The Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at NYU is a Title VI National Resource Center (NRC) for modern Middle Eastern Studies as named by the United States Department of Education. NRC support is essential to the Center's graduate program (area and language studies) and bolsters outreach programs to the NYU academic community, local educators, media and culture workers as well as the general public. Title VI funding, through its Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships, also enables important opportunities for NYU graduate students to intensively study the languages of the Middle East and South Asia (including Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, Persian, Turkish and Urdu).
In Europe, as I write (August 16th), commemorations of the centenary of the First World War have ended. Commentaries, television programs, dramas, readings of poetry, diaries, novels and essays, concerts, films and photographs continue. Yet more books are published. W. B. Yeats’ famous poem of 1919, “The Second Coming,” is often quoted: “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed.”

In a kind of macabre counterpoint to these commemorations, themselves punctuated by the violence and potential of confrontation in the Ukraine, events throughout the Middle East, in Iraq, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank demand even more urgent attention from us, however help- less and hopeless we students may so often feel. Gaza is yet again the theatre of vicious destruction and promiscuous killing. “Israeli security” is given a quasi-sacred status. “Palestinian security” seldom seems the equal and necessary term in any serious engagement with the conflicts. Tired, shop-soiled and hollowed-out righteous denunciations, beyond parody and without shame, still threaten to drown out voices calling for stern and unsparing re-examination of histories, conflicts, ideologies, narratives and interests.

In the Middle East, the passionate intensity that fills the worst is currently as fearful as the lack of conviction of the best. We, students of the region, have little if any effect. It is tempting to see our small and scattered efforts, personal and institutional, to pose questions, challenge assumptions, struggle to find some understandings, however unstable and weak, as doomed to failure and irrelevance. When swamped by such feelings, I recall how, over a quarter of a century ago, I told Lebanese friends who had survived the brutalities of war and were either in exile, silenced, or underground, that there was no point continuing to try to write the study of violence on which I had been unsuccessfully working (or avoiding) for so long. The Lebanese wars were too overwhelming in their brutalities, the scale of suffering too terrible, the futility of this tiny academic project too evident, the pointlessness too clear. There was no possible benefit or interest for anyone. Just abandon writing, which in so many ways I desperately wanted to do.

My friends would have none of this self-abnegation and retreat from responsibility. I had to write as if it mattered. We lost, just for now or for an age, and that makes it even more important that you write. “As if” might be all there was and is, but it has its own imperative. Write.

So a small institute such as the Kevorkian Center must be supported; student numbers must be brought to the optimum level; outreach and events of all kinds must be constantly developed; the office must have new resources; there must be a new post of Clinical Professor and the university must support students to the limit, and encourage the faculty who teach and mentor them. They will make their own judgments about their responsibilities and their capabilities. We all go on as if we can, regardless of the apparently insignificant contribution to public understanding and awareness. What heartens me and so many of my colleagues is the commitment, intensity and determination of students, administrators and teachers to fulfill our shared responsibility. It has been a privilege to be director of the Kevorkian for the past eight years and to work with such dedicated colleagues. I thank all those who have contributed to the program’s remarkable strength.

—Michael Gilsenan, Director

The Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies
Reflections on Today’s Middle East

Heniga Tawil-Souri
 Incoming Director of the Kevorkian Center, Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication

Reflections

Whatever I may have wished to write about via-à-vis events in Israel-Palestine over the past year have been superceded by the latest violence waged over Gaza. And about Gaza, there is so much I could choose to write about: military disproportionately, international law, human and humane stories from within the Gaza Strip, an analysis of the underlying issues at the heart of this conflict, an account of day-to-day events, a solution to politicians at war, a critique of the biggie “target” in English, in Arabic, in Hebrew. I move on – I don’t know how – to assessing the reporting coming from Israel/Palestine, and in the process, find myself writing a letter to the New York Times. I keep banging on the keyboard. I seem to be going on about how legitimizing armed conflict entails representation “work” and that the US and the US fans of Homeland should, and how the US fans of Homeland should. I begin to make parallels between Israel’s “buffer zone” in Southern Lebanon and the flattening and evacuation of parts of Northern Gaza.

To say that my words are all over the place is only half accurate. There is no seeming coherence to this book” that I have written and demands, but there is an underlying logic. All of these issues are connected. All of these resource the when the kinetic violence reaches the levels it does in early July. All of these have a pressing need to be written, published, shared when violence reaches these heights. What is most difficult however is to place aside the feeling of being overwhelmed, even only for a minute, in order to thread these arguments into something I can share. For now, it is easier to keep banging on my keyboard and stay silent.

Two hundred pages of text, and counting, the words on my screen are nothing more than rants and ramblings. I begin with an explanation of the “problem” in order to analyze the IDF’s Twitter feeds. I barely finish with that thread with an explanation of “the politics of spectacle” in order to analyze the term “target” in English, in Arabic, in Hebrew. I move on – I don’t know how – to assessing the reporting coming from Israel/Palestine, and in the process, find myself writing a letter to the New York Times. I keep banging on the keyboard. I seem to be going on about how legitimizing armed conflict entails representation “work” and that the US and the US fans of Homeland should, and how the US fans of Homeland should.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The water supply of Gaza. Credit: World Bank and Gisha.

I have been in Gaza while drones fly and bombs drop overhead. I have watched the last two Israeli military offensives – in 2008-09 and 2012 – and have tried to write about each and every one of these sub-events in Israel-Palestine over the past year have been superceded by the latest violence waged over Gaza. And about Gaza, there is so much I could choose to write about: military disproportionately, international law, human and humane stories from within the Gaza Strip, an analysis of the underlying issues at the heart of this conflict, an account of day-to-day events, a solution to politicians at war, a critique of the biggie “target” in English, in Arabic, in Hebrew. I move on – I don’t know how – to assessing the reporting coming from Israel/Palestine, and in the process, find myself writing a letter to the New York Times. I keep banging on the keyboard. I seem to be going on about how legitimizing armed conflict entails representation “work” and that the US and the US fans of Homeland should, and how the US fans of Homeland should.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Hassan Rouhani Supporters in 2013 Election.

Image Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

It is a testament to the institutional powers of the office of president in Iran that it has become increasingly common that pundits and media sources offer reviews of Iranian president’s “first 100 days in office” or appraise their ability to fulfill their campaign promises. These reflections appear in the Iranian press as well as US sources and reflect a growing frustration among many that Iranian politics cannot be reduced to the will of the Leader. The politics is not democratic and executive power is not consolidated in the cabinet, but neither is the Leader able to impose his preferences comprehensively or without cost.

With the electoral victory of Hassan Rouhani, most appraisals of his term in office have focused on his ability to address foreign policy matters, specifically, the ongoing negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program and the attendant sanctions imposed by the US government, European Union, and United Nations. There are clear reasons for this. During both his campaign and at the outset of his presidency, Rouhani emphasized that his primary goal is to resolve the international conflict surrounding Iran’s nuclear program. Not only does he reasonably claim that this is the biggest threat to the survival of the regime, but he sees it as integral to addressing the well-being of citizens. With this move he has (at least tentatively) bridged the gulf between regime elites and ordinary Iranians. Meanwhile, Rouhani and his advisors see ending the international crisis as essential for economic development. The broad sanctions imposed on Iran during Ahmadinejad’s tenure combined with mismanagement and structural factors to undermine Iran’s economic performance measured in terms of economic growth, social welfare, rate of unemployment, and the number of high-profile corruption cases. The massive windfall of oil revenue during Ahmadinejad’s presidency (approximating half a trillion dollars) helped oil revenues climb, but Iran’s economic potential is not limited to the will of the Leader. The polity is not democratic and executive power is not consolidated in the cabinet, but neither is the Leader able to impose his preferences comprehensively or without cost.

Ultimately, Rouhani will have to satisfy the conflicting demands of the US government (including a hostile Congress), Khamenei, various competing Iranian political factions, and the myriad demands of citizens, many of whom voted him into office last summer. This is a critical, yet overlooked point in many of the reflections of Rouhani’s presidency and posture. While his negotiation team is in Vienna sitting across the table from the P5+1 (permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany), Rouhani’s cabinet and allies in civil society and the electorate face criticisms and demands in Iran. Yes, some of these challenges are cutthroat and will require a coalition that transcends Rouhani’s campaign promises.

With the electoral victory of Hassan Rouhani, most appraisals of his term in office have focused on his ability to address foreign policy matters, specifically, the ongoing negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program and the attendant sanctions imposed by the US government, European Union, and United Nations. There are clear reasons for this. During both his campaign and at the outset of his presidency, Rouhani emphasized that his primary goal is to resolve the international conflict surrounding Iran’s nuclear program. Not only does he reasonably claim that this is the biggest threat to the survival of the regime, but he sees it as integral to addressing the well-being of citizens. With this move he has (at least tentatively) bridged the gulf between regime elites and ordinary Iranians. Meanwhile, Rouhani and his advisors see ending the international crisis as essential for economic development. The broad sanctions imposed on Iran during Ahmadinejad’s tenure combined with mismanagement and structural factors to undermine Iran’s economic performance measured in terms of economic growth, social welfare, rate of unemployment, and the number of high-profile corruption cases. The massive windfall of oil revenue during Ahmadinejad’s presidency (approximating half a trillion dollars) helped oil revenues climb, but Iran’s economic potential is not limited to
The July 3rd coup was preceded by a massive mobilization spearheaded by the Tamarun (“Rebellion”) movement, that culminated on June 30, 2013 in the biggest demonstrations in history. The popular energy behind them was immense, and justifiably so. Morsi’s ouster celebrations Tahrir. Image courtesy of Voice of America and WikiCommons; taken by S. Behn

Asli Iğsız
Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Turkey had yet another eventful year. The aftermath of the Gazi Park protests, government enforcement on public spaces, rising authoritarianism, the corruption scandal, the illegal wiretapping and surveillance scandal, the power struggle between the Islamic movement and Prime Minister and Minister of Defense General Abd al-Fattah El-Sisi, the violent police crackdowns on Al-Ahly movement, and the Soma mine tragedy have cast a dark shadow over Turkey. The picture of the situation is a mixture of anger and divisiveness. As the Alyosan and June 30 protests to justify its seizure of power and its repression of all opposition. Yet the long-term stability of al-Sisi’s regime cannot be taken for granted. The Muslim Brothers as the anti-terror and judiciary to implement the same neoliberal economic policies that Morsi had abandoned, and the long run this is likely to exacerbate poverty and inequality, and generate new rounds of protests. Millions of Egyptians were politicized by the dramatic events of 2011-2013. Many of them now support the government and the Islamic order; but in the longer term, having experienced the power that ordinary people can collectively assert when they refuse to accept an oppressive status quo and take to the streets, they may well make their voices heard once again.

Asli Iğsız
Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

protestors throughout the country. Protesters, however, were not the only targets. Riot police also attacked the protests, silencing crowds marching after the funeral of Berkin Elvan, a fifteen-year-old Alevi boy. This image captures the scale of corruption with the history of Turkish democracy, and is not the only responsible party. Corruption, one of the AKP’s signature moves, has made it easy for the AKP to include every alleged crime, stripped from the concept of crime, stripped from its legal framework, has been utilized discursively to justify its seizure of power and its repression of all opposition. Yet the long-term stability of al-Sisi’s regime cannot be taken for granted. The Muslim Brothers as the anti-terror and intelligence agencies in each case, and law enforcement of the existing laws and regulations.

There are several similar instances and in each case, the law enforcement have had it all. There is no question that the events of the year since Morsi’s ouster have generally not been just. The judiciary and the June 30th protests to justify its seizure of power and its repression of all opposition. Yet the long-term stability of al-Sisi’s regime cannot be taken for granted. The Muslim Brothers as the anti-terror and intelligence agencies in each case, and law enforcement of the existing laws and regulations.

There are several similar instances and in each case, the law enforcement have had it all. There is no question that the events of the year since Morsi’s ouster have generally not been just. The judiciary and the June 30th protests to justify its seizure of power and its repression of all opposition. Yet the long-term stability of al-Sisi’s regime cannot be taken for granted. The Muslim Brothers as the anti-terror and intelligence agencies in each case, and law enforcement of the existing laws and regulations.

There are several similar instances and in each case, the law enforcement have had it all. There is no question that the events of the year since Morsi’s ouster have generally not been just. The judiciary and the June 30th protests to justify its seizure of power and its repression of all opposition. Yet the long-term stability of al-Sisi’s regime cannot be taken for granted. The Muslim Brothers as the anti-terror and intelligence agencies in each case, and law enforcement of the existing laws and regulations.
Two important factors contribute to these realities. The first is the ongoing political and social transformations of the modern Middle East. After a relative decline that began in the 1980s, when culturalist approaches gained analytical prominence in the field, the last few years have witnessed a resurgence of academic interest in the study of political economy. This is precisely why we see an increase in tactics like suicide bombings and car bombs. With the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and its increased interest in Lebanon and Hezbollah, this might change. But ISIS has limited support within Lebanon and the majority of this support is rhetorical and sectarian in nature, rather than consisting of actual military capacity.

