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## DIRECTOR’S NOTE

2017-18 has been a remarkable year for the Mideast Center. For one thing, this year we officially mark the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Center in 2003. Correspondence from the dean's office indicates that our first account -- and the first modest budget -- was created at that time. There were no staff members, just Charlie Kurzman and I, plus a website. Remarkable growth has taken place since that time, in faculty positions, staff, curriculum (minors and certificates), language and area programs, and student enrollments. Two successful Title VI National Resource Center grant proposals, in collaboration with our Duke partners in 2010 and 2014, have brought us our terrific team, Associate Director Shai Tamari and Outreach Coordinator Emma Harver. The FLAS fellowships have supported a significant number of students for study of middle eastern languages. We have built patiently with a succession of strategic plans, in resonance with UNC’s global priorities, and we are aiming to develop further.

In accordance with our trans-regional emphasis on Muslim civilizations, we will also be continuing to work with academic partners both within the Middle East and beyond it. Current initiatives include:

- Working with Universite Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal. This was the location of a remarkably successful conference sponsored by UNC last June on Sufi music and performance. As a follow-up, at the end of May 2018, a delegation of five faculty members from the UNC Department of Religious Studies are heading to Dakar again, this time for a workshop designed to assist in the creation of a Center for Religious Studies at UCAD, a first for a Franco-phone University in West Africa. This meeting will also coincide with the opening of Youssou N’Dour’s Salaam Festival, a good sign for the continued engagement with both music and academic goals.
- Lecturing at the Institute for Sufi Studies at Uskudar University in Istanbul, Turkey. Prof. Juliane Hammer and graduate student Micah Hughes from Religious Studies took part in a conference at Uskudar in April, and I myself will be there to lecture in the Master’s program in May.
- Collaboration with the Institute for Advanced Study in Asia at the University of Tokyo. This was the site of a productive workshop on Middle East studies in May 2017, and as a result of a successful collaborative grant proposal, an imaginative conference on migration issues is now scheduled to be held in Tokyo in June 2019, with strong UNC participation. Plus, the center is happy to welcome our first visiting scholar from Japan, Professor Ayako Ninomiya of Aoyama Gakuin University.

Many other exciting opportunities are anticipated this coming year, including new developments in the Persian studies program. So please stay tuned and join us for as many of these as possible.

-Carl Ernst, Co-Director

# PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

## “Translating Islam” Conference Explores Themes in Islamic Studies

The center organized a conference in honor of co-director Carl Ernst’s contributions to the field of Islamic Studies on October 6-7, 2017. Ernst is William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill, and has devoted his academic life to translating Islam, linguistically and culturally.

The two-day conference, organized around themes in Islamic studies that Ernst’s work has addressed, evoked and expanded on his most notable contributions to the field. Current and former colleagues of Ernst’s, as well as his former graduate students, gathered from across the country to consider broad aspects of Islamic studies in panels and roundtable discussions.



*Professor Carl Ernst responds to questions as part of the roundtable discussion on the future of Islamic Studies. Photo: Rashaan Ayesh*

The conference opened on Friday, October 6 with panels throughout the day on Islam, Indo-Muslim Ventures and Translation Issues. Friday’s program concluded with a concert of classical Persian music at UNC’s Stone Center, held in collaboration with the Iranian Cultural Society of North Carolina. The concert included acclaimed musicians Hossein Behroozinia, Saeed Farajpoori, Behnam Samani and Hamid Behrouzinia, accompanied by vocalist Sepideh Raissadat. They offered a repertoire of classical Iranian music featuring romantic, joyous pieces with lyrics from the vast treasury of classical Persian poetry. Each musician truly demonstrated their virtuosity during the evening and the concert was extremely well-received by the audience. Thanks to Ernst’s research interests, making connections to the arts has become a priority of the Mideast center.

On Saturday, October 7, the conference continued with remarks by Cemalnur Sargut, president of the Turkish Women’s Cultural Association, on her work with Ernst. A roundtable discussion on the future of Islamic Studies followed, and the conference concluded with final remarks from Ernst. The conference not only celebrated Carl Ernst’s many contributions to Islamic studies, but also ignited new conversations and opportunities for further study. in the field.



