle East Studies Association meeting in New Orleans (November 2019).
- Peter Knapczyk (Urdu, Duke) – To present “Strategies for Developing and Expanding Asian LCTL Programs” at the annual conference of the Association of Asian Studies in Boston (March 2020).

Research Travel Grant:

- Yaron Shemer (Asian Studies, UNC) – Travel to Israel to conduct research on “Gaza in Israeli Cinema,” visit film archives at the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv Cinematheques, and conduct interviews with filmmakers.

New Course on “Arabic Sources on American Slavery” Taught Fall 2019

Professors at UNC Chapel Hill and Duke University collaborated to offer a new course in fall 2019, “Arabic Sources on American Slavery.” This course explored Arabic writings of enslaved Africans, focusing on Omar ibn Said (1770-1864), who wrote his autobiography in Arabic while enslaved in Bladen County, North Carolina in 1831.

Together, Carl Ernst, William R. Kenan, Jr., distinguished professor of Islamic studies (UNC) and co-director of the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, and Mbaye Bashir Lo, professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (Duke University) co-taught the course.

During the semester, students explored the history of slavery in America, focusing on slave narratives as a literary form, racialization of enslaved people, and slavery in comparative perspectives. Students connected the transatlantic slave trade to the history of Islam in America, the significance of Islam in West Africa, and conversion and religion among enslaved Muslims.

Omar ibn Said, a prominent figure studied in the class, was born and educated in Futa Toro (modern day Senegal) before being enslaved and transported to Charleston, South Carolina. Said escaped and ended up in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he was captured by police after entering a Christian church to pray. Said wrote on the walls of his prison cell in Arabic, drawing attention to his literacy, and was bought by General James Owen of Bladen County. He lived in North Carolina for the rest of his life.

Enrolled students engaged their Arabic language skills, translating some of Said's Arabic manuscripts into English. The process of translating Said's writings shed new light on his life. Said nominally converted to Christianity, though it is unclear whether or not his conversion was sincere. His writings contain several references to Islamic texts, including the Qur'an, poetry, and other theological texts, indicating not only his high degree of scholarship but also a likely continued Islamic practice.

The translations from the class will be compiled into a critical edition and published online as part of the Islamicate Texts Initiative at the University of Maryland.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Graduate Student Spotlight: Yasmine Flodin-Ali

PhD student, Religious Studies; Yasmine spent time during summer 2019 learning Arabic at the American Language Institute in Fes, Morocco

What are your research interests?

My work looks at the relationship between race and religion by examining the racialization of South Asian American Muslims and African American Muslims from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

Why did you choose to study Arabic?

Part of my dissertation research will involve working with Arabic manuscripts. One of the historical case studies that I'm examining is the life of Omar ibn Said, an enslaved man who spent most of his adult life in North Carolina, and wrote a number of documents in Arabic.

What was most valuable about your time in Morocco?

There were only two of us in my class at the American Language Institute in Fes! That small classroom setting was invaluable for language practice. Being immersed in an Arabic speaking context and in a country as beautiful and friendly as Morocco was also super helpful.

What are your plans for the future?

Narrowing down the case studies that I want to include in my dissertation, starting to draft book lists for my exams, and finding creative ways to translate my work into the public sphere.



Graduate Student Spotlight: Michelle Dromgold-Sermen

PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, Michelle received a Pre-Dissertation Exploration Award from the UNC Center for Global Initiatives to conduct research in Germany.



What are your research interests?

My research interests are in international migration, immigration law, and refugee and immigrant incorporation, particularly among Middle Eastern immigrants. I am particularly interested in the ways in which policies and immigration laws impact the incorporation and sense of belonging of refugees and immigrants as they settle in a new place.

What did you learn during your 2019 fieldwork experience in Germany?