Barring dramatic developments (such as ISIS or its affiliates entering into urban warfare against Hezbollah in Lebanon), a low-intensity conflict and terror campaign will last as long as the war in Syria does, and perhaps for a period of time after that. The question therefore becomes how long political leaders can continue to impose their collective will, which is against open conflict between the rival camps, over the general population. In large part, this will come down to how well the state-Hezbollah integrated security forces function. While events could still spiral out of control, the political and economic threshold for state failure and all-out war is much higher than most people would think.

Two important factors contribute to these realities. The first is that Lebanon is truly war weary, and the horrifying specter of Syria has reminded many of the costs of civil war. Remember that those who are of fighting age have parents who grew up fleeing, or fighting, a different civil war and paying its price. The second is that the balance of power within Lebanon is heavily tipped to one side; that of Hezbollah and the country’s military, who hold similar positions on Syria and are working closely together to maintain internal security. There is no armed Lebanese group or faction that would stand a chance against this alliance, which is precisely why we see an increase in tactics like suicide bombings and car bombs. With the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and its increased interest in Lebanon and Hezbollah, this might change. But ISIS has limited support within Lebanon and the majority of this support is rhetorical and sectarian in nature, rather than consisting of actual military capacity.

Barring dramatic developments (such as ISIS or its affiliates entering into urban warfare against Hezbollah in Lebanon), a low-intensity conflict and terror campaign will last as long as the war in Syria does, and perhaps for a period of time after that. The question therefore becomes how long political leaders can continue to impose their collective will, which is against open conflict between the rival camps, over the general population. In large part, this will come down to how well the state-Hezbollah integrated security forces function. While events could still spiral out of control, the political and economic threshold for state failure and all-out war is much higher than most people would think.

Two important factors contribute to these realities. The first is that Lebanon is truly war weary, and the horrifying specter of Syria has reminded many of the costs of civil war. Remember that those who are of fighting age have parents who grew up fleeing, or fighting, a different civil war and paying its price. The second is that the balance of power within Lebanon is heavily tipped to one side; that of Hezbollah and the country’s military, who hold similar positions on Syria and are working closely together to maintain internal security. There is no armed Lebanese group or faction that would stand a chance against this alliance, which is precisely why we see an increase in tactics like suicide bombings and car bombs. With the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and its increased interest in Lebanon and Hezbollah, this might change. But ISIS has limited support within Lebanon and the majority of this support is rhetorical and sectarian in nature, rather than consisting of actual military capacity.

Barring dramatic developments (such as ISIS or its affiliates entering into urban warfare against Hezbollah in Lebanon), a low-intensity conflict and terror campaign will last as long as the war in Syria does, and perhaps for a period of time after that. The question therefore becomes how long political leaders can continue to impose their collective will, which is against open conflict between the rival camps, over the general population. In large part, this will come down to how well the state-Hezbollah integrated security forces function.
On January 31st, 2014 in a small but crowded auditorium at New York University, students and faculty gathered to hear several prominent faculty members gather for a panel featuring Professors Lila Abu-Lughod and Suad Joseph’s talk. The conversation was the reflection on the persistence of the “woman question” in Islam, highlighting the relationship between academia and activism and Joseph and Abu-Lughod’s contributions to the field.

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod spoke candidly about her new book, which in many ways is the product of her own personal experiences (in the field and otherwise), the everyday life of women in Muslim societies and the distortions that become popularized in Western media accounts. This project, therefore, is commitment to knowledge sharing and breaking down the geopolitical sites of knowledge production by incorporating scholars in the region and creating greater accessibility. In total, this project seeks to disrupt monolithic understandings of the “Muslim woman” by attempting to capture the diverse and complex expressions and experiences of women in the Muslim societies. The encyclopedia has been translated into Arabic, with plans for translating it into Persian in the future. The EWIC is an effort to de-emphasize the West as the object of knowledge production and East as the object of study to create greater intellectual exchange between the two bodies of knowledge into inter-cultural and inter-zonal. Joseph also stressed the importance of making this body of knowledge available to young people in North America.

The question of personal biography arose several times throughout the conversation, whereby both scholars expressed their personal commitments to the study of women in Islam or in the Middle East. Both scholars reminded us that they were compelled to do this work, to write against the hegemonic imperative, in order to capture popular discourses in North America and Europe. Joseph and Abu-Lughod both grappled with the question of public engagement, and several questions at the end of the night came from journalists about how to negotiate the immediacy that their field demands, with the nuances of more rigorous scholarship.

Throughout the evening, Joseph, Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi all stressed the importance of feminist mentorship in the academy—recognizing that these relationships constitute a certain kind of activism. The articulation of these bonds often goes unnoticed or is sequenced to an acknowledgment page that so many of us might skim through, but these bonds are important reminders of struggles within the academy and outside of it.

The following day’s workshop at New York University’s Kavranik Center for Near Eastern Studies was a more intimate conversation between the scholars of the Humanities Studio and graduate students. The workshop consisted of mini seminars led by Maya Farnam, Judd Dyk, Zainab Anjali Arondekar, and Joan Scott. The scholars at the Humanities Studio comes from various disciplines, areas of study and methodological orientation, yet broadly their work complicates the standard privilege of religion and sexuality in particular ways. Studio members assigned various readings, which dealt with a range of topics, temporalities and sites—from recent debates over homosexuality and historiography in the Indian Penal Code to the question of transsexuality in Iran and personal status laws in Egypt. Importantly, the participants and their research worked towards displacing “Islam” and “The Middle East” as the dominant site of inquiry for recent studies of secularism and religion by incorporating South Asia, Europe, North America and their diasporic minorities. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to think about ways previously ignored by scholars of religion and secularism, and in particular the ways in which normative sexuality and religious difference is produced and maintained by the secular state.

An important aim of this session was to engage graduate students and create a venue for intellectual exchange. The session closed with faculty gathered to hear several prominent faculty members.

“Legacies” continued from page 11

Another set of recurring questions focused on the ways in which a new methodology of political economy could or should honor the contributions made over two decades by scholarship influenced by the cultural/linguistic turn. One basic point of agreement among the participants was that such scholarship has tended to make analyses of discursive and/or embodied forms of power and domination at the expense of the material contexts in which forms of thought and expression circulate and become intelligible. That said, several contributors expressed provocative reservations about the danger of ignoring the lessons of the cultural turn regarding the multiple modes and determinations of power. Of particular concern was the way in which the “new histories of capitalism” appearing both within and beyond Middle East Studies have often failed to address or incorporate the powerful insights of gender studies, many of which first emerged from a critique of the old methodology of political economy. The challenge, then, for scholars concerned to follow “new directions” in political economy lies in devising methods to engage questions of both structure and meaning together.

That even this small group of scholars encountered so many productive points of disagreement was ultimately a sign of the vibrancy of the field of scholarship. As Professor Zohary succinctly pointed out in the closing session of the workshop, “political economy” used to be a polite euphemism for Marxism in settings where the “M” word was considered extremely sensitive. Yet it is clear that we could not continue. Though for many of the contributors, the Marxist tradition continues to offer insight and inspiration, the diverse array of approaches and political commitments on display at the workshop attest to an engagement and interest in the fact that the future of political economy will be shaped by a broader set of trends in critical scholarship. We are therefore hopeful that this work will be the first in a longer series of meetings and conversations that will attract a widening group of scholars in the field.

New Directions for the Study of Gender and Sexuality

By Omer Shah, NES ’14 and Shirin Gerami NES ’14

On January 31st, 2014 in a small but crowded auditorium at New York University, students and faculty gathered for a panel featuring Professors Lila Abu-Lughod and Suad Joseph and Lila Abu-Lughod, mediatized by Maya Mikdashi. The conversation was the reflection on the persistence of the “woman question” in Islam, highlighting the relationship between academia and activism and Joseph and Abu-Lughod’s contributions to the field.

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod spoke candidly about her new book, which in many ways is the product of her own personal experiences (in the field and otherwise), the everyday life of women in Muslim societies and the distortions that become popularized in Western media accounts. This project, therefore, is commitment to knowledge sharing and breaking down the geopolitical sites of knowledge production by incorporating scholars in the region and creating greater accessibility. In total, this project seeks to disrupt monolithic understandings of the “Muslim woman” by attempting to capture the diverse and complex expressions and experiences of women in the Muslim societies. The encyclopedia has been translated into Arabic, with plans for translating it into Persian in the future. The EWIC is an effort to de-emphasize the West as the object of knowledge production and East as the object of study to create greater intellectual exchange between the two bodies of knowledge into inter-cultural and inter-zonal. Joseph also stressed the importance of making this body of knowledge available to young people in North America.

The question of personal biography arose several times throughout the conversation, whereby both scholars expressed their personal commitments to the study of women in Islam or in the Middle East. Both scholars reminded us that they were compelled to do this work, to write against the hegemonic imperative, in order to capture popular discourses in North America and Europe. Joseph and Abu-Lughod both grappled with the question of public engagement, and several questions at the end of the night came from journalists about how to negotiate the immediacy that their field demands, with the nuances of more rigorous scholarship.

Throughout the evening, Joseph, Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi all stressed the importance of feminist mentorship in the academy—recognizing that these relationships constitute a certain kind of activism. The articulation of these bonds often goes unnoticed or is sequenced to an acknowledgment page that so many of us might skip through, but these bonds are important reminders of struggles within the academy and outside of it.

The following day’s workshop at New York University’s Kavranik Center for Near Eastern Studies was a more intimate conversation between the scholars of the Humanities Studio and graduate students. The workshop consisted of mini seminars led by Maya Farnam, Judd Dyk, Zainab Anjali Arondekar, and Joan Scott. The scholars at the Humanities Studio comes from various disciplines, areas of study and methodological orientation, yet broadly their work complicates the standard privilege of religion and sexuality in particular ways. Studio members assigned various readings, which dealt with a range of topics, temporalities and sites—from recent debates over homosexuality and historiography in the Indian Penal Code to the question of transsexuality in Iran and personal status laws in Egypt. Importantly, the participants and their research worked towards displacing “Islam” and “The Middle East” as the dominant site of inquiry for recent studies of secularism and religion by incorporating South Asia, Europe, North America and their diasporic minorities. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to think about ways previously ignored by scholars of religion and secularism, and in particular the ways in which normative sexuality and religious difference is produced and maintained by the secular state.

An important aim of this session was to engage graduate students and create a venue for intellectual exchange. The session closed with faculty gathered to hear several prominent faculty members.

“Legacies” continued from page 11

Another set of recurring questions focused on the ways in which a new methodology of political economy could or should honor the contributions made over two decades by scholarship influenced by the cultural/linguistic turn. One basic point of agreement among the participants was that such scholarship has tended to make analyses of discursive and/or embodied forms of power and domination at the expense of the material contexts in which forms of thought and expression circulate and become intelligible. That said, several contributors expressed provocative reservations about the danger of ignoring the lessons of the cultural turn regarding the multiple modes and determinations of power. Of particular concern was the way in which the “new histories of capitalism” appearing both within and beyond Middle East Studies have often failed to address or incorporate the powerful insights of gender studies, many of which first emerged from a critique of the old methodology of political economy. The challenge, then, for scholars concerned to follow “new directions” in political economy lies in devising methods to engage questions of both structure and meaning together.

That even this small group of scholars encountered so many productive points of disagreement was ultimately a sign of the vibrancy of the field of scholarship. As Professor Zohary succinctly pointed out in the closing session of the workshop, “political economy” used to be a polite euphemism for Marxism in settings where the “M” word was considered extremely sensitive. Yet it is clear that we could not continue. Though for many of the contributors, the Marxist tradition continues to offer insight and inspiration, the diverse array of approaches and political commitments on display at the workshop attest to an engagement and interest in the fact that the future of political economy will be shaped by a broader set of trends in critical scholarship. We are therefore hopeful that this work will be the first in a longer series of meetings and conversations that will attract a widening group of scholars in the field.
Spaces of Negotiation, Desire, and the State
A Review of Professing Selves
By Belle Cheves, NES ‘15

Afsaneh Najmabadi’s historical ethnography Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran (Oxford University Press, 2016) offers us a unique and clearly presented entry into writing history and ethnography of transsexuality in Iran, as well as the spaces of negotiation and desire surrounding transsexuality and same-sex desire in Iran. The book traces the historical and contemporary discourses and practices of transsexuality in Iran, including the role of the state in creating and maintaining those discourses and practices. It provides a situated ‘cartography of desire’ in Iran that locates the lived experiences of trans and homosexual persons in Iran within the wider political and social landscape of the country. The book is not simply an academic study, but also a political project that seeks to critique the stereotype of Islamic groups as hubs of radicalization.

