

**Brown University  
Center for Middle East Studies**

ANNUAL REPORT

**2024-2025**

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**Front Cover:**  
Hassan II Mosque, Casablanca

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Dear colleagues and friends,**

This has been a momentous year for the Center for Middle East Studies at Brown. We have welcomed new faculty and staff, produced a rich program of scholarly events, and supported the educational aspirations of our students. It has also been a challenging year, but we have navigated the uncertain landscape that faces all academic institutions by facilitating informed discussion, building bridges across our campus community, and fortifying our commitment to the values of academic freedom, inclusiveness and respectful discourse.

Perhaps the most significant news item of the year was Provost Doyle's announcement that **CMES would become an independent center at Brown beginning in July 2025.**

Following an extensive self-study and external review process that began in the summer of 2024, the CMES Steering Committee proposed a strategic move toward independence, with the aim of maintaining the Center's multidisciplinary identity and the broad chronological coverage of its research initiatives and programming. Given that the mission of the new Watson School of International and Public Affairs will be focused primarily on contemporary policy and governance matters, such a move seemed only natural to our faculty, staff and students. I am confident that this important step will only bolster CMES's ambition to be a place that serves the whole Brown community.



*(continued on p.4)*

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

*(continued from p.3)*

Over the past year, CMES has hosted or co-sponsored several dozen lectures, conferences, readings and performances, including visits from **prizewinning authors** and leading scholars. The range of topics featured at CMES events has been characteristically broad, exploring everything from **Islamic stained glass windows** to medieval **Persian poetry**, **Dubai's entrepreneurship ecosystem**, **Iranian cinema** and the wars in **Gaza and Lebanon**. Meanwhile, we have expanded outreach to our alumni network and begun to build employment and internship pipelines for current students. Next year, we will be joined by two new postdoctoral fellows and will launch a year-long research initiative titled "American-Islamic Exchanges in the Long 19th Century," which will coincide with **Brown 2026**, a campus-wide initiative to demonstrate the important role of research and teaching universities in fostering open and democratic societies.

In closing, let me thank our wonderful staff for their tireless efforts in supporting Middle East studies at Brown. An exciting new chapter is about to begin. Join us!

## **Elias Muhanna**

*Director, Center for Middle East Studies,*

*Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and History*



# ABOUT

## MISSION

The Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) at Brown University promotes research, teaching and public engagement about the Middle East in a historically and culturally grounded manner. Its coverage is temporally and geographically expansive, extending from antiquity to the present, and it approaches the Middle East as a region with shifting boundaries as well as a conceptual entity within global discourses. As the hub for Middle East studies at Brown, CMES supports research and programming by world-renowned faculty, houses an undergraduate concentration with an interdisciplinary curriculum, and acts as an intellectual and social home for graduate students across various departments. CMES collaborates with other units on campus to further Brown's work as a global university, especially dedicated to seeking a just and prosperous future for all.

## CURRENT YEAR RESEARCH INITIATIVES

ISLAM AND THE HUMANITIES  
IRANIAN STUDIES  
NEW DIRECTIONS IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES

## RESEARCH PROJECTS

GENDER STUDIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

# RESEARCH INITIATIVES



## NEW DIRECTIONS IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES (NDPS)

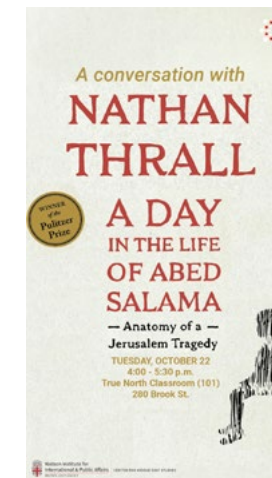
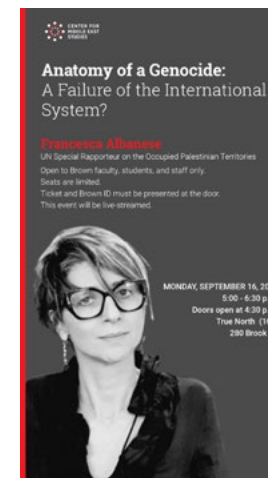
Founded in 2012 by Beshara Doumani, Mahmoud Darwish Professor of Palestinian Studies, this initiative promotes knowledge production on Palestine and Palestinians. NDPS invests in emerging scholars through an endowed postdoctoral fellowship, an annual thematic workshop, a book series with the University of California Press and outreach programming. Loubna Qutami, in her second year as postdoctoral research associate, taught a seminar titled [Palestine: A Comparative Ethnic Studies Approach](#), and with Doumani, Qutami co-organized an international workshop titled “(Re)Building Lives, Forging Futures.”



# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

NDPS also organized the inaugural Mahmoud Darwish Distinguished Visiting Lecture with Ibrahim Nasrallah and Huda Fakhreddine. NDPS also supported talks by Francesca Albanese (“Anatomy of a Genocide: A Failure of the International System?”), Pulitzer prize-winning author Nathan Thrall (“A Day in the Life of Abed Salama”) and other events on Palestine and the Palestinians.

NDPS facilitated the publication of papers presented at the annual workshops in peer-reviewed journals, including a special issue of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, “Claiming Property, Claiming Palestine.” The most recent book published by NDPS is “Novel Palestine: Nation through the Work of Ibrahim Nasrallah,” by Nora Parr. All NDPS books are [free to download](#).