Last summer I traveled to Berlin, Germany to conduct exploratory interviews with Syrian refugees there to better understand how differences in state asylum and refugee policies in Germany and the United States might impact refugees' experiences in these two countries in similar or different ways. During this time, I learned a great deal about the situation that refugees and asylees are experiencing at the city and national level in Berlin. In interviewing young Syrian men aspiring to and enrolling in university, I found that most felt a sense of belonging to Berlin, but not to Germany, and that many continued to feel excluded from societal incorporation despite their permanent status as refugees in Germany and their ability to speak German and study at the university level.

How have you shared your research with public audiences?

I have shared my research with local teachers in Guilford County through the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, as well as with undergraduate students in the Passport to Go program and graduate students seeking pre-dissertation exploratory funding through UNC's Center for Global Initiatives. I plan to write an academic article drawing on the interviews that I conducted and comparing the experiences of Syrian refugees in Berlin with those of Syrian refugees in the United States.

What are your plans for the future?

As a fourth year PhD student in the Department of Sociology, I am currently beginning research for my dissertation that explores how U.S. immigration policies, bureaucracy, and administration shapes nonimmigrants' pathways to legal permanent residence as they adjust status in the United States. Upon completion of my dissertation, I hope to become a professor of Sociology or Middle East Studies to continue researching and teaching about international migration.

Undergraduate Student Spotlight: Inaara Mohammed

UNC '21, 2018-2019 office assistant with the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, traveled to Jordan for the fall semester on a SIT study abroad program called "Jordan: Refugees, Health, and Humanitarian Action."



What are your academic interests?

I am currently a junior majoring in Global Studies with a focus on Global Health in addition to minoring in geography as well as Health and Society.

What coursework/internship did you engage with in Jordan?

In my fall semester, I got the opportunity to study abroad in Jordan where I was able to engage in coursework related to refugee health, humanitarian, and action and learn about the health system in place within the MENA region. I got the opportunity to visit different local non-profits as well as international

ones such as the Red Cross. I was able to intern at "Happiness Again", which is an organization whose mission is to avoid a lost generation by providing traumatized children skills to help navigate their daily lives in hopes to buffer stress.

What was the most valuable aspect of your time abroad?

Throughout my entire time abroad, the most valuable aspect of my experience was the connections I made with not only the Syrian refugee family I lived with but also the community around me and the students from across the country I was able to study with.

What are your plans for the future?

As I look to the future, I hope to pursue a path that will allow me to serve as a trauma-informed advocate for refugee communities, to help increase access to resources for integral matters such as mental health.

Honors Carolina Students Learn About Foreign Policy on the Middle East

In February 2020, UNC Honors Carolina students met with the Middle East Strategy, Plans & Policy team at the Pentagon. These students are in the Honors Seminar on Public Policy and Global Affairs, which provides a unique “study abroad” semester-long experience for students in Washington, D.C.

Led by center Associate Director, Shai Tamari, 22 students met with 6 officers in the Navy, Army, and Air Force, and a State Department Foreign Policy Advisor on the Middle East. Topics of discussion included the recent Middle East peace plan; goals of US foreign policy in Iran; the assassination of Qasem Suliemani; refugees in Syria; Palestinians in Jordan, and more. The trip to the Pentagon allowed students to learn more about current United States foreign policy in the Middle East and consider future career paths in the United States Department of Defense.



Honors Carolina Students at the Pentagon.

Carolina Global Photography Competition Winner

The annual Carolina Global Photography Competition showcases Carolina’s global activity, educational opportunities, research and service work. Each year, several photos are submitted by UNC-Chapel Hill students, faculty, alumni and staff who have traveled to the Middle East and North Africa for research, study and personal travel, and highlight the many connections UNC has to the region.

“That’s What I Call a Window” taken by Giovanna Torrieri ’19, in Chefchaouen, Morocco, was selected for the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies’ Regional Spotlight award. On her study abroad semester in Barcelona, Spain, Giovanna took a weekend trip to Chefchaouen, Morocco. She took this photo while eating lunch at a restaurant, moved by this captivating view of the Blue City.



OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

Workshop on Andalucía Explores History and Culture of Islamic Spain

K-12 teachers from across North Carolina convened at the National Humanities Center in the Research Triangle Park on Monday, March 2, 2020 for a daylong workshop on Al-Andalus, the name given to Spain during 800 years of Islamic rule during the Middle Ages. The program was held in partnership between the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, UNC Center for European Studies, and the National Humanities Center.

