



UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

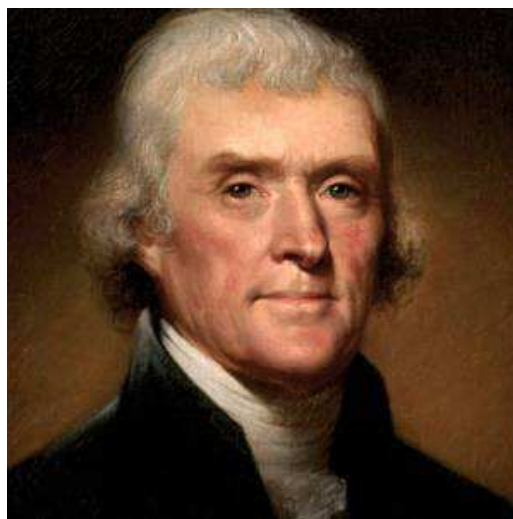
Department of Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures

Spring 2014
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Our First Student:

Thomas Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson

What does a beleaguered President, much criticized for "weakness" in foreign policy, accused even of being a Muslim, do in his spare time? He reads Persian poetry, of course.

While President Barrack Obama has been known to cite the poetry of Sa'di, Hafiz, and Simin Behbahani, the reference here is to our own University of Virginia founder, Thomas Jefferson.

Yes Virginia, it's true. Thomas Jefferson was keenly interested in many of the subjects taught here in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, from linguistics to revolutions to poetry.

Hafiz and Thomas Jefferson's Scrapbooks

The evidence begins in UVA's Albert & Shirley Small Rare Books library, where Thomas Jefferson's personal scrapbooks are preserved. During his eight years as President, (1801-1809) Mr. Jefferson clipped thousands of newspaper items, then organized and pasted them onto used stationary, then bound them into four volumes.

OUR FIRST STUDENT:
continued from page 1

Not discovered until 1998, these fragile and little known scrapbooks contain President Jefferson's clippings of patriotic and virtuous fare intermingled with odes to peace and warnings against war. He even selected satirical screeds that roasted his "d—md embargo." Yet Jefferson's scrapbooks also include sentimental poems on loneliness, sorrow, and yearning, on feelings of grief and "tears" – he lost a beloved daughter while President. Happier odes celebrate romance, love, good wives, kissing, and the virtues of modesty. Then too, there are homages to nature mixed with ruminations on the human predicament; some are hilarious, even bawdy. All suggest sides to Jefferson little known, yet fun to contemplate.

And yes, at least three of the poems in Jefferson's scrapbooks are by Hafiz, the famous 14th Century Persian poet. Among the translated lines,

*Thee, Love, since I first
understood,*

*New pains were my
portion each hour:*

*My heart has run
currents of blood,*

*Since first I experience'd
thy power.*

Remarkably, two of Jefferson's Hafiz selections are very different translations of the same mystical love poem, which alludes to Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Zuleikha in the Qur'an). One version was published by John Haddon Hindley in 1800, while the second one was published by William Jones in 1771, and is well known in literary Europe as "The Persian Song of Hafiz."

Jefferson pasted these two translations side-by-side. No doubt the differences had caught his attention, and Jefferson was already very familiar with William Jones.

Persia Jones

Jefferson's clippings of Persian poetry in English translation were not merely the fruit of a passing fancy, a leisurely hobby of collecting pleasing verses that appeared in newspapers of the day. Long before he was President, Jefferson acquired *Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum*, (1774), an eight volume Latin commentary on Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry, compiled by Sir William Jones, the Oxford orientalist who had gained notoriety as "Persia Jones" for his work on Persian grammar, history, and poetry.

Jefferson obtained Jones' *Commentariorum* in 1778 from the stranded library of his friend Samuel Henley, once a Professor of Moral Philosophy at the College of William and Mary.

Through this work, Jefferson could have gained familiarity not just with Hafiz, but also with Ferdowsi, Sa'di, and Rumi, as well as other Arab and Turkish poets, in the original languages, side by side with Latin translation and commentary.

We can even show that Jefferson had Jones' poetry commentary with him when he was President, when he was clipping Persian poetry. On June 30th, 1807, Jefferson paid a dollar to a Georgetown bookbinder named John March, for a "calf" covered binding of "*Posis Asiatica*" from eight volumes into one.

Jefferson and Jones shared wide-ranging interests and habits of mind. Even more than Jefferson, Jones was a polymath, fluent in over a dozen languages. "Oriental Jones," (another of Dr. Jones' sobriquets) is known best as the "father of modern linguistics," for his work on the connections between Indo-European languages.

Jefferson owned Jones' famous translation of Sanskrit drama, *Sakuntala*, by Kalidasa, the great Hindu poet of the fifth century A.D. Yet Jefferson also owned Jones' authored works on law and in politics, including his famous 1783 pamphlet, *The Principles of Government*, a radical "dialogue between a scholar and a peasant." Inspired by conversations with Ben Franklin, it pushed the envelope enough for Jones to be indicted for sedition.

Thomas Jefferson and Arabic

Beyond reading poetry in translation, Jefferson appears to have had a serious interest in the study of Middle Eastern languages, Arabic in particular. We see this tangibly in the contents of Jefferson's personal library that he sold to the Library of Congress in 1815. This collection included Dutch scholar Thomas Erpenius's six volume Arabic Grammar, *Rudimenta Linguae Arabicae* (1628), and Portuguese scholar Antonio Vieyra's *Specimina Arabica et Persica* (1789 – a guide for studying both Arabic and Persian).