## Palestinian:

Every Time They Erase Us,  
We Become Clearer

**Ibrahim Nasrallah**  
Winner of the Arabic Booker Prize

**Huda Fakhreddine**  
University of Pennsylvania

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 | 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.  
Joukowsky Forum (155), 111 Thayer

Co-Sponsors:  
Department of Literary Arts  
Department of Comparative Literature

# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## PALESTINIAN STUDIES POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, 2023-25

### Loubna Qutami

is a postdoctoral research associate in Palestinian studies at Brown University and an assistant professor in the Department of Asian American Studies at University of California, Los Angeles. Qutami's research examines transnational Palestinian youth movements after the 1993 Oslo Accords. Her broader scholarly interests include critical refugee studies, race and racialization and Indigenous and Third World feminism. In her two years at Brown, Qutami taught the seminar Palestine: A Comparative Ethnic Studies Approach and co-organized two New Directions in Palestinian Studies workshops.



# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## NEW DIRECTIONS IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES (NDPS)

THE ARABIC PROGRAM PRESENTS  
**TATREEZ**  
THE LANGUAGE OF  
PALESTINIAN EMBROIDERY  
A LECTURE WITH  
**Wafa GHNAIM**  
THURSDAY, OCT 3, 4:15 - 5:45 PM  
SCILI, 201 THAYER ST, ROOM 720

Wafa Ghnaim is a Palestinian dress historian, researcher, author, archivist, curator, educator and embroiderer. Wafa is the Curator for the Museum of the Palestinian People in Washington, D.C. and Senior Research Fellow for The Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art.

Sponsored by the Charles K. Colver Lectureship & Publications Fund, the Arabic Program at the Center for Language Studies, and the Center for Middle East Studies.

Wafa's photo by Ashraf Hussein (2024)  
Background image of 'The Gardens Thobe' (1996)

### A MOVEMENT'S PROMISE: THE MAKING OF PALESTINIAN THEATER

**BOOK TALK WITH  
SAMER AL-SABER**  
THURSDAY, APRIL 3  
5:00 - 6:30 PM  
ASHAMU DANCE STUDIO



# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## IRANIAN STUDIES

The Iranian Studies research initiative connects CMES with courses and programming in Brown's Center for Language Studies and scholars specializing in the culture, history and politics of Iran and Persianate societies. In his second year as Omar Khayyam Postdoctoral Research Associate in Iranian Studies, Mehrdad Babadi taught the course, **Iranian Cinema: History, Aesthetics and Politics**. This course was complemented by two Iranian cinema series in the 2024-25 academic year: the fall 2024 **Iranian Cinema Series** focused on the contributions of Iranian women directors and the spring 2025 series reexamined the pivotal role of the **FilmFarsi** genre in shaping Iranian cinema. **The Persian Poetry Reading Group**, jointly convened by Michelle Quay, lecturer in Persian at Brown University, and Annabel Keeler, affiliated researcher in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge, also met biweekly to read, translate and discuss Persian verse.



**IRANIAN CINEMA**

*FilmFarsi and Masculinity in Pre-Revolutionary Iran*

<b>Feb 26</b>	<i>Gheisar</i> (1969)
<b>March 12</b>	<i>Downpour</i> (1972)
<b>April 2</b>	<i>Qarun's Treasure</i> (1965)
<b>April 23</b>	<i>The Deer</i> (1974)



**IRANIAN CINEMA**

*Through Her Lens: Women Filmmakers on Gender*

<b>Sep 17</b>	<i>At Five in the Afternoon</i> (2003)
<b>Sep 24</b>	<i>The Day I Became a Woman</i> (2000)
<b>Oct 8</b>	<i>The May Lady</i> (1998)
<b>Oct 15</b>	<i>Hidden Half</i> (2001)
<b>Nov 15</b>	<i>Sansur</i> (2023) - 6-8pm

# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## OMAR KHAYYAM POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN IRANIAN STUDIES

### Mehrdad Babadi

is a cultural anthropologist whose work focuses on modern intimacies, love and gender, transitions to adulthood, and masculinities in Iran and the broader Middle East. In addition to his ethnographic research with youth in urban settings, he explores cinema as an anthropological lens to understand the sociocultural dynamics of contemporary Iranian life. At Brown, he teaches courses such as Intimacies in the Middle East, Iranian Cinema, and Love and Gender in Modern Iran.



# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## IRANIAN STUDIES

**BROWN**  
Center for Language Studies

### Women's Rights in Iran

**انسو سانسور**  
A FILM BY MOSTAFA HERAVI  
**SĀNSŪR**

*Documentary Screening & Discussion with translator Parisa Saranj*

Friday November 15th | 6:00 - 8:30pm  
Friedman Auditorium (190 Thayer St.)

**THE COW** (Gaav)  
A film by Dariush Mehrjui  
1969 | 104 min  
Persian w/ English subtitles

**SCREENING & CONVERSATION**

Oct. 28, 2024  
6 - 9:30 pm

List Art Building 120  
64 College St.

Free, open to the public  
Refreshments served

To request services, accommodation, or assistance, call (401) 863-6070.

Conversation participants:  
Mehrdad Babadi (Center for Middle East Studies | Brown)  
Timothy Bewes (English | Brown)  
Jean Coqnet (Modern Culture and Media | Brown)  
Michelle Quay (Center for Middle East Studies | Brown)  
Foad Torshidi (History | RISD)

**FILM-THINKING**

**MEHRDAD BABADI**  
Omar Khayyam Postdoctoral Research Associate in Iranian Studies

**MICHELLE QUAY**  
Lecturer in Language Studies

**Intellectual Masculinity in Iranian Cinema: Hegemonic or Alternative?**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12  
12:00 - 1:30 P.M.  
McKinney Conference Room (353)  
111 Thayer

**Cambridge-Brown**

**Persian Poetry Reading Group**

Join us on Zoom on select Tuesdays for three sessions of reading Persian poetry in the original. Designed for students with background in reading Persian. Open primarily to Brown and Cambridge affiliates.

