Dimensions of the Middle East: Foundations, Cultures, and Geopolitics
A Summer Institute for Educators
Sunday, June 24 – Friday, June 29, 2018 | Duke University
Welcome from the Directors

On behalf of the Duke and UNC communities, and the support of Qatar Foundation International, we’d like to welcome you to our summer institute. We are convinced that there is no functioning democracy without a well-educated citizenry. You all are at the very front lines of this education. We measure the health of a democracy by how our most vulnerable citizens are treated. Along with other vulnerable communities, people of Middle Eastern background and Muslims are among the most vulnerable in our midst. That’s why we are so grateful to have you with us for this week. Welcome, and let us carry on this task of bringing light and education to our embattled democracy.

– Omid Safi, Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center

– Erdag Göknar, Director, Duke Middle East Studies Center
Agenda

Sunday, June 24 | Arrival and Welcome

5:40pm
• Transportation from Aloft Hotel to dinner

7:30pm
• Welcome Dinner at Parizade

Monday, June 25 | Laying the Foundation

7:40am
• Transportation from Aloft Hotel to Duke University

8:00–9:50am
• Welcome, Breakfast, & Introductions

9:50–10:00am
• Break

10:00–11:30am
• A New Middle East?: What’s Happening and Where It’s Heading
  – James Gelvin | Professor in the Department of History, University of California Los Angeles

11:30am–12:10pm
• Lunch

12:10–1:20pm
• Foundations of Islam: Qur’an, Prophets, and Muhammad’s Life
  – Omid Safi | Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center

1:20–1:30pm
• Break

1:30–2:40pm
• Why Teach the Ottoman Empire?
  – Erdag Goknar | Associate Professor in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Director, Duke University Middle East Studies Center

2:40–2:50pm
• Break
2:50–4:10pm

- Religious Diversity of the Middle East
  - Carl Ernst | Kenan Distinguished Professor of Islamic Studies at the Department of Religious Studies, UNC Chapel Hill; co-director, Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations

4:10–4:20pm

- Break

4:20–5:20pm

- Curriculum Connections: Classroom Resources for Teaching About the Middle East
  - Emma Harver | Outreach Coordinator, Duke–UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies
  - Jill Lomanno | Program Associate, Qatar Foundation International

5:30pm

- Transportation from Duke University to hotel
- Free time, Dinner on own

Tuesday, June 26 | Social Movements & Nationalism

8:10am

- Transportation from Aloft Hotel to Duke University

8:30–9:15am

- Breakfast & Small-group Discussion

9:15–10:30am

- Iran, Shi’ism, and the Iranian Revolution
  - Omid Safi | Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center

10:30–10:45am

- Break

10:45am–12:15pm

- An End—Or A Beginning?: The Arab Uprisings of 2011 as History
  - James Gelvin | Professor in the Department of History, University of California Los Angeles

12:15–1:00pm

- Lunch at Duke Dining Hall
1:00–2:45pm

• **Film Screening: The Square**
  
  – Introduction, Miriam Cooke | Braxton Craven Professor Emerita of Arab Cultures, Duke University

2:45–3:00pm

• Break

3:00–4:20pm

• **Contemporary Turkey from Atatürk to the AKP**
  
  – Erdag Goknar | Associate Professor in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Director, Duke University Middle East Studies Center

4:20–4:30pm

• Break

4:30–5:30pm

• **Curriculum Connections: Teaching the Middle East Through Film**
  
  – Eileen Mattingly | Director of Education, Journeys in Film

5:40pm

• Transportation from Duke University to hotel

• Free time, Dinner on own

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**Wednesday, June 27 | Cultures, Identity & Belonging**

8:10am

• Transportation from Aloft Hotel to Duke University

8:30–9:15am

• Breakfast & Small–group Discussion

9:15–10:30am

• **Daily Life in the Middle East Panel**

  **Facilitator:** Omid Safi | Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center

  – Samia Touati | Independent Researcher and Educator

  – Doria El Kerdany | Teaching Assistant Professor in Arabic, UNC Chapel Hill

  – Manal Kahala | MIDP program, Duke University

10:30–10:40am

• Break
10:40–11:50am
- **Women and Leadership in the Arab World**
  - Nadia Yaqub | Department of Asian Studies, UNC Chapel Hill