Jefferson also owned *Simplification des Langues Orientales* -- "A New and Easy Method for learning Arabic, Persian and Turkish" -- published in 1795 by his friend Count Constantin-Francois Volney. Among many indications of his high regard for Volney, Jefferson secretly translated the first 20 chapters of Volney's book on revolutions. (completed by Joseph Barlow in 1801 as *Ruins, Or Meditation On The Revolutions Of Empire*)

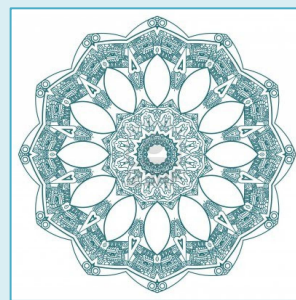
Jefferson's library also included works in Arabic, such as Heinrich Sike's *Infancy Gospel* (with Arabic and Latin text on opposite pages) and a rare copy of *Euclid's Geometry* – as translated into Arabic. (Kitab tahrir usul l-Uqlidus) Jefferson even owned grammar guides for the study of Hebrew and ancient Chaldean and Syriac.

We cannot say how far Jefferson's Middle Eastern language studies advanced. Few scholars have even considered the question. Yet Kevin Hayes offers us this plausible insight into Jefferson's method:

"Jefferson's systematic attempt to learn Arabic closely paralleled the procedure he had established for learning other languages during his student days. He familiarized himself with basic grammar, read a text in the new language with a parallel text in a familiar language adjacent, and then read a familiar text in the new language."

We can surely reason that Jefferson would be pleased to see the attention devoted today at the University he founded to the same languages and cultures for which he demonstrated such a high interest.

WM. SCOTT HARROP



Hindi Detective Fiction

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MESALC, the South Asia Center, the English Department, and the Program in Women, Gender and Sexuality pooled their resources to provide students and faculty with an inspiring talk on the popular genre of Hindi detective literature by Laura Brueck, newly tenured Associate Professor at Northwestern University. Despite the genre's popularity in India, far outselling "serious" literature, and despite its roots going through Bengali and originating in nineteenth century English examples, no one in academia has previously turned his or her attention to it. Professor Brueck gave her talk to an attentive and surprisingly knowledgeable audience on Friday, April 4, in 133 New Cabell Hall.

Well illustrated, with blood-dripping book covers of scantily-clad, pistol-packing broads and victims, Professor Brueck's talk focused on the so-far black-and-white nature of these very "plotty" books. The heroic detective, almost always male, embodies patriarchal and national virtues, the criminal is from a marginal community or more likely has some sort of Western, often particularly American, influence to skew his character, and the victim represents the helpless, oppressed motherland. The Hindi reading public, despite fierce competition for its attention from movies and television, seems not likely to abandon its love for these stories in the future, and it will be interesting to see what happens to the genre as it will inevitably become more sophisticated and take on more sensitive topics such as domestic violence and rape.

BOB HUECKSTEDT

Celebrating MESALC's Achievements

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Griff Chaussee

As the current academic year draws to a close, it's a wonderful opportunity to review some of the developments and achievements MESALC has seen over the past nine months. The number of students graduating this year with MESALC-related degrees continues to be very strong. No fewer than thirty-two students will receive MESALC-related degrees this spring, breaking down as follows:

Middle Eastern and South Asian Masters: 2

Middle Eastern Language and Literature Majors: 6

Middle Eastern Studies Majors: 13

South Asian Language and Literature Majors: 1

South Asian Studies Majors: 3

Middle Eastern Studies Minors: 5

South Asian Studies Minors: 2

These numbers reflect an extraordinarily diverse set of

backgrounds and disciplinary interests, and are a testament to our students' intellectual curiosity about the languages, literatures, and cultures of both the Middle East and South Asia—a geographic distribution, by the way, that comprises almost a third of the world's population.

Of course, one of the prime reasons for such gratifying student interest in MESALC is our faculty, and I'm extremely pleased to announce the addition of two new faculty members to our department. The first is Mahshad Mohit, who began teaching our elementary-, intermediate-, and advanced-level Persian classes for us this past year. She came to us with extensive teaching experience at both Yale University and New York University, and we look very much forward to her continued offerings in the years to come.

The second is Shankar Nair, whom U.Va. recently hired as an Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies. Shankar will begin teaching at U.Va. in the fall of 2014 and will teach one course a year in MESALC. He recently received his Ph.D. from the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University, and comes to us having already taught for a year as an Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Shankar's research and teaching interests make him a perfect fit

for MESALC, specializing as he does in the interaction between Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit intellectual cultures in Mughal South Asia. We look very much forward to welcoming Shankar when he arrives in Charlottesville later this summer.

My space here is limited, so I will mention just one more feather in MESALC's cap from this past academic year. This spring Prof. Hanadi Al-Samman taught a unique advanced Arabic language class (ARAB 4559/8559) entitled "Love, War, and Exile in Hoda Barakat's Narrative Fiction," for which Prof. Al-Samman (with the help of an award from the U.Va. Center for International Studies) brought Ms. Barakat herself to Grounds for the first four weeks of the semester as author in residence. It is precisely this kind of innovative class, in which the students have an opportunity to engage directly with the author of the works they are studying, that makes both our Arabic language program and our department itself so visible and attractive to students across Grounds.

Lastly, as my year as Interim Chair of MESALC draws to a close, I would be remiss if I didn't offer my heartfelt thanks to both Maggie VanEkeren (our Departmental Administrator) and Cameron Clayton (our Administrative Assistant). Without the daily help of these two wonderful people my job would have been all but undoable.

GRIFF CHAUSSEE

My MESALC Experience



Dalia Deak

During my time at the University of Virginia, I had the privilege of taking a number of classes in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures. In these classes, I had the opportunity to delve into the rich history of the Middle East as relayed by writers, poets, and playwrights. Whether I was discussing the political commentary made by a character in a play with Professor Al-Samman, the complexity of prose written during a war with Professor Sawaie, or the many layers of meaning in a single word in the Quran with Professor Obeidat, I found myself rigorously engaged in debates that were both challenging and rewarding. Armed with these experiences, I was better positioned in my job to tackle complex subjects with far-reaching implications. I hope to continue my journey in scholarship that began at UVa, and at MESALC in particular, in my master's program this fall.