Co-organized by  
**Dr. Annabel Keeler**  
**Dr. Michelle Quay**

Select Tuesdays  
12-1:00pm EST  
5-6:00pm UK time

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
BROWN Center for Language Studies



# RESEARCH INITIATIVES

## ISLAM AND THE HUMANITIES

Islam and the Humanities is a research initiative that connects the study of Islam and Muslims to topics engaged by scholars in the humanities in general. During 2024-25, the initiative sponsored a talk titled "[Medieval Manichaeans Under Muslim Rule](#)" by Kevin T. van Bladel, professor of the classical Near East at Yale, hosted by Medieval Studies and CMES; a talk titled "[Books from the City: Making Meeting in Isfahan \(2022\) at the Chester Beatty](#)," given by Moya Carey, curator of Islamic Collections at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, organized and hosted by the John Hay Library and CMES; and a talk by Paul Losensky, professor emeritus in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies and the Department of Comparative Literature at Indiana University, Bloomington, titled "[Tents and Fortresses, Palaces and Caves: Literary Architectures in Nezāmi's Book of Alexander](#)," organized through CMES and hosted by Margaret Graves, Adrienne Minassian Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture in honor of Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, Department of History of Art and Architecture.

With continuing support from the Carnegie Corporation, Islam and the Humanities sponsors an Open Access book series titled "Islamic Humanities", published by the [University of California Press](#).

**BOOKS FROM THE CITY: Making Meeting in Isfahan (2022) at the Chester Beatty**

**DR. MOYA CAREY**  
CURATOR OF ISLAMIC COLLECTIONS, CHESTER BEATTY (DUBLIN)

In February 2022, as Covid restrictions finally began to ease in Ireland, a new exhibition opened at the Chester Beatty in Dublin: *Meeting in Isfahan: Vision and Exchange in Safavid Iran*. Told through manuscripts, album pages and printed books, *Meeting in Isfahan* explored how the historic city of Isfahan became a new hub for dazzling urbanity, dynastic self-projection and cosmopolitan energy, thanks to a strategic centralisation of the silk economy. Together with loans from the National Museum of Ireland, the exhibition presented 65 exceptional works from the Chester Beatty's Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Armenian collections, as well as early printed books and maps from Europe.

Tuesday, October 8, 2024 • 4:00 PM

Primary Sources Lab (321), John Hay Library  
20 PROSPECT STREET, PROVIDENCE, RI

Please reach out to [john\\_ahern@brown.edu](mailto:john_ahern@brown.edu) in advance of the event in order to make any accessibility requests including elevator access (the Primary Sources Lab is located on the third floor). Thank you.



**Tents and Fortresses, Palaces and Caves: Literary Architectures in Nezāmi's Book of Alexander**

Thursday, February 20, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:15 p.m.  
Joukowsky Forum (155), 111 Thayer

Organized by  
**Paul Losensky**  
Emeritus Professor  
Indiana University, Bloomington

**Margaret Graves**  
Adrienne Minassian Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture in honor of Marilyn Jenkins-Madina | Brown University

**RI Medieval Circle Lecture**

**Medieval Manichaeans Under Muslim Rule**



**Kevin van Bladel**  
Yale University

# RESEARCH PROJECTS

## GENDER STUDIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

Led by [Nadje Al-Ali](#), Robert Family Professor of International Studies and Professor of Anthropology and Middle East Studies, this research initiative centers on the idea that gender is not peripheral but essential to understanding the complexities of the Middle East and its diasporas.

Whether analyzing political movements, economic change, social inequality or cultural expression, this lens provides critical insight into the region's dynamics. The initiative's most recent publication, "[Resisting Far-Right Politics in the Middle East and Europe: Queer Feminist Critiques](#)," reflects this approach, bringing together scholarship that challenges rising authoritarianism and exclusionary ideologies.

Al-Ali's current project, "Body Politics and Creative Resistance in the Middle East and North Africa," explores how artists, writers and activists use creative expression as a powerful form of political resistance. In contexts shaped by censorship, authoritarianism and social constraints, artistic practices – ranging from painting and performance to literature and digital media – serve as vital means to voice dissent, imagine alternatives, and nurture community. Rather than focusing solely on visible protests, this work highlights the quieter everyday forms of resistance: the embodied, affective and often subtle gestures that challenge power structures and carve out spaces for collective care and imagination.

# RESEARCH PROJECTS

Book Launch:  
**Resisting Far-Right Politics in the Middle East and Europe: Queer Feminist Critiques**

Edited by:  
Tunay Altay, Humboldt University  
Nadje Al-Ali, Brown University  
Katharina Galor, Brown University

Panelists:  
Sa'ed Atshan, Swarthmore College  
Elizabeth Berman, Brown University

Thursday, January 30, 2025 | 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.  
Joukowsky Forum (155), 111 Thayer

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

گناه (Sin) گناه  
**AN EXPERIMENTAL SONIC PERFORMANCE**

**Amitis Motevalli:**  
Multimedia artist who explores the intersections of class, queerness and gender in grassroots context.

**Sarah Khatami:**  
Singer and writer of R&B, pop and Persian music.

**Hesam Abedini:**  
A musician and educator who creates works that move along a post-intercultural path.

**Reinterpreting a Persianate Elegy**

**THUR DEC 5 2024** 7 - 9 pm

Venue (In-Person):  
**Brief Histories**  
115 Bowery  
New York, NY 10002

Co-Sponsored by Middle East Institute, Columbia University and Center for Middle East Studies, Brown University

# OTHER PROGRAMMING

## THE MIDDLE EAST COLLOQUIUM

Middle East Colloquium

**1979 Year Zero:**  
The Establishment of a PLO Office in Brazil as a Watershed Moment

**Omri Elmaleh** Visiting Assistant Professor in Israel Studies at the Judaic Studies Program

Tuesday, April 1, 2025  
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.  
McKinney Conference Room (353)  
111 Thayer St.