The book is divided into seven and eight chapters. In particular she focuses on how identification with particular genders and sexualities impacts interaction with the state and thus how people live their lives. And, as Najmabadi asks, quoting one of her sources, “does the issue of identification and naming oneself matter at all?” Najmabadi illustrates through the stories of her subjects that identification and naming are more than a matter of personal choice; they are central to how one is perceived by others. The ambiguities of which are what, as she reiterates at the end, make possible ‘living livable and loving lives.’

The insight Najmabadi gives into her research process and how she herself learned to write about her research is equally valuable. She writes, “It is the stories of some of the people who occupy these spaces, and how they ‘profess themselves,’ upon which she writes in chapters seven and eight. In particular she focuses on how identification with particular genders and sexualities impacts interaction with the state and thus how people live their lives. And, as Najmabadi asks, quoting one of her sources, “does the issue of identification and naming oneself matter at all?” Najmabadi illustrates through the stories of her subjects that identification and naming are more than a matter of personal choice; they are central to how one is perceived by others. The ambiguities of which are what, as she reiterates at the end, make possible ‘living livable and loving lives.’

When Pascal Menoret arrived in Riyadh in 2001 to conduct doctoral fieldwork, the anthropologist did not intend to study the urban history and politics of Saudi Arabia. Instead, he focused on transsexuality and the government sanctioned psychologists for sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in Iran. He was interested in the politicization of Saudi Arabia’s ‘really transsexual,’ ‘really homosexual,’ [or] ‘intersex,’” will receive a certificate, if deemed “the very process of psychological filtering and categorization is a process that holds great revolutionary potential.”

Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in contemporary Iran (Oxford University Press, 2016) offers us a unique and clearly presented entry into writing history and ethnography of transsexuality in Iran, as well as the spaces of negotiation and desire surrounding transsexuality and same-sex desire in Iran. The book traces the historical and contemporary discourses and practices of transsexuality in Iran, including the role of the state in creating and maintaining those discourses and practices. It provides a situated ‘cartography of desire’ in Iran that locates the lived experiences of trans and homosexual persons in Iran within the wider political and social landscape of the country. The book is not simply an academic study, but also a political project that seeks to critique the stereotype of Islamic groups as hubs of radicalization.

The book is divided into seven and eight chapters. In particular she focuses on how identification with particular genders and sexualities impacts interaction with the state and thus how people live their lives. And, as Najmabadi asks, quoting one of her sources, “does the issue of identification and naming oneself matter at all?” Najmabadi illustrates through the stories of her subjects that identification and naming are more than a matter of personal choice; they are central to how one is perceived by others. The ambiguities of which are what, as she reiterates at the end, make possible ‘living livable and loving lives.’

When Pascal Menoret arrived in Riyadh in 2001 to conduct doctoral fieldwork, the anthropologist did not intend to study the urban history and politics of Saudi Arabia. Instead, he focused on transsexuality and the government sanctioned psychologists for sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in Iran. He was interested in the politicization of Saudi Arabia’s ‘really transsexual,’ ‘really homosexual,’ [or] ‘intersex,’” will receive a certificate, if deemed “the very process of psychological filtering and categorization is a process that holds great revolutionary potential.”

Joyriding in Riyadh
A Review of Joyriding in Riyadh
By Matt Greene, NES ‘14

Joyriding in Riyadh is not simply a challenge to traffic law and order, but is a political act that contests the foundations of state legitimacy. Joyriding exposes the spatial strategies that the Saudi government uses to keep the Saudi population in order and political acquiescence, and demonstrates how large swaths of male Saudi youth seek out the sport as an act of protest. Joyriding in Riyadh is a unique and clearly presented ethnography of a fascinating subculture. The road revolt of 1970 was not simply a challenge to traffic law and order, but is a political act that contests the foundations of state legitimacy. Joyriding exposes the spatial strategies that the Saudi government uses to keep the Saudi population in order and political acquiescence, and demonstrates how large swaths of male Saudi youth seek out the sport as an act of protest.
A Review of *Apples of the Golan*

**By Ella Wind, NES '15**

**Directed by** Jill Beardsworth and Keith Walsh

**Austria/Ireland/Syria, 2012.**

Contested Identities, Conflicted Narratives

The characters throughout the film are slowly placed into dialogue with each other, at first in an unclear, disjointed way. The viewer may not even realize that a given topic has a great deal more controversy around it than one interlocutor articulates until someone with a contrasting perspective readdresses the topic much later in the film. The interviewees are never brought into actual face-to-face conversations, but through the unfolding of the film, the presence of a larger dialogue between them becomes increasingly explicit as more perspectives fill in the gaps, or completely overture previous explanations.

Throughout the film, apples form a backdrop as they are sowed, harvested, harvested, and eaten. Apples are a focal part of Golani identity. Since 2005, the only trade between the Golan and other Syrian communities is through the export of apples, and it is one of the few tangible connections between the Golan and Syria. They are also a talking point that Golanis use to define themselves as a region within Syria, distinctive from other regions whose climates are not as favorable to the cultivation of apples. It is thus no surprise that they are also a source of distinction from the Israeli settlers nearby.

At times, such articulation takes a much more explicitly nationalistic form, folding in the symbolism of state emblems. We meet a farmer in the Golan who slices an apple down the middle. He counts the five seeds. He goes on to explain the significance, making a connection to the Syrian national flag, which has a strong presence throughout the film: “Strange, in the Jewish settlements, there are six seeds. The Syrian flag has a five-pointed star, and the Israeli flag has a six-pointed star.” Much later, the filmmakers meet an Israeli farmer on an illegal settlement. They ask him to slice open an apple, revealing five seeds inside.

However, the film also introduces young people with a less nostalgic relationship to a country they are a generation removed from. One young man declares: “the Syrians, who we are originally from, forgot about us... If they wanted to free us, they would have done it a long time ago.” They describe an antagonistic relationship to the Israeli occupation, but they do not articulate it in their parents’ language of Syrian Arab nationalism. In contrast, female interviewees seem to be somewhat underrepresented in the film, in contrast to the diversity of perspectives otherwise.

Throughout the film, the subject is left to present their perspective on their own terms; most people are interviewed by themselves in their own home or work environments. In the beginning of the film, the viewer may not even realize that a given topic has a great deal more controversy around it than one interlocutor articulates until someone with a contrasting perspective readdresses the topic much later in the film. The interviewees are never brought into actual face-to-face conversations, but through the unfolding of the film, the presence of a larger dialogue between them becomes increasingly explicit as more perspectives fill in the gaps, or completely overture previous explanations.

The film makes no claims to be a deep study of any one particular issue or aspect of life in the Golan. But it is worth watching, as a nuanced presentation of the many contested identities and narratives in the Golan; as a result, we can only catch a glimpse of each aspect. Since 2005, the only trade between the Golan and other Syrian communities is through the export of apples, and it is one of the few tangible connections between the Golan and Syria. They are also a talking point that Golanis use to define themselves as a region within Syria, distinctive from other regions whose climates are not as favorable to the cultivation of apples. It is thus no surprise that they are also a source of distinction from the Israeli settlers nearby.

At times, such articulation takes a much more explicitly nationalistic form, folding in the symbolism of state emblems. We meet a farmer in the Golan who slices an apple down the middle. He counts the five seeds. He goes on to explain the significance, making a connection to the Syrian national flag, which has a strong presence throughout the film: “Strange, in the Jewish settlements, there are six seeds. The Syrian flag has a five-pointed star, and the Israeli flag has a six-pointed star.” Much later, the filmmakers meet an Israeli farmer on an illegal settlement. They ask him to slice open an apple, revealing five seeds inside.

However, the film also introduces young people with a less nostalgic relationship to a country they are a generation removed from. One young man declares: “the Syrians, who we are originally from, forgot about us... If they wanted to free us, they would have done it a long time ago.” They describe an antagonistic relationship to the Israeli occupation, but they do not articulate it in their parents’ language of Syrian Arab nationalism. In contrast, female interviewees seem to be somewhat underrepresented in the film, in contrast to the diversity of perspectives otherwise.

Apples of the Golan tries to show the many contested identities and narratives in the Golan; as a result, we can only catch a glimpse of each aspect. The film makes no claims to be a deep study of any one particular issue or aspect of life in the Golan. But it is worth watching, as a nuanced and sensitive sampling of life in a deeply contested slice of land whose intricacies are paradoxically unknown across both its East and West borders.
The Taming of Political Satire in Iran

By Shima Houshyar, NES '15

Marmoulak: The Taming of Political Satire in Iran

When released, Marmoulak (2004) quickly became one of the most widely-watched and oft-quotted Iranian movies in the history of post-revolution Iranian cinema. The plot follows the story of Reza Marmoulak (Reza “the Lizard”), a thief with a proclivity for climbing walls, who is arrested and subjected to harsh disciplinary treatment by the prison war-\dren, who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.

After a month of appearing in theaters in Iran, the movie was slowly banned across the country by local authorities who deemed it an insult to clergy, even as Iran’s Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance insisted on the legality and acceptability of its screening. Meanwhile, discussion panels were held with the film’s director, Kamal Tabrizi, film critics and members of the clergy to analyze and discuss the film. In one interview, Tabrizi claimed that he made the movie in order to bridge the gap between the cleric and ordinary people and bring the two closer in mutual understanding. The international press billed the film as a political satire that mocks religion and challenges cleric rule in Iran, while condemning the strict disciplinary mechanisms of the Iranian prison system. Indeed, it is not so much “tame” and “domesticate” him, and bring him back once again into the fold of the modern state’s subjects. If the criminal Reza cannot be reformed by the strict disciplinary mechanism of the state (i.e. the prison war-dren), who believes in a punishment-oriented system of rehabilitating prisoners. When Reza is hurt during a scuffle, he is taken to a hospital where he makes the acquaintance of a genial and kind-hearted cleric, who leaves his clerical robe and turban for Reza. Seizing this opportunity, Reza dons the cleric’s clothes, walks out of the hospital and begins to make his way to the Turkish border, which he intends to cross illegally. On his way he is mistaken for the imam of a local mosque in a small town and a series of funny events ensue as he is called upon to lead prayers (which he doesn’t know), give sermons, and help the poor.
Archives

Index of the Disappeared

An Archive of Dissent

By Parisa Chavoshi, NES’14

The Parasitic Archive appeared in the Ettinghausen Library as a series of thick binders with labels like “Isolation in US Prisons” and “NSA: Foreign Targets and Repерecussions,” a sign alerting us that the FBI had not (yet) been in our library, and portraits of brown faces scattered in between the library’s books. The Archive is a site-specific installation of the Index of the Disappeared, a project of artists Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani that evolves into the Index of the Disappeared

The Index appears in the Ettinghausen Library as a series of thick binders with labels like “Isolation in US Prisons” and “NSA: Foreign Targets and Repression,” a sign alerting us that the FBI had not (yet) been in our library, and portraits of brown faces scattered in between the library’s books. The Archive is a site-specific installation of the Index of the Disappeared, a project of artists Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani that evolves into the Index of the Disappeared.

By Parisa Chavoshi, NES’14

The Index stands as an intentional archiving of what would otherwise be silenced, of the lives and histories that post-9/11 wars and policies would prefer to be forgotten. The Archive’s appearance was especially resonant for me as I was completing my thesis at that time. In February 2014, a federal judge ruled that the NYPD’s massive surveillance of Muslim communities in New Jersey was lawful and did not profile on the basis of religion, dismissing a lawsuit brought in 2012 by eight Muslims alleging that the NYPD’s profiling was unconstitutional. US District Judge William Martini explained that he was unconvinced that the spying program had targeted them because of their religion.

Martini explained that he was unconvinced that the spying program had targeted them because of their religion.

The more likely explanation for the surveillance was to locate budding terrorist conspiracies,” he wrote, adding that “the police could not have monitored New Jersey for Muslim terrorist activities without monitoring the Muslim community itself.” My thesis explored this.

What would otherwise be silenced, of the lives and histories that post-9/11 wars and policies would prefer to be forgotten.

