

## CAROLINA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND MUSLIM CIVILIZATIONS

The Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, established at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2003, promotes understanding of the Middle East through teaching, research, and community outreach. The Center offers a unique combination of regional and cross-regional approaches to Middle East studies, including the region's non-Muslim peoples and civilizations, as well as a broader focus on Muslim communities and civilizations outside the region.

In collaboration with the Duke University Middle East Studies Center, the Carolina Center is part of the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies. As the recipient of a Title VI Middle East Studies grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Consortium is a National Resource Center.

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### Notable Events: 2015 - 2016



Photo: cemalnur.org

**October 7, 2015:  
Cemâlnur Sargut:  
"The Well-seeing,  
Unity and  
Togetherness that a  
True Understanding  
of Islamic Tasawwuf  
(Sufism) Brings"**

Cemâlnur Sargut, President of the Istanbul Branch of the Turkish Womens' Cultural Association (TURKKAD), is a renowned writer, researcher and teacher of Islamic tasawwuf (Sufism) in Turkey. In October, Sargut presented two public lectures on the tradition of Islamic tasawwuf, at UNC Chapel Hill and at Duke University. While at UNC, Sargut also served as a guest lecturer for Professor Carl Ernst's class, RELI 180: Introduction to Islamic Civilizations.

TURKKAD is a strong supporter of Islamic Studies at universities worldwide. In 2009, the nonprofit organization, led by women, established an endowed professorship in Islamic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at UNC. The group has a strong commitment to social service and education.

### **November 3, 2015: Dr. Trita Parsi: "The US & Iran – Can the Nuclear Deal Bring Friendship?"**

Dr. Parsi presented a lecture on the Iran nuclear deal and Iranian-American relations to an audience of about 150 at the FedEx Global Education Center.

Originally from Iran, Dr. Parsi is the founder and president of the National Iranian American Council and an expert on US- Iranian relations, Iranian foreign politics, and the geopolitics of the Middle East.

### **February 2, 2016: Dr. William McCants: "The Rise of ISIS"**

Dr. William McCants, a leading scholar on ISIS and counterterrorism presented on the "The Rise of ISIS" at UNC Chapel Hill, Duke University and Durham Technical Community College. Each presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session.

Dr. William McCants is a fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy and director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at the Brookings Institution. He is also an adjunct faculty member at Johns Hopkins and is a former senior advisor on violent extremism to the US State Department's Office of the Coordinator of Counterterrorism. Dr. McCants published "The ISIS Apocalypse" on the subject this past fall.

## Notable Events continued...

### February 19-20, 2016: Annual Conference: World War I and the Transformation of the Middle East

The Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies hosted its annual conference on "World War I and the Transformation of the Middle East" on February 19-20 in the Nelson Mandela Auditorium at the FedEx Global Education Center, UNC-Chapel Hill, with a pre-conference panel on February 19 at the Duke University Forum for Scholars and Publics. All events were free and open to the public.

The conference provided historical context to understand today's struggles over identities and borders in the Middle East. "In the aftermath of World War I, the religiously, linguistically and ethnically diverse Ottoman Empire was divided into a collection of small states. "Ottomans" became Syrians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis and Turks. These new economic, social, and political realities continue to influence the region to this day" (from the conference description, available at <http://worldwar1mideastconference.web.unc.edu/>).



Photo: A.J. Racy performs in the Nelson Mandela Auditorium, Credit: Carolyn Coons UNC '16

Conference participants and scholars from UNC-Chapel Hill and Duke addressed topics such as nationalism, sectarianism and segregation. The keynote presentation was a concert, featuring Professor A.J. Racy (UCLA), who performed on a variety of musical instruments from the Arab World, including the nay (reed flute), buzuq (long necked lute), 'ud (short necked lute), and others. Illustrating the shared features and the regional differences in the music, Dr. Racy also reflected on the memories of World War I in his Lebanese village of birth.

Saturday's schedule included sessions by Michelle Campos (University of Florida), Lerna Ekmekcioglu (MIT), Dimitris Kamouzis (Researcher at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Greece), and E.J. Zürcher (Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, The Netherlands).

The academic conference provided professional development for K-12 teachers. North Carolina teachers were invited to attend the conference and explore how to incorporate the material presented in their classrooms. Teachers attended the keynote concert, participated in sessions, and attended a special working lunch to discuss classroom applications.

## Carnegie Fellowships in Support of Arab Region Social Science

The Center was pleased to host early-career social scientists from universities in the Arab world for semester-long fellowships in fall 2015, with support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The fellowship offers advanced doctoral candidates or post-doctoral scholars to work with a faculty mentor at UNC-Chapel Hill, participate in ongoing research groups, and audit graduate seminars. The program is intended to provide an intensive academic experience, with advanced methodological training, for Arab social scientists at a formative stage of their career. This fall, we welcomed two fellows who presented on their research at a colloquium for UNC-Chapel Hill faculty and graduate students on December 3, 2015.