*Attendees of the “Translating Islam” Conference. Photo: Julie Maxwell*

## Center Hosts Final Carnegie Fellowships in Support of Arab Region Social Science

In fall 2017, the center was pleased to host its final cohort of early-career social scientists from universities in the Arab world for semester-long fellowships. The multi-year fellowship program was made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. During the four years of the program, seven fellows came to UNC to work with a faculty mentor, participate in research groups and audit graduate courses. Scholars in various fields participated in the program including those in communications, economics, political science and sociology.

For the last cohort of the program, the center welcomed Dr. Mariam Alkazemi from the Gulf University for Science and Technology in Kuwait City, Kuwait and Dr. Shima Hatab from the American University in Cairo, Egypt to spend the fall 2017 semester at UNC. These scholars from the Arab world presented their research in a colloquium event on December 8, 2017 to graduate students, faculty and staff.



*Carnegie Fellow Mariam Alkazemi (center) with center co-director Charles Kurzman (left) and advisor Deb Aikat (right). Photo: Emma Harver*

In the presentation “Personality and Cultural Factors that Predict Use of Social Media: A Uses and Gratification Approach,” Miriam Alkazemi presented her research on the use of social media by Kuwaiti students at the Gulf University for Science and Technology. Shima Hatab then provided insights into the region from a political science perspective with her presentation, “Transition from Authoritarianism: Political Polarization and Opposition Coordination (Egypt, Tunisia, Mexico, Chile).” The event offered provided the opportunity for these early-career scholars to showcase their work completed during the fellowship, as well as workshop their research.

## Omar Offendum Performs Concert on Themes of Identity and Belonging



*Omar Offendum performs at the UNC Stone Center.  
Photo: Shai Tamari*

Offendum performed to a nearly sold-out audience, accompanied by the tabla and oud. His music, which he performed in both Arabic and English, builds on American hip-hop and compelled the audience to consider issues related to Syria, identity, and belonging. The concert was preceded by a workshop for K-12 teachers from across North Carolina to explore poetry, hip-hop and peacebuilding in the Middle East.

Offendum participated in several additional activities during his time at UNC. He spoke to students in Professor Sarah Shields’ class on the modern Middle East, as well as Professor Michael Figueroa’s class on world music. In addition, Offendum gave a talk at Durham Technical Community College on the Syrian revolution and his music. Throughout his time at UNC, Offendum effectively used music and poetry to enhance the study of Syria on campus and in the community.

## Carolina Seminar Promotes Interdisciplinary Study of the Middle East

The Carolina Seminar on Middle East Studies (established in 2016) continues to provide forum events at UNC to explore current research in Middle East studies. There were five events in the seminar series during the 2017-2018 academic year, including three book talks on recent publications in the field.

On January 25, 2018, the seminar presented “Escape from Hell: Based on the True Story of a Syrian Political Prisoner” featuring co-authors Zubair Rushk and Daniel Romm. Rushk, who fled Syria in 2005 after being in Syrian prison, is now a junior at UNC. *Escape from Hell* is a powerful and enlightening book that chronicles Rushk’s motivations for leaving Syria, the horrors he faced, and his journey to the United States. The authors discussed the Al Assad regime, Kurdish communities in the region, and the plight of Syrian refugees.



*Zubair Rushk points at a map of Syria.  
Photo: Rashaan Ayesh*

The seminar hosted a talk by Dr. Claudia Yaghoobi, UNC Roshan Institute Assistant Professor in Persian Studies, on her recently published work, *Subjectivity in ‘Atṭār, Persian Sufism, and European Mysticism* on January 29. In her talk, Dr. Yaghoobi discussed concepts such as transgression, inclusion/exclusion, and self/the other. Looking at ‘Atṭār’s poetry contrapuntally with medieval European literature and modern theory, Yaghoobi mapped out the ways ‘Atṭār’s poetry interacts with itself within the Persian cultural and historical framework as well as with medieval European culture and modern Western theoretical perspectives. Her presentation was followed by robust discussion with an audience comprised of students, faculty, and community members.