While attending sessions with university faculty, teachers learned about Muslim Spain; explored the flourishing of art, culture, philosophy and science during this time period; and discussed a variety of resources and activities to integrate this content into the classroom. “The National Humanities Center creates opportunities for scholars and educators to collaborate, resulting in a deeper understanding on both contemporary and classic questions. Teachers at all levels need resources and the context on how to use these resources; similarly, scholars benefit from pedagogical discussions that impact their own classrooms,” shared Andy Mink, Vice President for Education Programs at the National Humanities Center.



Teachers pose outside of the National Humanities Center.

Al-Andalus was a multicultural civilization. Several groups of people have occupied the Iberian Peninsula over time from the Visigoths to the Umayyads, each leaving their mark on the diverse cultures of Spain. “Spain has a very intermixed history that comes from multiple groups,” reflected one teacher in attendance.

Laura Lieber, professor of religious studies and director of the Center for Jewish Life at Duke University, discussed the Jewish community living in Spain during Muslim rule and the nature of coexisting, or *convivencia*, among various cultural groups. Lieber noted the importance of language, such as Judeo-Spanish, a form of Spanish mixed with Hebrew (and several other languages after Jewish communities were expelled from Spain in 1492), and documentation in cultural histories.

The workshop also featured scholar Michele Lamprakos, associate professor at the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at the University of Maryland-College Park and visiting fellow at the National Humanities Center. Trained as an architect and architectural historian, she specializes in the Arab-Islamic world and critical heritage studies. Providing an overview of the Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba, Lamprakos emphasized the use of architecture and the transformation of buildings and places as a way to teach history.

The final session of the workshop explored issues of cultural diversity, tolerance and conflict in southern Spain today. Cristina Carrasco, teaching associate professor of Spanish, and Elena Peña-Argüeso, graduate student in the Department of Romance Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill, discussed recent immigration into Spain, highlighting migrants from the Middle East and North Africa.

“I learned so much background information on the coexistence of Moors, Christians and Jews in southern Spain. I feel better equipped to teach my annual unit on Andalucía,” said Megan Zawierucha, a middle school Spanish teacher in Raleigh. “Using art, architecture, history, and culture are essential lenses to understanding the modern Middle East,” Mink added.

K-12 Teachers Explore Women and Gender in the Middle East with “She Who Tells a Story” Exhibition

Ash Huggins, UNC 2022

On Monday, October 28, 29 educators from across North Carolina convened at the Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to broaden their understanding of complex issues surrounding women, feminism, art, and activism in the Middle East.

In this interdisciplinary, arts-integrated workshop for educators hosted by the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, Ackland Art Museum, and Carolina K-12, teachers explored the diverse roles of women in political, cultural, and social life of the region. The program featured the photography exhibit, “She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World,” which introduces the pioneering work of leading women photographers from Iran and the Arab world.

The day began with a presentation by Banu Gökariksel, Professor of Geography at UNC Chapel Hill, who elaborated on the portrayal of the victimization of women in the media and the politics of “saving” Middle Eastern women. Teachers then engaged with photographs in the exhibit to view perspectives of women in region, focusing on select works for deep analysis. “I teach art, so using the historical context in which the images are taken makes the work so much richer. I love the in depth observation of the work,” shared Ellen Loflin, a high school arts teacher from the Cannon School.

In the second half of the program, Diya Abdo, Associate Professor of English at Guilford College discussed women’s activism in the Middle East, followed by further interaction with the photography exhibit led by Jenny Marvel, Head of School and Community Programs at the Ackland Art Museum. Teachers conducted a close viewing of works from the exhibit, analyzing content, meaning, and message of the photographs. “When teachers integrate works of art into their classroom curriculum, there is an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of the content, sharpen their visual literacy skills, and see the world in new ways,” Marvel shared.



Professor Diya Abdo presents on women’s activism in the region.