11:50am–12:15pm
- Transportation from Duke University to Raleigh

12:15–12:45pm
- Lunch at the Islamic Center of Raleigh

12:45–2:10pm
- **Visit Islamic Center of Raleigh**
  - Fiaz Fareed | Outreach Coordinator, Islamic Center of Raleigh

2:10–2:40pm
- Transportation from Islamic Center of Raleigh to Duke University

2:40–3:50pm
- **Panel on Islamophobia**
  - *Facilitator:* Julie Maxwell | Program Coordinator, Duke University Islamic Studies Center
  - Anderson Al Wazni, MSW | Freelance Writer and Speaker
  - Dr. Mehdi Hazari | Resident Scholar/Imam – Islamic Ahlulbayt Association of the Triangle (IABAT), Secretary – Liaison Office of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Al-Sistani in North America
  - Iyman Gaspard | Program Manager, Center for Global Initiatives

3:50–4:00pm
- Break

4:00–5:20pm
- **Curriculum Connections: Facilitating Challenging Conversations in the Classroom**
  - Christoph Stutts | Doctoral Student, Teacher Education and Curriculum, UNC Chapel Hill

5:20pm
- Transportation from Duke University to Durham Cookery

5:30–8:00pm
- Middle East Food Cooking Activity & Group Dinner
- Durham Cookery & Kirk’s Traveling Kitchen

8:00pm
- Transportation from Durham Cookery to hotel
Thursday, June 28 | Geopolitics & Contemporary Issues

8:10am
- Transportation from Aloft Hotel to Duke University

8:30–9:15am
- Breakfast & Small-group Discussion

9:15–10:35am
- Conflict and Peace building in the Middle East
  - Anna Bigelow | Associate Professor of Islamic Studies, North Carolina State University

10:35–10:50am
- Break

10:50am–12:10pm
- A Discussion on the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict
  - Shai Tamari | Associate Director, Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations; Director, Conflict Management Initiative, UNC–Chapel Hill

12:10–12:45pm
- Lunch

12:45–1:45pm
- Breakout Session: Islamic Art & Architecture
  - Omid Safi | Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center

- Breakout Session: (A Very Brief) Introduction to U.S.–Israel Relations
  - Shai Tamari | Associate Director, Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations; Director, Conflict Management Initiative, UNC–Chapel Hill

1:45–2:00pm
- Break

2:00–3:00pm
- Breakout Session: Syria and the Refugee Crisis
  - Barbara Petzen | Director of Training Initiatives, Ashiré-Inamori Leadership Academy, Center for Strategic and International Studies

- Breakout Session: Russia and the Middle East
  - Dimitar Bechev | Research Fellow, Center for Slavic, Eurasian and East European Studies

3:00–3:15pm
- Break
3:15–4:30pm
- **Curriculum Connections: Evaluating Primary Sources on the Middle East**
  - Barbara Petzen | Director of Training Initiatives, Abshire–Inamori Leadership Academy, Center for Strategic & International Studies

4:30pm
- Transportation from Duke University to hotel
- Free time, Dinner on own

**Friday, June 29 | Classroom Connections**

8:10am
- Transportation from hotel to Duke University

8:30–9:00am
- Breakfast

9:00–10:00am
- **Interactive Institute Reflection**
  - Emma Harver | Outreach Coordinator, Duke–UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies

10:00–10:15am
- Break

10:15–11:45am
- **Current Events: Middle East and Islam Roundtable Discussion**
  - Omid Safi | Director, Duke Islamic Studies Center
  - Barbara Petzen | Director of Training Initiatives, Abshire–Inamori Leadership Academy, Center for Strategic & International Studies
  - Ali Askerov | Assistant Professor in the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, UNC–Greensboro

11:45am–12:30pm
- Lunch

12:30–3:30pm
- **Curriculum Connections Workshop**
  - Carina Brossy | Global Education Consultant

3:40pm
- Transportation from Duke University to hotel

4:00–5:00pm
- Closing Reception
- Departures from Durham
Speaker Bios

Ali Askerov, PhD, teaches peace studies at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, UNC–Greensboro. He is a recipient of several prestigious fellowships offered by the US Department of State and the Open Society Foundation. His publications include numerous articles. Ali is also an author or co–author of several books. His research fields include ethnic conflict, terrorism, religious studies, peace education, conflict transformation, qualitative research methods, and the history of political ideas, among others. Ali is a research fellow for the Center for New North Carolinians. He has been interviewed for various televisions numerous times regarding international conflicts, terrorism, and national security issues. Ali’s present research includes ongoing refugee issues, contending interests of Russia and Turkey in Syria, the collusion of legitimate and covert politics in the Middle East, international terrorism, and identity formation and change.