On April 11, the seminar organized a lunch-time book talk with Professor Nadia Yaqub (Department of Asian Studies) on her edited volume *Bad Girls of the Arab World*. This interdisciplinary collection of writings by and about Arab women is the first that focuses explicitly on Arab women’s often-fraught engagement with the boundaries that shape their lives in the twenty-first century. During her presentation, Yaqub introduced the conceptual framework that guided the creation of the volume and read excerpts from several chapters. The audience enjoyed these glimpses into the book and many attendees were inspired to read further into the volume.



*Nadia Yaqub shows off the cover of “Bad Girls of the Arab World.” Photo: Iyman Gaspard*

## New Programs in Persian Studies

The UNC Persian Studies program is thriving due to several new initiatives introduced to enhance the visibility of Persian studies across campus. In March, the University Libraries and Persian Studies presented the inaugural Ferdowsi Tusi Award to Mazyar Faridi, doctoral candidate in comparative literary studies at Northwestern University. The Ferdowsi Tusi Millennium Endowment, established in 2015 by a family of anonymous donors, aims to support the advancement of Persian language and culture at UNC including this annual essay prize.

Persian Studies also presented the inaugural event in the Horner Jarrahi Persian Studies Speaker Series, “Now that you are here, I am confused with joy!”: Sa‘dī’s Cosmopolitanism, Worldly Love, and Laughter” by Dr. Fatemeh Keshavarz on April 11. This speaker series, established by UNC alumni and donors Vance L. Horner II and Shaida Jarrahi Horner, will fund a series of free public programs at the Library related to Persian studies, history, and culture.

# FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

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## 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. Congratulations to the following UNC and Duke University faculty for receiving grants to work on the following projects:

### Research Travel -

- Shai Ginsburg (Duke, Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies) will travel to Israel to conduct research on Israeli family law for his book project, *Culture, Polity and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.
- Adam Mestyan (Duke, Department of History) will travel to Amman and Oman to meet with scholars and librarians and access archives related to his second monograph, *Modern Arab Kingship: A Study in Middle Eastern Monarchism in the Twentieth Century*.
- Mike Figueroa (UNC, Department of Music) will conduct ethnographic fieldwork in Morocco to explore how Middle Eastern musicians and religious practitioners perform sacred sound for global audiences, contributing to an “interfaith imaginary” that exists in tension with various ethnic, national, and regional political imaginaries.

### Course Development -

- Anna Kipervaser (Duke, Arts of the Moving Image) will conduct research on acclaimed Armenian Egyptian Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan to enhance her course “The Middle East Through Film.” This course aims to introduce students to a wide variety of films on the Middle East and films by Middle Eastern filmmakers.

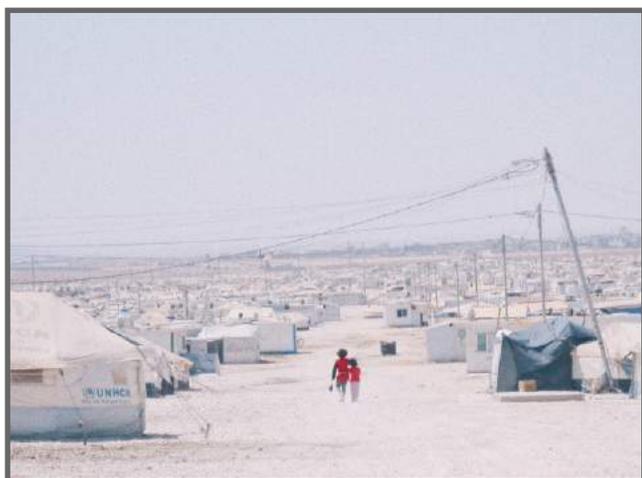
# STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

