



**Middle Eastern  
Studies Program**  
Syracuse University

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**Middle Eastern Studies Program**

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## THE MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES PROGRAM (MESP)

Located in the Maxwell School's Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, the Middle Eastern Studies Program (MESP) offers both an interdisciplinary minor and a bachelor of arts degree through the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as a graduate certificate of advanced studies through the Maxwell School. All three programs offer world-class instruction and study-abroad opportunities, providing unique insights into one of today's fastest-growing regions.

The interdisciplinary major, which leads to a B.A. in Middle Eastern studies, provides students with the opportunity to study the languages, history, culture, religions, and politics of the Middle East. The major will require students to complete (a) three core courses, (b) three consecutive semesters in one of the regional languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish), (c) two lower division courses, and (d) three upper division courses.

### MAJOR IN MES

The major is open to all undergraduates who have completed at least two Middle Eastern content courses (one of which can be a language course) and have a GPA of 2.8 or better. At least 18 of the 36 credits required for the major should be in courses numbered 300 or above. A maximum of six credits of independent study can be applied to the major by petition. Experience credit courses (i.e., internships) may not be used to satisfy the requirements of the major.

### MINOR IN MES

The minor in Middle Eastern Studies (MES) was established in 2003 to expose students to the diverse cultures, languages, literatures, religions, and political systems of the Middle East as it took center stage in the international geopolitical landscape. Students must complete a total of 20 credits (six courses) for the minor in Middle Eastern Studies: 8 credits in a regional language, 3 credits in one core course, and another 9 credits in upper division courses (numbered 300 or above). At least 12 credits total should be in upper division courses (numbered 300 or above). In accordance with university policy, a maximum of six credits may be counted toward more than one degree.

### CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

The certificate of Advanced Studies in Middle Eastern Affairs is available to Syracuse University students in all graduate programs who are looking to supplement their degree with a strong foundation in the region's culture and politics or to prepare for a career involving regional specialization. The Certificate is administered and awarded by the Maxwell School. Students are required to complete at least 12 credits: a single 3-credit required course and 9 credits in the form of approved electives chosen from affiliated departments within the University and/or approved extracurricular experience.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE • YÜKSEL SEZGIN

*“The angel is free because of his knowledge, the beast because of his ignorance. Between the two remains the son of man to struggle”.*

*Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)*

Over the last year the world has become a more confusing, more dangerous, and a less peaceful place. The challenges that we have encountered, particularly here at home, have been a great concern to our communities, students, and faculty.

From the so-called “Muslim ban” to rising anti-Semitism, and government policies that target public education, knowledge communities, scientific learning and advancement have affirmed the ever-rising need for interdisciplinary programs dedicated to advancement of knowledge in Middle Eastern cultures, languages, history, and politics.

The Middle Eastern Studies Program of Syracuse University is a quintessential example of such institutions that function as a center of learning and research dedicated exclusively to the study of Middle East and North Africa region.

As the director, I am happy to report that our program has continued over the past year to grow, and to play an important intellectual role both on campus and beyond.

The challenge of our age is the ever-declining trust among citizens in democratic institutions and processes. Democracy can produce its desired outcomes only in a society where open-minded, educated citizens freely participate in the process.

In this respect, the education of the citizenry is the key. In the absence of such education, democratic experience suffers, and leads to deterioration of our freedoms and the rule of law.

By the same token, we, the educators, students, and producers of knowledge are the ultimate guarantors of justice, democracy, and freedoms that the founding fathers had bestowed upon us.

We are working very hard to succeed in this intellectual and civic duty. I believe that in the days ahead we will need to work even harder to make sure that we are educating not only our students but also, in meaningful ways, contributing to, intellectual evolution of our communities beyond the campus. I have utmost confidence that our students, faculty, and staff will rise to the challenge, and our program will continue to shine as a beacon of freedom and hope for the years to come.

As said, we have an important mission and a civic duty to educate. A duty that we must not, and we will not, fail. Over the years many people, who include community members, students, and alumni, with their generous support, help made sure that we did not fail. And, counting on your continued support, I know that we will not fail.

I personally thank everyone for their hard work, dedication, and support that you have graciously bestowed upon our program. I hope that you will consider supporting our programs and activities by making a tax deductible donation at <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/giving> (please designate “MESP” as the recipient in the comment box).



## 2016-2017 MESP EVENTS

### September 27, 2016

Lecture: "Turkey's Coup of 15th July: A Gift for Erdogan" by Sinan Ciddi, executive director of Institute of Turkish Studies and Visiting assistant professor at Georgetown University

### October 3, 2016

Lecture: "Persistent Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Roles of Islamic Law" by Timur Kuran, professor of economics and political science & Gorter Family Professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University

### October 10, 2016

Lecture and Book Release: "Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict Over Israel" by Dov Waxman, professor of political science, international affairs, and Israel studies & Stotsky Professor of Jewish Historical and Cultural Studies at Northeastern University

### October 13, 2016

Lecture: "Challenges to U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East" by Ambassador Dennis Ross, William Davidson Distinguished Fellow, The Washington Institute

### October 24, 2016

Lecture and Book Release: "America's Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State" by Osamah Khalil, assistant professor of history at Syracuse University

### February 23, 2017

Lecture: "Gendering Politics, Peace, and Conflict in the Middle East" by Latif Tas, Marie-Sklodowska-Curie Global Fellow and visiting scholar at Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

### March 6, 2017

Lecture: "Thwarted Progress and Declining Trends: Women's Rights in Turkey" by Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat, professor of political science at University of Connecticut

### March 20, 2017

Lecture: "Political Context, Organizational Mission and the Quality of Social Services: Insights from Lebanon" by Melani Cammett, professor of government at Harvard University

## CURRENT STUDENTS ENROLLED IN MAJOR OR MINOR OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

### MAJORS:

- Elijah Ali Shama
- Ashlee Beers
- Corey O'Neill Driscoll
- Dashiell Isaac Krempel
- Teagan Cyan Peacock
- Steven Schmidt
- Cassandra Torres

### MINORS:

- Omneya Hany A Shanab
- Eric Benjamin Dunay
- Deniz Sahinturk,
- Annalena Ulbrich

## MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES SENIORS GRADUATING IN SPRING 2017

### MAJORS:

- Laziah S Bernstine
- Bjorn S Burk
- Victoria L Chen
- Nehda Shehadeh, Nehda

### MINORS:

- My'Asis Colon
- Alicia Lorraine Drummond
- Ari Gilberg
- Nathan Raymond Kadah
- Meghan Quinn Mistry
- Michael D Ordorica
- Maxwell Earl Redinger
- Jeffrey Louis Spivack
- Felicia Isabella Winebrenner Tiu-Laurel



## INTERVIEW WITH THE CO-RECIPIENTS OF 2016-2017 MESP TEACHING RECOGNITION AWARD (TRA)

### PROFESSOR MIRIAM ELMAN



*In past few years, you have offered several courses on different topics related to the Middle East; do you think your courses have helped students to develop a better and more informed understanding about the region? How?*

My MES 342 course, Politics & Religion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, which is cross-listed with political science, religious studies, and Jewish studies, offers students an interdisciplinary analysis of the origins, history, and evolution of one of the most protracted conflicts in the world. A great deal of the discourse and scholarship on the Israeli-Arab conflict is incredibly biased. In the course, I reject a one-sided narrative by giving students the opportunity to revisit key developments in the conflict from multiple perspectives. The course provides students with the tools they need to accurately assess contemporary events and to consider ways in which a lasting and just peace between Israel, the Palestinians, and neighboring Arab states could be achieved—as well as why conflict resolution has been so elusive.