Anderson Al Wazni (MSW) is a 2014 graduate of Smith College School for Social Work whose thesis research, “Muslim Women in America and Hijab: A Study of Female Empowerment, Feminist Identity, and Body Image”, was published in the 2015 NASW Social Work journal. She currently works as freelance writer and speaker on Islamophobia, feminism, and countering extremism. She has also been featured in the Oxford University Press Blog, international religious publications, and is a frequent speaker for social work conferences, university sponsored events, and clinical trainings. In addition to serving as part time lecturer for Smith College School for Social Work Continuing Education Series, Anderson has also branched into writing about the impact of global warming on refugee communities. Outside of social work, she is a part time student in Shia Islamic studies at the Al Mahdi Institute in Birmingham, England. She currently lives in the Triangle area of NC.

Dimitar Bechev is the director of the European Policy Institute, a think–tank based in Sofia, Bulgaria. Previously, he held research fellowships at Harvard University, University of Oxford and the London School of Economics, and headed the Sofia office of the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). Dr. Bechev has written extensively on EU’s external relations, the politics and modern history of Turkey and the Balkans, and Russia’s foreign policy. His book Rival Power, forthcoming with Yale University Press in 2017, explores Russia’s role in Southeast Europe (Balkans, Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey). He is a regular contributor to Al Jazeera, the American Interest, Politico, Foreign Policy, and open Democracy. He holds a D.Phil. (PhD) from the University of Oxford. Dr. Bechev is currently a visiting research fellow at the UNC Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies, examining the foreign policy of hybrid regimes, looking at the cases of Russia and Turkey.

Anna Bigelow is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at NC State University and a recent Carnegie Scholar. She received her MA from Columbia University (1995) and PhD in Religious Studies from UC Santa Barbara (2004) with a focus on South Asian Islam. Her book, Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India (Oxford University Press, 2010) is a study of a Muslim majority community in Indian Punjab and the shared sacred and civic spaces in that community. Bigelow’s current research involves further study of contested and cooperatively patronized multi–religious sacred sites in South Asia and the Middle East, focusing on the inter–religious dynamics that complicate or ameliorate these relations in plural communities around the globe.

Carina Cordero Brosny is a global education consultant who works with K–12 schools, colleges, travel immersion programs and international non–profits to integrate cross–cultural strategies into their curricula and business models. Prior to consulting, Carina served as assistant director for curriculum at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s World View program. There she coordinated globally focused professional development programs as well educator study visits to Honduras, Costa Rica, India, and Russia. As a former middle school teacher, Carina led sister school programs to Canada and South Africa. Carina has degrees in Spanish and International Affairs and speaks Spanish, French, and some Mandarin...but only on good days.
Miriam Cooke is Braxton Craven Professor Emerita of Arab Cultures at Duke University. She has been a visiting professor in Tunisia, Romania, Indonesia, Qatar and Alliance of Civilizations Institute in Istanbul. She serves on several international advisory boards, including academic journals and institutions. Since coming to Duke University she has taught Arabic language and a wide variety of courses on Arabic literature, war and gender, the Palestine–Israel conflict, postcolonial theory. She has directed several study abroad courses in Morocco, Tunisia, Cairo and Istanbul. Her writings have focused on the intersection of gender and war in modern Arabic literature and on Arab women writers’ constructions of Islamic feminism. Her more recent interests have turned to Arab cultural studies with a concentration on Syria, and to the networked connections among Arabs and Muslims around the world. Her latest book dealing with the Art of Syrian Revolution 2011 – 2016 is entitled Dancing in Damascus: Creativity, Resilience, and the Syrian Revolution [Routledge 2016].