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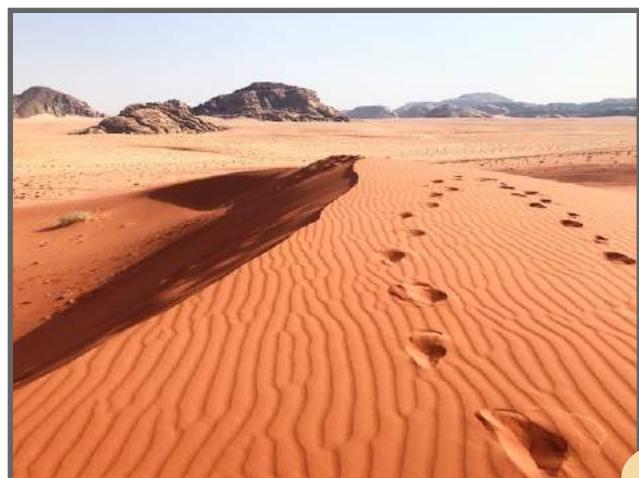
## Carolina Global Photography Competition Winners

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 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. Hiba Alzouby ’21, a doctor of pharmacy candidate at UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy won first place in the 2018 Carolina Global Photography Competition for her photo “Home We’ll Go”. This photo was taken during her time volunteering with the International Relief and Development program at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan.

“Dunes” taken by Maggie Lucas ’20, in Wadi Rum, Jordan was selected for the Middle East Center’s Regional Spotlight award. Maggie traveled to Jordan upon finishing her study abroad program in France to visit family and took this photo on an exploration of the protected desert wilderness. Congratulations to these students for their stunning photography.



“Home We’ll Go” by Hiba Alzouby



“Dunes” by Maggie Lucas

## Duke-UNC Middle East and Islamic Studies Graduate Student Conference Connects Young Scholars Studying Islamic and Middle Eastern Cultures

The Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies hosted the 15th annual Duke-UNC Middle East and Islamic Studies Graduate Student Conference, “Map, Territory, and Boundary” on February 9-10, 2018 at Duke University. This conference, organized by graduate students on both campuses, convened students from across fields in the humanities and social sciences engaged in the study of the Middle East and Islam. The topic of the conference this year focused on how the “themes of map, territory, and boundary” spark further exploration and discussion of Muslim and Middle Eastern cultures and communities, as well as the interactions between these communities and those that surround them.

“The Duke-UNC Middle East and Islamic Studies Graduate Student Conference is one of the few opportunities graduate students from around the country who are working on topics related to the Middle East and Islam have to engage in scholarly exchange both with one another and with several of the leaders in their respective fields” shared Jay Yeo, conference co-organizer and a graduate student in the UNC Department of Religious Studies.

The conference opened on Friday, February 9 with a keynote address by Dr. Banu Gökariksel, UNC Associate Professor of Geography and specialist on the intersections of gender, sexuality, and feminism with religion and geography. Dr. Gökariksel’s address was followed by a series of panels featuring graduate students from across the country, which continued Saturday, February 10.

The first panel discussed “Race and Slavery in the Post/Colonial” and explored the implications of race relevant to geography and geopolitics, as well as the impact of the spread of Islam and power in the Arab world on racial identities in the Middle East and Asia. This was followed by a second panel that continued to explore identity in a different light, focusing on the Levant and the shifts in definitions of identity and community in that region. The final and closing panel for Friday shifted the discussion to “Translating Islam” with respondent Dr. Carl Ernst. Saturday opened with a panel discussion on the topic of “Critical Cartography,” exploring the intersection of social interactions and geography, with respondent Dr. Anna Bigelow of North Carolina State University.

The impact of the conference on its attendees was profound, from the discussion of major research topics in the fields of Middle East and Islamic Studies, to the connections made between individuals from all over the country. Yeo noted, “Everyone- presenters, UNC and Duke graduate student organizers, attendees, and faculty- comes away from the weekend with new questions and an expanded group of conversation partners interested and willing to explore them.”