*Any suggestion for those who plan to teach courses on the MES and how to enhance knowledge about the region, especially in an impartial way?*

In order to promote less biased knowledge about the region, it's imperative that scholars become better methodologists and expose students to scholarship that is based on rigorous research designs. A great deal of what passes for scholarship on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, is little more than propaganda.

***And finally, can you tell us a little bit about your own research?***

My research has focused on a variety of topics related to the Middle East, including Israel's religious political parties; the impact of domestic politics on Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution; the role of spoilers in the Middle East peace process; and contestation over the city of Jerusalem. In addition to my scholarly work, I write frequently on these issues for the general public and for policymakers, along with other non-academic audiences. I also write and speak often against academic boycotts in the field of Middle East Studies, which I view as both harmful to the production of knowledge and as inhibiting a discourse for peace.

**PROFESSOR RANIA HABIB**



***In past few years, you have offered several courses on different topics related to the Middle East; do you think your courses have helped students to develop a better and more informed understanding about the region? How?***

I have taught advanced courses related to Arabic language and culture. These courses are instrumental for students who are minoring or majoring in Middle Eastern Studies and for understanding the multiple facets of the region. Arabic is considered one of the most critical languages in the region due to the political events that have been sweeping the region and other parts of the world. The increased number of students and interest in the region led me to offer advanced Arabic and culture courses and developing a minor in Arabic. One of the courses required for the minor is ARB/MES/LIT 336 (Arabic Cultures), which could be considered one of the most informative courses about the region. This course encompasses

every aspect of everyday life in the Arab world, including and not limited to geography, literature, religion (Islam and other religions), ethnic groups, social divisions, films, the media, music, art, food, gender issues, politics, economy, customs, and people's way of life. This course promotes awareness and understanding of attitudes and values that may differ from those that exist in a student's environment or background.

***Any suggestion for those who plan to teach courses on the MES and how to enhance knowledge about the region, especially in an impartial way?***

I believe in order to strengthen the MES program at SU, the curriculum should include higher levels of instruction in Middle Eastern languages to be able to compete with other Middle Eastern programs in other parts of the country. I suggest that an MES major should include at least three years of language instruction and a minor at least two years of language instruction. In addition, the curriculum could include concentrations in specific areas instead of having one general MES major degree, e.g., MES major with a concentration in economics, politics, religion, special area within the region, etc.

***And finally, can you tell us a little bit about your own research?***

I specialize in sociolinguistics, particularly language variation and change, with interests in bilingualism, cross-cultural communication, child and adolescent language and second language/dialect acquisition, phonology, pragmatics, and syntax. My present research deals with dialectal variation in the Arab world, particularly the colloquial Arabic of rural migrant and non-migrant speakers to urban centers and the change that their speech undergoes due to linguistic, social, and psychological factors, such as prestige, age, gender, and residential area, contact, identity, ideology, social meanings, social practices, etc. I have been for the past few years investigating the spread of urban linguistic features in the speech of rural children, adolescents, and adults in Syrian Arabic, comparing the speech of children to that of their parents to inform linguistic theory about whether children's acquisition of variation is a mere statistical learning of their parents' input or is developmental in nature. My work has been published and presented in national and international venues. My most recent presentations were two invited talks by the linguistics department in Cornell University on March 16-17, 2017, titled "Children's deviation in the acquisition of variable linguistic gender patterns" and "Effect of TV and internal vs. external contact on variation in Syrian rural child language." I have published three single-authored journal articles in 2016. They are as follows: "Identity, ideology, and attitude in Syrian rural child and adolescent speech" in the journal *Linguistic Variation*. "Parents and their children's variable language: Is it acquisition or more?" in the *Journal of Child Language*. "Bidirectional linguistic change in rural child and adolescent language in Syria" in the journal *Dialectologia*.



## INTERVIEW WITH KEN HARPER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MULTIMEDIA PHOTOGRAPHY AND DESIGN



*Would you give us a summary of your educational and professional background, your activities, your research?*

My name is Ken Harper, and I'm an associate professor in the multimedia, photography and design department at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. I'm also the director of the Newhouse Center for Global Engagement. I'm in my ninth year of teaching at Syracuse University and it's the longest I've ever stayed at one job, because it's worth staying at.

I've probably had 13 or 14 jobs, previously. I had my own business on and off over many years. Before joining Newhouse I worked as the lead interactive designer at the Rocky Mountain News, a newspaper in Denver, Colorado, that shut down just shy of 150 years of operation. I had to quit that job, two years before they closed their doors. I had made an ethical choice before my newspaper shut down to leave early because of some of the political stances that they took on the Iraq war. There were some other ethical and moral issues that I didn't feel comfortable supporting by working there. I went back to my own business, Ironclad Images, where I worked with a lot of nonprofits, specifically the Bahá'í Faith. I had a lot of work with the Bahá'ís. I'm not a Bahá'í but I lean in that multicultural, peaceful direction. Previous to that I held many different positions, advertising, news originations, nonprofits; from Indian advertising agencies in Dallas Texas (where I designed interactive DVD ROMS) to working for USAID in Uganda. I even made Ben and Jerry's ice cream for a period of time. I've worked for several media outlets, various newspapers, from Tucson, Arizona, to Chicago, and Dallas, to Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky. I also worked as an interactive designer for Electronic Intifada (EI). I served as the lead interactive designer with EI starting around the year 2000. At EI I worked with Nigel Perry, Laurie King, and Ali Abunimah and others. I also worked at MSNBC.com in Redmond, Washington, as a picture editor and interactive designer for the Winter Olympics. Over the years, I've tried to focus on empowering people to speak for themselves. I think it's important for people to be able to speak for their own culture, on the international stage, and that's one of the reasons I got involved with EI. I believe the more we understand each other, the less likely we are to want to hurt each other. That's where the power of communications can come in, as part of a solution. Unfortunately, it's not, of course, that simple; justice is a clear requirement for peace. Luckily, here at Newhouse I've been able to work with amazing people and fine colleagues throughout the university like David Crane in the law school and Mary Lovely and the TNGO Initiative in Maxwell. I've been able to find partners who want to engage in the world and have honest conversations, to learn from each other and then bring that to the table to create something they couldn't create on their own. I think we can address complicated issues with humility and move forward collectively, with knowledge and wisdom, applying that knowledge to real-world situations. Then there's the clumsy reality. It all sounds lofty and mushy and you wanna cuddle with it, but the reality is, it's inefficient, and difficult. So, it doesn't happen very often, you know? Because you have to teach your regular classes, like I'm gonna go teach at 5, but I'm not ready for it, such as freshman, sophomore level introduction to graphic design. So you have that imperative. I mean, I'm getting paid to do that, I love it, but you can't do everything well. You only have 100 percent to give so there's an ebb and flow between teaching and everything else—they feed into one another.