Dalia Deak is a 2012 graduate of UVa with a Bachelor's of Science in Biomedical Engineering and a minor in Middle East Studies. After UVa, Dalia joined the Brookings Institution in their Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform, where she focused on medical device evidence and innovation. Dalia will be joining the Harvard School of Public Health in the fall as a master's student in the health policy and management track.

DALIA DEAK

The Other Jordan



Mohammed & Patrick in Irbid, Jordan

I was on the verge of completing the University of Virginia's eight-week Arabic immersion program at Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan when I learned a valuable lesson outside the classroom.

I had befriended Mohammad, a campus security guard. One day, he invited me to his home -- in the Husn Palestinian refugee camp for an *iftar* meal. When we arrived, Mohammad gave me a long tour of his neighborhood. He wove his personal narrative into what life is like in Husn. He articulated the challenges of poverty, bad harvests, scarce water, and overcrowded schools and clinics. After hours of walking and talking in Arabic, Mohammad led me to a large open-air tent with dozens of chairs and large plates of food. Men, young and old, poured into the tent, where we began our *mansef* feast. I struggled to keep up, but the food and conversation flowed.

This amazing experience helped me realize the power of language and direct communication in eliminating pre-conceived notions. If not for my Arabic, however imperfect, I would not have understood Mohammed and his daily struggle to build a better life for his family. I would not have understood the plight of Palestinians living as second-class citizens in Jordan. It helped me connect the dots between the textbooks and physical reality. The Middle East changed for me: it shifted into something real that I can see, hear, smell, feel, and taste -- especially that delicious *mansef*!

PATRICK HOOVER

The United Nations

Residential Intensive Arabic Program in Amman, Jordan

When the United Nations offered me the opportunity to teach Arabic to their staff overseas in 2013, I was very excited and honored. During my 20 years at the United Nations, I gained valuable and memorable experiences working with and mentoring many bright, young students who spoke a variety of foreign languages. Moreover, my experiences reinforced my firm belief in the principles of the UN: cooperation, peace, and tolerance. I am incredibly grateful to the United Nations for the opportunity to meet so many interesting people.

The Languages and Communications Programme at the UN organized a three-part Intensive Residential Arabic program in Amman from July 28th to August 15th. The purpose was to recruit native Arabic-speakers for deployment on field missions – a key component of UN operations, where cross-lingual communication is imperative. In a broader sense, the program promotes multilingualism: according to UN Resolution 2480 B, the UN is mandated to improve the language capabilities of its staff, especially in overseas assignments. The Intensive Program draws its participants from UN offices all over the world: from Afghanistan to Beirut to New York. The program includes approximately 100 contact hours (seven hours of formal instructions per day).



In addition to being immersed in an Arabic-speaking environment in Amman, students were building the necessary vocabulary and skills to thrive in such areas as conflict resolution, peace-building operations, elections, human rights, rule of law, and civil and humanitarian affairs.

The focus was on Modern Standard Arabic with an emphasis on building oral and listening comprehension, while strengthening analytical skills in reading and writing. Not only was it important to cater to each student's individual needs regarding their professional and academic interests, it was also paramount to guide them in understanding Arab culture through the number of daily interactions with ordinary Jordanians. The program included field trips, as well as lectures by Arab scholars on cultural and political issues. These were organized to enrich the topics discussed in the program. Participants did indeed live, learn, and experience the language authentically.

My role was to design and teach the course, and eventually evaluate my students' weekly progress. I also coordinated all activities, including supervising a local Jordanian instructor who helped in teaching a two-hour, daily conversation class. Ultimately, my mission was to ensure the achievement of the objectives set by the UN program at Head Quarters in New York.

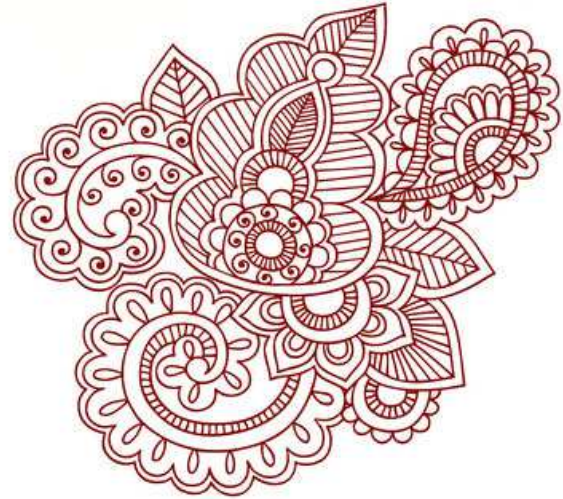
The summer of 2013 was one of my most worthwhile experiences in all of my 25+ years of teaching Arabic.

It was exciting to see how highly motivated learners can progress in a challenging language in such limited time. It was fulfilling to focus on topics such as peace and human rights, both of which concern me personally, and the Middle East in particular. Due to the success of the program and the positive feedback we received from our pupils, the United Nations decided to launch this overseas program for a second time. I am looking forward to embarking on the experience again.

SUAD MOHAMED

NEW COURSES

..... 2014



SAST 2559

**Media, Religion, and
Nationalism in South Asia**

Instructor: **Arsalan Khan**

This class explores the relationship between media, religion and nationalism in South Asia. The course gives students a critical understanding of nations as modern forms of community, which, far from being ancient, are relatively recent inventions. In South Asia, religion has been central to the creation of nationalism, and we will examine how older South Asian religious traditions like Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism have been reconfigured by nationalists in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Furthermore, we will explore how religion and nationalism are both reflected and transformed in new media contexts like television, film and, increasingly, on the Internet. The class will provide students with an understanding of the relationship between religion and nationalism in South Asia, and students will be encouraged to think critically about how new media are transforming the ways we think about ourselves and our communities.