Middle East Colloquium

**Ellis Garey**  
The Worker Question: Labor and Social Struggle in Greater Syria

Thursday, February 13, 2025 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
McKinney Conference Room (353), 111 Thayer

Middle East Colloquium

**Gwendolyn Collaço**  
Refracted Histories through Islamic Stained Glass: Crafting an Exhibit on 19th c. Ottoman Windows and their Histories of Collecting

Thursday, March 6, 2025 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
McKinney Conference Room (353), 111 Thayer

Middle East Colloquium

**Maru Pabón**  
Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature  
Brown University

**Transitional Transcriptions:**  
Jean Sénac and Būqāla Poetry

Thursday, April 17, 2025 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
McKinney Conference Rm (353), 111 Thayer

# OTHER PROGRAMMING

**A CREATIVE WORKSHOP**  
The Turkish Art of Marbling "Ebru"  
WITH ALEV BOWEN

PREPARE TO DIVE IN & BE PART OF AN EXCITING, INTERACTIVE PAPER MARBLING EXPERIENCE!

Ebru, the Turkish art of marbling, is a captivating process that involves sprinkling and brushing color pigments on a pan of oily water, and then transferring these intricate patterns onto paper.

NOVEMBER 11, 2024  
12:00 NOON-1:30 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 202  
89 ANGELL ST. PROVIDENCE

ORGANIZED BY THE CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
CONTACT: ISMAEL HERNANDEZ@BROWN.EDU

**Book Launch and Symposium in Conversation**

**Amiela Aisha Azoulay**  
THE JEWELERS OF THE UMMAH  
A POTENTIAL HISTORY OF THE JEWISH MUSLIM WORLD

Book Launch and Symposium in Conversation with Amiela Aisha Azoulay

Amiela Azoulay (organizer) - Jale BEN BELLA (organizer)  
Elizabeth BERNARD - Kate CROCKETT - Nivka ELIAS  
Jale Omer EL-KHAYAT - Aya FURTADO - Eliza GARDINA-PAPA  
Mariana SANCHEZ BARRIS - Yara KHALIL - Jill JARVIS  
Katerina RAMOS-JORDAN - Thangam RAJAGOPALAN  
Shireen RAZACK - Zoh SANKOZ - Amin ZEROUK

The event will conclude with a conversation with the author followed by a book signing.

**A CONVERSATION ON TÜRKİYE'S PAST AND FUTURE:**  
A Discussion with Garo Paylan  
Hosted by Stephen Kinzer  
APRIL 7, 2025 4:15-5:30pm

WATSON INSTITUTE  
JOUKOWSKY FORUM  
111 THAYER STREET  
PROVIDENCE, RI

ORGANIZED BY BROWN'S TURKISH PROGRAM  
SPONSORED BY CHARLES X. COLVER LEADERSHIPS & PUBLICATION FUND

**FRENCH & FRANCOPHONE FILM FESTIVAL**

Presented by Brown University  
French & Francophone Studies  
February 27 - March 6, 2025

<https://pffil.org>

**GEOGRAPHICALLY UNEVEN**  
HISTORICALLY UNALIGNED  
WRITING LABOR HISTORY AT THE MARGINS OF THE 'GLOBAL'

LECTURE BY  
GÖRKEM AKGÖZ

Thursday, April 17, 2025 | 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
McKinney Conference Room (353), 111 Thayer

**DARIUS MILHAUD**  
ALL THE MUSICS OF THE WORLD  
routtable debate video animation concert

**Sunday**  
September 22, 2024  
5:30 - 8 pm

GRANT RECITAL HALL  
105 Benevolent St  
Providence, RI 02912

**COVERING ISLAM**

This series takes its cue from Edward Said's 1981 book, *Covering Islam*, which explores distorting representations of Islam – in an object of judgment – by the Western media. Talks in the series will focus on the Islamic, transnational, thinking with and through Islam rather than only thinking about it.

**Humeika Iğdır**  
The Individual in Islamic Socialism: Connecting Justice and Social Equality  
Monday, Feb. 20, 12:30-2 pm  
Andrew House 110

**Omnia El Shakry**  
Postcolonial Islam, and the Poetics of Invention  
Monday, March 3, 12:30-2 pm  
Andrew House 110

**Amira Mittermaier**  
Allah in Dark Times: Ethnographic Glimpses of Present-Day Theodicies  
Monday, April 7, 12:30-2 pm  
Andrew House 110

**THE STATES OF THE EARTH**  
A Conversation About How the Disenchantment of Empires Led to the Climate Crisis.

with  
Muhammad Anwar Marziani (author)  
Holly Cae  
Barbara Demuth  
Leela Gandhi  
Adi Oshiri  
Thangam Ravindranathan  
David Wills (moderator)

Friday  
October 4  
4 - 6pm

Andrews House 110  
Copley Institute for the Humanities  
11 Brown St.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2024

**Mediterranean Encounters:**  
A Concert of Judeo-Islamic Musical Intersections

8:00 p.m. | GRANT RECITAL HALL  
105 Benevolent St, Providence, RI 02906

**CONFERENCE**

**NON-ZIONIST JEWISH TRADITIONS**

February 3 - 4, 2025  
Andrews House 110  
13 Brown St.