Luckily, I work at an institution that allowed me to create the Newhouse Center for Global Engagement, and to work on projects and find partners like the Near East Foundation and Charlie Benjamin there. I get to work with amazing professors like my chair, Professor Bruce Strong, and Professor Steve Davis, the chair of the newspaper department. To be able to go into the world and take students to places like Nablus in Palestine or Monrovia, Liberia, not just see the world through literature and books but go out and shake hands, have some tea, and meet regular people—people who don't have some sort of a high-brow political agenda. They're just trying to live their lives and understand the complications of the world they inhabit, they live a little bit closer to the earth. We try and teach how one can develop empathy for others, through experiences, and take that and share it. More recently, you know, I worked with David Crane closely on the Syrian Accountability Project and the dialog Running for Cover; Politics, Justice and Media in the Syrian Conflict. We brought together a real diverse group of people to discuss something that's so horribly topical. Since we keep doing these things to our fellow man, we need to at least try and wrap our minds around it. We're trying to understand it, the political realities surrounding the conflict. Instead of just throwing our hands in the air we need to be proactive in the world and not just accept what's put before us, but pushing through that, and with the opportunities that are presented to us, pick that up and, and combine it with other people's work. Coming back to that central idea of creating something through communal effort, something that is bigger than we could ever hope to accomplish on our own.

***So that actually is a segue to our second question, and I want to combine the second and third questions. Now that you started talking about this panel that you organized about Syria, can you tell us a little bit more about it? What was the initial objective and what did you achieve? Did you accomplish the goals that you were basically planning to achieve?***

Well, you know, we initially had been talking about partnering with the law school and Maxwell specifically the Syrian Accountability Project, international relations department and Middle Eastern studies programs at Maxwell, around the issue of the Syrian conflict, all the complicated issues around that topic; how it's become exponentially complicated over the years.

It's actually taken quite a while, a year or a year and a half, for that to actually come to fruition. One of the main points that David Crane and I realized we wanted to cover was that we wanted the event to be more of a dialogue than a symposium. We wanted it to be a conversation, more like a talk you'd have over coffee or beers with experts, people from the region. People who not only understand the intellectual side of what's happening but have parents there, sons and daughters. During the day we had five panels that were put together to cover the the disciplines from the various schools, and also some more communal panels that covered broader issues like, "How We Got Here" and "Where Do We Want to Go?" Other panels around the concept of accountability in an age of absolute power. When you think about what the Russians have done, or what America has done in Iraq or more recently in Afghanistan to a degree, or God knows what we're gonna do in the future—I think of the impunity of all these things. The long arm of the law is something that comforts me to a degree. Professor Crane speaks about it and how there's no expiration date on prosecuting war crimes. You know, they're dragging people who are 90 years old who were Nazis into court in Florida. They will spend their remaining days behind bars thinking about what they did. So I think there is hope.

I don't think having a conversation is all there is to it, it's not "the" answer, but one answer. If you think about the population that we were speaking to during the dialogue, they were actually students and professors; some media folks came in, but students were the primary audience. To engage and plant those seeds amongst that population sitting in the seats, daring them to think differently—to have empathy for the other. To begin to understand the complexities of the situation from different perspectives. If you think about news rooms, for instance, like a modern news room, like the New York Times, you know, they'll employ computer scientists, and architects, and astrophysicists, and people from many different disciplines to tackle a problem. They look at an issue in depth, from very different positions. They can put together a much better solution for the reader by gathering various experts and tackle the same problem, that's one premise of what we were trying to do—to have people from different disciplines talking about a complicated issue and having a human conversation.

The physical makeup of the dialogue was a central concern. "Oh, we've got all these seats, comfortable seats you can sit in..." We had, you know, 300-some stadium-style seats, very fancy and comfortable, easy. I said, "I don't want that. Put those away. I want a flat space. I want the people who are on the panels to be basically on the same level as the people in the audience, physically." The panelists needed to be raised a few inches so they can be seen from back rows, but essentially on the same plain. It is very a central method for this type of conference, called the fish bowl method. It's made of a semicircular or circular row of seats. The panelists sit in the center, surrounded by the audience. There's always at least one open chair on the panel for an audience member to physically walk up and sit in, inches away from the people who are the experts, and participate, like a human, in a very human conversation. If there's one thing that the dialogue was all about, it was the fact that humans are suffering and we need to be mindful of that. This isn't just an intellectual exercise. It is about the suffering of people who are going through something that I can't even imagine, and I am humbly aware of that, and trying to raise awareness of what that means and the complications behind that. One of the panelists brought up a question at the bar after the event: "But what's the point, what's the goal?" It was harder to answer than I thought—I think the best things aren't quantifiable. I think the deepest impacts can't be put in a spreadsheet, because they grow deep inside of people and they come out in very unique ways. There is no one solution. There have to be 10 thousand solutions, thousands of these events. There have to be a million David Cranes. The only way events such as Running for Cover will ever have positive effect is for the experts and academics to speak with people outside their own circles, speak like humans, human to human. That was one of the goals of our event and I think that was successful.