15TH ANNUAL DUKE-UNC MIDDLE EAST AND ISLAMIC STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

# MAP, TERRITORY, BOUNDARY

Friday, February 9 - Saturday, February 10, 2018  
Sanford Rubenstein Hall, room 200  
Duke University

**Friday, February 9, 2018**  
8:30 a.m. Breakfast and Registration  
9:00-10:15 a.m. Keynote Address by Dr. Banu Gökariksel  
10:30-11:45 a.m. Panel One: “Race and Slavery in the Post/Colonial”  
11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Lunch  
1:15-2:30 p.m. Panel Two: “Transnational Reimaginings of the Levant”  
2:45-4:00 p.m. Panel Three: “Translating Islam”

**Saturday, February 10, 2018**  
9:30-10:00 a.m. Breakfast and Arrival  
10:00-11:15 a.m. Panel Four: “Critical Cartography”  
11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Lunch  
12:30-1:00 p.m. Closing Remarks and Discussion

PLEASE RSVP AT [GO.UNC.EDU/GRADCONF2018](http://GO.UNC.EDU/GRADCONF2018) OR EMAIL [JAYYEO@LIVE.UNC.EDU](mailto:JAYYEO@LIVE.UNC.EDU)

Thank you to our generous sponsors for making this opportunity for collaboration, discussion, and engagement possible: Carolina Center Asia, Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, Duke Center for Jewish Studies, Duke Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Duke Department of Cultural Anthropology, Duke Department of Political Science, Duke Department of Religious Studies, Duke International Comparative Studies, Duke Islamic Studies Center, Duke Program in Literature, Duke University Middle East Studies Center, Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies, UNC Center for Global Initiatives, UNC Department of Geography, UNC Department of History, UNC Department of Religious Studies

Poster for the 2018 graduate student conference.

## Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship Student Spotlights

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships fund the study of Less Commonly Taught Languages and area studies coursework by providing academic year and summer fellowships to graduate and advanced undergraduate students. With support from Title VI funding from the Department of Education, the center offers FLAS grants for the following languages: Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. Meet a few of the center's 2017-2018 FLAS recipients:

**Nikki Behnke** was awarded an academic year FLAS to study Arabic.

*What are your research interests?*

I am working towards a Management Master of Science in Public Health in Environmental Sciences and Engineering at the Gillings School of Global Public Health. I work with the Water Institute, and my research is focused on water, sanitation, hygiene, and environmental health in refugee and IDP camps.

*Why did you choose to study Arabic?*

I was a Peace, War, and Defense major as an undergraduate at UNC, and found myself drawn to courses about the Middle East, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I graduated in 2016 and was applying to Master's programs - I knew I wanted to focus on the Middle East for my research. I had wanted to learn Arabic for a while and knew it would be critical for reaching my career goals.

*What has been the most valuable experience during your FLAS fellowship?*

I will be in Jordan this summer for my field research and an internship with World Vision International, and I anticipate that having some knowledge of Arabic will help me make the most of my time there. I have also just really enjoyed studying the language itself- it has complemented my more science-heavy coursework at Gillings.

*What would you like to do in the future?*

In the long-term, I am interested in working at the intersection of water and international security. My more immediate goal is to continue working on water and sanitation issues in the Middle East, particularly in the context of monitoring and evaluation of programs and infrastructure in refugee and IDP camps.



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**Lily Herbert** was awarded an academic year FLAS to study Turkish.

*What are your research interests?*

For my Master's research, I am studying Islamophobia and education in the southern United States. I plan to conduct a comparative study between the southern US and northwestern Germany for my PhD research.

*How did you use your FLAS scholarship?*

I used my summer FLAS scholarship to study Turkish at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Language Immersion Institute (APTLII), and my academic year FLAS scholarship to continue Turkish at UNC.

*Why did you choose to study Turkish?*

I studied Turkish for two years during my undergraduate work, but wanted a better understanding of Turkish grammar and culture. I plan to extend my study of Islamophobia to Germany, and wish to work with Muslim community organizations that serve individuals who may speak Turkish as a primary language, or come from primarily Turkish-speaking households. Advanced knowledge of Turkish culture and language will be critical for equitable and respectful work with such organizations and their members in Germany.