**The Polyphony Ensemble**

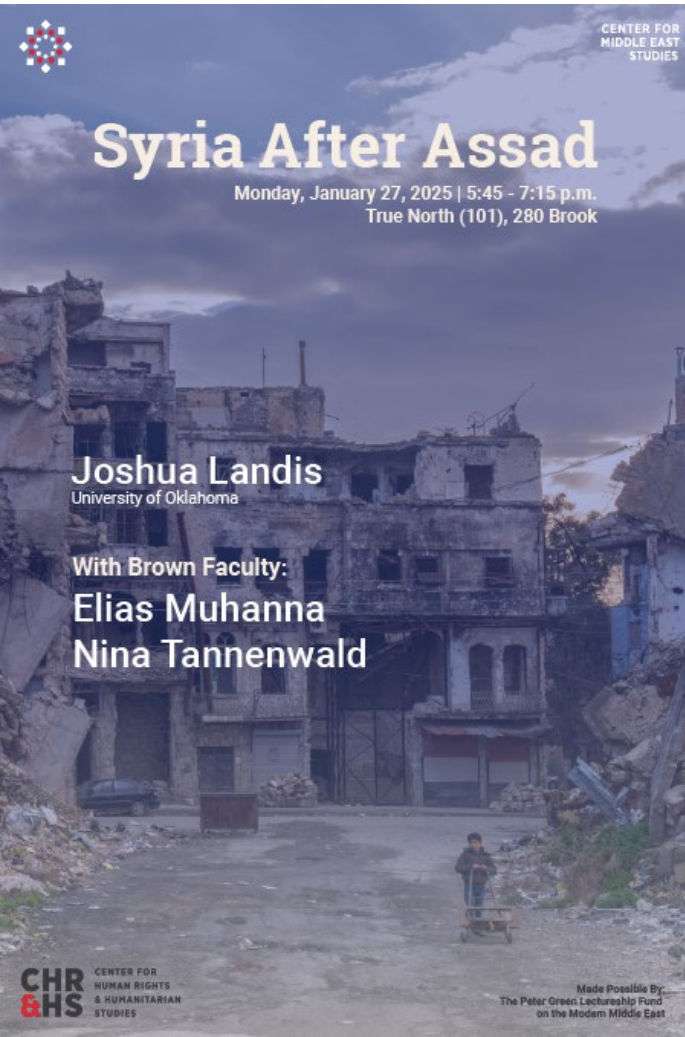
Join us for an afternoon of conversation and chamber music performed by the Nazareth-based Polyphony Ensemble

Sunday, February 23, 2025  
4:00 PM  
Sayles Hall, Brown University

**Dabke Workshop**  
with Instructor Karim Nagi

Wednesday March 05, 2025  
7:30-9:30 pm  
Pentacost Unit Lounge  
111 Thayer St. (1st floor)  
Pizza will be served

# OTHER PROGRAMMING



**CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES**

## Syria After Assad

Monday, January 27, 2025 | 5:45 - 7:15 p.m.  
True North (101), 280 Brook

**Joshua Landis**  
University of Oklahoma


With Brown Faculty:  
**Elias Muhanna**  
**Nina Tannenwald**

**CHR & HS** CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS & HUMANITARIAN STUDIES

Made Possible By:  
The Peter Green Lectureship Fund  
on the Modern Middle East



**CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES**



## A New Lebanon Faces a New World

**Amal Mudallali**  
Former Ambassador of Lebanon  
to the United Nations

**Firas Maksad**  
Managing Director, Eurasia Group

**Monday, April 21, 2025**  
5:45 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. EST  
Joukowsky Forum (155), 111 Thayer

**Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs** | **CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES**  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Made possible by the Peter Green Lectureship Fund on the Modern Middle East



# ACADEMICS

## SAMPLING OF COURSES



CMES faculty and students further the Center's well-earned reputation for ground-breaking research and classroom innovation, pushing the boundaries of Middle East Studies from antiquity to the present. Affiliated faculty have established Brown as a hub for research on gender and sexuality, conflict and displacement, and social and political movements. Students are drawn to Middle East studies by their interests in the region's languages, cultures and societies, as well as its connections to other parts of the world.

Brown's first-rate Middle Eastern language courses often serve as a gateway for students interested in the region. Elective courses in various departments introduce students to different disciplinary perspectives and methodologies, which they apply to their own research with the support of faculty, librarians and CMES travel funding. Students travel to the Middle East for research, language study and internships. Meanwhile, scholars, journalists, artists and practitioners visit Brown's campus for CMES events and to speak to Middle East Studies classes, providing an opportunity for students to engage directly with leading voices in the field.

CMES thus continues to foster a tight-knit community of scholars – students and faculty – who bring their unique interests and perspectives together in the shared endeavor of better understanding the Middle East and the people who live there.

### Islam in America: A Global History

**FAIZ AHMED**

This course explores the history of Muslims in America — and American discourses about Islam — from 1492 to the present, extending from the transatlantic slave trade to the racialization of Muslim Americans before and after 9/11 and U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

### Brotherhood of Kings: A History of the Ancient Middle East's First International Age, 2000-1200 BCE

**MATTHEW RUTZ**

Over a thousand years before the Persian Empire, Hammurabi of Babylon engaged in a project of statecraft that reshaped the political landscape of ancient Iraq, and the fall of Babylon a few generations later presaged an expansive international age that reached from North Africa to Iran. This course explores both what happened in the ancient Middle East and how modern scholars piece together histories of the forgotten past.

### Islamic Sexualities

**NANCY KHALEK AND ASEEL AZAB**

This course examines gender and sexuality in a range of Muslim cultures, as well as how Islam is imagined in relationship to gender and sexuality. It explores topics such as Islamic law, the representation of women in the Quran, gender and family issues in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and how the constructions of gender and sexuality shape the representation of Islam and Muslims in a variety of contexts.