It is exactly through these fictive constructions of “the Muslim terrorist” or “Islamic terror” that the War on Terror produces a population always prone to terrorism. Brown bodies become a legitimate site of intervention, or “Islamic terror” that the War on Terror produces a population always prone to terrorism. Brown bodies become a legitimate site of intervention, and legitimate targets for surveillance, deportation, torture, bombing, and on and on, because of their propensity to terror. But it is not only that they become legitimate targets, but more terrifyingly, and more insistently, that they demand these interventions, and these interventions are therefore unremarkable. Quickly passed over, quickly forgotten, if even notable in the first place, because, after all, who would mourn a (would-be) terrorist?

It is in this reality that the archiving project becomes a radical practice, as Chitra and Ganesh insisted during an artists’ talk at the library. Where Brown lives are lives that don’t matter, the very act of chronicling these lives and foregrounding their stories is a radical act. The materials in the exhibit are diverse, pulling together personal narratives, news articles, policy memos, documentaries, books, rights groups’ reports, court cases, and portraits. But they collectively archive the particular horrors of post-9/11 life. There are still slim blue folders that gather together what scant information there is on the victims of the War on Terror. A few news articles roughly sketch together stories of people imprisoned for years without trial, sent to black sites for torture, families whose loved ones have disappeared. In one folder, there is only a photo without any accompanying text. There is a larger binder on Lakhdar Bounmedni, who, as the lead plaintiff in a Supreme Court decision guaranteeing the right of Guantanamo detainees and other foreign nationals to file writs of habeas corpus, has a better-documented case.

It is still a very fragmentary and partial chronicle of the magnitude of the personal losses of post-9/11 life. Absent, for example, is the story of Mohamedou Youcef, a PhD candidate in our own MEIS department. Working as a translator for lawyer Lynne Stewart on the case of “The Blind Sheikh,” both he and Stewart were accused of passing messages from the Sheikh to a terrorist organization, and ultimately convicted under the material support statute. He served over a year in prison and is now on parole.

The Index juxtaposes those devastating narratives of the victims of the War’s broad sweep with materials that highlight just what a mundanely bureaucratic reality this for some. The catalog on surveillance technology, for example, is almost comical in this context. In a scheme uncomfortably evocative of IKEA, the catalog advertises products with names like TOTEGHOSTLY V.20 or MONKEYCALENDAR; software implements the Windows Mobile OS or GSM SIM cards, respectively, capable of doing things like pulling your contact list from your cell phone. Or you can read the absurd and absurdly compiled report by a US military officer on “Islamic Rulings on Warfare.”

The archive is curated to draw a loose web of connections in time and space, linking American history to American present, domestic policy with foreign policy, different racisms with each other. Binders detailing “Isolation in US Prisons” and “Racial Profiling” stand alongside “Extraordinary Rendition” and “Torture Memos: ‘CONTELPRO’ and ‘Church Committee Report’” and thus provide history and context to “Corporate Espionage Against Nonprofit Organizations” and “Policing Dissent.”

I could have contributed a little folder of my own to the project. When I was in high school, or maybe early college, there was a Communion in our community over the head of our masjid, involving the FBI and all the related accusations of the War on Terror. I am not entirely sure what it was that he was supposed to have done. I had something to do with terrorism, of course, and hanged on this military service abroad, I think. No one went over the details with me, but even now and with so little detail I feel uncomfortable writing about it. It’s just not spoken about. For the most part I forget it even happened.

When even remembering causes nervousness and worry, archiving is dissent.
Anjali Kamat, a graduate of the Near Eastern Studies program in 2004, is now a producer and correspondent for Fault Lines at Al Jazeera America. Her work demonstrates a desire to allow those who are typically rendered voiceless to tell their stories. Kamat’s work is an important example of journalism working to inform and influence the world in which it operates.

Similarly, “America’s War Workers” explores the connections between laborers, contractors, and the American industrial institutions. Focusing on the situation of contract workers on US military bases, this Fault Lines episode highlights the exploitation of third-country nationals who, through deception, became indebted and fill the ranks of an indentured workforce upon which the US military relies to serve American troops in war zones.

Both of these documentaries highlight the situation of workers and examine the institutional structures and misbehavior which allow these exploitative labor systems to continue. Anjali Kamat’s work is an important example of journalism working to inform and influence the world in which it operates.

In Recognition of Matthieu Aikins

Matthieu Aikins, who studied in the joint M.A. program for Global Journalism and Near Eastern Studies (2008-2010) and completed his M.A. in Near Eastern Studies in 2012, was awarded the George Polk Award for Magazine Reporting for his article “The A-Team Killings.” Appearing in Rolling Stone Magazine, this article documents the war crimes committed by a 12-man U.S. Army Special Forces unit and their translators in 2012. Aikins investigates the disappearance and extrajudicial killings of ten civilians in the Nerkh district of Wardak province in Afghanistan. Over three years, “Frontline” correspondent Aikins and his team spoke not only with the US and Afghan military officials and interpreters for the Special Forces unit, but also to the civilians who had lost friends, family, and community members to these crimes. Aikins’ piece simultaneously uncovers the horror and abuse committed by US military and translators while also allowing these exploitative laborers to voice their own experiences of torture, abuse, and loss.

“Writing demonstrates the importance of thorough investigative journalism. His article has had a tangible impact as the military, which had initially charged the deaths, has opened a criminal investigation and several human rights organizations have called for an impartial investigation into these crimes. By focusing on the civilian victims of crimes perpetuated by this Special Forces Unit, Aikins forces his readers to think about the lives which are lost and destroyed in war. His journalism demonstrates courage, integrity, and a desire to tell the stories that would otherwise be forgotten.”

Spotlight on Anjali Kamat

Anjali Kamat, a graduate of the Near Eastern Studies Program in 2004, is now a producer and correspondent for Fault Lines at Al Jazeera America. Her work demonstrates a desire to allow those who are typically rendered voiceless to tell their stories. Kamat’s work is an important example of journalism working to inform and influence the world in which it operates.

In Recognition of Matthieu Aikins

Matthieu Aikins, who studied in the joint M.A. program for Global Journalism and Near Eastern Studies (2008-2010) and completed his M.A. in Near Eastern Studies in 2012, was awarded the George Polk Award for Magazine Reporting for his article “The A-Team Killings.” Appearing in Rolling Stone Magazine, this article documents the war crimes committed by a 12-man U.S. Army Special Forces unit and their translators in 2012. Aikins investigates the disappearance and extrajudicial killings of ten civilians in the Nerkh district of Wardak province in Afghanistan. Over three years, “Frontline” correspondent Aikins and his team spoke not only with the US and Afghan military officials and interpreters for the Special Forces unit, but also to the civilians who had lost friends, family, and community members to these crimes. Aikins’ piece simultaneously uncovers the horror and abuse committed by US military and translators while also allowing these exploitative laborers to voice their own experiences of torture, abuse, and loss.

“Writing demonstrates the importance of thorough investigative journalism. His article has had a tangible impact as the military, which had initially charged the deaths, has opened a criminal investigation and several human rights organizations have called for an impartial investigation into these crimes. By focusing on the civilian victims of crimes perpetuated by this Special Forces Unit, Aikins forces his readers to think about the lives which are lost and destroyed in war. His journalism demonstrates courage, integrity, and a desire to tell the stories that would otherwise be forgotten.”

Spotlight on Anjali Kamat

Anjali Kamat, a graduate of the Near Eastern Studies program in 2004, is now a produc- er and correspondent for Fault Lines at Al Jazeera America. Her work demonstrates a desire to allow those who are typically rendered voiceless to tell their stories. They represent a new and creative generation of Ott hists.

An Eastern Europeanist by training, Holly Case, Associate Professor of His- tory at Cornell University, traced the nineteenth-century emergence of the “marketplace of healing” in the Imperial Russian Empire. Her talk addressed the power struggles surrounding medical expansionism. The museum exemplifies the dense web of connections and European-Ottoman cultural interactions through a discussion of a wax museum of lifelike Ottoman figures that opened in London in 1854. Established by a colorful Ottoman-Armenian diplomat, the “Oriental and European” museum was a conscious effort to present a sympathetic version of the Ottoman Empire to potential European allies in the face of Russian expansionism. The exhibition exemplifies the deep web of connections between the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the time of the Crimean War.

Ozgen Felek, a recent Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Religious Studies at Stanford University, discussed the ways in which the dreams and visions of Sultan Murad III shaped his public image. Building on her previous work on dream interpretation, she parsed a complex symbolism that ad- dressed a wide range of particular Ottoman questions. She argued that dream interpretation is a long-neglected field of Ottoman Studies, despite its im- portance in the early modern period.

Finally, in her critique of the concept of “medical pluralism,” Nazanin Shahrokni, Har- vard Business School student, presented her own Ph.D. thesis on the “Iranian Days of Revolution: Life and Polities of Iranian Oil Workers (1978-1982).” The discussant for this lecture was our colleague Zachary Lockman. Overall...
Wounds of Waziristan

Wounds of Waziristan features the unnoticed casualties of war. The documentary film does not make us feel for those lives that were cut short due to America’s drone offensive in Pakistan, but instead for those who are left behind and forced to pick up the bodies of their loved ones, those who are “haunted by loss.” Instead of focusing on the number of dead or the vague distinctions between ‘civilians’ and ‘militants,’ the creator of this project, Madiha Tahir, an independent journalist and doctoral candidate at Columbia University, attempts to capture the experience of the drone-affected people of North Waziristan without reference to military or policy experts.

“What I wanted to do with Wounds of Waziristan was to allow Karim and Saddam to tell their stories without reference to the whole architecture of expertise. We ought to be able to consider them legitimate witnesses to their own lives. That is an intervention into the way war correspondence is generally done,” explains Tahir.

The 26-minute-long documentary shows that the area upon which the majority of the drones fall is not directly under the ambit of Pakistan’s legal system. Apart from four major states, Pakistan is also comprised of Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (Fata): a group of seven agencies in which the jurisdiction of Pakistan’s courts does not apply. Waziristan, divided into North and South, consists of two such agencies, and has been used as a battleground by American forces and Pakistan’s security forces as well as the insurgents that they collectively created. Although Waziristan is hardly a day’s drive from the capital, Islamabad, the documentary shows how with the help of American and Pakistani media, it’s made to seem a world away.

It is a widely known fact that, due to security concerns caused both by militants and the Pakistani military themselves, it is nearly impossible for journalists to enter Waziristan. Even in July 2014 when the Pakistan Army launched an operation in North Waziristan, the only source of information available was the army’s media wing. Despite this, upon release of her film, Tahir was widely criticized by some in Pakistan for making a documentary about a region she had never visited. No part of the documentary was shot within Waziristan, simply because no journalists, barring a handful under army protection, have recently been allowed to enter the tribal area. But perhaps this makes Tahir’s documentary all the more important: she shines light on a people who do not wish to be voiceless, but have been silenced by deafening bombings. Tahir conducts interviews in Islamabad, with Karim and Saddam, two residents of Waziristan who have lost family due to drone attacks. Other interviews take place in Peshawar and Bannu, cities in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that Tahir visited to conduct formal and informal interviews.

Perhaps the only legitimate critique of the film is the fact that it never introduces the concept of tribes to the audience. Not once during the interviews does Tahir ask any of the survivors what tribe they belong to; by completely ignoring their family lineages and connections the filmmaker creates confusion for the audience as to why these regions are even called tribal and why they don’t fall under the ambit of Pakistan’s legal system. But barring this critique, Tahir’s film delivers its promise: it succinctly conveys to us that the effects of war cannot be neatly summed up in facts and figures. Even though Barack Obama describes - and Tahir quotes him - the drones as “neat surgical tactics,” the truth of the matter is that nothing about drone violence is neat or surgical. “You can’t take away the bad, and leave behind the good,” she explains. The entire idea, she says, of using physical violence to solve a political issue is senseless.

Another reason Tahir’s film stands out is because, while the standard narrative states that America is bombing Waziristan to cleanse it of the Taliban, not once during the film does she name this enemy. Instead she provides the audience with a background of the freedom fighters, comments on how Waziristan was used as a training ground for them and continuously refers to them as “insurgents.” Tahir explains that she chooses to do this because the purpose of the film was not to debate the futility of the drones, as that has been done by many others, but to convey the stories of the affected without using the already existing narratives. “Every country, every region has a slot. Pakistan’s slot is ‘fanatical Islam’ and ‘terrorism.’ Even stories about beer production or fashion or business in Pakistan must reference these tropes in order for the story to be legible to western audiences,” says Tahir. And in this she succeeds: Wounds of Waziristan is a story about drone violence outside of these clichéd tropes, and presents audiences with a fresh lens through which drones can be examined.

By Maham Javaid, NES ‘15

Wounds of Waziristan
Since the Arab Spring, organized labor has provided a significant challenge to authoritarianism, economic inequality, and the military establishment in the Middle East. I was lucky enough to witness this dynamic firsthand as a FLAS Fellow in Istanbul during the summer of 2013.