-Dr. Omar Al-Shehabi, Gulf University for Science & Technology, Kuwait, on "From Sea to Sky Scrapers: The Political Economy of Land Reclamation in Bahrain"



-Dr. Kareem Kamel, Future University, Egypt, on "Revolution Unravelling the 'Nation'? The Clash of Nationalisms in Post-Revolutionary Egypt"



## FLAS Grantee Spotlights:

FLAS fellowships fund the study of Less Commonly Taught Languages and area studies coursework by providing academic year and summer fellowships to graduate students and advanced undergraduates. The Center offers FLAS grants for the following priority languages: Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu.



**Graduate student Micah Hughes** was awarded a **Summer and Academic Year 2015-2016 FLAS** to study **Arabic in Morocco**.

*What I study:*

"I am in the Department of Religious Studies in the Islamic Studies track where I look at intellectual debates around Islamic mysticism (Sufism) in changing political contexts of the late-19th and early-20th century Middle East, specifically Turkey."

*What and Where I used my FLAS for:*

"I went to Fez, Morocco for the summer where I studied advanced Modern Standard Arabic with a focus on reading texts. During the year, I was able to once again focus on Arabic at UNC Chapel Hill in order to further develop my reading abilities and to help me in my studies of classical and modern Arabic texts. I plan to continue developing these Arabic skills in light of my dissertation research in Turkey so that I may better understand the transnational moment of religious and political reform in the early part of the 20th century."

**Undergraduate student Danny Hage** was awarded a **Summer 2015 FLAS** to study **Arabic in Jordan**.

*What I study & My future goals:*

"I am majoring in Environmental Science with a concentration in Energy and Sustainability. I also am pursuing a minor in Geography. I studied Arabic at the University of Jordan.

My future goals are to pursue a career in environmental engineering and eventually move to Lebanon and get involved with the environmental scene there, specifically in regards to renewable energy."

## Grants Awarded to UNC Faculty

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. Congratulations to our UNC faculty for receiving grants to work on the following projects:



**Course Development:** Farida Badr, for developing a course on Arabic calligraphy as it relates to the Qur'an

**Research Travel:** Professor Eren Tasar, for conducting research in Turkey and Uzbekistan, summer 2016

## K-12 Outreach

The Center provides resources for K-14 educators through the outreach program coordinated by the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies. We connect with educators through workshops, conferences, curriculum consultation, classroom visits, newsletters, and more.

In August 2015, the Consortium led a local study tour for 19 K-12 teachers titled "Connecting the Middle East to the South East." This one-day tour of community institutions was designed as a global experience one can have locally; teachers were immersed in Middle East Cultures and Islam in North Carolina.

Teachers reported that this program increased their level of cultural awareness, awareness of Middle Eastern communities, and knowledge about Islam.



**Photo: K-12 teachers at the Institute for Islamic and Turkish Studies in Cary. Credit: Brandon Bieltz, UNC-CH**

"Now having been in a Mosque, learning the facts from the readings, and attending the Study Tour, I can feel more sure of myself when teaching this part of the curriculum" shared a 6th Grade Social Studies Teacher from Eastern Wayne Middle School.

## *K-12 Outreach continued...*

In February, the Consortium presented sessions at the annual North Carolina Council for the Social Studies conference. Professor Charles Kurzman presented on "The Truth about Terrorism," and Outreach Coordinator, Emma Harver, presented "Strategies for Teaching the Diversity of the Middle East."

## Library Updates

Due to the hard work of Middle East and African Studies Librarian, Mohamed Hamed, we have increased our collections in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish by over 200% since 2011 to 27,000 items.

This year, in addition to a number of English databases about Middle East studies added, the Library was able to subscribe to the following databases:

- Arab World Research Source Resource (Arabic and English)
- MultiData/General News Database Resource (Arabic)
- NoorMags (Persian and Arabic)

For more resources, visit the Middle East Library Guide at <http://guides.lib.unc.edu/middleeasthome>.

## Regional Spotlight Winner, Carolina Global Photography Competition 2015-2016

Congratulations to Robert Liford '17 M.B.A., for his winning photo, "Motion at the Blue Mosque." Center staff were inspired by the movement in this photo, symbolizing the dynamic changes occurring in the Middle East. The photo highlights a historic landmark, and captures the dynamicism and liveliness of the Middle East.



## Upcoming Programs and Opportunities

We are pleased to announce these exciting upcoming programs and opportunities in the summer and fall, more details to come.

- "Connecting the Middle East to the Southeast" Study Tour for K-12 teachers in Greensboro | August 2016
- Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies annual conference, "Islam and Religious Identity: The Limits of Definition" | October 14-16, 2016 at UNC-Chapel Hill
- Faculty Small Grants Program: With support from the Title VI program, the Center is pleased to offer the following grants this fall, deadline December 9, 2016 (tentative): Course Development Grants, Faculty Research Travel Grants, and Language Instruction Training Grants

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