Doria El Kerdany is a Teaching Assistant Professor in Arabic in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she is also coordinator of the Arabic language program. She received her M.A. in Teaching Arabic for Non–Arabic Speakers from the American University in Cairo. El Kerdany was born in Cairo, Egypt, but spent her childhood and school years in Mansoura, which is a smaller city in northern Egypt. She received her B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communication from Cairo University and previously worked for Sabah El Kheir magazine in Cairo. She then worked as a teacher and manager of the AUC kindergarten for 9 years. Before joining the Department of Asian Studies at UNC in August 2009, I had taught various levels of Arabic courses (classical and colloquial) at the American University in Cairo. She is also author of the novel, Rimal Na’emah (Fine Quicksand), which won the second–best–selling novel in September 2011 by Kotob Khan, Cairo, Egypt.

Carl W. Ernst is a specialist in Islamic studies, with a focus on West and South Asia. His published research, based on the study of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, has been mainly devoted to the study of three areas: general and critical issues of Islamic studies, premodern and contemporary Sufism, and Indo–Muslim culture. He has received research fellowships from the Fulbright program, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and he has been elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His current research projects include an edited volume on Islamophobia in America (Palgrave–Macmillan, 2013), studies of Muslim interpreters of Indian religions, and a translation of the Arabic poetry of al–Hallaj. He studied comparative religion at Stanford University (A.B. 1973) and Harvard University (Ph.D. 1981). He has done extended research tours in India (1978–79, 1981), Pakistan (1986, 2000, 2005), and Turkey (1991), and is a regular visitor to the Gulf, Turkey, Iran, and Southeast Asia for lectures and conferences. He has taught at Pomona College (1981–1992) and has been appointed as visiting lecturer in Paris (EHESS, 1991, 2003), the University of Seville (2001), and the University of Malaya (2005, 2010). On the faculty of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since 1992, he has been department chair (1995–2000) and Zachary Smith Professor (2000–2005) as well as member of the Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association. He is now William R. Kenan, Jr., Distinguished Professor (2005– ) and Co–Director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations.

Fiaz Fareed is a nuclear medicine technologist. He is also an executive member of the board of directors of Free Clinic, a member of the diversity council at Wakemed, and a member of the Triangle Interfaith Alliance. He works in outreach for the Islamic Association of Raleigh.

Iyman Gaspard manages federal funding opportunities at the Center for Global Initiatives including the Fulbright–Hays Faculty and Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships. She also serves as the Fulbright U.S. Student Program adviser. Iyman is originally from Sudan and grew up in Egypt and Canada where she earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in political science from the University of Windsor. Most recently she worked at the Middle East Studies Center at Duke University.
James L. Gelvin is Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History at the University of California, Los Angeles. He received his B.A. from Columbia University, his Master's in International Affairs from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He has taught at Boston College, Harvard University, MIT, and the American University in Beirut. A specialist in the modern social and cultural history of the Arab East, he is author of five books: The New Middle East: What Everyone Needs to Know (Oxford University Press, 2017); The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know (Oxford University Press, 2012, 2014); The Modern Middle East: A History (Oxford University Press, 2004, 2007, 2011, 2015); The Israel–Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War (Cambridge University Press, 2005, 2007, 2014); and Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire (University of California Press, 1998), along with numerous articles and chapters in edited volumes. He is also co–editor of Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print, 1850–1930 (University of California Press, 2013). In 2015, Gelvin received the Middle East Studies Association’s Undergraduate Education Award.

Erdağ Göknar is Associate Professor of Turkish & Middle Eastern Studies at Duke University and the director of the Duke University Middle East Studies Center. He is the award winning translator of Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk’s My Name is Red and A.H. Tanpinar’s A Mind at Peace. He is the author of Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel (Routledge 2013). Under the working title Occupied Istanbul, his current research project examines the Allied occupation of Istanbul after World War I.