MESA 2559

**Muslims in the Middle East
and South Asia**

Instructor: **Rose Wellman**

This course explores the cultural politics of Islam, gender, kinship, food, and everyday life in the contemporary Middle East and South Asia. A key focus of the course will be Shi'i Muslims in Iran. However, students will also engage materials on diverse Muslim communities in Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, and India. Students enrolled in this course will use ethnography, new digital media, and newspapers to move beyond the sensationalist headlines that shape commonly held views of the harem, the veil, and Islamic "fundamentalism." They will additionally explore the lives of contemporary Muslim youth. This course introduces students to key anthropological concepts such as cultural relativity, fieldwork, and cross-cultural comparison. It provides students with the central theoretical and post-colonial frameworks that guide the anthropology of Islam.

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NEW COURSES

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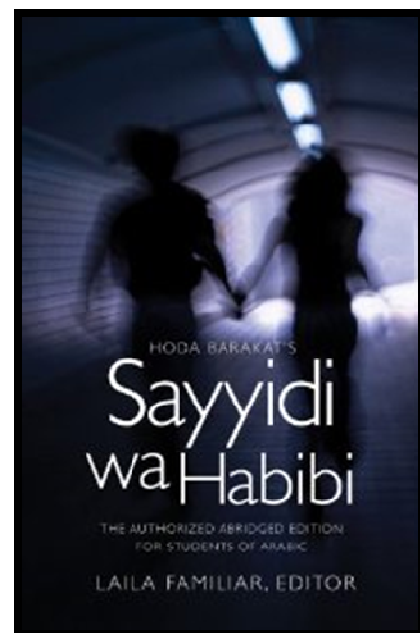
PETR 3559/5559**Beyond Headlines: Reading Persian Newspaper****Instructor: Mahshad Mohit**

This course introduces students to a formal style of Persian language used in the newspapers. Within a selection of newspapers, magazines, periodicals and blogs, it explores a variety of texts, including headlines, front page news, editorials, and op-eds. The students not only familiarize themselves with the daily language of media and its jargons, but have the opportunity to go beyond the language and discuss the cultural, socio-political background of the news.

This course is designed for high-intermediate students of Persian language. In each class, we also focus on the texts in *Persian Newspaper Reader*, second edition (2000), which illustrates typical subjects, features, and styles of writing in Iranian journalism. It aims to help students to read a more challenging form of Persian effectively, and to increase their proficiency in writing and speaking the language.

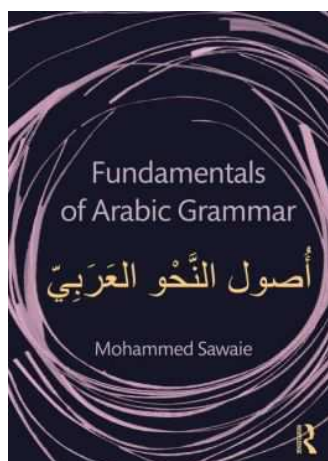
**ARAB 4559/8559****Love, War, and Exile in Hoda Barakat's Narrative****Instructor: Hanadi Al-Samman**

This course explores the intersection of love, war, and exile in the literature of a prominent Lebanese writer—Hoda Barakat. Ms. Barakat's reflections on the Lebanese civil war, paradigms of familial domination, and governmental authoritarianism articulate the causes of Arab citizens continued sense of alienation, and the subsequent Arab Spring's desire for political agency. Advanced students of Arabic will study an abridged version of Barakat's novel, *My Master and My Lover* (2004; 2013), and will have a rare chance of interacting with the author in person during her one-month residency on Grounds.





NEW PUBLICATIONS



Fundamentals of Arabic Grammar

Author: **Mohammed Sawaie**

Publisher: **Routledge, January 2014**

Fundamentals of Arabic Grammar provides an authoritative guide to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) grammar. It has been organized to promote a thorough understanding of MSA grammar and presents its complexities in a cohesive and user-friendly format, filling many gaps left by other textbooks. Explanations are clear, full and accessible and extensive cross-referencing, two generous indices and six appendices provide users with easy access to the information they require. No prior knowledge of linguistic terminology is required.

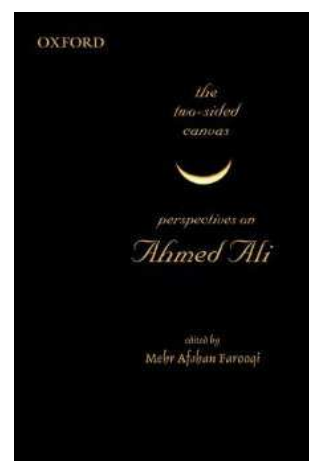
The Two-Sided Canvas: Perspectives on Ahmed Ali

Editor: **Mehr Farooqi**

Publisher: **Oxford University Press, 2013**

Ahmed Ali (1910-1994), multitalented, bilingual writer, poet, scholar, translator, critic, and anthologist, is one of the stalwarts in the South Asian literary sphere. A founder of the All India Progressive Writer's Association (AIPWA) and best-known for the classic portrait of Delhi, *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), Ali's life and work is informed by a tremendous idealism that inspired a whole generation of writers and intellectuals. As a literary figure, he epitomized a compelling cosmopolitan sensibility and opened up the South Asian literary sphere to the West, easily bridging East-West boundaries through his modernist outlook and anti-parochial stance.

In this volume, Mehr Afshan Farooqi introduces us to Ali's world and brings together a judicious mix of biography, interviews, and critical essays by renowned contemporary scholars like Carlo Coppola, Ahmad Hal Rahim, and Shamsur Rehman Faruqi, which shed fascinating light on Ali's literary oeuvre as well as a tumultuous period of history that saw the demise of British colonial rule in India. With rare archival material and selections from Ali's work, including unpublished letters and essays, this comprehensive critical volume draws a well-rounded portrait of Ahmed Ali, the man and the genius, and gives new direction to the scholarly study of his work.



