Letter from the Director

Dear Middle East Studies community in Ohio and beyond,

There are numerous ways the Middle East Studies Center (MESC) promotes and supports Middle East studies, which spans beyond The Ohio State University campuses and the Midwest region and facilitates connections abroad with universities in Middle Eastern countries such as Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and Afghanistan. According to the current Academic Plan, internationalization is fundamental, both to Ohio State’s immediate academic strategy and our long-term goal to place Ohio State “among the world’s truly great universities.” According to the plan, “Ohio State must become more diverse so we can prepare our students for success in this more diverse nation and must enhance and coordinate our international studies and programs to prepare students for a more global economy.” In accordance with this priority of internationalization, former Ohio State president Karen Holbrook established a task force on the matter earlier this year. As a member of that task force, I can say there will be more emphasis on internationalization at Ohio State on a number of levels, one of which will be the focus on ties with foreign universities. Our active agreements with Middle Eastern universities include: Assiut University and the Arab Academy of Science and Technology in Egypt; University of Damascus in Syria; and Kadir Has, Bilkent, and Harran Universities in Turkey. An Ohio State delegation recently went to Turkey, including former president Karen Holbrook; David Hansen, director of International Programs in Agriculture; and myself, to strengthen existing relations and form new linkages in the country. The trip was successful in that we were able to learn firsthand about the similarities and differences between American and Turkish systems in the Turkish milieu, as well as obtain formalized agreements between our universities. We received continued commitment for our faculty exchange program with Atatürk University in Erzurum, Turkey, and well as additional commitment from Atatürk and Yeditepe in Istanbul for provided space, equipment, and other support for a study abroad program. I also had the privilege of showing President Holbrook human-made and natural wonders of Turkey, such as the Sumela Monastery in Maçka, part of the Black Sea region of Turkey.
Seeded Faculty Positions and Courses

Two other key ways in which we are making a difference in international education are through seeded, Middle East-related faculty positions and courses across several Ohio State academic departments and programs. Seeded faculty positions include a Central Asian historian in the Department of History, an Arabian Peninsula and Syrian anthropologist in the Department of Anthropology, and Turkish and Urdu language instructors in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. Courses which have been seeded include: Introduction to the Middle East, Contemporary Issues in the Middle East, and Middle East Economic Development, each in the International Studies Program. Additionally, Turkish, Persian, and Pashto courses have been seeded during summer quarter.

Quantifying the Impact

At the university level, increased faculty positions, course enrollments in language and area studies, and successful completion of programs are major measurements of impact. The most recent graduate records show that among graduates from 2004, 1,416 students had taken 15 or more credits in ME-related courses, an increase of 12.5% from three years prior. This shows the alumni placements for students who had advanced beyond at least one year of course work in ME language or area studies. Many have enrolled in graduate or related professional programs, or are employed in higher education or the private sector.

Current Events and Outreach

As a Title VI National Research Center director, my job requires me to help disseminate information—in addition to giving lectures to a variety of constituencies, I take part in media calls several times per week for analysis with local, national, and international news outlets. Most recently, Fred Andrle interviewed me for a program entitled, “Politics, Conflict, and Everyday Life in Afghanistan.” The interview is available online for RealPlayer: rtsp://streaming1.osu.edu/wosu/openline/081307aOL.rm, or Windows Media: mms://streaming1.osu.edu/wosu/openline/081307aOL.wma. To see a comprehensive list of my interviews, please see the events calendar on the MESC web page.

In addition to contributing to numerous programs for better coverage of the Middle East at Ohio State and in the local and international media, MESC also promotes better coverage of the Middle East in schools and community colleges through programs such as the Eastern Consortium in Persian and Turkish; the Midwest Institute for Community College faculty; Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS Fellowships); undergraduate and graduate courses; Institute for P-12 Teachers, and others.

There are many things MESC is doing both behind the scenes and publicly to keep information and resources available to the academic community and the community at large. Please let us know what research you are conducting focusing on the Middle East. We would be happy to share that in our newsletter or in other venues. The center will have new web site soon with expanded resources for researching, studying, and teaching about the Middle East (see: mesc.osu.edu in November).

Best wishes,

Alam Payind
Guest Scholar: Tahir al-Bakaa
by Melinda Wightman

The Middle East Studies Center was honored to host Tahir al-Bakaa, one of Iraq’s most prominent academics, who visited The Ohio State University to convey the urgency of the higher education crisis in Iraq and to report on current developments. Al-Bakaa provides a unique perspective on the status of Iraqi higher education due to his former position as minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and his diverse background: a Shiite Muslim and former member of the Baath party. He was forced to leave his position as minister, flee Iraq, and find refuge in the United States after several attempts on his life. Al-Bakaa is now a visiting scholar at Suffolk University and was a visiting scholar at Harvard the year before last. Since coming to the United States, he has continued collecting data on the educational system in Iraq and has written an article (referenced below) based on this research. He also has authored several articles regarding the political situation in Iraq and the need to quell divisive sectarianism and partisanship in the political system (see tahir-albakaa.iraq.ir for his writing in Arabic).

Unfortunately, due to a severe ice storm, Ohio State’s campus was closed the day he arrived, and the roundtable had to be cancelled. He had prepared a talk on Iraqi higher education reform, with reference to his article “Iraqi Intellect in a Troubled Ocean: Higher Education Reform and Iraq’s Advancement” (see Arabic version at tahir-albakaa.iraq.ir/reform.htm). Within the article, he argues that higher education reform requires that the people of Iraq view intellectual achievement and personal development as both shared values and patriotic contributions. Accordingly, building a strong Iraqi nation is the targeted outcome of his reform plan; al-Bakaa stresses the promotion and development of individual human capital and excellence in every field of research as the most effective strategy. A quote from his article on Iraqi intellect (see above) elucidates his value of education: “[Higher Education] places creative abilities and a capacity for discovery at humankind’s service.”

In short, education is the foundation of a prosperous nation.

The past three decades have been deleterious for Iraqi higher education and the social and physical infrastructures of the country as a whole. Iraq used to have one of the highest percentages of educated people in the Middle East; Baghdad was teeming with educated professionals and intellectuals. The 1970s in particular were a good time for higher education in Iraq. Iraq sent students to universities around the world for their studies and offered numerous scholarship competitions.

The dramatic shift occurred with the start of the Iran-Iraq war in September of 1980, when government funds were channeled to the war rather than to education, and funding for university study and scholarship were cut. The Iran War, however, only marked the beginning of the end for Iraqi higher education. Along with most social and government institutions, higher education is barely surviving under the conditions of the current crisis. In the early days of the U.S. invasion, universities were completely stripped by looters—even down to the wires in the walls. The situation for Iraqi higher education has not improved much since: students are being bombed and professors are the targets of assassination attempts. In fact, while president of Mustansiriya University, al-Bakaa was the victim of several assassination attempts. Bombings on the Mustansiriya campus can be read in the news every day; that living piece of Islamic history may not survive the onslaught of both war and harsh economic times (see Mustansiriya University, next page).

Al-Bakaa shared his point of view on the current state of Iraq, along with historical insights and information. Not only a noted scholar and historian, al-Bakaa is also a great storyteller, and his descriptions of Iraq and personal dealings with Saddam are vivid. He has the ability to bring history to life, from the days of the Abbasid Caliphate to the U.S.-Iraqi conflict. Similarly, his analysis of the current conflict provided students with different perspective than that which many had heard before.

For example, when looking at previous failed measures for curtailing Saddam’s power, al-Bakaa pointed out that, rather than weakening his regime, sanctions only made Saddam stronger. Sanctions provided Saddam with an alternative source of blame for people’s suffering. In addition, the Oil for Food program which was meant to alleviate that situation also made Saddam stronger. He was able to take the profits and kickbacks skimmed by corporations participating in the program.

(continued on page 4)
In regard to the Iraq elections, al-Bakaa pointed out that the votes only reflected the underlying partisanship of the people and were not a real statement of individual views and concerns. In his opinion, elections should have only come after post-Saddam Iraq had become more fully formed and stabilized. This would have avoided fanning the flames of sectarianism. In addition, the initial strategy to remove former Baathists and the army from power happened at the same time that Iraq’s borders were opened; this weakened the country’s ability to repel outside influences.

Al-Bakaa’s visit afforded the faculty and students who spent time with him many insights and new perspectives on Iraq. His down-to-earth personality and openness to questions permitted faculty and students the chance to be educated on the current crisis in Iraq by a former senior government official and university president who personally wrote parts of the new Iraqi constitution. One anecdote he provided concerned an ongoing quarrel he had been engaged in with other university presidents over the separation of religion and education. This quarrel would flare up whenever these colleagues attempted to enforce Ramadan restrictions on all students, even Christians. It was fascinating to hear a story of secular ideals coming from the president of Mustansiriya, originally built as a madrasa, or institution of Islamic learning, by Mustansir I (see inset, above right).