Emma Harver is the Outreach Coordinator for the Duke–UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies. In her role, she works with K–12 and community college educators across North Carolina to increase understanding of the Middle East. She develops professional development programs and has created or co–created several curriculum units and classroom resources on the Middle East. Harver has traveled to the region with educators, and currently serves on the Executive Board for the Middle East Outreach Council, the North Carolina Council for the Social Studies, and the Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Seminar. In her previous work with LEAF Community Arts, she coordinated cultural arts education programs and residencies in Buncombe County and globally in ten countries. Harver holds a B.A. in Global Studies and Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is currently pursuing a Master’s in International Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Sheikh Dr. Mehdi Hazari is originally from Toronto, Canada. Dr. Hazari received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Florida/Florida Atlantic University, his Master’s degree from the University of Toronto and his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University. He is a neurophysiologist/environmental scientist by profession and studies the effects of air pollution on human health. Dr. Hazari was awarded the 2011 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) by President Barack Obama – The White House. Sheikh Hazari is also the resident scholar (a’lim) and imam of the Islamic Ahlul Bayt Association of the Triangle (IABAT) and a board member and officer of the Imam Mahdi Association of the Marjaeya (I.M.A.M.), which is the liaison office of his eminence Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Ali al–Sistani and other Shia Muslim religious authorities in North America.

Manal Kahla is an architect and urban planner. Currently, she is enrolled in the Master of International Development Policy Program at Duke. Manal was born and raised in Palestine. She received her B.Sc. in Architectural Engineering from Birzeit University in Palestine and a M.Sc. in Urban planning and studies from Jordan University of Science and Technology in Jordan. In 2013, Manal was selected as an emerging leader and participated in TechWomen program which is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. She has worked extensively in community development–based projects in different geographies in Palestine and is passionate about bringing about social change and improving communities’ quality of life.
Eileen Mattingly is the Director of Education for Journeys in Film, where she plans teaching guides, assembles teams of teachers/authors, and edits their work. She holds a degree in International Studies from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service and an M.A. in History from the Johns Hopkins University. She has taught English and Social Studies for over 35 years, primarily in high school and middle school. She has also served as Director of World Wise Schools, the Peace Corps’ program to teach U.S. students about other cultures. She has written lesson plans for PBS and the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Center for Learning has published a number of her curriculum guides.

Julie Maxwell is the Program Coordinator for the Duke Islamic Studies Center at Duke University in Durham, NC. She holds an M.Div. from Iliff School of Theology in Denver where she concentrated in Islamic Studies and earned a BA in Theology from Elmhurst College. She worked for 5 years at Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago, IL and served for 9 years as the Director of Youth Ministry at First Congregational UCC in Downers Grove, IL. An avid traveler and photographer, she volunteers with the Eno River Association and Full Frame Documentary Festival.

Barbara Petzen is director of Middle East Connections, a not-for-profit initiative specializing in professional development and curriculum development on the Middle East and Islam, global education, and study tours to the Middle East for American educators. Concurrently, she is past president of the Middle East Outreach Council, a national consortium of educators working to further Americans’ understanding about the Middle East. She is also director of training initiatives at the Abshire–Inamori Leadership Academy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, developing executive education for global audiences and other training programs.

Petzen previously worked as education director at the Middle East Policy Council and as outreach coordinator at Harvard University’s Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and taught courses on Middle Eastern history, Islam, and women’s studies in Nova Scotia, Canada, while studying in the Ph.D. program in history and Middle Eastern studies at Harvard University until she left the program after 9/11 to focus on public education. Petzen earned an Ed.M. in learning design and leadership at the University of Illinois, a B.A. in international politics and Middle Eastern studies at Columbia College, and a second honors B.A. as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford University in Oriental studies. Her interests include Ottoman and Middle Eastern history, gender in the Middle East and Muslim communities, the role of Islam in Middle Eastern and other societies, relations and perceptions between Muslim societies and the West, globalizing K–12 education, and project-based and technology-enhanced learning.