Calendar of Events

..... Spring 2014



January 27

Sufi Qawwali & Kabir

❖ *Dhruv Sangari, Vocalist*

6:30 PM

130 Monroe Hall

February 3

Hoda Barakat Roundtable

❖ *Hoda Barakat*

❖ *Hanadi Al-Samman*

❖ *Mohammed Sawaie*

5:00 PM

Newcomb - Kaleidoscope Room

February 5

IWL Film Series - "An Egyptian Salad"

❖ *Hanadi Al-Samman*

❖ *Hoda Barakat*

6:30 PM – 9:30 PM

301 Wilson Hall

March 19

"An Indian Caravan: On the Migration of a Group of Freethinkers from Safavid Iran to Mughal India"

❖ *Daniel Sheffield*

6:30 PM

211 Shea House

March 22

Indian Classical Night

6:00 PM

Chemistry Auditorium

April 1

Colors of Islam

6:00 PM

Newcomb Gallery

April 2

IWL Film Series - "Aviva My Love"

❖ *Zvi Gilboa*

6:30 PM – 9:30 PM

301 Wilson Hall

April 3

"Seeking a Transitional Justice Strategy for Syria"

❖ *Balkees Jarrah*

❖ *Mohammed Al Abdallah*

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Caplin Pavilion

April 4

"Dubai and Singapore: Asian Diasporics, Global Logistics, Company Rule"

❖ *Enseng Ho*

1:00 PM

Brooks Hall Conference Room

April 4

Arabic Lecture Series - "The Book of Songs"

❖ *Bilal Maanaki*

1:00 PM

April 4

"The Violent Desires of Hindi Pulp"

❖ *Laura Brueck*

3:00 PM

132 New Cabell Hall

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS
continued from page 10

April 11

Arabic Lecture Series - "Indian Influences on Adeni Culture & Dialect in Yemen"

❖ *Suad Mohamed*

1:00 PM

144 New Cabell Hall

April 11

"The Dream in Urdu Poetry: A Striking Convergence of Literature and Psychoanalysis"

❖ *Salman Akhtar*

3:00 PM

124 Monroe Hall

April 14

"China and Central Asia: The Renaissance of the Silk Road"

❖ *Shawn Lyons*

6:00 PM

122 Monroe Hall

April 17

"Corruption Scandal and Political Crisis in Turkey: What's Next?"

❖ *Dr. Fevzi Bilgin*

5:00 PM

211 Nau Hall

April 17

"Women's Rights and Economic Development in Afghanistan"

❖ *Rangina Hamidi*

7:00 PM

108 Clark Hall

April 18

"The Reluctant Healer: An Amil and Anthropologist"

❖ *Veena Das*

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Brooks Hall – 2nd Floor Conference Room

April 19

Layaleena - "My Big Fat Arab Wedding"

6:30 PM

Newcomb Ballroom

April 22

"Who's Reporting Your News and Why it Matters"

❖ *Dorothy Parvaz*

4:00 PM

Brooks Hall Commons

April 23

"US Intervention in the Middle East: Perspectives from an Al Jazeera Journalist"

❖ *William Quandt*

❖ *Elizabeth Thompson*

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

OpenGrounds

April 24

"The Visual Culture of Yoga"

❖ *Debra Diamond*

6:00 PM

153 Campbell Hall

So if I say this at Yarmouk...

...no one will understand me?

Sometime during the first year of Arabic classes students realize Modern Standard Arabic is not what their Arab friends speak at home to their families. Nor is it what they will hear on the streets while studying abroad. Why is it important?

Modern Standard Arabic is a language of presentation, a language of audience. Newspapers, universities, and religious texts all use MSA for its inherent formality. With respect to the Quran, Muslims believe the text descended from God to Muhammad in the unadulterated form of MSA, which includes the *harakat*, or vowelings, an element often absent in *aameah*, or colloquial Arabic.

Clearly, MSA has its place in the modern era despite the pervasiveness of colloquial Arabic. In order to help students situate the importance of MSA within its intended context and enable them to engage the language they study inside the classroom in a setting outside the classroom, former Teaching Assistant Juliet Blalack created the Arabic Lecture Series one year ago, during the spring of 2013.

Over the course of that semester, professors had the opportunity to present on their research and personal interests to students and other faculty from the department. Guests of the Series met Friday afternoons



Audrey Waldrop

for an hour of presentation, discussion and fellowship with food all the while speaking in MSA. In order to open the events to all levels of language students, professors had the opportunity to provide Arabic-English vocabulary lists in advance of the sessions. These sheets helped newer students ask questions and follow the outline of their professors' presentations.

As a student coordinator, I helped Juliet advertise in the spring of 2013, and for the fall, I brought in a speaker from outside the department, former UVa student and current Cairo correspondent for McClatchy Newspapers, Nancy Youssef. Nancy returned from Cairo for a few days to meet with UVa students, including those within the Arabic Lecture Series, in order to present her analysis of the revolution in Egypt, particularly the role of women

particularly the role of women and the restrictions on journalists within the movement.

This spring, I returned to the format of professor presentations, and we had two seminar events this April, one on "Kitab al-Aghani (The Book of Songs): The Magnum Opus of Classical Arabic Poetry," led by Ustath Bilal Maanaki, department chair and professor of Elementary Arabic and Advanced Arabic IV. Ustatha Suad Mohamed, professor of Elementary Arabic and Advanced Arabic II, led the second seminar, "Indian Influences on Adeni Culture & Dialect in Yemen."

Taken together, professors from both the Arabic and the Persian departments attended these seminars as did first through fourth-year Arabic students as well as students learning the language via independent studies.