You know something, when I think about my undergrad experience in photojournalism, my undergrad degree is in photojournalism, even though I was an interactive designer most of my career. I wasn't some amazing student. I wasn't a great writer, you know, pumping out some great dissertation or something. I was out in the world, photographing in the trailer parks of Western Kentucky. I was hanging out with the Ku Klux Klan, I was talking to real people from very different backgrounds. That has given me an interesting perspective. One of the things I've learned while teaching—the things that are discussed in academic situations often don't bear fruit until much later, until they interact with another life event, or some, some other bit of wisdom that someone else drops. You know, Rumi, or some Chomsky, or something, or maybe you just need to speak to a farmer in Iowa. You know what I mean? Often things take time to make sense. "Oh, that is what the lecture was about"? Revelation. Like it resonates with your life and then it has meaning, more meaning. But without that seed planted, there is nothing. There is no fruit. It takes a lot longer for real change to happen. One of my undergrad professors, Michael Williamson, who won a Pulitzer many years ago, many of the things that he said, I was like, what? I was listening but not understanding, I think I got like a B in his class. I worked really hard and he probably looked at me and thought, "Yeah, Ken is nice but I don't know. Does he get it?" Many years later, when I went to school in the West Bank at Birzeit University—I never really went to class—but I did go to school there, technically—a lot of the things that Williamson spoke about started to make sense. It wasn't a phrase or a sentence. It was the culmination of his intent and my new experiences that somehow reverberated in my mind subconsciously or otherwise, combined to help me understand the world in a new way. So I believe events, like what we held last October, bear fruit in ways we can't possibly understand and I'm okay with that. It's the beginning of conversations inside an individual's mind that are most exciting to me. I might not personally be a part of continuing that conversation, but I can let that go and I think that's just fine.

***It sort of answered, at least, partially the third and the fourth and fifth questions I wanna ask you. So, I was going to ask, how do you evaluate the response to that, basically? Academic circles in the U.S. gave to crisis in Syria and, you know, I want to combine two questions. How can we play a more constructive role, in similar situations: conflict, humanitarian crisis, by academic circles?***

I think it's engagement. I worked really closely with the Liberian government during the Ebola outbreak. I was surrounded by academics at a U.S. academic retreat, and I was talking to my friend Thomas, who was in charge of the website for the Ministry of Information. I was standing on the boat dock, I had a glass of wine in my hand, and my friend asked "What's that retreat about?" I paused. He was in the middle of telling me about a mutual friend, Francis, who lost his brother to Ebola and was now missing. I had trained Francis in web design and different things. I've worked one on one with communication professionals in West Africa for the past nine years, training people, mostly in media development. So Francis lost his brother to Ebola and then his father contracted the virus. So he carried his father to the Ebola clinic and he contracted Ebola himself, and now, come to find out, was also in the clinic. Thomas said, "Ken, it's so bad. It feels like death, we didn't know where Francis was and he just called me—he called me screaming, screaming from his bed. He's like, "I'm dying. Save me. It's horrible here. No one can help me, the bread is moldy. I can't eat. Please bring me food." Thomas was crying recalling their conversation, crying so hard. I said, "Oh my god, Thomas." He said, "Ken, I went down to JFK Hospital," where Francis was. And he said, "It was unbelievable. Mothers and children bleeding in the yard, people screaming. It was like a horror show. I could only bring food for one day for Thomas and the chief resident there, the chief doctor, came out screaming, 'The media is lying about the numbers.'" It was a horrible account of what he had seen with his eyes. He's a Liberian and he'd seen so much during their civil war. I said, "Oh my God, this is horrible." "Ken, where are you?" he said, so I told him. I was standing watching a beautiful sunset in the mountains and drinking a glass of wine. There were probably 50 Ph.D.s within earshot of me. Thomas said, "We have such a crisis. Why don't you tell everybody, stop their group discussions. I can give them direct access to the government of Liberia with the crisis that's happening right now." I said, "I'll do whatever I can do, man. That's just horrible," as I'm watching the sunset over this beautiful scene. So I go back into this group of academics, good people, smart people wanting to do good in the world. I came into the bar and said, "I have a crisis for you to manage." So when I tried to tell them the story of my phone conversation, one by one they left the room and eventually I was alone. Days afterwards one of them wrote me and said, "I know you were really upset. But honestly, we know how to write about things that already happened, but we don't know how to deal with things that are actually happening now."

I have no illusion about my impact on the world. I am just trying to do what I think will help, what will benefit my family, myself, others, and to keep learning along the way. But there was one wish I had at that retreat, to take all that fucking brain power and apply it to something where you can see the fucking stone move. I think it's a mindset and a culture. Many people, because of their personalities, are led to what makes clear sense for their own little journal-focused world. If it's peer reviewed it's important, right? But if it stops there, and 12 people in Korea read what you wrote, then what good is that? It's a giant waste of brain power and human capacity. It's the same thing as having somebody turn a wrench in some factory. That person has potential. When you see somebody with high-end brain power, keeping in it a box in an ivory tower, if only they applied their knowledge and were more humble on how to engage with the world and it's challenges, I think that would be a life well lived, and a struggle worth sweating for, and feeling uncomfortable for. I don't know how to do half the shit I do, until I go out and make it happen, I figure it out. I partner with others too, extend my abilities and go beyond what I know. I figure things out because it's worth figuring out, you know? And if I fall, I fall. To that point I'm co-teaching a new class with law Prof. David Crane in the fall, called Media and Atrocity. "Media and Atrocity," I'm like, "Whoa." I may work with the media in post-conflict countries so I'm not completely ignorant of conflict reporting, but I've never been a war correspondent, you know? But guess what? I'm gonna figure it out, and I'm gonna make it work. I'm going to learn a lot and the fear of not being an expert in all things media and war will motivate me in a big way, you know? It's not gonna stop me from trying. I'm gonna find those bad ass people, and I'm gonna bring them into the conversation from communications. And David is going to bring them for the conversations about the Rwanda genocide, you know, from the Charles Taylor trial. It's going to be an amazing class. We all play our part in the world. I guess some of what I said may come off as judgmental and that is not my intention. I just hope each of us go beyond our comfort zones, extend our abilities and make the most of our time on the planet.

## INTERVIEW WITH LATIF TAS, MARIE-SKLODOWSKA-CURIE GLOBAL FELLOW AND VISITING SCHOLAR AT MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS



*Thank you very much Dr. Latif Tas for accepting to be interviewed. I'm going to combine questions one and two, and ask about your educational and professional background, as well as the research you are currently undertaking.*

I was born in Kars, a city in eastern Turkey, which used to have a multiethnic, multilingual and multireligious population. The city municipality shares borders with four countries and one disputed territory: Turkey, Iran, Georgia, Armenia, and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic. I don't know if a similar city exists in the world, but it was one of the cities where pluralism coexisted, where Kurds, Turks, Azeris, Armenians, Terekemes, Turkmen, Georgians, Chechens, Russians, and even some Germans lived peacefully side by side; where many mixed families flourished. Having spent your childhood in such a diverse environment as I did, certainly shapes an individual's identity. Kars is not just the city where I was born;

it is the place that created my pluralistic identity and belief in tolerance, pluralism, and the coexistence of difference within any given society. These principles have been my guide, first during my many years in journalism and more recently, over the past 10 years, in the context of my academic work.