Al-Bakaa is a staunch supporter of a secular government in Iraq and an outspoken advocate for women’s rights and for the right to education for every Iraqi. Knowing al-Bakaa helps one to understand the richness and complexity of Iraqi society. We plan to have him visit Ohio State again this year, so that others can benefit from learning directly from him and his collective experiences. Check out upcoming events at mesc.osu.edu.
Teaching Excellence

Profile of Award-Winning Arabic Instructor

Allen Clark

Allen Clark has been an Arabic instructor at Ohio State since 1998. Recently he has received two prestigious awards, the OSU Graduate Teaching award and the Louise Vetter Award for Graduate Students from the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. He currently teaches Arabic 104, 205, 401 and 403. He also has recently completed certification as an Arabic Language Proficiency tester through the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages. Originally from Florida, Clark did not learn Arabic by his choice: it was chosen for him by the U.S. Army. In 1992, Clark enlisted in the Army and after rigorous testing was shipped off to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, one of the nation’s premier language institutes. After working for four years in military intelligence, Clark decided to apply his linguistic capabilities and his appreciation for the cultures and histories of the Middle East to the humanities. He enrolled in Ohio State in 1996 and obtained a BA and an MA through the Near Eastern languages and cultures department in just three years! Since that time, Clark has been working on his PhD in Education with advisor Keiko Komiya Samimy in the foreign and second language education specialty area. Clark’s focus is on Arabic and technology.

What is important for understanding Iraq today, however, is what can be understood from the story of Mustansir. It is likely he built the madrasa to be a symbol of Muslim unity, both to reinforce Abbasid central power, and to bring people together to resist the Mongol invasions. This push for unity may have included a push for easing the Sunni-Shi’ite divide. According to the reports of Baghdadian historian Ibn aj-Jawzi, al-Mustansir behaved in a conciliatory manner toward the Shi’ites and visited their shrines (from the Encyclopedia of Islam entry on al-Mustansir I).

Sunni-Shi’ite relations have gone through varying degrees of peace or conflict, depending on the political and historical context. If one watches mainstream news, one may get the impression that the current factionalism and strife originate in this religious divide, but in fact Sunnis and Shiites lived in relative harmony before the war. One indicator of that is the number of Shi’ite/Sunni marriages at that time, which was relatively high at around five percent. Another mitigation of the social divide between the two sects is that the distance between the two religious traditions isn’t as divergent as it might seem to an outsider. The divide is fundamentally political, based on a disagreement about who the first Caliph (successor to the Prophet Muhammad) should have been. Shi’ites believe that ‘Ali, the fourth Caliph, should have been the first Caliph rather than the one who Sunnis believe was rightfully chosen, Abu Bakr. Shi’ites use the term imam rather than caliph and consider the family lineage of ‘Ali as the determining factor for the successive leaders. — Melinda Wightman

Michael Ewers (M.E.): What is the hardest part of teaching Arabic as a second language in the United States?

A.C.: I think that the hardest part is convincing students to have faith in you. If they have faith in you, they become a community of learners where people are not afraid of making mistakes. Then you get synergy in the classroom and the students want to come to class. I do not take attendance but I have very high attendance nevertheless—rewarding for students.

M.E.: How would you describe your teaching method? What tactics and strategies do you use to create the sense of community you describe?

A.C.: The most important thing to me is to get to know the student individually, rather than seeing them only as a collective group. I want to know what the individual learner likes to talk about, what motivates them to take the language and what has helped them to succeed (continued on page 6)
Teaching Excellence
(continued from page 5)

in other classes. By getting the individuals to talk about themselves, I am able to get promote enthusiasm about learning and I am able to create a community of both learners and friends.

In terms of specific methods, I like to use peer-to-peer groups to help the students teach each other. I will often have the students form two-person groups and have each student interview his or her partner with questions derived from the weekly theme. This dialogue helps the students to implement the vocabulary and grammar that was taught as part of the lesson and theme.

M.E.: What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A.C.: I would not use the word “enjoyable” to capture how I feel about teaching. I take my role as a teacher to be one of a coach or a guide. I find that getting people to work together and buy into my philosophy of thinking in the language to be extremely rewarding, but I take the process too seriously to call it “enjoyment.” My goal each quarter is to watch students grow, both in the language and as human beings.

M.E.: How has teaching Arabic changed at Ohio State since 9/11?

A.C.: The biggest change has been in the numbers of students enrolled in Arabic classes.

There were approximately 70 students enrolled in Arabic classes in 1996-7, when I came to Ohio State, and 641 enrolled in 2004-5. Similarly, there were 17 students enrolled in individualized instruction classes in 1996 and there were 120 this year. We use to offer 101 once a year, now we have five sections of 101. The new challenge is not really class size since we keep the sections small, but with so many sections we need greater coordination.

M.E.: How does your dissertation combine your background in NELC with your studies in education?

A.C.: On the one hand, I am dealing with the notion of Arabic linguistic competency in terms of Western journalists. This is clearly part of my NELC background. My intent, however, is to help teachers of Arabic as a foreign language to promote greater proficiency in western journalists for dealing with texts that are highly complex and require a significant understanding of the historical, political and religious contexts in which they are written.

More specifically, my dissertation topic is “The Crisis of Arabic Literacy in the Western Media.” I am studying communiqués from the Middle East and examining how they have been distorted from the source text to the target language because there are no AP editors/ translators who can handle the complex subject matter. For instance, BBC and the Associated Press each only have one translator. The editors are “general” Middle East experts. They get text from translator and they market it to American consumer. They take pieces of text which will give more sales. The head editors over all of the world regions then edit the text again, after which it goes back to the translators and then it is published. So the topic is about translation in general, but I am trying to change the academic culture towards the media through using case studies.

M.E.: What is your view of journalism after having done this research, and what would you suggest to major news services for preventing mistranslations and misconceptions from getting into print?

A.C.: Clearly, there is a serious lack of Arabic language proficiency in Western journalists working on the Middle East. The problem is that this illiteracy in the media is passed on to media consumers. My goal is to promote a new educational policy that would create curricula of language enhancement and maintenance for correspondents responsible for reporting high-priority communiqués to the general public. This curriculum could be implemented at journalism schools as well as within the media organizations.

M.E.: What are your plans after you graduate?

A.C.: Currently, I am planning on becoming an Arabic language professor, either at the Defense Language Institute or the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. A third possibility would be to teach at a large research institution.
Study Abroad in Egypt – March 14-24, 2007

Students enrolled in the study abroad course Near Eastern Languages and Cultures 697, Culture, Society, and History of Egypt experienced the uniqueness of Egypt on a 10-day spring break excursion and academic tour of the country’s historic legacies, institutions, and everyday experiences. The course was the culmination of a course held on campus during winter quarter which explored Egyptian culture through literature, language, history, and aspects of traditional music and dance.

Staying at the Hotel Ramses Hilton for the nights in Cairo brought the students close to the Nile, and some ventured out for a walk a long the Corniche, soaking in the immensity and historical significance of the river while observing Egyptian “nightlife” – i.e., walking with friends, occasionally a love interest, or hanging out with a group by the railings and benches. The idea that students are mainly interested in visiting tourist sites and not in learning about the everyday lives of people did not apply to this group. Interest was shown at the mosques, synagogue, churches we visited, but was piqued to a much greater degree when we visited the Anderson House, full of architecture and objects relating to household activities, and again at the Zalalain neighborhood where students were able to see the way Cairo’s garbage collectors live.

After some experiences with Egyptian culture, students especially enjoyed the lecture about Egyptian identity at the American University in Cairo, with its complexity and its resistance to definition. “Are Egyptians Arabs first or Egyptians first?” was one of the questions asked. Another professor who was Egyptian walked into the room at that time and said without hesitation: “I am Egyptian first, definitely”—a reminder of the importance of including points of view from within the culture to make a real impact. The primary organizer of the study tour, Sherif Barsoum, is Egyptian, and he played the role of cultural mediator and guide. The last group activity was perhaps the best one: a dinner at the house of Barsoum’s family in Cairo where students got to see a real Egyptian home and talk to Barsoum’s family and friends, as well as a chance to chat informally with the Egyptian guides who had led most of the tours. For more information about this course and study abroad trip, contact the Study Abroad Office of the Office of International Affairs – (614) 292-6101. — Melinda Wightman

Recent NELC Faculty Hires

Bruce Fudge
Assistant Professor
PhD, Arabic and Islamic Studies,
Harvard University

Assistant Professor Fudge is a classical Arabic specialist with a research focus on Qur’anic studies. He comes to Ohio State from Southwestern University, where he was an assistant professor of religion. His recent publications include numerous journal and encyclopedia contributions covering many aspects of Islamic studies and Arabic language and literature. He has also published articles in The Boston Sunday Globe and the Atlantic Monthly and provided Arabic translation and consultation for the Atlantic Monthly, The Christian Science Monitor and the Iraq Research and Documentation Project. Among his many fellowships and awards, Fudge is the recipient of a Merit Fellowship and two Certificates of Distinction in Teaching from Harvard University and two Mellon Language Study Grants (Arabic and Persian). He is also a graduate of the Center for Arabic Studies Abroad program at the American University in Cairo. His research languages include Arabic (Classical, Modern and Egyptian Colloquial), French, German and Persian.