The day concluded with discussion and reflection, as well as a presentation of classroom resources available from the Consortium, Carolina K-12, and the Ackland Art Museum to further student understanding of the complex issues in the Middle East surrounding women. The presentations and exhibit highlighted the diversity of women’s experiences in the Middle East. “I most valued learning about how varied the experiences of different Arab women are, even when they tend to be treated as a monolith,” concluded social studies teacher Jennifer Dumond.

2020 Cohort of Middle East and African Cultures Teacher Fellows Program Kicks Off with Spring Webinars

A group of fifteen educators from across North Carolina has been selected to participate in the Middle East and African Cultures Teacher Fellows program.

Organized in collaboration with the African Studies center, the MEAC program is a competitive eight-month

fellowship for teachers to explore Middle Eastern and African history, cultures, and diaspora. Running March to December 2020, this program aims to enhance teacher expertise in Middle Eastern and African studies, in part by making relevant connections to local communities. This is the second time that the program is being offered.

This spring, the fellows are engaging in a series of webinars to introduce teaching and learning about these two important world regions. The first, in March, focused on teaching about the Middle East “through 10 quiz questions,” led by Professor Charles Kurzman, professor of sociology and co-director of the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies. The second, in April, provided themes and resources in African Studies, led by Dr. Emily Burrill, professor of history and women’s and gender studies and director of the African Studies Center.

In the fall, fellows will attend four experiential learning field visits across the state to explore the Middle East and Africa, including visits to the North Carolina African Services Coalition and the Moise Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies. “I am most looking forward to making connections with other teachers and being able to connect with real organizations and programs around the state,” shared one of the fellows. “I think it will be really awesome for us to be able to bring the ‘outside’ to our students and see how these pockets of the world have a presence in NC.”

Center Supports Arabic Program at Durham Technical Community College

As part of its designation as a National Resource Center through a Title VI grant award from the U.S. Department of Education, the center supports the Arabic language program at Durham Technical Community College. This year, the program welcomed a new instructor, Noor Ghazi. “When I started teaching the Arabic class, I made some changes to develop the course to make it more inclusive to fit my students’ expectations, needs and interests,” Ghazi shared.



A refugee from Iraq and graduate of the master’s degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from UNC-Greensboro, Ghazi has infused contagious energy into the Arabic program. In her course, she includes cultural topics to broaden students’ language and cultural skills. “I believe that Arabic culture is a strong part of teaching and learning the language,” she explained. Her students have conducted research on Arabic-speaking countries to gain an in-depth understanding of culture, language, and history.

They have also completed book views on literature from the Middle East, using contemporary, relevant resources to develop their writing skills. “Her pedagogical approach teaches students to think critically about issues of the Middle East and contextualizing the news they hear,” shared Shannon Hahn, Discipline Chair for the Foreign Languages program at Durham Tech. “Students are watching and reading from sources outside the US to gain deeper understanding of the region, especially Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.” Ghazi is also developing a new Mideast cultures course, to begin online in summer 2020 (HUM 120 Cultural Studies.) This course will highlight major cultural, social, and political developments in the Middle East.

Support the Center for Middle East and Islamic studies

Thank you for your engagement with all that we do at the Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies. We are grateful for the financial support of our alumni and friends. Private gifts help sustain our programs. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to help further understanding of the Middle East throughout the university and community. Your gift to the center will directly support the many events we host and sponsor, our K-12 outreach initiatives, and help support student fellowships.

For more information about giving opportunities, please visit mideast.unc.edu/support or contact Shai Tamari, Associate Director, tamari@unc.edu or (919) 962-2034.

Your gift is greatly appreciated.



UNC CENTER FOR
MIDDLE EAST &
ISLAMIC STUDIES

Connect with Us



mideast.unc.edu



facebook.com/mideastunc



[@UNC_CMEIS](https://twitter.com/UNC_CMEIS)

3023 FedEx Global Education Center
301 Pittsboro St, CB # 7582
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7582

Office: (919) 962-2034
Fax: (919) 843-2102
Email: mideast@unc.edu