### Advanced Reading and Composition:

#### Kalila wa-Dimna

**MILED FAIZA**

Introducing advanced Arabic students to classical Arabic through the medieval folk tales "Kalila wa Dimna", this course also engages with a modern version of the stories by Munther Younes to explore the Arabic language's evolution.

### Understanding the Palestinians

**BESHARA DOUMANI**

Who are the Palestinians? What does their transformation into a dispossessed, displaced, and stateless people tell us about the making of the modern world? And why has the Palestinian condition become a signifier for global struggles? This course centers Palestinian experiences and agency within larger thematics of capitalism, colonialism, nationalism and indigeneity.

### The 1,001 Nights

**ELIAS MUHANNA**

Spending the semester in the company of genies, princes, liars, slaves, mass murderers, orientalists and Walt Disney, this course explores the origins, performance, reception, adaptation and translation of one of the most beloved and influential story collections in world literature.

# ACADEMICS SAMPLING OF COURSES



## Understanding Modern Turkey through Film and Literature

**ESRA OZDEMIR**

An introduction to modern Turkey and its society and culture that explores a range of themes, from Istanbul and its neighborhoods to ethnic identities, from modernism and political Islam to Turkish music and cuisine.

## Third World Literature and Thought 1950-1970

**MARU PABÓN**

How did literature contribute to the formation of the Third-Worldist project, and how did the Third-Worldist project inform the writing of literature? This course examines the role of conferences, print periodicals and organizations like the Afro-Asian Writers Association, focusing on the shifting relationship between the Soviet Union, anticolonial nationalist movements and leftist internationalist currents from 1955 to 1973.

## Protest and Dissidence in Iran

**MICHELLE QUAY**

The anti-authoritarian Woman, Life, Freedom movement arose in fall 2022 as a reaction to incarceration and death in Iran. Through a broad selection of texts, film and art, this course explores corruption, authoritarianism, multiculturalism, race, social class, religion and gender relations in today's Iranian culture and society.

## Islamic Art in the RISD Museum:

### Thinking With Objects

**MARGARET GRAVES**

Students work with objects from the RISD Museum collection to think through the histories and historiographies of Islamic art, exploring aspects of production, circulation and display history, and questions of authenticity and provenance raised by passage through the colonial-era antiquities market.

# TESTIMONIALS

*To study Arabic resistance poetry, for instance, as connected since its emergence with Latin American, Asian and African poetry means shedding light on facets of the global reach of Middle Eastern literature that have often been hidden from view.*

**—MARU PABÓN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

*My single favorite highlight was our local history walking tour which brought to light sometimes surprising connections between diverse global regions – Iberia, West Africa, the Balkans – and American and Islamicate history right on our own campus and the streets of Providence.*

**—FAIZ AHMED, JOUKOWSKY FAMILY DISTINGUISHED ASSOCIATE  
PROFESSOR OF MODERN MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY**

*Understanding the Palestinians was the first time in my academic experience that the history of Palestine was told through the people.*

**—LAYLA AHMED '27**

# ACADEMICS STUDENTS

## DEPARTMENTAL UNDERGRADUATE GROUP (DUG)

The DUG is run by students interested in Middle East studies who wish to build a community both inside and outside of the concentration. The MES DUG aims to highlight those aspects of the center that are related to undergraduate activities. This year's DUG leaders were Mica Maltzman '25, Dorra Omrani '26 and Sabine Jimenez-Williams '26. In their role, they acted as undergraduate student ambassadors, disseminating pertinent announcements to their peers and organizing socials and career development events.



(from left): Mica Maltzman '25, Dorra Omrani '26, Sabine Jimenez-Williams '26

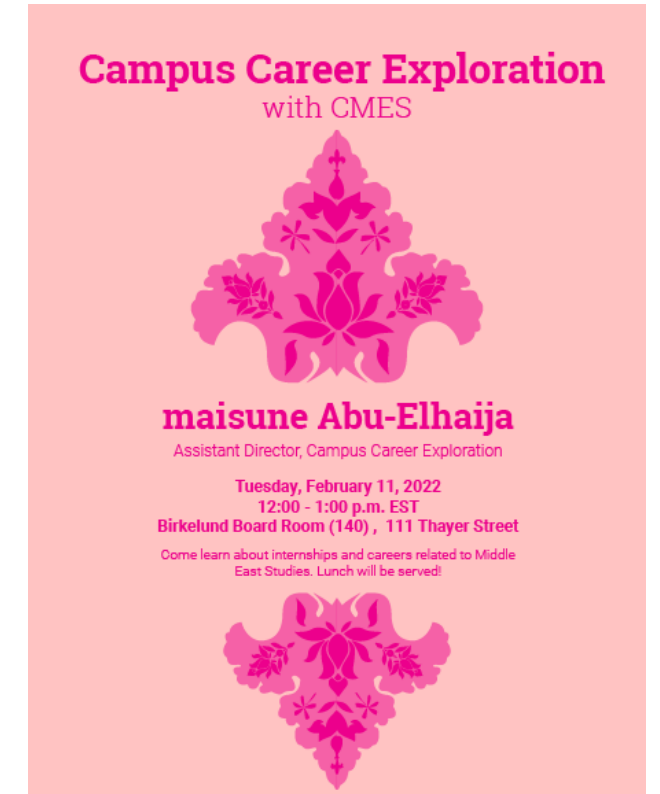
# TESTIMONIALS

*Being an MES concentrator has grounded my studies in a tangible community. It makes even career workshops (usually stressful events for me) feel like an enjoyable lunch among friends, even if I have never seen those friends before.*

—INARI JADE BARRETT '27

*The MES student community is one of those most welcoming and friendly at Brown. Even as someone who is not a concentrator, I have always enjoyed classes and events related to the region.*

—ARMAN DEENDAR '25



## MIDDLE EAST STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (MESGSA)

Supported by CMES, MESGSA is an interdisciplinary group of graduate students united by a shared scholarly interest in the Middle East. Combining diverse humanities and social sciences backgrounds with regional expertise, the association fosters conversations that are theoretically diverse and regionally focused. MESGSA organizes an annual seminar featuring presentations by recipients of the [Sams Family Research Travel Grant](#).