Morgan Y. Liu
Assistant Professor
PhD, Anthropology,
University of Michigan

Assistant Professor Liu is a cultural anthropologist studying social imaginaries and Islamic knowledge in central Eurasia. Theoretically, his interests include space, phenomenology, agency, emergence, and ethnographic complexity. His most recent work is a book on how ethnic Uzbeks in a Kyrgyzstani city conceive of the post-Soviet state and Islam, based on research using vernacular language interviews and ethnographic fieldwork of urban social life. His next project, set in the populous and pious Fergana Valley of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, will investigate the links between post-Soviet Islamic piety, economic prosperity and poverty, and systemic corruption. It will look at Central Asian Islams as a form of utopian thought and practice that aims for peaceful and virtuous societal transformation in the Muslim postsocialist world. For further insights into Liu’s research and interests, see his interview in the winter 2007 issue of the MESC Bulletin. Liu has been awarded a wide variety of prestigious awards and fellowships, including several from IREX and SSRC. His research languages include Uzbek, French, Kyrgyz, German, Russian, Turkish, and Chinese.

George N. Tamer
Professor, Sofia Chair in Arabic
Habilitation (2nd PhD), Islamic Studies,
Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg
PhD, Philosophy, Freie Universität Berlin

A native of Lebanon, Professor Tamer is a classical Arabic specialist who was most recently the chair of Arabic Culture and Literature at Freie Universität Berlin. His current research projects include a book-length examination of The Concept of Time in the Qur’an, a translation of and commentary on The Pseudo-Platonic Book of Laws, and a project on Maimonides in Muslim Thought. Tamer is the recipient of a wide array of scholarships, honors, and fellowships. Most recently, he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University. His past research includes translations of biblical literature and famous German Qur’anic and philosophical scholarship into Arabic, and books on Islamic, Pre-Islamic, and Jewish philosophy and poetry. His research languages include Arabic (modern and classical), German, Latin, Classical Greek, Persian, and Hebrew.
Opportunities in Middle East Studies

Conferences on Middle East Studies
Check mesc.osu.edu for further conference updates.

**Liberty and Justice: America and the Middle East: an Interdisciplinary Conference**

January 7-10, 2008, at the American University of Beirut

This conference will examine current and past encounters between America and the MENA with a particular focus on the many ways notions of liberty and justice have informed, or might inform, those encounters. The conference will bring together scholars from North America, the Middle East, and other regions. In an attempt to engender new insights and perspectives, the conference will provide considerable time for free interaction. In recent years, several new American studies programs have appeared in the MENA. Graduate students are encouraged to submit proposals for the “Graduate Projects, Bridges, and Dialogues” panels, whose purpose will be to foster interdisciplinary discussions among graduate students in American studies and related fields, based in the MENA region. For more information, see the CfP below or this web site: staff.aub.edu.lb/~webcasar/index.html.

**International Conference on Globalisation, Economic Reforms, Aid, and Democracy in the Arab World**

February 3-4, 2008

This conference will be held at the Arab Thought Forum in Amman, Jordan. The conference organizers invite innovative and high-quality theoretical, empirical, and policy contributions from academics and policy-makers from both the developed and developing world that focus on one of the three tracks of the conference: the impact of globalisation and economic reforms, financial aid, and democratization in the Middle East, North Africa, and neighboring regions. For full information on the conference, including details about conference themes and paper submission, please visit the conference web site: www.business.mmu.ac.uk/cibi/globconf, or e-mail globconf@mmu.ac.uk.

**Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers**

April 15-19, 2008

The Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers attracts more than 6,500 geographers and related professionals from around the world. The 2008 meeting will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, at the Marriott Copley Place and Westin Copley Place Hotel. Visit the conference web site at: aag.org/annualmeetings/2008/index.htm. Register and submit abstract online between August 1 and October 31, 2007.

**1908-2008: Centennial of the Young Turk Revolution**

May 28-30, 2008

An international congress entitled “1908-2008: Centennial of the Young Turk Revolution,” commemorating the 100th anniversary of the II. Constitutional Period of the Ottoman Empire, will be hosted by the faculty of political sciences of Ankara University in Ankara. Papers will consider the place of the concept of bourgeois revolution in the social sciences, the connection between the Young Turk Revolution and bourgeois revolutions at the beginning of the 20th century, the impact of the Young Turk Revolution in the world, and its influence on the Turkish Republic.

**Possible themes and topics might include:**

- Bourgeois Revolution: Concept and Reality
- Bourgeois Revolution and Anti-Systemic Movements
- Bourgeois Revolutions at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Russia, Iran, China, and others
- The Ottoman State and the 1908 Revolution
- The 1908 Revolution and Its International Impact
- The 1908 Revolution and Ottoman Peoples
- The 1908 Revolution and Gender
- The 1908 Revolution and Social Classes
- The 1908 Revolution and Political and Economic Thought
- The Legacy of the 1908 Revolution and the Turkish Republic

Papers can be presented either in Turkish or in English. Please submit proposals by e-mail, and proposals should contain the title of the paper, an abstract, and a list of key words. Abstracts should not exceed 1,500 words. Applicants must submit their proposals no later than October 31, 2007, and decisions will be announced by December 1, 2007. The applicants will be notified of the result by e-mail. For more information, visit the web site at: 1908.politics.ankara.edu.tr.

**Between Empire and Nation States: Continuity and Change in the Economies of the Middle East and North Africa in the 20th Century**

August 3-7, 2009

A session proposed by Jacob Metzer (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, msmetzer@mscc.huji.ac.il) and evket Pamuk (Bogaziçi University, Istanbul, pamuksh@tt.net.tr) to the XVth World Economic History Congress, Utrecht, The Netherlands (www.wehc2009.org).

**Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Fellowship Program**

The Office of International Affairs is the OSU administrator for the U.S. Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Grants for the development and improvement of the study of modern foreign languages and area studies in the United States. Applications are available at the Department of Education web site www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsfra/index.html. The Ohio State deadline is Tuesday, October 23. Contact: Kukielka-Blaser.1@osu.edu.

**Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program**

The Office of International Affairs administers the U.S. Department of Education's Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad program for advanced graduate students studying modern foreign languages and area studies. Eligibility is restricted to students who possess the requisite language skills for the dissertation project, and who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Applications are available at www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsddrap/applicant.html. The Ohio State deadline is Monday, October 29. Contact: kukielka-blaser.1@osu.edu
**Featured Course**

**Economic Development in the Middle East**

*An MESC interview with Hassan Aly, associate professor, Department of Economics and faculty affiliate of MESC and the John Glenn Institute for Public Policy, The Ohio State University*

Since 9/11 there has been a trend in academia toward increasing the number of Middle East-related courses in an effort to help American students better understand the peoples, cultures, and languages of the region. As a result, additional Arabic, Persian, and Turkish language classes have been added to the class list in the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department, and there has also been an increase in survey classes covering various aspects of the region in several departments on campus. Hassan Aly’s Economic Development in the Middle East (cross-listed as International Studies 437 and Agricultural and Developmental Economics 437) is unique among these offerings in that Professor Aly takes Ohio State students to the Middle East via satellite. In each of the past four years that this class has been offered, he has convened one-day meetings with students at universities in the United Arab Emirates as part of a face-to-face virtual conference to discuss Middle East development issues and points of mutual understanding. MESC intern Michael Ewers talked to Professor Aly about his course, the role of the virtual conference, and its impact on his students.

Michael Ewers (M.E.):

**How does the video conference fit into the overall course and how does it give insight into Middle East economic development?**

Hassan Aly (H.A.):

Most generally, the course is about Middle East social and economic conditions.

In terms of the overall course, we deal with three groups. First, we look at the “populated emerging economies,” including Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. These countries have diversified economic bases of agriculture, industry, and trade. Within this group, we also deal with the problems associated with traditional economies. Second, we examine the “highly developed economies,” including the small Gulf States and Israel, each of which has outpaced the region. Lastly, we study the “medium traditional economies,” comprising Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, and Tunisia. As a whole, the course looks at both the diversity and the common features within and between each of these groupings, such as language, endowment (land and climate), tradition, culture, and religion. Encompassing the entire course is how these cultural and environmental factors influence the economy. Also, we have guest speakers from different countries (lately from Syria and Palestine) come to talk about specific issues.