As a fourth year student, I look forward to passing down the tradition of the Arabic Lecture Series to rising Arabic students, and I hope the tradition will continue for years to come as more professors share their research and update students on newer findings or subjects of interest. If you are interested in leading the program in the future, please contact Audrey Waldrop at

asw3qx@virginia.edu.

AUDREY WALDROP

A Month with Hoda Barakat

In my last undergraduate year at the University of Virginia, I signed up for a course called “Love, War and Exile in Hoda Barakat’s Narrative”. Without much prior familiarity with contemporary Arabic literature, I enrolled in the course on a slight whim. Nonetheless, I saw an opportunity to deepen my understanding and appreciation of Middle Eastern culture. Barakat arrived as the first author-in-residence at the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures at U.Va. I struggled to keep up with Usteza Hoda’s noticeable stage presence and stature. Her heavy Levant accent peppered with French wit and charisma not only challenged my “ear”, but also immersed me in the atmosphere of the novel.

Professor Hanadi Al-Samman – the instructor and Barakat’s host, was another reason I took the course. I have never been in any of her classes prior to Barakat. After hearing nothing but praise for Professor Al-Samman, it was a no-brainer. I wanted to begin to think in Arabic critically and analytically. Judging from Al-Samman’s previous scholarly work, I knew she would challenge me.

In order to properly express my experience in this course, I need to quote an Egyptian proverb. I realized: “*ma khafee kana a’zam*”, basically translating into “this is only the tip of the iceberg”. I had come to the conclusion about studying Arabic. The “tip” is standard *fusha* instruction; sharp, defined, and clean. The rest of the “iceberg” reveals a gigantic singularity each with its own uniquely carved-out features, some encompassing dozens of miles wide. I saw the rest of the “iceberg”, the underestimated complexities and sophistication of Arabic literature.

Barakat’s “*Sayyidi wa Habibi*” touches on themes common to all cultures: the questioning of existence, agency in a patrimonial milieu, and human reaction to trauma. Barakat placed us in the shoes of a young Lebanese male named Wadie and took us



Hoda Barakat

from the chaotic civil war to exile in a foreign country. What was especially difficult was to keep up with the cultural references to food, music, geography, and colloquial lexicon. Also, Usteza Al-Samman’s small, intimate-style classes fostered greater debate between the undergraduate and graduate students.

In the end, I learned that Arabic is less about the language itself and more about the means in which it is expressed. Literature is a means of transmission and linkage, much like the thread to a social fabric, revealing not only Barakat’s powerful, direct prose, but also an insight into the daily life of an ordinary Arab struggling to make ends meet. This proved a valuable lesson: it is impossible to learn Arabic without understanding Arabs. Barakat’s “*El Resa-el el Ghareeba*” provided the personal backbone to the second half of the book, where Wadie is forced to live as a foreigner in Cyprus – much like how the author herself lived in France in the 1970s. The focus on the trials and tribulations of one man highlights the relative insignificance of sectarian politics during Lebanon’s war, and instead relies on a personal narrative to truly grasp the effects of trauma and exile. Her novel provided a worthy approach to learning Arabic. I highly recommend any student of the language to read Arabic fiction and engage in Arab culture, whether it be reading Barakat, Naguib Mahfouz, or simply listening to Om Kalthoum!

PATRICK HOOVER

Hoda Barakat's Month in Residence at MESALC

During the first part of the spring semester, MESALC students taking intermediate-level Arabic were privileged to have the opportunity to interact with Lebanese writer and novelist Hoda Barakat during her month in residence with us at the University of Virginia. Barakat was invited to U.Va. as part of the course taught by Prof. Hanadi Al-Samman titled "Love, War, and Exile in Hoda Barakat's Narrative" – in which all of the readings and discussions took place in Arabic – which enjoyed a mixed enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students. This pioneering initiative provided the opportunity for undergraduate students to access a simplified version of Barakat's novel *Sayyidi wa Habibi* (*My Lord and My Love*) published in 2013 by Georgetown University Press, while graduate students and some undergraduate native speakers of the language had access both to the simplified version of the novel in Arabic – along with the online supplemental materials – and to the original, unabridged text. The plot of the novel centers on a male character who grows up amid the background of the Lebanese Civil War that took place in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, and this formed the content for assignments and discussion during the first half of the course.



Michelle Sawwan

Class discussions were deeply enriched by the presence of the author, who provided a personal perspective on her writing as well as cultural information that enabled readers to better understand the interpersonal dynamics of the novel. This shed significant light on interactions ranging from family and household rules of conduct to the emerging corporate culture of the globalized era. Indeed, students as a whole found that – as other commentators have observed – Barakat truly succeeds in writing for a global audience while staying true to her roots. The issues that are at play in modern Lebanese society are not unintelligible even to people from the farthest ends of the globe when read through the lenses provided in Barakat's work.

The themes of war and exile threaded the various

readings throughout the course, whether they came from the novel *Sayyidi wa Habibi* or from her collection of reflections on life away from Lebanon in France, *Rasa'il Al Gharibah* (*Letters of a Stranger*). The main characters in the novel reflect in their very psychological makeup and socialization the effects of what Barakat terms "al-mujtama'at al-ma'zumah," or "crisis-stricken societies." Her narrative style lends itself less to what one might call historical fiction and more to a kind of psychological portrait of the nation through the lives of fictional characters. What readers are able to sense from *Rasa'il Al Gharibah*, on the other hand, are the residual effects of war on the Lebanese community in diaspora. One of the interesting points that were raised during the course, however, was the difficulty of translating the word "al-ghurbah" – from which "gharibah," or "strange/stranger" is derived – which has been rendered "estrangement," and "exile." Her reflections do not really form an exile narrative because *Rasa'il Al Gharibah* is less a nostalgic reflection on Lebanon and the state of estrangement from it than it is an expression of mixed feelings toward pre and post-war Lebanon in general. These issues of war and exile in Barakat's work, along



with the related issues of rendering these concepts through translation and interpretation, were raised in the class discussions.