As an academic, I have been researching different dimensions of socio-legal, political, and armed conflict in the Middle East and Europe for the last 10 years. The politics of citizenship, diaspora mobilizations, migration, gender, transnationalism, and peace negotiations have been the central subjects of my work. Through multi-sited and comparative ethnographic studies completed in Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria, Germany, and the UK, my research has focused mainly on the Turkish-Kurdish case.

I began a Ph.D. in law at Queen Mary, University of London, in 2009, upon completion of a second master's degree in legal research on migration, integration, and the process of resettlement. For this achievement, I was awarded the grade distinction and the prize of best masters research dissertation for 2009. My Ph.D. thesis offered a historically grounded ethnographic assessment of the politics of multiple laws and the alternative dispute resolution practices of Kurds living in Turkey and in the UK. It explored why and how Kurds often prefer to solve their disputes within their own community using their own customary laws, rather than approaching or cooperating with the police or state courts. I directly observed around 500 unofficial Kurdish court processes during my research. The research findings have been published in several high-ranking international journals and my book, *Legal Pluralism in Action: Dispute Resolution and the Kurdish Peace Committee*, was published by Routledge / Ashgate in 2014.

My doctoral research did not only focus on the religious dimension of alternative laws. When we look at customary laws, we generally think they are predominantly based on religious beliefs, but this is not in fact true. The Kurdish case, for example, illustrates how customary practices are also based on secular beliefs and national identity politics. I examined the Kurdish case from the Ottoman Empire's *Millet practice* to the present day. Their statelessness and weak citizenship within the countries where they live has led Kurds to create their own alternative political, legal, and economic institutions.

There is a normalization of majoritarian hegemony almost everywhere, and I think this is one of the biggest problems and failures of modern democratic states and their institutions. To be entitled to a passport and citizenship does not mean that everyone enjoys the same rights. An individual's life chances are influenced by their ethnic and religious background as well as their gender. Inequality and slavery may have ended officially, but in practice the state treats people differently according to inherited societal codes. Even voluntary or forced assimilation has not changed these codes for several generations. You could still be discriminated against because of your grandparent's background, ethnicity, and religion. This creates a significant barrier to achieving real and fair equality, and does not leave much alternative for discriminated people but to create their own solutions. This also brings us to focus more on borderless politics and borderless justice.

Upon finishing my Ph.D. in 2012, I completed a one-year post-doctoral research position with the Forum Transregionale Studien, Wissenschaftskolleg at Humboldt University in Berlin. During my time in Germany, I built upon my doctoral studies and extensively researched about alternative politics and justice systems, and an article on '*The Myth of the Ottoman Millet System: Its Treatment of Kurds and a Discussion of Territorial and Non-Territorial Autonomy*' is published by the *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* in 2014.

In 2013, I was invited to SOAS, University of London, by my previous mentor Prof. Werner Menski and this marked the beginning of my academic life at SOAS. Aside from teaching about multiculturalism, secularism, comparative law and politics, conflict and peace process in the Middle East and Turkish-Kurdish politics, I also prepared my first book and a few articles for publication during my time at SOAS.

In 2014, I was appointed by the University of Oxford as a research fellow and consultant to work on their Diasporas' Programme, titled "(Re)Conceptualising stateless diasporas in the European Union." My research examined how statelessness and citizenship regimes have been constructed historically and within contemporary contexts. A working paper and article of my research, which critically engages with the limits and problems of international laws when it comes to the subject of citizenship and statelessness, was later published by the Oxford Migration Institute and the Cambridge University journal, *International Journal of Law in Context*, in 2016. In between my time at SOAS and Oxford University, I was also a visiting scholar at the Department of Law and Anthropology, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany. During my time at MPI my research focused on citizenship, migration, and refugee regimes in the European Union, and recent Turkish political development, and their effects on Turkish and Kurdish conflicts and peace process. A few articles on these issues was published by Open Democracy. After my time and research experience with the University of Oxford, I began a new joint research project in 2015 with Prof. Nadjie Al-Ali at the Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS. Our research examines the gendered dimensions of the Turkish-Kurdish peace negotiations, relations between feminism and nationalism, and Kurdish diaspora mobilization. We know and hear a lot about how Kurdish fighters, especially female fighters, are resisting ISIS in Syria and Iraq, but we generally fail to consider the wider ideological and political context and history of Kurdish women's armed struggle and political mobilization. We also do not often consider carefully what gender freedom actually means. Gender freedom is not just a battle to win. There are many levels and many barriers, not just created by the state but also by society, as well as religious and cultural beliefs. For example, we have discovered that Kurdish women actually experience double, even triple, layers of discrimination because of the very patriarchal and masculine social environment within which they live. Our joint research tries to answer some of these very difficult and complicated questions, and a few articles resulting from our research to date are in process of being published by very important international peer-review journals.

Now here in Syracuse, I have started my new role and research as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the Maxwell School. My new project, which focuses on the politics of transnationalism, justice, and gender in the Middle East and Europe, is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement number 703201. SOAS (London), Syracuse University, and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle, Germany) are all hosting my research project and this is the first time that both SOAS and Syracuse University have hosted one of these prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellowships. I will be spending the next three years between Syracuse, London, and Halle. I am expanding my previous research to examine more closely transnational politics and justice, which will also form part of my new book. This research outcome will form an important contribution to understanding comparative politics and justice in the Middle East and Europe.



Before entering into academia and completing my Ph.D. in law, I not only worked as a journalist for almost 10 years for different Turkish newspapers, I also studied journalism and completed my first master's degree in TV and Journalism. This degree considered the disconnection between society and political power, and I used the 1940s Frankfurt School of philosophy's approach to analyze societal and political alienation. In doing so, I found many similarities between the 1940s condition and the present day. Societal ignorance, divisive politics, a lack of freedom of the media and rule of law, internal and external conflicts, and the creation of new borders are themes common to both periods. These issues were one of the main reasons why I stopped working as a journalist in Turkey in 2004 and moved to London to begin a new career in academia. The foundations of Turkish President Erdogan's current authoritarian regime were already in place in 2004, and it was not difficult to predict at this time the effect these symptoms would have on Turkey's fragile democracy.