Omid Safi is a leading Muslim public intellectual. He is the Director of the Duke Islamic Studies Center (http://islamicstudies.duke.edu/), one of the leading institutions for research on Islam and promoting publicly accessible scholarship on Islam and Muslim communities worldwide. He specializes in the study of Islamic mysticism and contemporary Islam and frequently writes on liberationist traditions of Dr. King, Malcolm X, and is committed to spiritual traditions that link together love and justice. Omid was recently invited by the family of Dr. Martin Luther King to speak from Ebenezer Church in Atlanta during the national MLK Celebration, and again asked to speak at the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel as part of the 50th annual commemoration for Dr. King. Omid is the past chair for the Study of Islam at the American Academy of Religion. He has written many books, including Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism; Cambridge Companion to American Islam; Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam; and Memories of Muhammad. His most recent book is Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Traditions, which has just been published by Yale University Press. Omid is among the most frequently sought out speakers on Islam in popular media, appearing in The New York Times, Newsweek, Washington Post, PBS, NPR, NBC, CNN, and other international media. He regularly blogs at On Being (https://onbeing.org/author/omid–safi/), and leads a summer program focused on diverse religious traditions in Turkey and Morocco, called http://www.illuminatedtours.com. All of the participants in our program are welcome to take part in Illuminated Tours.
Christoph Stutts is a third-year PhD student in the School of Education at UNC-Chapel Hill. After working as a special education assistant in middle schools for 3 years in California, he taught high school social studies for 10 years in North Carolina, earning a Master of Arts in Teaching as well as National Board Certification. He currently supervises pre-service teachers in North Carolina in their student teaching placements and facilitates curriculum development with veteran social studies educators. As a research assistant, teaching assistant, and teacher educator, Christoph is working within the fields of both teacher education and social studies education to help with the development of more transformative teaching practices. Currently, Christoph is investigating the presence of racial ideology in U.S. History narratives. In addition to his research and teaching, Christoph was a reviewer for the 2017 Handbook of Social Studies Research and serves on the editorial board of the High School Journal.

Shai Tamari is the Director of the Conflict Management Initiative at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and specializes in conflict management training. He teaches both undergraduate- and graduate-level skill-based courses in negotiation and mediation under the Department of Public Policy, Department of Political Science, and the Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense. His previous courses included: “Challenges to Peace-Making in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” “Palestinian Nationalism, Politics, and Diplomacy,” and “U.S.-Israel Relations.” Shai is also the Associate Director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations at UNC, where he administers a federal grant in support of Middle East studies on campus. Prior to his UNC appointments, between 2008 and 2010, Shai was the foreign policy adviser for Congressman James P. Moran (D-VA) at the U.S. House of Representatives, and focused on issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, human rights in Iran, and parental child abduction to Japan. Born and raised in Jerusalem, Shai served in the Israeli military between 1994 and 1997. He earned a B.A. in Journalism from the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia, and a Master’s degree in Near and Middle Eastern Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London in the UK. In 2006, Shai was awarded a Rotary Peace Fellowship and studied for a second Master’s in Global History, along with Arabic and Conflict Resolution at UNC. While a Rotary Peace Fellow, Shai worked in the summer of 2007 with the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) International in Amman, Jordan. Shai is a native speaker of Hebrew, a trained mediator for North Carolina Superior Court Mediated Settlement Conferences, and sits on the Advisory Council of American Near East Refugee Aid.

Samia Touati, Ph.D. is a researcher, educator, and founder of Arab Heritage Learning. Multilingual in Arabic, French and English, Touati specializes in the art of teaching about cultures, arts and languages from the Middle East and North Africa, cultural studies, ethnography, visual culture and healthy lifestyles. Passionate about sharing her multicultural experience from her upbringing, academic interdisciplinary training and travels, Touati seeks to bring more understanding to the community about Arab cultures, and is dedicated to the conservation of the Arab Heritage and creating bridges between the East and West. While living in Qatar, Touati taught at Qatar Academy High school, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, and served as the Research and Editorial Manager, as the founding team of Mathaf Encyclopedia of Modern Art and the Arab World, and authored the first sample artists’ biographies for this Encyclopedia, at Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar.

Nadia Yaqub (PhD University of California, Berkeley, 1999), is professor of Arabic language and culture in the department of Asian studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research addresses film, and literature from the Arab world with particular attention to gender. She is the author of Pens Swords and the Springs of Art: The Oral Poetry Dueling of Weddings in the Galilee (Brill 2006) and Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution (University of Texas Press 2018) as well as numerous articles and book chapters. She also coedited Bad Girls of the World (University of Texas Press 2017) with the late Dr. Rula Quawas, professor of English at the University of Jordan in Amman.