*What has been the most valuable experience during your FLAS fellowship?*

The importance of making an engaged effort to show respect for another person through learning their first language, if it isn't English. This isn't new to me, but the more I study language, the more I understand how fragile cross-cultural communication can be. It's so easy to effect misunderstandings with a slight mistake in vocabulary, grammar, intonation, body language or cultural reference. Only through constant practice have I learned how to avoid and navigate such misunderstandings with grace and kindness, and build equitable cross-cultural friendships and professional relationships.

**Tara L. Di Cassio** was awarded an academic year FLAS to study Arabic.

*What are your research interests?*

I am a Global Studies MA candidate with an area focus in the Middle East. My capstone project examined the use of “wall art” on the Separation Barrier in the West Bank amongst Palestinian youth as a method of alternative political participation.

*How did you use your FLAS scholarship?*

I used my FLAS to support my area study courses focusing on the history of the Middle East in the fall and Zionist thought and practice in the spring- both at UNC. I had the unique opportunity with FLAS to continue advanced Arabic study with one of my previous CASA professors at the Qasid Arabic Institute in Amman, Jordan via Skype sessions every week.

*Why did you choose to study Arabic?*

I chose to study Arabic due to my research interests concerning young people in the Middle East (particularly the Levant region) as well as my overall interest and passion for the Arabic language given its beauty, depth, and grammatical complexity.

*What has been the most valuable experience during your FLAS fellowship?*

The most valuable experience of FLAS has been the ability to continue my Arabic study. Without FLAS, I could not have afforded to continue the Arabic courses with the Qasid Arabic institute which were critical to maintaining and furthering the Arabic knowledge I have accumulated over the past six years. Additionally, the language experience I had on such an advanced level due to FLAS contributed to a sophisticated discussion of Palestinian resistance and artistry by being able to read, research, and discuss these topics in Arabic.

*What would you like to do in the future?*

In the future, I would like to return to Amman, Jordan to conduct research on the street art that has recently increased in proliferation amongst the city’s walls. I would like to conduct my own interviews with young street artists and research on the topic as little work has been done on Amman’s street art. Eventually, I would like to further this academic research and inquiry and enter a PhD program in Geography.



## Undergraduate Student Spotlight: Marisa Breathwaite

Marisa, class of 2018, was an intern with the center during the year. Learn more about her experience in Middle East studies at UNC:

At Carolina I studied Asian Studies with a focus on Arab Cultures and Global Studies with a concentration on the Middle East and transnational arts, identities and cultures. During my senior year, I completed my Senior Honors Thesis in the Asian Studies department titled, “Making Space and Women’s Activism in the Arab World”, where I use feminist geography to assess various women’s activism initiatives in the Arab World.

During my time at Carolina, I had the privilege of taking courses such as “Dissident Voices in the Arab World”, “Sex and Gender in the Middle East”, “Modern Middle East”, “Introduction to Arab Cultures”, “Iranian Prison Literature” and “Advanced Arabic”. My course work has been so enriching and has both expanded my interest in the Middle East but also has helped me hone in on my specific interests. A huge part of my Carolina experience was the opportunity to study abroad in Cairo, Egypt at the American University in Cairo, where I took Egyptian Arabic and politics courses among others. Interning at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and the Mideast Center at UNC have also been formative opportunities that have helped direct my future goals. I will be traveling to Egypt in fall 2018 to continue my Egyptian Arabic studies and visit some places I did not see during study abroad, and I hope to enroll in a graduate degree program focused on Arab Studies or human rights studies in fall 2019.

# OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

## Year-long Program for K-12 Teachers Explores Middle Eastern and African Cultures

In December 2017, the center was pleased to accept 15 K-12 teachers from across North Carolina into the “Middle East and African Cultures Teacher Fellows” program. Offered in collaboration with the African Studies Center and Carolina K-12, this intensive year-long professional development opportunity aims to enhance teachers’ area studies expertise in Middle Eastern and African studies by highlighting Middle Eastern and African culture, history, and communities with structured site-visits across North Carolina. Fellows were accepted into the program through a competitive application process and represent the elementary, middle, and high school grade levels, as well as multiple content areas including social studies and language arts, among others.