In terms of the video conference, it primarily focuses on the United Arab Emirates—one of the highly developed Gulf countries. As it relates to the overall course, Ohio State students get a firsthand look at the other side of the ocean by meeting face-to-face with Middle Eastern students. They get a feeling of how Middle Eastern students live, and they discover mutual understandings and interests. For example, Ohio State students find out that students in the United Arab Emirates know about 50 Cent and Shakira (celebrities in American popular culture), watch the same movies, and have some of the same interests. The video conference gives a closer look at “how people are.” The objective is for students, from these very different parts of the world, to know each other on a personal basis. Some students have even e-mailed each other after the video conference.

**M.E.: What are some common assumptions that U.S. students have about the Middle East in general and Middle East economic development in particular before they take your class?**

H.A.: The most important benefit of the video conference is correcting stereotypes. It opens their eyes to Middle East and to the Gulf in particular. From the video conference and the Gulf section of the course, they see that Gulf States are advanced compared to what they had thought. They are small counties and highly advanced in terms of communications and human development. Students here do not realize that their per-capita income is amongst the highest in the world. Very importantly, students learn that Gulf people really enjoy their life there. There are incredible benefits for individual citizens from the state due to oil revenue distribution, including education, housing, and marriage grants. This really surprises Ohio State students.

**M.E.: Do the U.S. students require any “special orientation” or coaching before starting the video conference? What is the effect of the video conference in dispelling any assumptions or stereotypes?**

H.A.: I make it an explicit point to have no special coaching and to ensure that the students know that the exchange is supposed to be a free forum, natural and spontaneous.

**M.E.: What were some of the best questions asked? What were some of the best exchanges between the U.S. and UAE students?**

H.A.: There are always exchanges about the perceived relationship in the U.S. between Islam and terrorism. The UAE students (some of whom are repeat customers to the video conference) talk about Christian populations in the Middle East and the acceptance of Christianity in Islam and the fact that terrorism is clearly not an aspect of Islam. While the video conference does not dispel all stereotypes, it certainly helps.

**M.E.: How would the course be different if the video conference was with an Egyptian university? Do you have any expansion plans?**

I chose the United Arab Emirates first because I wanted U.S. students to meet more traditional Arab students. I have plans for future courses to have multiple video conferences with multiple Arab universities, including my alma mater—Alexandria University in Egypt.
Reaching into the Past to Create a Modern Identity

by Hans Utter

The Tajik people are using history to reshape their national identity, avoid civil strife, and reduce Islamic extremism. During two stays in Tajikistan in summer 2006 and May 2007, I found that Tajiks are looking to the historical Persian Kingdom under which they flourished—the Samanid Dynasty (819-1005)—as a way of creating pride in a post-Soviet national identity. For the Tajiks, rediscovering a suppressed history and heritage—especially in poetry and music—is providing the confidence to move into a new political future.

In the summer of 2006 I was in Tajikistan as a student of Persian through the American Councils for the Teaching of Russian, and subsequently made a brief return visit in May 2007. As an ethnomusicologist and student of Persian poetry, my impressions of the country differ from many other Westerners and expatriates. I can understand when references to music and poetry are made and relate many of the cultural struggles to what I have observed in the musical and poetic life of India. Although I do not have training as a political scientist, I found that in Tajikistan, poetry and music are fundamentally political. It is a place of cultural wealth and material poverty, shaped by its position as a frontier state between the ancient Samanid Kingdom and the upheavals of the 20th century.

By modeling the current political regime on a great past, the country and its people have found a new alternative way of framing the modern world and their role in the future through a return to Tajikistan’s distant past. The first step in this reinvention is to interpret the Soviet encounter as an insignificant occurrence compared to the history of the Samanid dynasty in the region, which was responsible for converting the Turks to Islam, building the great cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, and reviving Persian architecture, art, and literature.

Tajikistan: Past and Future

Tajikistan embodies a great historical and cultural crossroads. The main ethnic groups are the Pamiris, the Tajiks, and the Uzbeks, although there are more ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan than in Tajikistan. Tajikistan is poised on these virtual fault lines of memory and history, between its Aryan and Persian cultural heritage, between Stalinist socialism and the promises and perils of Westernization and capitalism. It is in this complex situation that the dialogue between the past and future becomes of such importance. The decades of Soviet rule left deep imprints in the bureaucratic system, modalities of interpersonal relationships, and infrastructure. The president of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmanov, has managed to sustain a relative peace between diverse ethnic, geographical, political, and religious divisions; however, the uneasy peace can be seen as a reflection of the war-weariness of the Tajiks after the 1992-1997 civil war.

The creation of a stable and inclusive national identity for the country is of primary importance, as the return of ethnic conflict and the rise of armed Islamist militant groups is a constant, if muted, possibility. In this context, the Tajiks have returned to the glories of the Persian Empire that stretched from central Asia to the Deccan Plateau, a cultural heritage based on inclusion instead of exclusion, on poetry and music, not polemics and martyrdom. Rediscovering their heritage has not been easy for the Tajiks, however, especially as much of their culture was suppressed during Soviet occupation and domination by other foreign powers. Similarly, some people today think that the economic conditions were more stable under the Soviets. While the Soviets are not considered to have been respectful of Tajik culture, they did form the modern Tajik national identity through their delineation of the region and its people within the Soviet Union. They also played a role in preserving Tajik musical traditions and notating their classical music composition forms, such as Shesh maqam. Some Soviet legacies, such as the use of an Islamic first name and a Russian last name, are still widely visible. In this delicate balance, the reach into the past is counterbalanced by the grasping of the future in the process of modernization. In order to create a new country, the Tajiks look to their rich Islamic heritage, but a strong Soviet influence is present in both infrastructure and social systems.

In the center of town, the once towering statue of Lenin has been replaced by one of Shah Ismail Samani, whose countenance graces the round and static King Samani, who represents the reclamation of the grandeur of Persian and Aryan high culture.

The white SUVs of the many foreign aid organizations in Dushanbe interrupt this mute dialogue between two very different world views and civilizations with the representation of a third way, that of the capitalistic West. In the ambitions of the young and the pulsating beat of the two discothèques in the city, there is an attempt to live an entirely new type of life. I gave a talk at college in Dushanbe in May 2007 on the connections between Indo-Persian and Central Asian culture, and was struck, not by the expected desires to embrace Western culture and to travel abroad, but by the intense pride in their own cultural heritage and the belief that Tajikistan could emulate the West, yet still maintain its cultural heritage. Many students asserted that they would like to go abroad, not to live, but to gather information which could be used to benefit their own country.

This openly stated purpose should be understood in the context of a society that was replete with informants under Soviet rule, and the fact that the civil war only ended in 1997. Tajikistan is an artificial construction, lines drawn on a map that represented the political conflicts of the “Great Game” fought between Russia and the British during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The distinction of the Tajik language itself from Persian was the justification for the creation of a separate state under the Soviets. Under the Soviets, practicing Islam and even writing in the Arabic script was severely repressed. During Soviet time a Tajik could be executed for not using Cyrillic script or for going to the Mosque. People kept religion alive during Soviet time through practice underground.

Inner Versus Outer World

My initial observation in arriving at my home stay in Dushanbe was a sense of disappointment, viewing a narrow alley that led down to a nondescript door. However, when my hostess, a gracious and articulate woman who taught psychology at the University of Dushanbe, opened the door, I was taken aback. Behind the door was not a room, but a series of separate rooms that opened out onto a small farm, plots of roses, cascading grape vines, and rows of vegetables. My room contained a workable piano,
collections of western musical scores, and thick Persian carpets. The intimation of a separate inner world, sustained by art, music, and poetry, that existed as an alternative to outer strife and conflict, was mirrored by the walled garden in which I would live.

This focus on the interior world as opposed to the outer world is a commonality among the countries I have visited, but it is a distinction that changes depending on individual value systems of a particular nation. In Tajikistan, there is a movement toward more focus on interior life; that is, less on material wealth and more on non-tangible riches. Materialism is attributed to Western culture and seen as against Islam. It is a contrast to the worldview in which value is placed in possessions in social status and the tangible riches. Materialism is used to back up the reader as a kind of authority. It is similar to an experience I had in India in which Rumi would often be used to interpret current political crises. A professor I studied under would take a Rumi quote and use it to explicate political situations, showing that Rumi is not only relevant to daily life but that he provides solutions to global conflicts. In the same regard, poetry could be used to resolve social conflicts.

In regard to the use of contemporary poetry to express political views, Tajik vernacular poetry in Cyrillic did emerge at the end of Soviet era. There is still a great deal of censorship, however, and this is revealed in a notable caution in public speech. This presents yet another reason for reaching back to classical music and poetry. Classical poetry often is reinterpreted with new political meanings and is used to mold the Tajik national identity. After all, who can be offended by classical poetry? The Tajik people are creating distinct national identities by reconstructing history over conflicting ethnic, political, and economic divisions. They are reconstructing history and the notable resurgence in classical music and poetry is a key element of this hardening back to the heyday of the Samanid Kingdom. Music, poetry, and art are also used to link into the past and create identity.