In Turkey, the labor movement has long faced serious challenges to organization. A growing, largely migrant urban workforce has bolstered Turkey’s status as one of the world’s fastest growing economies. Large profit margins in the construction and industrial export sectors have been maintained through the repression of labor movements seeking to raise the minimum wage, shorten long working days, and rectify abysmal work safety conditions.

Despite these conditions, the past few years have seen a rise in militant labor activism. The convergence in recent years of leftists, labor unions, and pious youth organized under the banner of an “Anti-Capitalist Muslim Youth” has signaled a break with the politics of the ruling Justice and Development Party’s “capitalism with ablations,” advocating in its place an Islamic conception of social justice rooted in a class-based understanding of Turkey’s economic development.

The contours of Turkey’s rapidly expanding economy and the push back against the exploitation and dispossession it causes were readily apparent upon my arrival in Istanbul. With construction cranes scraping the skyline everywhere I turned, the city seemed to be in the process of reinventing itself. Hip boutiques and cafes lined streets that were once home to the city’s working classes, demonstrating the effects of displacement and gentrification.

A week into my stay a popular movement rose up against the abuses of this so-called “urban renewal.” Mass demonstrations, marches, and clashes between police and youth in the streets became a daily occurrence. I became a frequent visitor to Gezi Park, the center of the protests and an incredible experiment in participatory democracy. At its height, the revolutionary community in the Park ran free libraries, a radio station, day-care centers, and community gardens. Striking workers joined university students in political conversations lasting through the night. Istanbul’s streets and parks became my most effective classroom, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to learn Turkish through studying this incredible experiment in participatory democracy.

Resisting Testimony
By Emma Quail, NES ’14

Tahrir is less a square and more an assemblage of expansive roads held together by the congestion of taxis, people, and mini-buses. In the weeks leading up to the military coup that ousted president Mohamed Morsi in summer 2013, the square lay in disarray—remnants of old protest tents, life-sized effigies representing the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) hanging from traffic lights, and burnt out fire pits. In an apartment just down the street along a small alley with a few kiosks, I met Matar Suleiman and his friends, huddled over laptops editing refugee testimony videos. Only the top two floors of the building are lived in—the rest is used as a storage facility for various kinds of merchandise. Matar and his friend Baal are Sudanese refugees and political activists living in Cairo. Matar is 31 years old, from Elgorey, a town in Western Sudan and the capital of the state of Central Darfur. He is a serious man, tall and muscular, with a long scar just above his left eyebrow: tough looking. He wears a navy blue t-shirt and beige kaki pants. Baal is in his late 30s and is also a refugee from Central Darfur.

Egypt is home to four million Sudanese refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented residents, in a country of 80 million. Refugees in Egypt do not have access to free education, housing, employment, citizenship or health care. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the main governing body over refugees in Egypt, as the state rescinded its responsibility in 1992. The UNHCR provides a negligible service to refugees, especially from Sudan. Racial discrimination, at a state and societal level, leads to arbitrary arrests and harassment on the streets. In the midst of this, refugees like Matar have engaged in resistance to the UNHCR and Egypt’s state apparatus through demonstrations, video production, and publishing stories. During my research in Cairo, I discovered that testimonial narratives are forced upon refugees by neoliberal entities such as the United Nations. Sudanese refugees not only resist this control but also struggle for their refugee rights in a state undergoing a political transition.

Learning Turkish During a Revolution
By Nate Christensen, NES ’14

Since the Arab Spring, organized labor has provided a significant challenge to authoritarianism, economic inequality, and the military establishment in the Middle East. I was lucky enough to witness this dynamic firsthand as a FLAS Fellow in Istanbul during the summer of 2013.

In Turkey, the labor movement has long faced serious challenges to organization. A growing, largely migrant urban workforce has bolstered Turkey’s status as one of the world’s fastest growing economies. Large profit margins in the construction and industrial export sectors have been maintained through the repression of labor movements seeking to raise the minimum wage, shorten long working days, and rectify abysmal work safety conditions.

Despite these conditions, the past few years have seen a rise in militant labor activism. The convergence in recent years of leftists, labor unions, and pious youth organized under the banner of an “Anti-Capitalist Muslim Youth” has signaled a break with the politics of the ruling Justice and Development Party’s “capitalism with ablations,” advocating in its place an Islamic conception of social justice rooted in a class-based understanding of Turkey’s economic development.

The contours of Turkey’s rapidly expanding economy and the push back against the exploitation and dispossession it causes were readily apparent upon my arrival in Istanbul. With construction cranes scraping the skyline everywhere I turned, the city seemed to be in the process of reinventing itself. Hip boutiques and cafes lined streets that were once home to the city’s working classes, demonstrating the effects of displacement and gentrification.

A week into my stay a popular movement rose up against the abuses of this so-called “urban renewal.” Mass demonstrations, marches, and clashes between police and youth in the streets became a daily occurrence. I became a frequent visitor to Tahrir Square, the center of the protests and an incredible experiment in participatory democracy. At its height, the revolutionary community in the Park ran free libraries, a radio station, day-care centers, and community gardens. Striking workers joined university students in political conversations lasting through the night. Istanbul’s streets and parks became my most effective classroom, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to learn Turkish through studying this incredible experiment in participatory democracy.
This year, two Falak Sufi scholars are enrolled in our program. Maham Javaid who joined the Kevorkian Center in Fall 2013, will return in September to finish her degree. A graduate of Lahore University of Management Sciences, Javaid is studying patriarchal norms and gender-based violence in societies where the War on Terror is being waged. She spent her summer in Pakistan working in the Opinion/Editorial section of DAWN newspaper in Karachi. Additionally she spent time in Bannu in Khyber Pakhtunkwa where she filmed a documentary about the displacement of people from North Waziristan. She has also been freelancing for Pakistani as well as international publications. After completing her M.A., Javaid envisions embarking on a career in journalism in Pakistan.

Aqsa Khalid will join the Kevorkian Center in Fall 2014. Aqsa obtained a Bachelor of Science in Economics, with honors, from Lahore University of Management Sciences in Pakistan. Her research explores the juxtaposition of past and present socio-cultural norms in the Middle East and South Asia, especially pertaining to the role and position of women. Her interests have led her to probe further into women’s narratives as depicted in Near Eastern history, literature, film, and folklore.

Kevorkian also awarded the sixth annual Falak Sufi Memorial Essay Prize that recognizes originality and promise in M.A. scholarship in April 2014 to Sarah Yozzo ’14. An honorable mention went to Nate Christensen ’14.

In her Falak Sufi winning research paper “Producing Intifada: Security Narratives and Imagined Social Identities,” Sarah examines the controversy surrounding the Khalil Gebran Academy in Brooklyn and, perhaps most famously, its principal Debbi Montassar. Sarah used her own research in the school and among its students and other Arab American children in the NY public education system to illustrate the ways that the controversy operated within the context of the “War on Terror” and its production of “good” and “dangerous” US citizens. She thought through this fieldwork using literature on the state, on surveillance, and on power, and succeeded in writing a tight and well-written article on the ideological spaces of the “War on Terror” and the subjects that it produces.

In his research paper, “Tribalism, the War on Terror, and the State in Yemen,” Nate studied the ways in which tribalism has been researched, (re)constructed and circulated in studies and policies related to Yemen. Nate related the academic development of “tribalism” as a trope, to its circulation in policy and war-making worlds. In doing so, Nate provided a fresh and innovative perspective to a field of inquiry that has preoccupied researchers of the Arabian Peninsula for decades.

A number of outstanding essays were submitted for competition, including (in alphabetical order):

- Gina Hakim, ’15: “Rabaa al-Adawiya and Egyptian Military Chauvinism”
- Maham Javaid, ’15: “Approaching Lebanese Sectarianism through Indian Communalism”
- Adam LoBue, ’14: “Utopian Urbanism in the Gulf: Dubai in Comparative Perspective”
- Emma Quail, ’14: “Decolonizing Solidarities: Third Worldism and Indigenous Movement in Settler Colonial States”
- Eva Schreiner, ’14: “Rawabi- A New City for ‘New Palestinians’?”
- Ella Wind, ’15: “Brigade as Brand: Liquid Capital, YouTube Video, and the Syrian Civil War”

Applications for next year’s scholarship will arrive in Fall 2014, and the essay prize competition will take place in Spring 2015. The Hagop Kevorkian Center remains indebted to the family of Falak Sufi for supporting this recognition of outstanding M.A. candidates and their writings.
Sara Abi Saab: This summer, I will be conducting an interview for the LEAP program in Boujr El Shannah refugee camp in Tyre, South Lebanon. This is my first time beginning conduct interviews for my thesis, speaking to mothers of children living in Tyre about their experiences in Lebanon and how their experiences impact familial relations and their political affiliations.

Yasmine Al-Sayyad: I am currently working as a Junior Researcher at the UNDP Bureau of Arab States helping with the review process for the Arab Human Development Report. I am also working on a collaborative project on women participation in the public sphere. I will be traveling to Egypt in August to start reporting for my thesis. 

Thalita Beatty: I will be studying Arabic in Tunisia this summer on a FLAS and conducting interviews for my thesis. I plan to write about the continuing problem of unemployment in the region as well as its impact on young people after its political revolution. I will be staying in the room near the WNYC office, and I am looking forward to continuing to work in radio.

Belbe Cheves: My first year at Kevorkian was a bit of a whirlwind. I am looking forward to my second year and continuing to study modern Iranian history. This summer, however, I am very excited to spend two months in Tajikistan on my second State Department Critical Language School scholarship to study the Farsi and Tajik dialects of Persian.

Jeff Eamonn: My first year at the Kevorkian Center was very rewarding. This summer, I will be traveling to Lebanon to conduct an interview-based Arabic course at the American University of Beirut with funding from the David S. Dodge Arabic Fund. The highlight of my first year was attending the many guest lectures at the Center and, of course, getting to know a whole new set of colleagues and professors. Next year I plan to do an internship alongside a development professor and get to know the bars and restaurants in the city even better.

Brooke Fisher: This summer I will be studying Arabic at the Kevorkian Center. I will also be studying Arabic at the Lebanese American University campus in New York City.

Gina Hakim: This summer I will be working as a teacher’s aide in a junior school located in Pas- ta, Egypt. I hope to continue learning about the role of education in the Egyptian society and to possibly travel to Cairo, Egypt in order to continue my research.

Shima Houshary: Having finished an amazing first year at the Kevorkian Center, I am looking forward to spending my summer in Iran where I will be visiting friends and family. I hope to continue some fieldwork and archival research, while also spending time in the art and cultural scene in Tehran.

Maham Javid: After completing my first year at the Kevorkian Center, I am excited to spend my second year in a human rights project in Lebanon. I am working in the Editorial section of the Center and will continue to freelance for Pakistani as well as international publications over the summer.

Hannah Lawrence: This summer I will be conducting fieldwork in the new research center at the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESIR) in Brooklyn. I am hoping to pursue another internship this fall, and use both experiences as a basis for my M.A. thesis. Thanks to the generosity of the FLAS program and the Kevorkian Center, I am grateful and excited to complete my second year as a fellow in Arabic. 

Adrian Moussa: This summer I am studying Persian at Arizona State University (ASU) and conducting preliminary research for my thesis topic, which tentatively examines translative movements between Iranian and French literature. I hope that with Persian added to my research skills, I will gain access to more material, thus helping to shed more light on my specific direction.

Anna Reufer: Happy to join the Class of 2015, I am more than ready to instruct students to improve their Arabic. I hope to spend spending most of my summer at Aflam Air, a group dedicated to promoting each other on middle eastern activist art and cultural anxiety in Tehran.

Sara Arafat: As a Global Journalism student, I am currently working on a graduate assistant- ship to put into practice the knowledge I gained at the Kevorkian Center.

Matthew Coogan: This summer I completed my MA after writing my thesis on the El Shama refugee camp in Syria. I am currently working as an Arabic-English Assistant for the University of Virginia’s summer Arabic program in Istanbul. I plan to continue working on my thesis in the fall, continuing my research for the Syria page on Jadaliyya, and with my dear friends and colleagues on the Kevorkian Center. I am intensely focused on analyzing the Gulf for future research. I’m looking forward to spending a month in Istanbul. Throughout the year, I plan to attend academic events and seminars, and continuing to work on publishing pieces on Ajem Media Collective stands as the potential future of journalism in the Gulf. I will be attending the Kevorkian center, I am planning to continue my work on both Turkey and the Roma in the years to come.

Alex Bookoozas: This summer I will be working with the Kevorkian Arabic studies at the Galam wa Lawin institute in Rabat, Morocco. I received funding for this summer both from FLAS and from Galam wa Lawin’s own scholarship program.