***Your research also covers the late Ottoman period. For those of us who are less familiar with that era of Turkey's history, could you please tell us a little bit more about major changes and continuities between the Turkish Republic and its predecessor, the Ottoman Empire?***

First of all, I'm not a historian, and I have to admit this limitation. But yes, I study and write about the late Ottoman's political and socio-legal processes from the 1840s onwards, their relations with religious and ethnic minorities, and establishment of the political and legal foundations of the modern Turkish Republic. I mainly focus on the *millet* practice and its implications for modern day relations with Turkey's minority communities. This pluralistic, decentralized system of local self-governance was in place until the middle of the 19th century, during which time it was a significant factor in keeping one of the largest, multi-lingual, multiethnic and multi-faith empires together. It was only once the Ottomans began to centralize political power, taking it away from local (previous autonomous) communities and forcing them to assimilate, did the empire start to collapse and ultimately crash. This is an important example of how an ignorant ruling class can destroy its own institutions and existence. The Ottoman example also shows how states are not usually destroyed by outsiders—even in the present day—but instead by their own political blindness. Other notable examples include Iraq, Syria, Yugoslavia, Libya, and Turkey today. We cannot just blame outsiders for destroying states. This usually is caused by corrupt politicians and ruling elite, pervasive state corruption and clientelism, short-sighted politics, and strong assimilationist state policies.

The Turkification and Sunnification-based nationalism of the late Ottoman period destroyed the centuries-old Empire forever. The late Ottoman ruling elites and Sultans forgot that Ottomans were not just Turks and Sunnis. Ottoman society was multiethnic, multilingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious, and stretched across three different continents. You need a different type of governance structure to manage this kind of diversity.

When the Turkish Republic was first established as a nation state, the 1921 constitution was very pluralistic. Initially, Atatürk and his friends were clever and pragmatic enough to understand the importance of creating a new state that could represent all. But, of course, after the war of independence in 1923, like many other politicians and states, they forget their early promises. They created only majoritarian-based state policies. From 1924 onwards, Turkey adopted those same centralized policies that destroyed the empire and which are destroying modern Turkey today. Many ethnic and religious minorities, especially Kurds, Alevi, Armenians, Assyrians, and other Christian groups, as well as Jews, have not been accommodated into these narrow state structures. The present problems facing Turkey and its authoritarian leadership are not new; they have their roots in the Republic's early foundations.

***Besides your work on the late Ottoman era, you're also an expert on the Kurdish conflict. What are the challenges facing researchers who study ongoing conflicts? How much can they maintain and balance impartiality as a researcher and their own personal political standpoints?***

Of course, this is a very important question. Where there are multiple conflicts and proxy wars, where researchers and journalists are increasingly becoming targets in 21st century conflicts, it is difficult to carry out research. But it is not impossible. Many places in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Asia, and even Europe are experiencing active conflict or intolerable regimes, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Congo, Colombia, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, and Hungary.

I think all significant research requires three important backbones: ethics, appropriate methodology, and recognition of limitations. These are very important criteria for social science, and especially for research on social, political, and military conflict. I taught classes on research methodology and ethics while I was completing my Ph.D. at Queen Mary, University of London. I have also been carrying out research on sensitive political and cultural topics, often within active conflict and post-conflict environments, for almost 10 years and have faced many difficult contexts.

There are many ways to carry out research. Fieldwork is very important, but it is not the only approach. Researchers do not have much control over the fieldwork environments within which they operate and the people they talk to. It is not just a question of researchers being careful: geographic, political, and human conditions, conflict and financial limitations also affect the result of many research projects. Scholars are not soldiers or politicians. They don't have guns to protect themselves. They research, think, read, investigate, write, and publish. These are our only weapons. But in dangerous conditions these limitations should not stop a scholar from carrying out their research. We might not be able to visit a particular research site because of active conflict, but we can look at the issue from a different angle. We can adjust our research questions, examine other elements of the conflict or situation. Even if you are able to visit your research site, spend a year there and interview hundreds of people, this still does not guarantee that your research will be sufficiently balanced and comprehensive. It will still have limitations.

It remains important for us to question the environment from different angles, whether we can be physically present there or not. For example, for my current research project I completed fieldwork in some cities of Turkey, such as Diyarbakir, Mardin, and Istanbul in 2015 and 2016. However, the security situation has deteriorated even further since I carried out the interviews and it is very difficult to complete follow-up research there today because it is no longer safe.

Safety is another important element of the research. Many universities do not allow their researchers to go to conflict zones. These limitations are something out of our hands, but the researcher should always find alternative ways of completing their research. We cannot just stop because the conflict continues and authoritarian regimes put limitations on us. Sometimes researchers should stop and rethink about their main research question and focus if the barriers continue. We need to use alternative communication technologies such Skype to carry out our interviews and to analyze the situation from an impartial outsider's perspective. We can follow some, but maybe not all, daily activity in Mardin and Diyarbakir, for example, from London and Berlin easily through the social networks we create. For this reason, our field research community and gatekeepers are very important, and we need to increase our networks and keep in touch with them from time to time—not just for our benefit, but also for theirs. We can do this by sharing our research outcomes and publications with them or offering to give a talk to their local area or community. We need gatekeepers for our own safety and that of our research, for accessing difficult information. We need to have gatekeepers from different ethnic, religious, gender, and age backgrounds. But when we write or share our research data we should always protect our gatekeepers' identities and reputations, not just our interviewees.'

Language is another important element of any socio-ethnographic research. If you don't speak the local language of your research field and community, then it is very difficult to find the main vein of the problem that you are looking for. For example, when I observed the Kurdish alternative peace process, if I couldn't speak Kurdish I would not have been able to grasp many of the things they were talking about, especially negotiations between judges, and between clients and judges. Language is a central part of any ethnographic research. I recommend that the researcher learns the language of their research subjects before beginning any project.

Of course, to be either an insider or an outsider brings advantages and disadvantages. To stay neutral and to not go native is very difficult to achieve and maintain, but it is very important for the sake of the research. Alternatively, you could just stay on the side of the activists and become emotionally involved in the subject matter, which many people do and which I respect, but then you can no longer call yourself an impartial researcher.

***We move to our last question. I would like to ask about the role of the media in the politics of western societies. How do the media influence western political developments in the Middle East? What are the similarities and differences between the role of the media in the West and in the Middle East?***

The power of the media has increased significantly since the 1936 Berlin Olympics, when the Nazi regime used this opportunity for their own propaganda purposes. It was the biggest opportunity for the Nazi regime to show the world what kind of system they were creating and how "great" it was. It was also the beginning of political manipulation and one-sided news. Since then we have experienced the different sides of the media. It has been a great benefit for many of us to receive real-time news from different parts of the world; from inside the White House, to the protest movements in Tiananmen, Tahrir, and Taksim squares. It was the power of the media that forced President Nixon to resign. Watergate was an important landmark, a great success of the independent media against state-based corruption. It was the media that showed us the fast changes in the Eastern Bloc and the tanks in Moscow during the early 1990s. People have been actively taking part in political and policy processes with the help and support of the media. The media can easily create a contradictory black and white response to similar actions: while the western media may criticize the policies and activities of Assad, they stay silent or are even supportive of other authoritarian leaders such as Erdogan. While all of us are talking about Syria and Iraq because of what the media shows us, we are also totally ignoring what is going on in Yemen, Bahrain, and Turkey because of ignorance or cooperation of the western media with these regimes. This shows how the media can become an important agent of dictatorial regimes around the world.