Rudaki is one of Tajikistan’s national poets. This is a poem inscribed on Rudaki’s monument in Dushanbe (translated by Hans Utter): “All who cannot learn from time’s progression are unreachable by any teacher’s erudition.”

**Tajik Poetic Heritage**

I soon found that poetry was not simply the remnant of a nostalgically framed past, but a living text that found its way into daily conversation, speeches at weddings, and Tajik popular music. My room was located near the main street in Dushanbe, named after one of the earliest Persian poets, the 10th century Rudaki. The city was preternaturally calm, especially after my experiences in Southeast Asia, and the wide, tree-lined streets reminded me of a European capitol in the 19th century. Fountains abounded, cascading in front of neoclassical architecture in the grandiose Soviet style. Relaxed, open-air cafés were interspersed with small shops and government buildings. Many women dress traditionally, but just as many would not be out of place in a Paris discotheque. Most of the men have adopted Western modes of dress, but the occasional traditionally bearded Imam can also be seen.

Poetry is a major part of Tajik life, and I was able to experience it firsthand when I was invited by a professor who was also interested in poetry to recite Omar Khayyam in Farsi on the radio. Unlike in the United States, classical poetry quotations and performances are a regular part of Tajik life. Classical music and poetry are often used even in common speech, as I experienced in talking with taxi drivers. Similarly, when I went to weddings, the band would stop playing and guests would come up and speak about the bride or groom and then recite poetry. The readers would interpret the poem and its significance toward the family as a way to express their emotions. In the taxi and wedding situations—and especially in talking about politics—poetry is used to clarify and give legitimacy to points; the famous author is used to back up the reader as a kind of authority. It is similar to an experience I had in India in which Rumi would often be used to interpret current political crises. A professor I studied under would take a Rumi quote and use it to explicate political situations, showing that Rumi is not only relevant to daily life but that he provides solutions to global conflicts. In the same regard, poetry could be used to resolve social conflicts.

**Tajik Musical Heritage**

It is in poetry as well as music that the current administration is attempting to create a common, national identity that will transcend the ideological and ethnic fault lines of Islam, Marxism, and capitalism, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Pamiris, and Russians. The national music form of Tajikistan is known as Shesh Maqam, which means, literally “Six Modes.” It is an irony of history, perhaps, that the only aspect of traditional Tajik culture that was allowed to thrive under the Soviets was their music, and that this music is currently the vanguard of the manufacturing, or revivifying, of a national identity. Tajik classical music is fundamentally grounded in poetry. Not only are the song texts derived from the great Persian poets like Hafiz, Rumi, Rudaki, and Omar Khayyam, but the rhythms, the foundations of all musical performances, are based on the numerous and complex meters found in traditional poetic forms such as the ghazal, rubaiyat, and qaṣida. The music, unlike Persian, Arabic, or Hindustani music, is composed and orchestrated and contains a minimum of improvisation. The process of taṣīm, the free elaboration of the maqam’s melodic material, is central to Arabic and Persian music, and its absence from Tajik music perhaps indicates the heavy hand of Stalinist cultural czars.

Tajik culture is more homogenous than India’s, which is where I have conducted most of my field research, focusing on Hindustani musical forms. Using music for a reinvention of national identity has been very successful in Tajikistan because there is a strong cultural resonance and a sense of cultural release from having their own nation not under Soviet control. The national music has a very unique style that I have not heard anywhere else. It creates a unified identity among the diverse groups within the country.

Another reason for the unified musical style of Tajikistan is that Tajikistan is a smaller country. But also, music provides cultural resonance and incorporates national identity through ancient poetry and history. Likewise, music cuts across clan and ethnic lines; even Uzbeks have part in musical tradition. Uzbeks are considered great performers of the shesh maqam. Improvisation is not an important feature of music in Tajikistan (unlike in India) and a key reason for this is that the Soviets only preserved music that the Soviet government found acceptable and not “pretentious.” Music, therefore, became fixed and incorporated Western ideas of music from Soviets (notation, classical, symphonic). Music of the people (narodnost) was promoted and Tajik music was only preserved if it fell in accordance with this...
Notes from the Field
(continued from page 11)

Soviet interpretation of the purpose of art. Any remnants of improvisation disappeared during Stalinism and by the hand of the Soviet board of censorship.

Potential for Violence
My past experiences in Kashmir led to expectations of military and police checkpoints, boarded-up and ruined buildings, and the constant threat of attack. The fear of an attack becomes more debilitating than the actual incident, as it destabilizes the basic security that we rely on in day-to-day life, and that we generally take for granted in the West. This feeling has profound psychological effects. My first view of the vista of the Dushanbe airport reinforced my mental pictures, as I saw the debris of abandoned or destroyed aircraft, and a small fleet of Soviet era MIG fighters parked next to the runway. The first time I visited Tajikistan, however, I did not experience any violence, but the second time there were a few moments of fear. In one instance, I thought that I was going to have to drive through Afghanistan and fly out of Kabul to leave the country because of a flight mix-up, but luckily this did not happen. I also found the checkpoints quite scary. On one occasion I had to sit down in road at checkpoint and play Sitar to prove to the guards it was an instrument and not a weapon. There was a general sense that real problems in Tajik society/government were percolating, but I never felt in imminent danger. That said, there was an understanding conveyed to me by the locals as to just how fragile the peace was and what actions by individuals might return the country to war.

While there is extremism in Tajikistan, it is not among the majority of the people. Instead, a focus on heritage has provided a more positive way for preserving identity. Most generally, the causes of extremism are a feeling of being culturally beset. In Tajikistan, this trend is being combated through an alternative model which gives citizens an identity as Muslims with great cultural heritage, needlessly of any Islamic faction.

Conclusion
The government’s intent to use music and poetry to create national unity is evidenced by the constant musical performances on television, in universities, and theaters. The impressive statue of Samani in the heart of Dushanbe reflects the glorious past of the golden age of the Samanid Dynasty, beckoning the country into a new golden age. Yet, is something so seemingly fragile as music and poesy sufficient to keep the floodwaters of conflict from erupting again? There are no easy answers to this question, as the fiery constructions and reconstructions of 20th-century history cast shadows on both the skyscraper and the mosque.

Faculty Activities

Howard Federspiel
Department of Political Science

The book covers the rise and development of Islam in Southeast Asia, beginning in the period between 700 to 1300 and ending in 2000. It describes the growth of a belief system that first had to compete with other belief systems—Hinduism, Buddhism, and animism—and accordingly developed a hybrid culture that allowed accommodation with existing cultures already existing in Southeast Asia. The spread of Islam was somewhat uneven, showing the heavy influence of Middle Eastern Islam in places like Aceh, Johore, and Sulu, while demonstrating light influence in the interior areas, such as at Minanakabau (on Sumatra) and at central Java. Over time, however, Islam strengthened itself and made a heavy impact on the cultures of Southeast Asian region, so that today standard Islamic practices are common throughout the region. The book examines, in particular, the role of Islam in government where it operated a sultan system that was a hallmark of the region for many centuries and also developed Islamic boarding schools as a primary means of fostering orthodoxy among the population. The study shows how mysticism was an instrument of conversion and how warfare was used by some sultans to spread their influence and, incidentally, that of Islam as well. The influence of Islamic literature from the Middle East and India also are examined and how the architecture of the mosque and religious buildings underwent a vast revolution over time. Finally, the book details the challenge of Islam to modern nationalism and its failure to date, except in Brunei, to dominate the political life of the various nations in Southeast Asia where Muslim constitutes either majorities or significant sections of the population. The book is the first of its kind to treat the entire Muslim population of eight countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam) as a single unit and to show a common identity of that population. As such, it offers a macro-view of Southeast Asia while, at the same time, giving considerable information through the use of case studies drawn across the historical time frame and geography as well.

Carole Fink
Department of History
“The Refugee Crisis on the Eve of World War II” at the annual Dolowitz Lecture on Human Rights, Salt Lake Art Center, University of Utah: Salt Lake City, Utah.

“The Palestine Question and the Paris Peace Conference” at the International History Institute conference, Boston University: Boston, Mass.

“Minority Rights/Human Rights” to the history department and “Bonn-Washington-Jerusalem: The Struggle over Ostpolitik” to the Faculty Research Seminar, University of Tennessee at Knoxville: Knoxville, Tenn.


In 2007, Professor Fink was also reappointed to a three-year term on the board of the journal Contemporary European History and received The Ohio State University Distinguished Scholar award.