Boyko Xu: After a great year at Kevorkian, I am now set to conduct my final pre- liminary research for my thesis topic, which tentatively examines translative movements between Chinese and Russian literature. I am planning to continue some of my work on the Gulf for future research. I hope to continue writing about Ye- men, the “War on Terror,” and social movements in the Middle East, while polishing my classical Arabic writing skills in hopes of finishing my whole academic year. This summer, I seek to apply the knowledge I gained during my summer and continue further research on my thesis related to “bank interest debates in Shari’a law.” This summer I will be working with the Galam wa Lawin institute in Rabat, Morocco. I received funding for this summer both from FLAS and from Galam wa Lawin’s own scholarship program.

Sherin Gerami: Having been involved in student-labor solidarity work at NYU for the last two years, I am currently working on the history of student-labor solidarity and especially something literary related. I had a really positive collaboration with my two professors, researchers Assis, IGSS, and Hala Halim, and after receiving positive feedback and encouragement from them, I am going to be submitting my thesis for publication, hopefully in the Science Fiction Studies Journal. I am planning on applying to several MA programs this year, as well as either in Comparative Literature or Cultural Studies; depending on which I plan to write a dissertation. I will be continuing to write my research as well as continuing to do research searches. I may end up applying sooner rather than later. I am currently looking for a job to catch up on my non-school related reading and attaining a semi-normal sleep schedule.

Molly Oringer: For my Master’s Thesis, I explored narratives of in- digenity and consumption in dias-
porea tourism to Israel under the guidance of Maya Mikdash. I am currently working as a development associate and grant writer at the World Cities Center in New York, an organization that helps to train low-income communities, thus lessening their reliance on NGOs and govern- ment agencies. I plan to apply to doctoral programs in anthropology this fall.

Jackson Perry: In my second year, thanks to a grant from the Kavliower Center, I conducted research in the Rome archives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as part of a master’s thesis, titled “Planting the State: the FAO forestry division in mid-20th-century Morocco.” I plan to continue my studies in Middle East environmental history.

Emma Quail: During summer 2013, I spent a month conducting research for my MA thesis on Sudanese resistance in Egypt, focusing on the col- onial legacies of race and domination in the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. I continued my work with the labor union UNITE HERE in New York City, which fights for low-wage workers’ rights in the hotel, gaming and food service industries.

Brooke Reynolds: I will be continuing my research on prison hunger strikes and confinement, and searching for ways to more deeply incor- porate healing arts into political resistance.

Elif Sari: I graduated with my MA in Near Eastern Studies after complet- ing my thesis on queer refugees in Turkey. Starting from next semester, I will pursue my PhD in Anthropology at Cornell University. I will also con- tinue my thesis on queer refugees in Turkey. Starting from next semester, I will be working as an immigration lawyer in New York City.

Jakub Hejnek: My final year at MESA 2013 has been an exciting year. I presented a paper on Turkish au- thor Sahabi Sabit at MESA 2013 in New Or- leans, and I co-organized a seminar on “From Right to Utopia” with the University of Arizona at ACA 2014. We will be co-editing an issue from the proceedings of the seminar in the Arizona Journal of Middle East Studies. I am currently working on a research project in support of my dissertation project, which focuses on the extensive commentarial praxis surrounding medieval literary texts, particularly the Maqamat of al-Hariri. I also re- ceived a summer FLAS Fellowship to pursue ad- vanced study in the field. This Fall, I will be presenting a paper on Turkish migration to Israel. I also taught “The Emergence of the Mod- ern Middle East” course during Summer.

Aaron Jakes: I plan to submit and defend my dissertation in the fall. I am currently working on a project on the Arab diaspora in Paris, while organizing the Arab conversation hour and working alongside Gayatri Kumra and Greta Scharnweber to coordinate a political satire film series. My thesis, entitled “Prophets, Secrecy Narratives and Imagined Identities,” focuses on the multiplicity of ways in which Islamophobia, implicated within state security narratives that target Ar- ab and Muslim identities, manifests itself in media, word and mouth, and the inner workings of institutions such as schools, that cumulatively affect the lives of Yemeni youth in Brooklyn. Since graduating, I have been working as the Program Coordinator for AFSIC’s summer camp and preparing to move to Nablus, where I will be teaching a Literature class to high school students at a baccalaureate school for the coming year.

Ilker Hepkaner: My final year at MESA has been highly productive. I presented a paper on “The Role of Turkish Islamic Studies at the Global Context” at the 2014 Islamic Studies Association (ISAS) annual meeting in Jerusalem. An excerpt from my paper was published in Jerusalem Quarterly, an academic journal published by the United Arab Emirates.

Susyene McEirone: I was abroad for the fall of 2013. In September, I had an article published in the Middle East Journal of Phoebe Mitchell: My first year at MESA 2013 has been an exciting year. I presented a paper on “The Role of Turkish Islamic Studies at the Global Context” at the 2014 Islamic Studies Association (ISAS) annual meeting in Jerusalem. An excerpt from my paper was published in Jerusalem Quarterly, an academic journal published by the United Arab Emirates.

Susyene McEirone: I was abroad for the fall of 2013. In September, I had an article published in the Middle East Journal of Phoebe Mitchell: My first year at MESA 2013 has been an exciting year. I presented a paper on “The Role of Turkish Islamic Studies at the Global Context” at the 2014 Islamic Studies Association (ISAS) annual meeting in Jerusalem. An excerpt from my paper was published in Jerusalem Quarterly, an academic journal published by the United Arab Emirates.

Susyene McEirone: I was abroad for the fall of 2013. In September, I had an article published in the Middle East Journal of Phoebe Mitchell: My first year at MESA 2013 has been an exciting year. I presented a paper on “The Role of Turkish Islamic Studies at the Global Context” at the 2014 Islamic Studies Association (ISAS) annual meeting in Jerusalem. An excerpt from my paper was published in Jerusalem Quarterly, an academic journal published by the United Arab Emirates.
A Journey on the Great Silk Road
A Study Tour of Uzbekistan

In July 2014 the Kevorkian Center teamed up with the Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO) to host an outreach trip for K-12 teachers to Uzbekistan. Masha Kirasirova (MEIS, ’13) and Maurice Pomerantz, faculty members at NYU Abu Dhabi, served as Academic Directors. The trip focused on the history of the Silk Road, highlighting the importance of Central Asia as a crossroads of empires, trade and religion. Professor Pomerantz’s scholarship on pre-modern Arabic Literature and Islamicate Literature as well as Professor Kirasirova’s work on the history of exchanges between Soviet Eurasia and the Middle East added context and additional knowledge to the tour as the group traveled from Tashkent to the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva.

“I learned so much about a part of the world that had been a gap in my students’ study of the Silk Road. The fabled cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva are truly wonderful. A trip to Central Asia was incredibly exciting and enlightening. Our guide, Lazig, was great, and the two NYU professors who accompanied us really added a lot to the whole experience.”
Barbara Moore, Grade 6, English and History

“I am amazed by the incredible diversity and the different wares of the people who have moved through this region. This diversity will allow me to incorporate the culture and history of Uzbekistan in multiple units in my World History course ranging from the Silk Road to Tamerlane and the Mongols.”
Chi-Ann Lin, Grades 9-12, Global and East Asian Studies

“Participation on this trip has enabled me to better prepare my students with an understanding of how Uzbekistan was indeed the “cradle of civilization” and a crossroads of Khans, cultures, and cuisines. A must do for any teacher of ancient history of literature!”
Elizabeth Graf, Grades 10-12, Literature

“Traveling on the Heart of the Silk Road trip with GEEO allowed me to experience Central Asian history and culture in a way that brings to life the knowledge that I’ve gained from books. This allows my lessons in World History about this region of the world to become more meaningful. My students will benefit tremendously from the information provided by my guide, images I took and mementos I brought home to share.”
Cassie Elliot, Grades 9-12, History, Government and Economics

“This opportunity to travel the same path as previous travelers will allow me to present facts about cultures, and customs to my students that will enhance their knowledge of differences from the past to the future.”
Carol McCormick, Special Education Diagnostician

“Being in Uzbekistan was a unique experience. One can see the ancient, medieval, and modern histories side by side, and all three have combined to form modern Uzbek identity. There is much I will take back to my classes from this trip, particularly ancient and medieval globalization via the Silk Road as well as better understanding of Islam in Central Asia. These are just two of the many new ideas that I might include in my future courses. This was an enlightening trip and I have become richer for it.”
Nandini Sinha, Grades 9-12, Global History

“The Great Silk Road was not one continuous route from China to Rome from a set time in history but rather a nexus of encounters driven by commerce, empire, exploration, science, and religion, in short every human activity between and among a myriad of cultural centers both proximate and far-flung lasting variously for generations, reigns, centuries, and in some cases millennia.”
Philip Scharper, Grades 6-8, Assistant Principal

“It was fascinating to travel along some of the exact routes that were traversed by caravans hundreds of years ago. The monuments were truly beautiful and relaxed the power that various rulers held over the centuries. It is amazing that the ancient trading centers of Khiva, Samarkand, and Bukhara continue to flourish as centers that capture many of the elements of the Silk Road. I enjoyed the sights, food, landscape, and meeting many friendly and warm Uzbeks. The homestay with the Uzbek family and the yurt stay in Kyzyl Kum desert allowed me to experience the Silk Road as many traders along the Silk Road experienced it. The extreme heat helped to de-romanticize many aspects of the Silk Road. I have gathered an immense amount of information and images which I will utilize to enrich my unit on the Silk Road.”
Fazeela Scharper, Grades 9-12, History and Government

A group of teachers traveled to Uzbekistan to learn about culture, religion, history, and literature.

In July 2014 the Kevorkian Center teamed up with the Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO) to host an outreach trip for K-12 teachers to Uzbekistan. Masha Kirasirova (MEIS, ’13) and Maurice Pomerantz, faculty members at NYU Abu Dhabi, served as Academic Directors. The trip focused on the history of the Silk Road, highlighting the importance of Central Asia as a crossroads of empires, trade and religion. Professor Pomerantz’s scholarship on pre-modern Arabic Literature and Islamicate Literature as well as Professor Kirasirova’s work on the history of exchanges between Soviet Eurasia and the Middle East added context and additional knowledge to the tour as the group traveled from Tashkent to the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva.

“There is much I will take back to my classes from this trip, particularly ancient and medieval globalization via the Silk Road as well as better understanding of Islam in Central Asia. These are just two of the many new ideas that I might include in my future courses. This was an enlightening trip and I have become richer for it.”

Nandini Sinha, Grades 9-12, Global History

“Traveling on the Heart of the Silk Road trip with GEEO allowed me to experience Central Asian history and culture in a way that brings to life the knowledge that I’ve gained from books. This allows my lessons in World History about this region of the world to become more meaningful. My students will benefit tremendously from the information provided by my guide, images I took and mementos I brought home to share.”

Cassie Elliot, Grades 9-12, History, Government and Economics

“This opportunity to travel the same path as previous travelers will allow me to present facts about cultures, and customs to my students that will enhance their knowledge of differences from the past to the future.”

Carol McCormick, Special Education Diagnostician

“It was fascinating to travel along some of the exact routes that were traversed by caravans hundreds of years ago. The monuments were truly beautiful and relaxed the power that various rulers held over the centuries. It is amazing that the ancient trading centers of Khiva, Samarkand, and Bukhara continue to flourish as centers that capture many of the elements of the Silk Road. I enjoyed the sights, food, landscape, and meeting many friendly and warm Uzbeks. The homestay with the Uzbek family and the yurt stay in Kyzyl Kum desert allowed me to experience the Silk Road as many traders along the Silk Road experienced it. The extreme heat helped to de-romanticize many aspects of the Silk Road. I have gathered an immense amount of information and images which I will utilize to enrich my unit on the Silk Road.”

Fazeela Scharper, Grades 9-12, History and Government

A group of teachers traveled to Uzbekistan to learn about culture, religion, history, and literature.

In July 2014 the Kevorkian Center teamed up with the Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO) to host an outreach trip for K-12 teachers to Uzbekistan. Masha Kirasirova (MEIS, ’13) and Maurice Pomerantz, faculty members at NYU Abu Dhabi, served as Academic Directors. The trip focused on the history of the Silk Road, highlighting the importance of Central Asia as a crossroads of empires, trade and religion. Professor Pomerantz’s scholarship on pre-modern Arabic Literature and Islamicate Literature as well as Professor Kirasirova’s work on the history of exchanges between Soviet Eurasia and the Middle East added context and additional knowledge to the tour as the group traveled from Tashkent to the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva.