Fellows first attended a two-day orientation February 16-17, 2018 to introduce the themes of the program with sessions on topics such as the history of Arab immigration to the Carolinas, culturally responsive pedagogy, and re-thinking and re-defining the way we study and learn about Africa. For the duration of the program, fellows are visiting sites across the state with connections to the Middle East and/or Africa, while engaging with readings, scholarship, discussion, and pedagogy. “I am really looking forward to resources and experiences in this fellowship to bring back to my classroom, and I am particularly interested in connecting these to the issues in North Carolina.” shared fellow Savannah Blystone, social studies at Gates County High School.



*The 2018 Middle East and African Cultures Teacher Fellows.  
Photo: Emma Harevr*

The program is organized around three thematic strands: Migration & Diaspora, Cultural Landscape & Community, and Shared Histories & Cultural Retention. For example, in March fellows attended a concert by Al Sarah and the Nubatones in Durham to learn about Sudanese history, culture, politics and diaspora. In April, fellows visited Masjid Omar ibn Sayyid in Fayetteville to explore the spread of Islam into Africa, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the experiences of African American Muslims. In the fall, the fellows will visit the African Services

Coalition in Greensboro, and the Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies at NC State University, among other sites. At the culmination of the program, teachers will develop curricular resources related to program content and present their work at a workshop in December 2018.

This program builds off of the center’s first fellows program, piloted in 2015-2016 focusing on Sufi performance and global Muslim identities. Longer-term professional development programs help increase teacher preparedness to infuse new material into the curriculum. By working intensively with one group of teachers, the center continues to develop teacher leaders with Middle East expertise throughout the state.



*Masjid Omar ibn Sayyid. Photo: Barbara Anderson*

## Two Teachers Funded to Attend Fall Meeting of the Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Seminar

The center provided grants to two North Carolina teachers to attend the fall meeting of the Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Seminar (SERMEISS) in October 2017; Anita Rubino and Molly Stevenson. Rubino is a visual art teacher at Currituck County High School and Stevenson is a world history teacher at the Oakwood School in Burlington, North Carolina.

“SERMEISS is a valuable professional and personal development experience for all” shared Rubino. “As an educator, the benefits ranged from hearing professionals and academics, vested in passion and research on the Middle East, talking about their experiences and research to the informal dialogues between participants and presenters that provided individual experience insight never discussed during formal presentations of content.” Both teachers attended the seminar to gain content knowledge that will enable them to make connections to the Middle East and Islamic Studies in their curriculum, enhance learning activities, and gain resources. Rubino stated, “I learned so much from that seminar which translated into new content for my classroom; I left the conference with a wider world view.”

## Educators Explore Environmental Issues in the Middle East & Latin America in Day-long Workshop

20 teachers from across North Carolina gathered together on Saturday, April 21 for a cross-regional exploration of environmental issues. Together, the Duke-UNC Consortia in Middle East and Latin American and Caribbean Studies hosted a day-long interdisciplinary workshop to discuss environmental issues in Latin America and the Middle East.

During this interactive one-day program, teachers explored pressing global environmental issues including water, climate change, mining, and environmental activism. The event opened with a keynote lecture on contemporary environmental challenges in the Middle East with insights from Latin America by Dr. Erika Weinthal, Lee Hill Snowdon Professor of Environmental Policy in Duke’s Nicholas School of the Environment.

In addition to participating in panels with Duke and UNC faculty on climate change and water issues, the teachers also viewed *Hija de la Laguna*, a film that addresses resource extraction, mining, and indigenous rights to land and water in the Peruvian Andes. The day ended with an interactive art activity led by environmental artist, Bryant Holsenbeck. Teachers gained strategies for using art as a tool to teach about environmental issues using recycled materials. Through the workshop, teachers not only deepened understanding of environmental issues specific to the Middle East and Latin America, but also gained comparative strategies to examine these issues across regions.



*Teachers use recycled materials to make environmental art.  
Photo: Emma Harevr*

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