Timothy Gregory
Department of History


Richard Herrmann
Department of Political Science
The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences selected Professor Herrmann as a recipient of the Joan N. Huber Faculty Fellowship for 2007. He has also been appointed as the director of Academic Affairs at the Office of International Affairs. Herrmann is the director of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies (mershoncenter.osu.edu).
Rattan Lal
School of Environment and Natural Resources

William Liddle
Department of Political Science

Sylvia Wing Önder
Ohio State alumna, former MESC FLAS fellow and visiting assistant professor of Turkish language and culture at Georgetown University

Protecting the health of family members is one of the major responsibilities of women in the Turkish family. Studying women’s changing roles from within a rural family, the author presents a complex network of social relations which incorporates both traditional healing methods such as bone-setting and the services of the nationally sponsored health clinic. Following a patient-centered ethnographic approach, the book reveals the community’s construction of the “natural” caring of mothers, wives, daughters, and daughters-in-law; Muslim practice and Islamic revivalism; tradition and modernity; global, national, and regional identity; and gender shape local concepts of health and illness. For example, a villager who does not believe that microbes cause illness may be flown to relatives in Germany for a surgical operation. Describing the verdant and rugged coast and the everyday life of the spirited individuals who inhabit it, this study examines the metaphors used to describe the body and its suffering—from birth to death—and places a small Black Sea village community in the global context of labor migration, religious trends, and medical technologies.

Academic Year 2007-2008 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellows

The Middle East Studies Center is pleased to announce that we have awarded the following graduate students at Ohio State a FLAS Fellowship for the 2008 academic year:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Language</th>
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<tr>
<td>Steven Hyland, Jr.</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
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<td>Michael Ewers</td>
<td>Geography</td>
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<td>Jennifer Nowlin</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
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<td>Jennifer Regan</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
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<td>Shahreena Shahrani</td>
<td>NELC</td>
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<td>Farah Shadchehr</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
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<td>Benjamin Gatling</td>
<td>NELC</td>
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<td>Catalina Hunt</td>
<td>History</td>
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<td>Lesley Ann Gregoricka</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
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<td>Ryan Phillips</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
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Student Resources and Recognition

MESC Endorses Domestic Summer Intensive Language Programs

These programs were offered in 2007 and are suitable for Summer Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellows. Check individual program web sites for more details and 2008 dates as they are announced—usually late in fall or early winter quarters. MESC offers FLAS Fellowships in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish that can support students enrolled in these programs.

Grant Award Profile

by Michael Ewers
PhD Student in Geography

For the summer of 2007, I received a Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. This award included two proposal development workshops (spring in Denver, fall in St. Louis) and provided funds for a three-week trip to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to conduct pre-dissertation research. While the primary focus of my past trips to the Middle East has been military duty, tourism, language study, or conferences, this trip was strictly for finding data and making contacts. Ohio State economist Hassan Aly played an instrumental role in providing me with names of people to contact: engineers at the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, representatives from Chambers of Commerce, labor economists, and even the secretary general of the national university. In addition, I was able to make contact with other academics and representatives at government ministries. Late at night in Columbus, I would call these people, introduce myself, and ask for meetings in Arabic.

My dissertation is focused on the role of highly skilled expatriate labor (primarily Westerners) in the economic development of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—from the time of the ’70s oil boom until today. Economic development in the Gulf has been and continues to be characterized by large flows of skilled and unskilled workers from developed and underdeveloped regions of the world. One of the main concerns in the Gulf is whether or not the local labor force will be able to replace or compete with skilled expatriates as the countries diversify their economies.

The context of Gulf economic development has been generally addressed as a single, shared history, despite a great deal of diversity in this sub-region of the Middle East. Across the region, and especially at the sub-national level, there are wide varieties of natural resource and labor endowments, economic development dynamics, and diversification efforts. During my summer trip to the Gulf, I realized that the United Arab Emirates and its individual Emirates provide a microcosm for this diversity and an excellent case study to understand the lessons and legacies of the past in Gulf development, as well as the future potential.

The United Arab Emirates, formed as it is seen today in 1972, is a federation consisting of what were previously seven individual trucial states or sheikhdoms, now termed Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain. Generally, the Emirates can be broken down into three main groups: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and the Northern Emirates. Abu Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates and the overwhelming source of its oil wealth, representing the classic model of an oil-state. Dubai has used its past history and comparative

Summer Intensive Language Study: Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish
The University of Chicago
Cover a year’s worth of language instruction in nine weeks of intensive study.
Web site: summer.uchicago.edu/intensive-language-study.cfm

Summer Intensive Persian and Turkish at the University of Chicago
Eastern Consortium
Provides intensive instruction in elementary and intermediate Persian and Turkish, and Advanced Turkish. The Eastern Consortium is a cooperative arrangement of the Title VI National Resource Centers of Columbia, Georgetown, Harvard, New York, Ohio State, Yale, and Princeton Universities, and the Universities of Chicago, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.
Web site: www.cmes.uchicago.edu/easternConsortAnnounce.shtml

Summer Arabic and Persian Immersion Programs
University of Wisconsin
Are you ready to sign a language contract agreeing to speak only in Arabic or Persian for eight straight weeks? If so, this full-immersion program is for you.
Web site: global.wisc.edu/apip/index.htm

Summer Intensive Arabic Program
Brigham Young University
The Center for Language Studies at Brigham Young University (BYU) began offering first- and second-year intensive Arabic during summer term. This is an excellent domestic program choice for those looking for greater colloquial study. First-year intensive focuses on Egyptian Arabic and second-year intensive continues Egyptian but includes Modern Standard Arabic.
Students must follow the BYU Honor Code.
Web site: asiane.byu.edu/arabic/index.php?content=courses/SummerIntensive

Verses of the Qur’an in Kufic script

Iranian boats, United Arab Emirates
MESC Endorses Summer and Academic Year Language Programs Abroad

These programs were offered in 2007 and are suitable for Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellows. Check individual program web sites for more details and 2008 dates as they are announced—usually late in fall or early winter quarters.

MESC offers fellowships in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish that support students enrolled in these programs.

Critical Language Scholarships for Intensive Summer Institutes
Arabic, Persian, and Turkish

The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers

Beginning in 2006, the U.S. Department of State and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers have been offering scholarships for intensive summer language study. While the status of the program has not yet been announced for 2008, students may want to learn about this program, its offerings, and requirements in preparation for the coming year.

Undergraduate, master’s, and PhD students are eligible, and, unlike the NSEP, there is no service requirement for receiving the scholarship. Examples of programs include:

- **Beginning and Intermediate Turkish** – American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) at Bosphorus University
- **Intermediate and Advanced Persian** – American Institute of Iranian Studies (AIIRs) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan
- **Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Arabic** – Cairo, Amman, Sana’a, Tangier, and Tunis

Web site: [www.clscholarship.org/programs.php](http://www.clscholarship.org/programs.php)

Fast-Track Intensive Arabic Program in Amman

The University of Arizona’s Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the National Middle Eastern Language Resource Center (headquartered at Brigham Young University)

This is a new summer intensive language program in Amman, Jordan, for Modern Standard and Jordanian Colloquial Arabic. Students share apartments or stay with families in Amman. Admission is competitive.

Web site: [studyabroad.arizona.edu/display_program.php?id=171](http://studyabroad.arizona.edu/display_program.php?id=171) or [www.nmelrc.org/](http://www.nmelrc.org/)

Persian Overseas Flagship Program

American Councils for International Education and the National Language Flagship Program

American Councils has announced a Persian Overseas Flagship Program as part of the National Flagship Language Program (NFLP) beginning in 2007–2008. This program is intended to help advanced-level Persian or Tajik students achieve the highest levels of language proficiency, and admission is competitive. This intensive academic year program is held at the Dushanbe Language Center and Tajik State National University in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Web site: [www.americancouncils.org/programs.php?program_id=MTAz](http://www.americancouncils.org/programs.php?program_id=MTAz)

advantage as a trade hub with India as a strength on which to diversify, boasting Jebel Ali Port as the largest human-made harbor and dry docks in the world. They are also emphasizing tourism and service sector development as economic growth strategies. The Northern Emirates have little or no oil and have had to find alternative economic strategies and niches in the shadows of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Since scholarly and media attention began to be drawn to Dubai, particularly in the last five years, there has been an increasing conflation of Dubai’s experience with the entire United Arab Emirates. Little work has examined the diversity in the Emirates or outcomes of the distinction between the extreme wealth in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and the extreme poverty in some of the other Emirates.