“There is much I will take back to my classes from this trip, particularly ancient and medieval globalization via the Silk Road as well as better understanding of Islam in Central Asia. These are just two of the many new ideas that I might include in my future courses. This was an enlightening trip and I have become richer for it.”

Nandini Sinha, Grades 9-12, Global History

“Traveling on the Heart of the Silk Road trip with GEEO allowed me to experience Central Asian history and culture in a way that brings to life the knowledge that I’ve gained from books. This allows my lessons in World History about this region of the world to become more meaningful. My students will benefit tremendously from the information provided by my guide, images I took and mementos I brought home to share.”

Cassie Elliot, Grades 9-12, History, Government and Economics

“This opportunity to travel the same path as previous travelers will allow me to present facts about cultures, and customs to my students that will enhance their knowledge of differences from the past to the future.”

Carol McCormick, Special Education Diagnostician

“It was fascinating to travel along some of the exact routes that were traversed by caravans hundreds of years ago. The monuments were truly beautiful and relaxed the power that various rulers held over the centuries. It is amazing that the ancient trading centers of Khiva, Samarkand, and Bukhara continue to flourish as centers that capture many of the elements of the Silk Road. I enjoyed the sights, food, landscape, and meeting many friendly and warm Uzbeks. The homestay with the Uzbek family and the yurt stay in Kyzyl Kum desert allowed me to experience the Silk Road as many traders along the Silk Road experienced it. The extreme heat helped to de-romanticize many aspects of the Silk Road. I have gathered an immense amount of information and images which I will utilize to enrich my unit on the Silk Road.”

Fazeela Scharper, Grades 9-12, History and Government

A group of teachers traveled to Uzbekistan to learn about culture, religion, history, and literature.

In July 2014 the Kevorkian Center teamed up with the Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO) to host an outreach trip for K-12 teachers to Uzbekistan. Masha Kirasirova (MEIS, ’13) and Maurice Pomerantz, faculty members at NYU Abu Dhabi, served as Academic Directors. The trip focused on the history of the Silk Road, highlighting the importance of Central Asia as a crossroads of empires, trade and religion. Professor Pomerantz’s scholarship on pre-modern Arabic Literature and Islamicate Literature as well as Professor Kirasirova’s work on the history of exchanges between Soviet Eurasia and the Middle East added context and additional knowledge to the tour as the group traveled from Tashkent to the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva.

“There is much I will take back to my classes from this trip, particularly ancient and medieval globalization via the Silk Road as well as better understanding of Islam in Central Asia. These are just two of the many new ideas that I might include in my future courses. This was an enlightening trip and I have become richer for it.”

Nandini Sinha, Grades 9-12, Global History

“Traveling on the Heart of the Silk Road trip with GEEO allowed me to experience Central Asian history and culture in a way that brings to life the knowledge that I’ve gained from books. This allows my lessons in World History about this region of the world to become more meaningful. My students will benefit tremendously from the information provided by my guide, images I took and mementos I brought home to share.”

Cassie Elliot, Grades 9-12, History, Government and Economics

“This opportunity to travel the same path as previous travelers will allow me to present facts about cultures, and customs to my students that will enhance their knowledge of differences from the past to the future.”

Carol McCormick, Special Education Diagnostician

“It was fascinating to travel along some of the exact routes that were traversed by caravans hundreds of years ago. The monuments were truly beautiful and relaxed the power that various rulers held over the centuries. It is amazing that the ancient trading centers of Khiva, Samarkand, and Bukhara continue to flourish as centers that capture many of the elements of the Silk Road. I enjoyed the sights, food, landscape, and meeting many friendly and warm Uzbeks. The homestay with the Uzbek family and the yurt stay in Kyzyl Kum desert allowed me to experience the Silk Road as many traders along the Silk Road experienced it. The extreme heat helped to de-romanticize many aspects of the Silk Road. I have gathered an immense amount of information and images which I will utilize to enrich my unit on the Silk Road.”

Fazeela Scharper, Grades 9-12, History and Government

A group of teachers traveled to Uzbekistan to learn about culture, religion, history, and literature.
Faculty News

Benedita Chaffai: The highlight of my last year was the opportunity to teach for the past seven years in the Arabic Program. I would like to extend a special thank you to all the students and other faculty members who have supported me throughout my career. In May, I had the pleasure of participating as a speaker at the Annual Conference on Modern and Contemporary Islam, at the University of Virginia. My talk focused on the history of Middle East studies in the United States more or less came to an end when the history of Middle East studies in the Unit

day. I helped organized a workshop on “New Di- rectors in Political Economy,” held at NYU Abu Dhabi Institute’s public

Arab American universities and who are the Arab Americans, where they are coming in American universities and who are the ones who wanted to interview me about two

The focus is on "Social Theory and Duty" at the Symposium on Gender and Duty held at NYU Abu Dhabi Institute. As one of the main themes of the symposium was an essay, forthcoming in Economy and Soci- ty, with Narges Erami that marries our ethno- graphic

Academically, 2013-2014 has

Teaching two new courses: "East/West? Poli- tics and representations of the temple of Ramesses II in Ancient Egypt. My students and I will have the pleasure of presenting the findings that appeared in the most recent issue of the Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt (JARCE). In addition, the research project for pre-modern texts. We were suc- cessful in renewing the grant for another five years. I carried on through the year over- seeing the NYU Abu Dhabi Institute’s public outreach program as Vice Provost. In my ca- zig taking my students to Bozcaada, we will be teaching two new courses: "East/West? Poli- tical Culture of Representation and the Middle East" and "East/West? Islamic Art and the Middle East: Civilization, Hu- manism, and Branding the Nation." I have continued to serve on the MESA Com- mittee on Academic Freedom as one of the two scholars responsible for reporting grievances in Turkey.

Aragh Cheshvariaz: During Fall 2013, I was occupied with various writing projects and continuing my research on the Persian Gulf in the long-twentieth century. Among my publi- cations this year was an essay published in the Arab Studies Journal that critically exam- ined several works pondering authoritarian re- sistance in the Arab World. This essay also co-authored an essay, forthcoming in Economy and Soci- ty, with Narges Erami that marries our ethno- graphic view in the TLS which I hope will encourage adoption of the volume in the classroom. My project on anarchosyndicalism has transmogrified into a new manuscript that I am pre- paring a prospectus for the three volumes for my editors at Edinburgh University Press.

In April with generous funding from both the Ko¨velkian Center and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University. Last but not least, I continued to serve as chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom, which produced a re- port on "Reconfiguring Muslim Marriage: Sex as a Martial Right and As an Academic and Women’s Sexuality in Law and Religion at the University of Michigan. The paper is part of an ongoing project on the history of the Muslim marriage contract that I will be pursuing in CY 2014-15 on fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study and the American Council of Learned Societies. I am looking forward to plunging into research in the coming year!

Philippe Kennedy: This year was spent on the Library of Arabic Literature editing and trans- lating a study of the "recent" photographs of the "1933 Greek-Turkish exchange of religious minorities in contemporary Turkey. A portion of this work will be published as an article in CASSAME. This year, I also taught a gradu- ate seminar, "Decolonizing the Near East," and will be teaching two new courses: "East/West? Poli- tical Culture of Representation and the Middle East" and "East/West? Islamic Art and the Middle East: Civilization, Humanism, and Branding the Nation." I have continued to serve on the MESA Com- mittee on Academic Freedom as one of the two scholars responsible for reporting grievances in Turkey.

Aragh Cheshvariaz: During Fall 2013, I was occupied with various writing projects and continuing my research on the Persian Gulf in the long-twentieth century. Among my publi- cations this year was an essay published in the Arab Studies Journal that critically exam- ined several works pondering authoritarian re- sistance in the Arab World. This essay also co-authored an essay, forthcoming in Economy and Soci- ty, with Narges Erami that marries our ethno- graphic view in the TLS which I hope will encourage adoption of the volume in the classroom. My project on anarchosyndicalism has transmogrified into a new manuscript that I am pre- paring a prospectus for the three volumes for my editors at Edinburgh University Press.

In April with generous funding from both the Ko¨velkian Center and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University. Last but not least, I continued to serve as chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom, which produced a re- report on "Reconfiguring Muslim Marriage: Sex as a Martial Right and As an Academic and Women’s Sexuality in Law and Religion at the University of Michigan. The paper is part of an ongoing project on the history of the Muslim marriage contract that I will be pursuing in CY 2014-15 on fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study and the American Council of Learned Societies. I am looking forward to plunging into research in the coming year!

Philippe Kennedy: This year was spent on the Library of Arabic Literature editing and trans- lating a study of the "recent" photographs of the "1933 Greek-Turkish exchange of religious minorities in contemporary Turkey. A portion of this work will be published as an article in CASSAME. This year, I also taught a gradu- ate seminar, "Decolonizing the Near East," and will be teaching two new courses: "East/West? Poli- tical Culture of Representation and the Middle East" and "East/West? Islamic Art and the Middle East: Civilization, Humanism, and Branding the Nation." I have continued to serve on the MESA Com- mittee on Academic Freedom as one of the two scholars responsible for reporting grievances in Turkey.

Aragh Cheshvariaz: During Fall 2013, I was occupied with various writing projects and continuing my research on the Persian Gulf in the long-twentieth century. Among my publi- cations this year was an essay published in the Arab Studies Journal that critically exam- ined several works pondering authoritarian re- sistance in the Arab World. This essay also co-authored an essay, forthcoming in Economy and Soci- ty, with Narges Erami that marries our ethno- graphic view in the TLS which I hope will encourage adoption of the volume in the classroom. My project on anarchosyndicalism has transmogrified into a new manuscript that I am pre- paring a prospectus for the three volumes for my editors at Edinburgh University Press.

In April with generous funding from both the Ko¨velkian Center and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University. Last but not least, I continued to serve as chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom, which produced a re- report on "Reconfiguring Muslim Marriage: Sex as a Martial Right and As an Academic and Women’s Sexuality in Law and Religion at the University of Michigan. The paper is part of an ongoing project on the history of the Muslim marriage contract that I will be pursuing in CY 2014-15 on fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study and the American Council of Learned Societies. I am looking forward to plunging into research in the coming year!

Philippe Kennedy: This year was spent on the Library of Arabic Literature editing and trans- lating a study of the "recent" photographs of the "1933 Greek-Turkish exchange of religious minorities in contemporary Turkey. A portion of this work will be published as an article in CASSAME. This year, I also taught a gradu- ate seminar, "Decolonizing the Near East," and will be teaching two new courses: "East/West? Poli- tical Culture of Representation and the Middle East" and "East/West? Islamic Art and the Middle East: Civilization, Humanism, and Branding the Nation." I have continued to serve on the MESA Com- mittee on Academic Freedom as one of the two scholars responsible for reporting grievances in Turkey.

Aragh Cheshvariaz: During Fall 2013, I was occupied with various writing projects and continuing my research on the Persian Gulf in the long-twentieth century. Among my publi- cations this year was an essay published in the Arab Studies Journal that critically exam- ined several works pondering authoritarian re- sistance in the Arab World. This essay also co-authored an essay, forthcoming in Economy and Soci- ty, with Narges Erami that marries our ethno- graphic view in the TLS which I hope will encourage adoption of the volume in the classroom. My project on anarchosyndicalism has transmogrified into a new manuscript that I am pre- paring a prospectus for the three volumes for my editors at Edinburgh University Press.

In April with generous funding from both the Ko¨velkian Center and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University. Last but not least, I continued to serve as chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom, which produced a re- report on "Reconfiguring Muslim Marriage: Sex as a Martial Right and As an Academic and Women’s Sexuality in Law and Religion at the University of Michigan. The paper is part of an ongoing project on the history of the Muslim marriage contract that I will be pursuing in CY 2014-15 on fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study and the American Council of Learned Societies. I am looking forward to plunging into research in the coming year!

Philippe Kennedy: This year was spent on the Library of Arabic Literature editing and trans- lating a study of the "recent" photographs of the "1933 Greek-Turkish exchange of religious minorities in contemporary Turkey. A portion of this work will be published as an article in CASSAME. This year, I also taught a gradu-
impasses between Middle East Studies and Feminist Approaches of Security. I also worked closely with Greta Schuurman, our associate director, to host a three-day work- shop in partnership with the International Center for Human Rights and National Security, IHRHA. I released the news that I had been awarded a two-year Mellon postdoc grant to the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University, Secularism, and am excited to continue building on and sharing my research in the future. Looking towards the year ahead ever imagined. Notwithstanding other events, the students were experiencing was more challenging, re- garded as a Second-Class Citizen? Part 2. November 2013. 2013-2014 Events Archive

Research Workshops

The program's academic cornerstone features new and unexplored work by established and up-and-coming scholars of the region. Promotes cross-regional and interdisciplinary engagement of analytical issues in Middle Eastern Studies and beyond.