The class sessions with Hoda Barakat were recorded on video by the Arts & Sciences Center for Instructional Technology (ASCIT) and placed on the Collab webpage for the course. This will serve as a resource for all future students of Prof. Al-Samman's course who would benefit from reviewing the presentations given by Ms. Barakat in class, as well as listening to the questions and points for discussion posed by students. The course in general was an especially fruitful one, especially thanks to Hoda Barakat's personal investment in spending a month with the Arabic students of MESALC, the newly available resources published by Georgetown University Press, and the availability of ASCIT staff to record the class sessions during which Ms. Barakat was present.

MICHELLE SAWWAN



ARAB 4559/8559 Class Picture

UVA - Yarmouk 2014 Summer Program

UVA-Yarmouk University Summer Program will launch on June 6, 2014 its 30th season of studying Arabic at Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan. Twenty-eight students will be traveling to that day to pursue their study of Arabic for eight weeks in three levels. Students who completed one or two or three years are eligible to participate in the Program. This year's participants hail from several institutions of higher learning: University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, to name only a few, in addition to the University of Virginia. Fifteen students from UVA will participate in the Program in 2014. Students with two or more years of Arabic study were financially supported by a grant from the USDE Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad. The UVA-Yarmouk Program was awarded a grant in 2012 for four years to support the Program expenses and to provide fellowship funds for eligible students. Other funds this year were available to a limited number of students from a gift provided by a 1984 alumna of the Arabic Program. Three members of the current Arabic faculty will accompany the participants and reside in Irbid, Jordan for the Program's duration, namely Mohammed Sawaie, Suad Mohamed and Michelle Sawwan.

MOHAMMED SAWAIE

Faiza Saleem

MESALC HOSTS PAKISTANI FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR



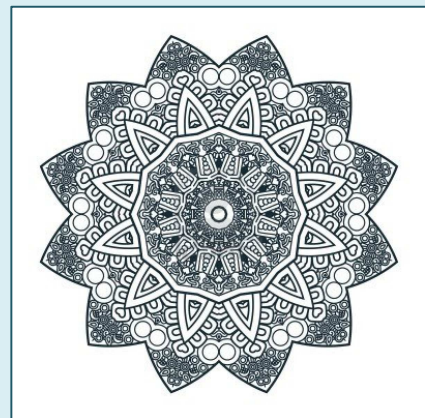
Faiza Saleem

I received a Fulbright (FLTA) scholarship for teaching Urdu at the University of Virginia. This was an excellent opportunity and a great learning experience. I taught advanced Urdu during the Fall 2013, and Spring 2014 semesters. Teaching Urdu language in a foreign country like the United States provided me with multiple opportunities to enhance my development. It taught me new dimensions and approaches towards language teaching as well as learning. I am now more cognizant of foreign language teaching issues than before. Besides teaching, I also took courses like Ethnographic Research Design and Methods, Elementary Arabic and Globalization, Childhood and Culture. These courses proved to be very challenging but nevertheless very helpful not only for my own research but also enhanced my professional experience.

I am doing my PhD in Linguistics from Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan, Pakistan. My research focuses on gender socialization during early childhood in schools. It is ethnographic research which deals with young children in their everyday school setting. I am hoping to finish my dissertation by the end of this year. I have also conducted research on Linguistic analysis of gender biases in Primary School Textbooks for my MPhil Degree. I have my Masters in English Language and Literature. I am also a visiting faculty member in English Department at BZU, Multan and have been teaching English, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Research Methodology and Prose since 2007.

I like to teach and my interest in teaching has grown further after having met with wonderful colleagues and teachers here at UVa. During this short period I made several friends who were crucial in helping me adjust to UVa. They are, and will be, a source of inspiration for me in many different aspects. The Fulbright scholarship provided me with a great opportunity to live and travel in the United States, and I really loved it.

FAIZA SALEEM



Mahshad Mohit

HER JOURNEY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Travelling down from New York City to Virginia, my heart was filled with a sense of ambivalence and anxiety, even though I found the old love of adventure and the thrill of the unexpected still alive and kicking in me. I lived in the City for 15 years, but in the end it only took me two weeks to decide on leaving her for good. As the train pulled into the Charlottesville station, the consequences of an intuitive last minute decision suddenly dawned on me, and only then did I start to realize the turn of events that had brought me here. I took a deep breath, picked up my suitcase and left the train.

It was a warm, sunny day in September. A professor from MESALC was waiting for me; he was the first of a few people who aided, sheltered, and fed me in that weekend and the following few days. My inner self, still imbued with the New York mentality, found it a little too weird that these people, who probably had more pressing affairs to do, remained attentive to my needs. They had worked unyieldingly to solve an emergency situation; and I had become its solution by accepting to teach Persian language for that semester.

I stepped out of the train into a world of plants and birds and all kind of wonderful creatures. I woke up to the smell of grass and rain, and a sight so green that



for so long had been wiped out of my memory. Feasting my eyes on the picturesque wooded land in front of my porch, the whisper of wind in the magnificent old trees was music to my ears. I was blessed with so many kind, generous, and wonderful people who had suddenly entered my life; furthermore I found myself a member of a secret community of incredible creatures in my new neighborhood. My closest neighbor was a grand old tree that no doubt enjoyed the coolness of the morning air and listening to the singing of birds in chorus as I do. It took me a while to meet the most majestic of all my neighbors. One night on the slopes that comes up to my door I saw three of them standing motionless - a fawn and her mother and maybe an older sister. I held my breath and for a few seconds we looked at each other before they slowly turned back and disappeared into the shadows of the night.

University towns always put me at ease; their way of being has an edge of familiarity that cuts deep in my soul.