As a FLAS fellow who has spent most of his language study focusing on Arabic as it is used in the Mediterranean Arab countries, researching the Gulf has presented some unique challenges. First, Gulf dialect is very distinct from Levantine or North African. Secondly, learning this dialect has been especially difficult in the context of majority non-Arab populations and ubiquitous use of English. Traveling outside of the large Gulf cities, like Abu Dhabi or Dubai, has provided me with the best opportunities to utilize my Arabic abilities. Lastly, I have to overcome the stereotypes that come with being an American, non-Arab Arabic speaker. I have had significant practice in overcoming this misperception in each of my travels to Middle East countries. While the Gulf represents a unique sub-region of the Middle East, as is true throughout the region, the hospitality and generosity are overwhelming.
The Portrayal of the Middle East in Secondary School U.S. Textbooks

Author: Brockway, Elizabeth Marie
Degree: Master of Public Administration (MPA), Bowling Green State University, Public Administration, 2007
Advisor: Marc Simon

This thesis has provided the analytical framework to answer the question: Do American junior and high school world history textbooks present a biased perception of the Middle East? Through both quantitative and qualitative research, this study has found that the 10 world history textbooks analyzed presented a biased perspective of the Middle East through word use, omission of data, and the presentation of inaccurate information. The thesis is divided into five chapters, summarized as follows: Chapter One discusses current textbook content standards, explains the process of textbook adoption, and presents the purpose of the study. Chapter Two discusses political socialization and its role in this study, followed by theories on where the pre-existing bias against the Middle East comes from, and concludes with a review of the findings from previous studies. Chapter Three then explains and justifies the methodology used, including the quantitative ECO analysis created by Pratt (1972) and the development and use of the qualitative rubric. The results of a preliminary study are presented followed by the evaluation of alternative research designs and the discussion of the study’s strengths and weaknesses. Chapter Four presents the results of both analyses with tables and examples to heighten understanding and finally, Chapter Five explains the conclusions of the study including implications for socialization theories, previous research, and policy, and concludes with recommendations for future research.

A Rhetorical Examination and Critique of Hezbollah, the Party of God

Author: Kahil, Souhad
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Bowling Green State University, Communication Studies, 2006
Advisor: Alberto Gonzalez

Rhetorical examination and critique of Hezbollah—the Party of God—is an analysis and interpretation of Hezbollah as a social movement whose discourse is rooted in Arabic and Islamic discourse traditions. Hezbollah is a poorly understood movement, portrayed as a one-dimensional terrorist group. Hezbollah members are portrayed as plane hijackers, kidnappers, and suicide bombers. But the Party of God has a rhetorical life—even the rhetorical construction of the martyr is worth examination from a cultural perspective. The following study examines how persuasive discourse constructs Hezbollah identity and purpose. Further, this study examines how the political and military elements in the context of Lebanese modernism are reflected in movement’s discourse.


Author: Smith, Kyle Michael
Degree: Master of Arts (MA), Bowling Green State University, History, 2006
Advisor: Gary Hess

This thesis examines the phenomenon of political Christian Zionism and its influence on U.S. policy toward Israel from 1977 to 1998. While there is a vast literature on America Middle East policy and the relationship between the United States and Israel, relatively little attention has been given to the actions of Christian evangelicals on behalf of Israel. Motivated by an eschatological system called dispensationalism, these Christian Zionists supported Israel through a variety of activities, including direct lobbying at the congressional level. Forming alliances with the Jewish pro-Israel lobby and the Israeli Likud party, Christian Zionists were active in pressuring Congress to oppose arms sales to Arab countries and gaining recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The rise to political prominence of the Christian Right during the 1980s and 1990s facilitated the growth and influence of Christian Zionist efforts, connecting dispensationalism to political power as never before. While scholars in the field of diplomatic history have noted the strategic and economic concerns that drove U.S. policy toward Israel, as well as the influence of the American Jewish community and its lobby, they have failed to adequately understand or integrate the profound political actions of Christian Zionists. By examining the role that Christian Zionism has had in the myriad factors that have influenced U.S. policy toward Israel, a more complete understanding of the dynamics of the U.S.-Israeli relationship is gained. In short, this thesis adds Christian Zionism to the matrix of factors currently identified as underlying the unique partnership between the United States and Israel.
The Integration of Computer Technology in an Eighth-Grade Male Social Studies Classroom in the United Arab Emirates

Author: Al-Mujaini, Ebrahim Y.
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Ohio University, Education, 2006
Advisor: Sandra V. Turner

This study described an eighth-grade classroom environment in the United Arab Emirates where computers were used as a tool in teaching social studies. It was conducted in a naturalistic setting where different activities and interactions were observed and explained. The study investigated both the teacher’s perceptions and students' attitudes toward using computer technology for a social studies class. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered to describe and explain what happened in the eighth-grade social studies classroom, which consisted of 28 male students between 13 and 14 years of age. In the qualitative segment of the study, a 20-item Computer Attitude Questionnaire was administered to determine any significant differences in students' attitudes towards computer importance, computer enjoyment, and computer anxiety through the use of computer-enhanced instruction in their classroom. A two-tailed pairwise sample t-test at the .05 significance level was conducted to examine students’ change in attitudes regarding each item. The results of the two-tailed t-test showed that the students’ perceptions towards computer importance were not significant; in contrast, when it came to the students’ perceptions of computer enjoyment and computer anxiety, the results of the two-tailed t-test showed positive improvement. In the qualitative part of the study, three different sources of data were employed to understand and describe the cooperative computer-based learning environment: student interviews, students’ written reflections, and the teacher’s personal observation notes. The three main themes that emerged during data analysis were students' sense of empowerment through presentations, rapport and support among students, and cooperation among students.

Measuring Arab Immigrant Women’s Definition of Marital Violence: Creating and Validating an Instrument for Use in Social Work Practice

Author: Abdel Meguid, Mona Bakry
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy, Ohio State University, Social Work, 2006
Advisor: Denise E. Bronson

Despite growing evidence that immigrant women are at risk of becoming victims of domestic violence, there has been little effort until recently to address intimate partner violence in the increasing immigrant populations in the United States. Evidence in the literature indicates that the severity as well as prevalence of intimate partner violence may be higher among immigrant groups. Suffering coupled with partner violence is additionally associated with problems related to immigration and acculturation. Yet, previous studies on intimate partner violence have rarely regarded the immigration status of the victim or the specific cultural and religious background of the immigrants. The purpose of this study was to design a valid and reliable instrument, a Likert-type scale that measures Arab-Muslim women’s perception of marital violence. The study examined 224 Arab-Muslim women's definition of marital violence, help-seeking sources they might consult in case of marital violence, and barriers they might perceive in seeking outside help. The results indicated the length of stay Arab-Muslim women have been in the United States and the amount of education they have received influence their perception of marital violence and their help-seeking preferences.

Acculturation Factors among Arab/Moslem Women Who Live in the Western Culture

Author: Al-Ma’seb, Hend
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy, Ohio State University, Social Work, 2006
Advisor: Maria Julia

The purpose of this study was to explore the cultural changes experienced by Arab/Moslem women residing in Columbus, Ohio, during the winter 2006 based on the six indicators of religion, relationships with non-relative men, living alone, control over decisions, drinking alcohol, and smoking cigarettes. This study also intended to discover the predictive relationship between the period of time that Arab/Moslem women stay in the United States, contact with American culture and people, contact with Arab culture and people, educational level, and acculturation. One hundred and two Arab/Moslem women were recruited through the Islamic organization in Columbus, Ohio. Non-probability data collection method (convenience sampling) was utilized. The participants responded to a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the first research question (To what extent do Arab/Moslem women who live in Columbus, Ohio acculturate?). Multiple regression analysis was conducted to answer the second research question (Can a model consisting of a linear combination of the period of time that Arab/Moslem women stay in the United States, contact with American culture and people, contact with Arab culture and people, and educational level predict the level of acculturation of the Arab/Moslem women living in Columbus, Ohio?). The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the Arab/Moslem women who live in Columbus, Ohio, were not acculturated to the American culture. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable of acculturation and three of the independent variables (the period of time that Arab/Moslem women stay in the United States, contact with American culture and people, contact with Arab culture and people). However, the relationship between the dependent variable of acculturation and the independent variable of educational level was not statistically significant.
Songs for the First Hebrew Play
Tsahut bedihuta dekidushin by Leone de’ Sommi (1527–1592)

Author: Levenstein, Anna Shaari  
Degree: Doctor of Musical Arts, Case Western Reserve University, Early Music Performance, 2006  
Advisor: Ross W. Duffin

The first Hebrew play, Tsahot bedihuta dekidushin (A Comedy of Betrothal/Wedlock), a commedia erudita in five acts, was written in Mantua in the 1550s by Leone de’ Sommi (1527-1592), a playwright whose specialty was the production of theatrical intermedi. This document includes a study of the musical milieu of the play and an edition of songs arranged by combining secular Italianate Hebrew lyric poetry with Italian musical styles current during the late-16th and early-17th centuries. The cultivation of Hebrew secular poetry and the proficiency of song composition and performance by artists surrounding Leone de’ Sommi, both in his lifetime and in the years following, all point to a strong possibility that similar songs were heard at performances of this first Hebrew play.