A series featuring new, groundbreaking publications with relevance to the field of Middle Eastern Studies.

From Yarkand to Sindh via Kabul Weidaw Ziad, History, Yale University; Lale Can, History, City College of New York

Professing Sexes: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desires in Contemporary Iran (Duke University Press, 2013) by Afsaneh Najmabadi, History, NYU

Beyond the Two State Solution: A Jewish Political Essay (Polity Press, 2012) by Yehouda Shenhav, Sociology, Tel Aviv University

Joyriding in Riyadh (Cambridge University Press, 2014) by Pascal Moncorps, Arab Crossroads, NYU Abu Dhabi

The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Coloniality (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2013) by Katrina Davia, Mount Holyoke College

New Books

Political Arts of Politics, Arabics: Early Zionists Settlement in Palestine and the Possibility of pre-1948 Mizrahi Intimacies (Cambridge University Press, 2014) by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, History and MEIS, NYU; Rashid Khalidi, Columbia University


Mediating Modernities: Empire, Tribalism and Religious Pluralism in the Middle East (Oxford University Press, 2013) by Joe Dwyer, History, Yale University


Settler Colonialism: Then and Now (Harvard University Press, 2014) by Lila Abu-Lughod, Anthropology, Columbia University

Muslim Elites in the Neo-Liberal Sphere: Shaping Sharia in the West: Research Case Studies (Cambridge University Press, 2013) by Jack Tchen, New York, London and Sydney Centre, University of Western Sydney

Private Space and Female Honor: Negotiating Jewish Households in Fatimid Egypt (Cambridge University Press, 2014) by Eve Krakowski, Judaic Studies, Yale University

2013-2014 Events Archive
Writing at theBorders of Violence
Hoda Barakat, Lebanese novelist; Sanan Antone, NYU Gallatin

Classified Memories: Trying To Tell History
Suspects Who Were Tortured by the CIA
Lisa Hager, Sociology, University of California Santa Barbara

The Revolution As Music: Authenticity and Authorship in Studying the Arab Uprisings
Mark LeVine, History, UC Irvine

Public Workers, Private Properties, Visual Legacies: Slaves in All Mubarak’s Historical Records (and how to see them)
Eve Troutt Powell, History and Africana Studies, University of Pennsylvania

Event, Metaphor, Memory: The Shaykh Safit al-Ali Revolution in Syria Between Sectarianism and Nationalism
Max Weiss, History and Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University


Sara Pursley, History, CUNY

The Meanings of Martyrdom in Ba’thist Iraq
John Chalcraft, Government, London School of Economics

George Washington University

Against Humanitarian Intervention: The Case for Syria
Noor Lari, International Affairs, Harvard University

The Lives of Muhammad: Modern Biographies of the Prophet
Yehouda Shenhav, Sociology, Tel Aviv University

Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East
John Chalcraft, Government, London School of Economics

Before The Spring, After the Fall: Rock, Rebellion, Revolution (2013)
Keith Walsh, co-director

A Conversation with Marwan Rechmaoui, Visual Artist
Marwan Rechmaoui, Artist-in-Resident, Alwan for the Arts

My Neighborhood (2012)
Suhad Babaa, Director of Programming, Just Vision

Terrorism and Kebab (1992)
Directed by Sharif Arara, Discussion: Eman Morsi, MEIS, NYU

Kosher Cinema: Women and Orthodox Filmmaking Screening of The Dreamers (2011)
Ayala Fader, Anthropology, Fordham; Rachel Chadoff, Sundance Institute, New York Jewish Film Festival, Rose Waldman, MFA Student, Columbia

Chronicle of a Disappearance (1996)
Directed by Elia Suleiman; Discussant: Molly Oringer, NES, NYU

Vizontele (2001)
Directed by Yılmaz Erdoğan and Çerçioğlu, National TV, Istanbul; Discussion: Shima Houshyar, NES, NYU

Marmoulak - The Lizard (2004)
Directed by Ömer Faruk mêhmet, Turkey; Discussion: Zachary Lockman, History and African Studies, Columbia University

The Dreamers (2011)
Jed Rothstein, director; Mark Levine, producer

Women and Orthodox Filmmaking Screening of Women and Orthodox Filmmaking Screening of Written in Stone (2005)
Directed by Elia Suleiman; Discussant: Molly Oringer, NES, NYU

Apples of the Golan (2012)
Directed by Shlomi Elmaleh, Screening by the Israel Film Archive; Discussant: Yehouda Shenhav, Sociology, Tel Aviv University

Madiha Tahir, Filmmaker, Vasuki Nesiah, NYU Gallatin

Postcards from Tora Bora (2007)
Waadhal Osman, Filmmaker, Faysal Ginsburg, Center for Media, Culture and History, NYU, David Kriser, Anthropology, NYU

1st International Yemeni Film & Arts Festival Screening of Wounds of Waziristan (2013)
Directed by Yilmaz Erdogan and Ömer Faruk mêhmet; Discussant: Madiha Tahir, Filmmaker, Vasuki Nesiah, NYU Gallatin

Visual Culture Series

A series of films, presentations, performances, and exhibitions centered on visual art and media from and about the modern Middle East.

Gaza Strip (2002)
Hilga Taiwi-Souf, Media, Culture and Communication, NYU

The Law in these Parts (2012)
Ri’ān ‘Aadan Alexandrovich, Director

Confession #1: Lecture Performance
Rima Najadi, NYU Taich Aalmus

Whispers of Ba’athism (2004)
Directed by Elia Suleiman; Discussion: Zachary Lockman, History and African Studies, Columbia University

Before The Spring, After the Fall: Rock, Rebellion, Revolution (2013)
Jed Rothstein, director; Mark Levine, producer

Apples of the Golan (2012)
Directed by Shlomi Elmaleh, Screening by the Israel Film Archive; Discussant: Yehouda Shenhav, Sociology, Tel Aviv University

Madiha Tahir, Filmmaker, Vasuki Nesiah, NYU Gallatin

Postcards from Tora Bora (2007)
Waadhal Osman, Filmmaker, Faysal Ginsburg, Center for Media, Culture and History, NYU, David Kriser, Anthropology, NYU

1st International Yemeni Film & Arts Festival Screening of Wounds of Waziristan (2013)
Directed by Yilmaz Erdogan and Ömer Faruk mêhmet; Discussant: Madiha Tahir, Filmmaker, Vasuki Nesiah, NYU Gallatin

Coverage in Context

Reﬂections on journalism and the Middle East by journalists, academics, and other contributors to public discussion about the region.

Eagry in Flux: Essays on an Unfinished Revolution
Aidil Iskandar, Georgetown University; Ahmad Shokr, MEIS, NYU

Documenting Yemen’s Revolution
Tom Fin, NES, NYU; Sara Ishaq and Nawal Maghli, film directors

Narrative as Violence, Narrative as Resistance, Investigative Journalism and the War on Terror
Ahmed Al Attar, Freelance journalist; Maya Mishkour, NES, NYU; Abir Hamayouth, MEIS, NYU

Iranian Studies Initiative

S cholarly presentations of Iran, Past and Present, curated by Professor Ali Mirsepassi with a steering committee drawn from MEIS and other faculty and students with support from the Gallatin School and H. Kevorkian Center. Hafza and Suﬁ Hermeneutics

Danyoosh Afsousi, independent scholar, France and Ali Mirsepassi, moderator: NYU Gallatin

Shahnameh: The Epic of Persian Kings/Succession and Charisma
Hamid Rahmanian, illustrator and designer; Ahmad Sadri, Lake Forest College; Sheila Dayani MEIS, NYU

The Pioneering Spirit of Early Persian Poetry: Khorasani Lyric of the 11th and 12th Centuries
Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, University of Maryland; Ari Khapoor, MEIS, NYU; Mahdi Komaani, MEIS, NYU

Writing Iranian Cinema History
Hamid Naficy, Department of Radio/Television/Film, Northwestern University; Hamid Dabashi, Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies, Columbia University

Days of Revolution: History, Politics, and Anthropology in an Iranian Setting
Mary Elaine Hegland, Anthropology, Santa Clara University; Ali Mirsepassi, NYU Gallatin

Gendered Spaces and the Changing Face of the State in Iran
Nazarin Shari’i, Harvard University; Arang Keshavarzian, MEIS, NYU; Ali Mirsepassi, NYU Gallatin

The Paradigm of Revolution: Life and Politics of Iranian Oil Workers
Payman Jalali, Social History, University of Amsterdam; Zachary Lockman, History and MEIS, NYU

Program in Ottoman Studies

The program in Ottoman Studies is led by Professor of History Leslie Peirce

Intellectual Transformations in an Imperial City: Istanbul from the Late Ottoman to the Early Republican Periods
M. Safi Ozervan, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yıldız Technical University

The Eastern Question in the Century of Questions
Holly Case, History, Cornell

Redeeming the Sick Man of Europe: An Ottoman Wax Museum in Nineteenth-Century London
Urmi Rizvi, Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University

Ottoman Dream Culture and the Dream Letters of Sultan Murad III
Ozgen Fekih, Middle East and Middle East American Center, CUNY

The Ottoman Healing Arts: Health, Medicine, and the State
Nurhet Yarklı, History, Rutgers University Newark
As mandated by our Title VI grant, K-16 workshops are hosted by the Hoppo Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies in collaboration with the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University as well as NYU’s Faculty Resource Network. Middle and High School teachers as well as Community College faculty from the tri-state area regularly attend alongside teachers-in-training from Steinhardt. The programs increase the quality of Middle East-related content in our region’s K-16 curriculum.

Understanding Sharia, Then and Now
Intisar Rabb, MEIS and Law, NYU; Marion Katz, MEIS, NYU; Joshua Roose, Religion and Society Research Centre, University of Western Sydney

Music, Art and Resistance: Teaching the Culture of Social Movements
Mark Levine, History, UC Irvine

Central Asian Connections: Crossroads of Empire, Trade, and Culture
Zvi Ben-Dor Benita, MEIS, NYU; Masha Kirasirova, MEIS, NYU; Lale Can, History, City College of New York

Unpacking “Terrorism”
Jack Shaheen, Visiting Distinguished Scholar, NYU; Malcolm Clarke, journalist and filmmaker; Remi Brun, Journalism, NYU

On Humanitarian Intervention
Asli Bial, Law, UCLA

Islam and U.S. Slavery:
Cultures and Historians in Connection
Ashra Khan, Anthropology, NYU; Ali Ayyas, Affiliated Scholar, Queens College; Barbara Petran, President, Middle East Outreach Council

Heart of The Silk Road: A Study Tour for Educators in Uzbekistan
Masha Kirasirova, MEIS, NYU; Maurice Pomarantz, Literature, NYUAD

Faculty Resource Network: The Middle East After the Arab Spring
Ali Banuazizi, Political Science, Boston College

NEH Summer Institute: A Reverence for Words: Understanding Muslim Cultures Through Poetry & Song
Jawid Mojaddidi, Religion, Rutgers; Sylviane Diouf, NY Public Library; Bruce Lawrence, Religion, Duke University

Jack G. Shaheen Archive
NYU holds the archive of media scholar Jack Shaheen, which includes over 3,000 TV shows, feature and documentary films, movie posters, comic books, editorial cartoons, and personal papers focused on stereotypes and images of Arabs and Muslims in American popular culture. This year we hosted Dr. Shaheen on campus for two events featuring materials from the collection:

Archiving Stereotypes: Documenting and Remaking the Images of Arabs and Muslims in U.S Popular Culture
Jack Shaheen, Visiting Distinguished Scholar, NYU; Hazem Jamjoum, MEIS, NYU

Terror in the Promised Land (1978)
Malcolm Clarke, filmmaker, Jack Shaheen, Visiting Distinguished Scholar, NYU; Adam Shatz, NES, NYU

A is for Arab Traveling Exhibition
Powerful, accessible and compelling, A is for Arab, which features images from the Jack G. Shaheen Archive, reveals and critiques the stereotypical portrayals of Arabs and Muslims in U.S. popular culture. Providing historical context about these images, which range from film stills to comic books to editorial cartoons, this traveling exhibition aims to educate and stimulate discussion about the impact of stereotypes on both individual perceptions and national policy. This year, the exhibit was featured at several universities, organizations, and conferences.

Portland State University,
Portland, Oregon

Arab Center of Washington,
Seattle, Washington

Pope John XXIII High School
Sparta, New Jersey

University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

Western Illinois University
Macomb, Illinois

University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

Indiana University Purdue University
Indianapolis, Indiana

Cuyahoga Community College
Cleveland, Ohio

Colby College
Waterville, Maine

Bettendorf Public Library, Bettendorf, Iowa