2024-25 MESGSA leader **Adel Ben Bella** is a filmmaker and curator pursuing a Ph.D. in Modern Culture and Media. He holds a bachelor of arts in Lettres Modernes Spécialisées from Université Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV) and a master of fine arts in film directing from Columbia University. His work revolves around 20th-century colonial and post-colonial Algeria, with a focus on activist and militant visual culture in the context of the Algerian Revolution and Algerian national identity formation.



*Adel Ben Bella*

**Friday, November 1, 2024**  
**12:00 – 1:30 p.m.**  
On Zoom | Registration required

Presenters

**Adel Ben Bella**  
Modern Culture and Media

**Arif Erbil**  
History

**Hosna Salari Sardari**  
History of Art and Architecture

**Amelle Zeroug**  
History

**Gabriel Zuckerberg**  
Music

Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs | CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

# ACADEMICS STUDENTS

## SAMS FAMILY RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARDS

### UNDERGRADUATE

*The MES research grant allowed me to travel to Morocco over winter break to conduct research for my senior thesis on Amazigh activism during the Arab Spring. The opportunity to integrate primary source materials into my thesis would not have been possible without support from CMES.*

—BIANCA ROSEN '25

### GRADUATE

*With CMES travel funding, I traveled to Istanbul, Turkey, and Lund, Sweden, to conduct research on scribal traditions in the early modern Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul, I examined manuscripts and archival documents at the Süleymaniye Library and the State Archives, while in Lund, I explored the Rare Materials and Manuscripts collection at Lund University Library and attended a summer school on the History of Knowledge at Lund University.*

—ARIF ERBIL

*I used CMES travel funding to travel to Algiers to conduct oral histories with women who were leaders and/or active in the Algerian War from 1954 to 1962; and to Paris where I conducted archival research and accessed intercepted correspondence between female militants and their families, military and police records of interrogations and on the war's development, and reports on the 'psychological action' targeted at Algerian women.*

—AMELLE ZEROUG

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## INCOMING POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**GABRIEL YOUNG**

ALOMRAN FAMILY POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

**ORWA SWITAT**

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES

## SAMS FAMILY RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARD RECIPIENTS | SUMMER 2024

### GRADUATE STUDENTS

**ADEL BEN BELLA** (MODERN CULTURE AND MEDIA)

**ARIF ERBIL** (HISTORY)

**HOSNA SALARI SARDARI** (HISTORY OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE)

**AMELLE ZEROUG** (HISTORY)

**GABRIEL ZUCKERBERG** (MUSIC)

### UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

**ABOUD ASHHAB** '25



# ACADEMICS CLASS OF 2025



## CAPSTONE

The Tension between Pragmatism and Idealism in Abdolkarim Soroush's Neo-Mu'tazila Theory of the Expansion and Contraction of Religious Knowledge

## JAD HAMZE '25

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and health and human biology. As a student in Brown's eight-year Bachelor-MD Program in Liberal Medical Education (PLME), he is dedicated to a career in medicine, integrating biomedical research with a nuanced understanding of the Middle East to tackle global health challenges. His research focuses on ischemic heart disease and metabolic syndrome, utilizing high-sensitivity proteomic analyses to investigate cardiovascular therapies. He has authored multiple research papers, presented at the American Heart Association conference and contributed to translational large animal model surgeries. Jad also served as a DUG Leader for MES, fostering student engagement with the discipline. After graduation, he will attend the Warren Alpert Medical School.

## BAYLIE A. HARTFORD '25

is a Middle East studies concentrator with particular interests in ancient and medieval history and literary translation. In addition to studying Arabic and Persian, Baylie has also pursued coursework in visual art and technical theatre, and has worked on a number of student and departmental productions at Brown. After graduating, Baylie intends to continue studying both languages through travel and hopes to incorporate these interests in language and history into a career in the creative sector.



## CAPSTONE

Translating Stories and Essays by Waciny Laredj



## CAPSTONE

Detroit 1973: Factory Work and the Mobilization of Arab Workers

## MICA MALTZMAN '25

is a double concentrator in history and Middle East studies. At Brown, she served as the co-editor-in-chief and an editor of the Brown Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies, as well as worked with Palestinian activist groups. She is interested in the history of Palestinian resistance and its intersections with diaspora. She has spent the past year writing a thesis on a Jewish Communist housing cooperative that once existed in the Bronx, exploring interests closer to home. After graduating, she hopes to pursue a career in public interest law.

## ANAIS LEICHTLING '25

is a triple concentrator in Middle East studies, political science and Judaic studies. During her time at Brown, Anais has focused on exploring the intersectionality of religion, culture, and politics in the MENA region and beyond. She is passionate about understanding how political and religious narratives play into and shape collective identities, and in turn catalyze or limit prospects for intercommunal cohesion, sustainable conflict management and de-escalation more broadly. Her capstone centers on the ways in which portrayals of Jerusalem's Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in contemporary Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Muslim art reflect and inform religious narratives on the Israel-Palestine conflict, with particular emphasis on themes of messianic apocalypticism and religious fundamentalism. After graduation, Anais looks forward to spending time with family and further expanding on these areas of study.