We should also appreciate that we get to know and hear mainly what others want us to know and hear. Of course, there is selection and limitation of what stories receive airtime. When media outlets have significant business connections with different power holders, you cannot expect to receive an independent judgment from them. Sadly, many western media outlets, including well-known progressive ones such as CNN, the BBC, the Guardian, New York Times, and Le Monde, cannot claim to be full independent and free today. There has been an increase in radical right-wing politics in western countries recently and the media has played an important role in this radicalization. The UK had Brexit last year. Many politicians openly and clearly lied to the public. They said, “We are going to invest an additional €350 million, the UK’s weekly contribution to the EU’s budget, into the National Health System (NHS).” It was a clear lie, but the media did not challenge it before the referendum.

When we look at the Middle East, the condition of the media is actually worse than in the West. For example in Turkey, especially over the past few years, it is no longer possible to talk about the freedom of the media. The majority of Turkish television stations, newspapers and online media outlets are controlled directly or indirectly by the government or their controlled business people. The number of TV and radio channels, newspapers, and online sites are very high, but almost all deliver the same messages for the same aim. Not just in Turkey, but in many other Middle Eastern countries the situation is also deteriorating. The biased media is misleading the public on many important issues. The limited media freedom and oppression we are facing is almost as bad as what it was during the 1930s. As in the 1930s, the current media position will be remembered as one of the most biased, shameful, and misleading in history. A criminal dictator’s needs and ambitions are seen to be more important than thousands of people’s lives, many cities, and even a whole country. A dictator’s propaganda can receive significant media coverage, but the destruction of many cities, the loss of thousands of lives, and hundreds of thousands of political prisoners cannot find a minute of coverage. Real-life facts have been swapped with “alternative” and biased facts by the media. This type of coverage has destroyed any moral and ethical value that society has and we should also be blamed for watching these lies and buying into them. There is no possibility, politically or financially, for an independent media to survive in many countries, to challenge this. Many journalists are in now prison. Not just their independent work and journalistic integrity, but their lives are in danger.

Of course, under such conditions you will only hear state propaganda. And the results of elections are becoming meaningless. Under such conditions any element of democracy, the rule of law, and political opposition can be destroyed. For all these to survive and flourish you need to have a free and independent media to hold the government and public institutions to account, to inform citizens with the facts, and to create space for alternative viewpoints, politics, and policies.

To have no news is better than to only have fake news. We need to question the news we receive, every channel we watch. Social media has also many fake news and problems, but it also provides us with the ability to create our own news and democratize media, so it is a double-edged sword.



## INTERVIEW WITH OSAMAH KHALIL, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY



***Please tell us about your educational and professional background.***

I received my doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2011 with a dual concentration in U.S. and Middle East History, specializing in the history of U.S. foreign relations. I joined Syracuse University in the fall of 2011. To date, my classes have focused on the history of U.S. foreign relations, America and the Middle East, the history of the Cold War, the Vietnam War and popular culture, and the history of International Relations.

***You successfully published your first book last year. Tell us more about your book.***

My book, *America's Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State*, is based on my doctoral dissertation. It examines the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and the origins and expansion of Middle East studies and expertise from World War I to the global war on terror.

One of the main questions that the book attempts to answer is how did this area we now call the "Middle East" become a site for the exercise of American power and hegemony? A related question is, how did the evolution of U.S. foreign policy in the region and globally influence how the Middle East has been studied?

In part, my book is an institutional history and it focuses on how several major academic institutions in the U.S. and the Middle East interacted with U.S. government agencies. It also examines the relationship between Washington and philanthropic foundations, academic societies, and think tanks. The book is also an intellectual history that explores how U.S. foreign policy interests were reproduced in Middle East studies and expertise over the past century.

***How do you think political developments and changes in the U.S.'s foreign policy toward the region have affected the fate of Middle Eastern studies programs?***

As I detail in the book, Middle East studies in the United States followed a similar trajectory to other area studies programs. Although some elements existed before the Cold War, university-based area studies programs found increased support from U.S. government agencies, philanthropic foundations, and academic societies in the post-World War II era. The establishment of Middle East studies programs were driven in large part by Washington's increased interests in the region, as well as global efforts to contain the Soviet Union. This culminated in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which formalized federal funding for area studies and language training and was directly linked to U.S. national security interests.

The book also traces the emergence of think tanks and how they competed for influence with university-based area studies centers and scholars. I discuss how a split between government agencies and academia emerged during the Vietnam War era and think tanks benefited from this rift. While academic centers and scholars were important for the foreign policy and national security establishments during the early Cold War era, by the late and post-Cold War periods, I discuss how they were effectively supplanted by private think tanks.

***How do you foresee the prospect of Middle Eastern studies programs?***

It is important to separate the academic study of the Middle East and the exciting research that is being conducted from the macroeconomic and political issues and trends that have had an impact and will continue to affect Middle East studies programs and centers. There are a number of excellent monographs that have been produced in recent years and others in process by junior and senior scholars. I expect that groundbreaking work in the field will continue to inform how we understand, study, and teach about the region.

At the same time, the prevailing political trends in the United States are troubling. The short term, and perhaps the long term as well, will be difficult times for university-based Middle East studies centers and programs. Extreme elements in the Republican Party, especially members of the “Tea Party” and the new Trump administration, are ideologically and politically opposed to federal funding of higher education, and public education more broadly. As I discuss in my book, this aligns with pre-existing efforts by conservative and neo-conservative think tanks, individuals, and organizations to target Middle East and Latin American studies. They argue that these programs are not aligned with U.S. national interests, which they define narrowly. But they also boast that cutting funding to area studies is just the beginning of efforts to reduce or eliminate all federal funding for higher education.

The early reports appear to indicate that the Trump administration and the Republican-led Congress will institute large cuts to, if not the elimination of, funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment of the Arts, the National Science Foundation, as well as other programs and agencies. These budget cuts will likely have a long-term negative impact on academic research well beyond Middle East studies.