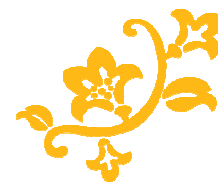
Somehow, happiness and sunshine and old books are bound together in the memories of my past. Here, as I walked into this new place, an old world that I had pushed back into the crevices of an invisible past was vengefully rushing back into my life. Fading memories became alive with intensity. In this new place I could hear again the steps of darkness lingering on my window. Like a magician, I could open the door and walk straight into the rain. I could fill my lungs with the smell of grass and soil. In the morning, the sight of crows landing down on the grass reminded me of the crow's nests up on the old pine trees in a far-off neighborhood which is engraved into my memory for ever.

Now, when I sit on the porch at night, I can see the road from the corner of my eye and the passing cars. The wanderer in me hears the call of the wild but remains calm and gazes deeper into the dark, sitting back motionless in the sweet silence of the night.

MAHSHAD MOHIT



“A is for Arab”



MESALC Hosts Traveling Exhibit Displaying Images of Arab and Muslim Stereotypes



“A is for Arab” Exhibit

The traveling exhibit “A is for Arab: Stereotypes in U.S. Popular Culture” made its way to the University of Virginia in November of 2013, sponsored by the department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures and under the guidance of Professor Hanadi Al-Samman.

The installation was housed on the first floor of New Cabell Hall, making the exhibit easily accessible to students as they walked between classes, as well as to visitors. It presented images of Arabs and Muslims as they have been depicted in American film, television, editorial cartoons, and other media from the early 20th century to the present day. By exposing these often negative portrayals, the exhibit aimed to initiate dialogue about the origins of these images, their persistence in contemporary media, and the harmful ramifications of stereotyping groups of individuals.

The images presented were drawn from the much larger Jack G. Shaheen Archive, currently housed at the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University.

Dr. Shaheen worked for decades to assemble a wide range of cultural artifacts, from toys to books to films and more. He has published several books exposing the underlying messages of these artifacts in order to critique them, and his research also formed the foundation for the production of his documentary film, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. These artifacts and media, he argues, have shaped American perceptions of Arabs and Muslims and have, in turn, influenced U.S. policies, with real consequences for real people.

The striking images collected in the exhibit provided a springboard for discourse throughout the UVa community about popular conceptions of Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners as cultural “others.” Images that have come to seem normal or acceptable prove themselves, in fact, to be quite harmful. The treatment of the Disney film *Aladdin*, for example, evoked particularly powerful responses. The immensely popular film was revealed to contain deeply harmful messages about Arabs and Arab culture that nevertheless went

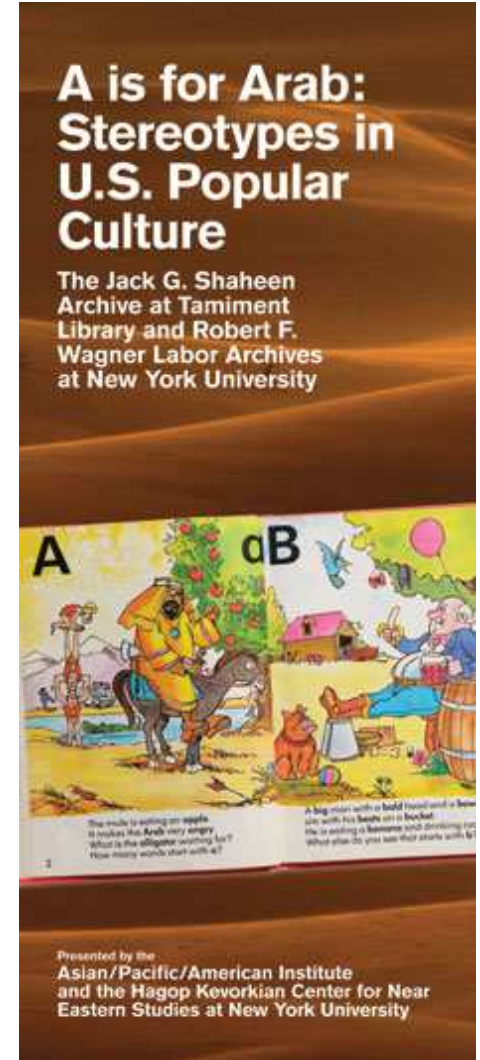
"A IS FOR ARAB"

continued from page 18

unnoticed by viewers until the images were brought to their attention in the context of the exhibit. Suad Mohammed, lecturer in the MESALC department, remarked on the response of an Arab-American student of hers: the student surprised herself by singing along with the film's lyrics, which she did not perceive as being offensive to people of Arab heritage until seeing Shaheen's film and viewing the exhibit.



Cristina Della Colleta & Hanadi Al-Samman



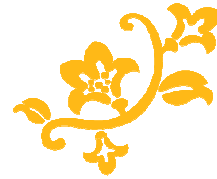
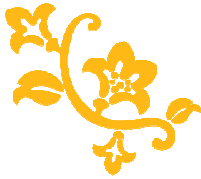
A reception with Dean Cristina Della Colleta for members of the University community was held in honor of the opening of the exhibit on Friday, November 8th. The event featured remarks by Dean Della Colleta and Professor Al-Samman and included a viewing of the exhibit. Events such as this one provide the MESALC department with the opportunity to enhance its critical perspectives and to engage the wider university community on salient national and global issues.



Graduate student Siri Swedeen-Halvorson of MESALC found the two-sided composition of the exhibit especially remarkable, as it served to emphasize the contrast between the superficial allure of some of the images and the damaging messages behind them. In the words of fourth year undergraduate student Lindsey Lucente, "the project made theoretical concepts more accessible to others, which is really the most important thing."

GRACE ERDMANN





Department of Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures

142 New Cabell Hall, P.O. Box 400781
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4781
Phone: (434) 243-8076 Fax: (434) 243-1528
Email: mesa@virginia.edu

The MESALC Newsletter
Contact: Cameron Clayton
Phone: (434) 243-8076
Email: rcc8k@virginia.edu

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