## CAPSTONE

Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, Politics, and Apocalyptic Religious Fundamentalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict through Jewish and Islamic Art

# ACADEMICS CLASS OF 2025



## BIANCA ROSEN '25

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and international and public affairs. She is passionate about the Arabic language and has studied it intensively both at Brown and abroad in Jordan, Morocco and Oman. A highlight of her Arabic language studies was getting the chance to publish a translation she worked on in class with Professor Miled Faiza in the journal ArabLit. Bianca is also fascinated by North African history and has spent the past year writing a thesis on Amazigh activism and tribalism in Morocco during the Arab Spring. Outside of class, she was managing editor of the Brown Political Review and involved with CMES in various capacities, including serving as a student assistant, teaching assistant and undergraduate fellow. Bianca looks forward to continued exploration of her interests in politics and the Middle East after graduation.

### CAPSTONE

The Politics of Jihad and State-Building: An Analysis of Gulf Policies toward Bosnia

## IAN STETTNER '25

is a double concentrator in Middle East studies and international and public affairs. Coming to Middle East studies initially from an interest in archaeology and early Christian history, Ian has tried to build a course load that balances the new with the old. He wrote for the Brown Political Review as a senior staff writer and, outside of Brown, he organized archaeological surveys of northern Long Island settlement sites. Last spring, he continued his Arabic studies through Middlebury's semester abroad program in Jordan, and he intends to return to the region in the next year to improve his Arabic and work as a freelance journalist.



### CAPSTONE

Money Talks: Designing Fiscal Incentives in Multi-Ethnic Federations



## ELIAS MUHANNA

DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND HISTORY

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OMAR KHAYYAM POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE  
IN IRANIAN STUDIES



## LOUBNA QUTAMI

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN PALESTINIAN STUDIES

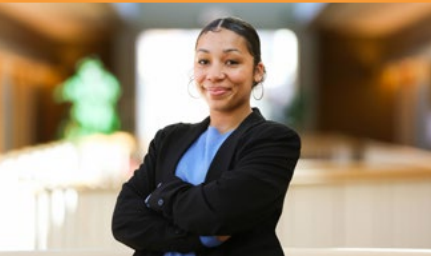


# PEOPLE

# PEOPLE

## STUDENT STAFF

**INARI JADE BARRETT '27**



**SALMA ELDEEB '26**



**SABINE JIMENEZ-WILLIAMS '26**



**MUSTAPHA KHARBOUCH '27**



**DORRA OMRANI '26**



**BIANCA ROSEN '25**



# STEERING COMMITTEE

## ELIAS MUHANNA

DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND HISTORY

Muhanna is a scholar of medieval and early modern Islamic history and classical Arabic literature. His research has focused on encyclopedic practices in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world, the history of the Arabic language, and the problem of the vernacular in various literary traditions. His essays and criticism appear regularly in the New Yorker, the London Review of Books, the New York Times, and other periodicals.



## NITSAN CHOREV

HARMON FAMILY PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AND  
INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Chorev is interested in different aspects of the global political economy, including international trade, global health, and foreign aid. She is currently working on a project on the relations between the military and the tech industry in Israel.



## BESHARA DOUMANI

MAHMOUD DARWISH PROFESSOR OF PALESTINIAN STUDIES

Doumani focuses on subjects marginalized by mainstream scholarship on the Middle East. He also writes on academic freedom, the politics and ethics of knowledge production, and the Palestinian condition. Doumani is the editor of the New Directions in Palestinian Studies book series and founder of the Palestinian Museum.



# STEERING COMMITTEE

## MARGARET GRAVES

ADRIENNE MINASSIAN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ISLAMIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN HONOR OF MARILYN JENKINS-MADINA

Graves is a specialist in the art of the Islamic world, with a particular research focus on museum objects, the plastic arts (ceramics, metalwork, stone carving) and the acts and contexts of making in the medieval and modern eras.



## JAE HAN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Han is broadly interested in the literature of the peoples who lived in ancient Syria and Mesopotamia. His current project focuses on concepts of prophethood and revelatory knowledge among late antique Syro-Mesopotamian communities, especially "Jewish Christians," Manichaeans, Neoplatonists and early Jewish "mystics."



## NANCY KHALEK

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND HISTORY

Khalek's research focuses on medieval Islamic history and culture. She works in the fields of historiography, late antique and early Islamic continuity and change, and the history of emotion in relation to practices of piety in the pre-modern Islamic world.



# STEERING COMMITTEE

## MICHELLE QUAY

LECTURER IN LANGUAGE STUDIES (PERSIAN)

Quay's research focuses on premodern Persian literature, particularly in the writings of Farid al-Din 'Attar Nishapuri and other early Sufi mystics. Through her teaching, she enjoys helping students acquire the basics of Persian language and guiding them through the program to Advanced Persian language, literature and culture courses.



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**NADJE AL-ALI**, Middle East Studies, Anthropology, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs

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**ARIELLA AZOULAY**, Modern Culture and Media, Comparative Literature

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**PAUL NAHME**, Judaic Studies, Religious Studies

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**ESRA ÖZDEMİR**, Center for Language Studies

**MARU PABÓN**, Comparative Literature

**MICHELLE QUAY**, Center for Language Studies

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**MATTHEW RUTZ**, Egyptology and Assyriology

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**ALEX WINDER**, Middle East Studies, History

**SUVAID YASEEN**, History

**VAZIRA ZAMINDAR**, History



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