## GRADUATE STUDENT STUDY ABROAD NOTE

By Shaundel Sanchez, Ph.D. candidate, Department of Anthropology



I applied for the Middle Eastern Studies Program's (MESP) 2016 Graduate Student Summer Research Grant to continue conducting preliminary research on a project that began in winter 2015-2016. During the winter preliminary ethnographic research visit, I gathered data in order to inform my future year-long ethnographic project in the United Arab Emirates. As an anthropologist interested in the experiences of Muslim American migrants in Sharjah, UAE, I use the ethnographic methods of in-depth interviewing and participant observation. Using these methods, I proposed to MESP that I would collect data which would allow me to start answering my research question: What are the conceptions of citizenship held by people in the United Arab Emirates? This, in turn, had two subsidiary questions: Is it important for residents in the UAE to have a defined idea of citizenship? Are there advantages or disadvantages in assuming citizenship in the UAE?

It was my understanding before conducting summer research that there were two groups of Muslim American migrants living in Sharjah: a group that was invited to move to Sharjah by the Sharjah royal family, and another group consisting of Muslim Americans who had migrated using networks formed on the internet or in U.S. mosques. I was under the impression that the group with connections to the royal family possessed more privileges than the group without royal-family ties, such as constant funding, cheaper housing, and permanent sponsorship. Yet, the more privileged group knew they would never receive Emirati citizenship. These observations led me to consider that perhaps citizenship was not necessary for some people to live secure and fulfilling lives in the UAE.

Thanks to funding provided by MESP, I was able to test my assumptions. This funding allowed me to stay in Sharjah amongst my informants for a longer period of time. The extended period permitted more observations, as well as more in-depth recorded interviews with informants. Many of these informants I knew from the three years I lived in the UAE from 2010-2013 and met during winter preliminary research two years later. I found that this summer, informants were more open to sharing sensitive information about how they came to live in the UAE. For example, during an in-depth interview with an African-American convert, Zahid (a pseudonym), he explained that his relationship with a royal family member granted him a life-long position working with the royal court. His position came with additional duties to fulfill beyond his job description. The primary, but not official, job this royal family member wanted him to perform was *dawah* (invitation to practice Islam) for Emirati citizens. As instructed by the royal family, Zahid came to believe that his main purpose living in the UAE was to perform *dawah*.

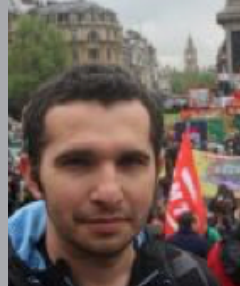
This interview led me to question why it might be important for the UAE to import Islam from the United States; after all, the Arabian Peninsula is the birthplace of this monotheistic religion; and why would these Muslim Americans agree to the additional labor of performing *dawah* when they can never obtain UAE citizenship? These questions began to guide my research as I heard similar accounts of Muslim Americans as *da'i* (those who perform *dawah*) from many other informants and from at least one royal family member. With this new insight, I began to recognize the need to adjust my research direction. These new ideas that I encountered contribute to notions of citizenship, but in ways that focus on the role of the state as represented by Sharjah royal family members and on the duties that one must perform in order to "belong." Therefore, my adjusted primary question for my research is: Why do these Muslim Americans agree to perform *dawah* for the Sharjah royal family members despite their inability to obtain Emirati citizenship? Subsidiary questions include: Why do these Muslim Americans choose to live in Sharjah, as opposed to another Emirate or another Muslim majority country entirely; and why do Sharjah royal family members choose to use Muslim Americans to spread Islam in a Muslim majority country? Without the funding provided by the Middle Eastern Studies Program it is unlikely that I would have been able to formulate these new and improved questions for my dissertation project.



**GRADUATE STUDENTS CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON TOPICS AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE MIDDLE EAST**



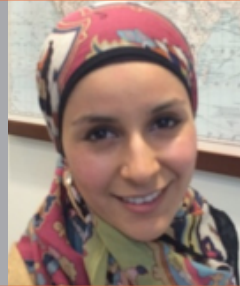
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Ph.D. student in political science  
Studying democratization in Turkey



**AYKUT OZTURK**  
Ph.D. student in political science  
Studying political economy of Turkey



**ABOLGHASEM BAYYENAT**  
Ph.D. candidate in political science  
Studying Iran's foreign policy



**SHAUNDEL SANCHEZ**  
Ph.D. candidate in anthropology  
Studying Muslim Americans who live in Sharjah, UAE



**ELIZABETH DAVIS**  
Ph.D. student in political science  
Studying diaspora and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa



**SEFA SECEN**  
Ph.D. student in political science  
Studying immigration and refugee regimes in the Middle East



**ESRA EKINCI**  
Ph.D. candidate in political science  
Studying electoral and party systems in Turkey



**DUYGU YENI**  
Ph.D. candidate in religion  
Studying gender-based interpretation of religious texts



**DREW KINNEY**  
Ph.D. candidate in political science  
Studying civil and military relations in the Middle East



## STUDENT AWARDS

### **Recipient of Middle Eastern Studies Program 2017 Summer Research Grant:**

Aykut Ozturk (Political Science)

### **Recipient of The Young Scholar Prize in Middle Eastern Studies (for Outstanding Scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies at the graduate level):**

Elizabeth Skye Davis

*The Refugee Crisis by Discipline: A Case for Pluralism in Understanding Middle East Policy Responses*

### **Recipient of The Young Scholar Prize in Middle Eastern Studies (for Outstanding Scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies at the undergraduate level):**

Katherine Joan Barymow

*Proxy Conflict Turned Civil Crisis: Understanding Syria as a Product of Global Foreign Policy*



## MESP FACULTY UPDATE

**Rania Habib** (Associate Professor of Linguistics and Arabic) published three articles in 2016: “Identity, ideology, and attitude in Syrian rural child and adolescent speech” in the journal *Linguistic Variation*; “Bidirectional linguistic change in rural child and adolescent language in Syria” in the journal *Dialectologia*; and “Parents and their children’s variable language: Is it acquisition or more?” in the *Journal of Child Language*. Habib also presented papers in three conferences in 2016: the 30th Meeting of the Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics (ASAL 30); the 83rd Meeting of Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL 83) titled “Linguistic Gumbo: Challenges in Multilanguage Contact”; and Miami Fling 2016, including the two joint conferences: Florida Yearly Linguistics Meeting (FLYM) 3 and Linguistics Matters Festival.

**Yüksel Sezgin** (Associate Professor of Political Science) has received a year-long visiting fellowship from the law and public affairs program of Princeton University, and conducted field research in Ghana and Greece, where he studied Islamic law and courts.

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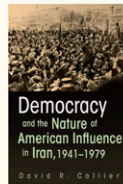
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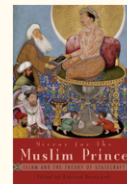
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