Crossing the Strait from Morocco to the United States: the Transnational Gendering of the Atlantic World before 1830

Author: Robinson, Marsha R.  
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy, Ohio State University, History, 2006  
Advisor: Claire Robertson

This world women’s history is a comparative legal study tracing 2,000 years of cultural contact through 1830 between the Saharan-based, gynecentric, Berian culture foundational to the Maliki Islam of the Berbers, Southern Arabs and Iberians, and the Mesopotamian and eastern Mediterranean patriarchy foundational to West Asiatic Islam and Western Christianity. The work explores the female-friendly Berian values common to the Saharan salt marsh diaspora and Almoravid Andalusia and North Africa, correcting patriarchal Sassanid influences upon Abbasid and Almohad omissions of female politicians from their imperial histories of the Maghrib. The European patriarchal bias began during Isabel I’s Reconquista Spain when the Spanish Inquisition attempted a purge of Berian matriliney. It continued with British harem envy, hyper-virility, and political jealousy as Anglo-Americans engaged Barbary states. Western Christian philosophers, Freemasons, politicians, and ministers used misperceptions of the harem to limit Western women’s economic and legal rights. In the U.S., this resulted in the simultaneous rise of domesticity, left-handed marriages, and de facto American polygyny. The Berber cultural influence on the U.S. occurred in the 1833 U.S. v. Percheman decision when the Supreme Court adopted married women’s property rights from the Siete Partidas after the Florida cession.

Recent Events

Shaping of the Modern Middle East Symposium  
Clusters of Interdisciplinary Research on International Themes (CIRIT), the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, and the Middle East Studies Center hosted a panel on post-World War I Ottoman identities and their relationships to the shaping of the Modern Middle East in May. The speakers were Professor Carter Findley of Ohio State, Fred Lawson of Mills College, and Salim Tamari of Bir Zeit University, as well as Joseph Zeidan of Ohio State, who moderated and acted as discussant. World War I period Ottoman identities are frequently misunderstood because of the subsequent emergence of nation-states, which, from a European standpoint, presumably would have been based on established national identities.

The speakers shed light on this period of transition to national identities by covering collective identity concepts and their relation to the formation of the modern Turkish state, the role of nationalism in shaping modern Arab states, and by pointing out the relative absence of an Arab national identity during the Great War as shown through war diaries. The presenters clarified the distinction of Arabism vs. Pan-Arabism, the formation of Turkish nationalism vs. the emergence of a Turkish collective identity, and the variety among Arabs of the Ottoman Empire in their loyalties and self-identified cultural concepts. Participant Joseph Zeidan added a new dimension to the discussion by emphasizing the misperception that all Christians sided with Europeans and were at the forefront of nationalist movements at that time. On the contrary, many Christians sided with Istanbul due to their resistance to conversion and the impending dominance of Europe. One underlying motivation of the missionary schools’ movement to revive Arabic was to divide Arabs and Turks in the Empire. There continued to be solidarity among Ottomans, Arab and Turk, which was demonstrated additionally through the example of Butrus al-Bustani, who, though a prominent Christian Arab figure in the

From left: Findley, Lawson, Tamari, Zeidan
Arabic revival movement, continued to insist that Turkish remain the official language of the Ottoman Empire. Zeidan also pointed out that the Arabic Literary Renaissance was largely due to Ottoman policies, a contradiction to the common idea that it was exclusively due to the Christian missionary schools.

Program:
- Carter Findley - “Collective Identities, from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic”
- Fred Lawson - “The Emergence of the Modern Middle Eastern States-System”
- Salim Tamari - “WWI and the Reconstitution of Ottoman Identity”
- Joseph Zeidan, moderator and discussant

For paper abstracts, see the link from mesc.osu.edu calendar for May 24, 2007.

Ottoman History Lecture Series
The Ottoman History Lecture Series of academic year 2006-2007 was sponsored by the Middle East Studies Center, Department of History, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Department of Comparative Studies, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the Mershon Center, Center for African Studies, Center for Slavic & East European Studies, Melton Center for Jewish Studies, and Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. All of the lectures in the series were available to the Ohio State community and beyond. Seminars included:

- “Muhammad-Centered Religiosity in the Ottoman Empire,” Gottfried Hagen, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
- “A Caliph, a Canal, and 20,000 Cannibals: the Tarih-i Garbi in Historical Perspective,” Giancarlo Casale, University of Minnesota
- “Arab Responses to the Ottomans in Greater Syria from the 16th through the 18th Centuries,” Bruce Masters, Wesleyan University in Connecticut
- “Ottoman Profiles in Courage and Infamy (1750-1850),” Virginia Aksan, McMaster University, Canada

- “Manliness, Male Virtue, and History Writing at the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Court,” Marc D. Baer, University of California - Irvine
- “The BEAST at the FEAST: Animals at Sultanic Festivals in the Ottoman Empire,” Suraiya Faroqhi, History Institute in Berlin

To be included on our announcement list for similar series, please send a request to mesc@osu.edu.

Turkic World Workshop
The Middle East Studies Center at the Ohio State University held an intensive one-day workshop focusing on the history and culture of the Turkic world countries. Presentations delivered by professors from Ohio State and the University of Wisconsin-Madison described those elements that define the region as a whole and its particular countries, geographically, historically, linguistically, and culturally. Speakers illustrated selected issues which helped to define the contemporary culture and civilization of the Turkic peoples. The program was attended by K-12 teachers, community members who wished to enrich their understanding of the Turkic world and its people, as well as graduate students.

The workshop provided seven contact hours of instruction for the teachers. Saturday workshops such as this, including an “Arab World Workshop” and “The Horn of Africa Workshop,” are offered throughout the year—check the web site at mesc.osu.edu or sign up for e-mail announcements by sending a request to mesc@osu.edu.

Institute on Middle Eastern Cultures
The Institute on Middle Eastern Cultures is a comprehensive introduction to Middle Eastern cultures and civilizations for teachers, offered every year by the Middle East Studies Center. Now offered as T&L 727.28 “Gaining an Understanding of the Middle East,” during spring quarter, the course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of attitudes, ideologies, and cultural patterns of the Middle East. By studying the Middle East with its cultural diversity and richness, teachers become aware of their Middle Eastern students’ background, better understand their cultural point of view, and are more prepared to instruct them. Further, they provide a more complete picture of world history that includes aspects of Middle Eastern intellectual, spiritual, and social heritage in America, and, generally, in the world, and provide teachers meaningful ways to include Middle Eastern topics in their instruction.

The participants of the Institute on Middle Eastern Cultures consisted mainly of Columbus Public Schools teachers, but also included several administrators and clinical professionals. It was an opportunity for them to gain an understanding of Middle Eastern students and patients. Among the teachers, there was a wide variety of grade level and disciplinary focus. Social studies was the most commonly represented subject, but the courses were also attended by math and science teachers, two gym teachers, and an art teacher.

One of the most enriching aspects of the course, for which the teachers gave very positive feedback both in class and in their evaluations, was the series of guest lecturers. The Institute on Middle Eastern Cultures has always featured guest lecturers. This strategy is based on the premise that no single instructor can be an expert on every aspect of the Middle East, but by including an itinerary of a series of guest lecturers and films, students get the most up-to-date and in-depth scholarship on selected aspects. The result is an engaging and dynamic classroom environment. Discussions of culture and cultural activities constituted a significant portion of the course instruction as well.

MESC in the Classroom
Continuity and continued support are key factors in getting Middle East-related content into P-12 classrooms. To provide teacher support once the courses are over, additional introductory courses and workshops are offered through MESC, including the Horn of Africa (continued on page 20)
Upcoming Programs

*International Education Week – Nov. 12-16, 2007:*

A variety of internationally focused events will be offered during this week, including Middle East Studies Center-sponsored lectures, movies, and cultural activities. A lecture by visiting scholar Tom O’Donnell titled, “Oil in the Global Economy: American Foreign Policy in the Persian Gulf and Venezuela,” will take place on Tuesday, November 13, at 5:30 p.m., in 71 Hagerty Hall (basement level). Co-sponsored by the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center for International Business Education Research (CIBER), and the Middle East Studies Center, the event will be open to the public. Parking is available in the Ohio Union Parking Garage. For further details, see the calendar at mesc.osu.edu and click on “events.”

For information about events from other world areas, go to the Office of International Affairs website, oia.osu.edu.

Check mesc.osu.edu for announcements, or sign up for e-mail announcements by sending a request to mesc@osu.edu.

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**MESC in the Classroom**

(continued from page 19)

Workshop; The Arab World and Turkic World Workshops; IS/NELC 645 “Contemporary Issues in the Middle East”; and public lecture series on current events, historical topics, and multidisciplinary themes. MESC also provides lesson-planning support through a lending library, reviews of materials, one-on-one consultations, a speakers bureau, in-class visits, and other resources. MESC also participates in the training programs of local school districts.

**MIDDLE EAST STUDIES CENTER**

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