

Department of Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures

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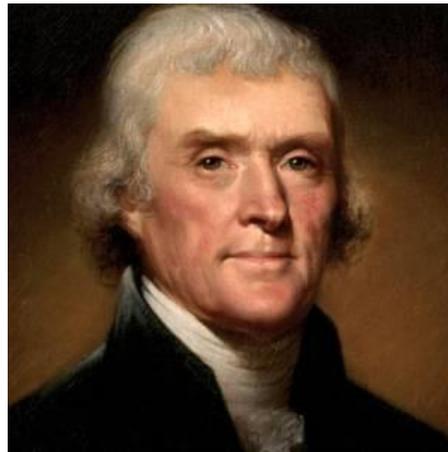
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Thomas Jefferson PEACE STUDIES



“Peace and friendship with all mankind is our wisest policy, and I wish we may be permitted to pursue it.”

-Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson to CFW Dumas, 1786

On the eve of the University of Virginia’s 3rd century, we rightly contemplate anew the vision of our founder. In previous newsletter issues, we have offered original explorations of Jefferson’s interests in revolution, in religious liberty, and the “holy cause” of education, as Jefferson put it, so that the American “experiment in liberty” could survive.

We even dubbed Jefferson “our first student” for his demonstrable interests in so many of the subjects we teach here in this department, from languages to literature, even Persian poetry.

But Jefferson and Peace Studies, you ask? Since when? Wasn’t Mr. Jefferson the one who wrote the Declaration of Independence, a ringing justification for resorts to arms against perceived tyranny? He surely was.

Wasn’t he also the President who founded the United States Military Academy in 1802? Wasn’t he too one of the first to argue for the construction of a credible navy, in part to earn the “respect” of Europe and to do battle with the Barbary Pirates? All true.

One can also find Jefferson quotes asserting the necessity of military muscle in world affairs. In 1790, he famously wrote that “whatever enables us to go to war secures our peace.” In 1786, as Ambassador to France, he creatively proposed an international armed “Convention against the Barbary States...to compel the piratical states to perpetual peace....”

Yet Jefferson was also fervently interested in finding pathways to peace without recourse to war. Three striking samples of his thought on war and peace:

"I abhor war and view it as the greatest scourge of mankind."
TJ to Elbridge Gerry, 1797

"Never was so much false arithmetic employed on any subject as that which has been employed to persuade nations that it is their interest to go to war."
TJ Notes on Virginia, 1782

"The most successful war seldom pays for its losses."
TJ to Edmund Randolph, 1785

Far from being isolated, stray quotes, they reflect an abiding Jeffersonian sense that “peace with all nations” was “America’s most important interest.”

Jefferson’s eight years as President included a difficult struggle to avoid entanglements and war with Europe.

Jefferson’s policies to embargo shipping, to refuse trade with Europe in order to avoid war, were bitterly contested at home.

Jefferson in retirement could reflect proudly upon how difficult it was to resist the “angry passions” and “fever for war.” Writing to Thaddeus Kosciuszko in 1811, Jefferson acknowledged the criticisms, yet insisted that “Peace... has been our principle, peace is our interest, and peace has saved to the world this only plant of free and rational government now existing in it.”

Jefferson believed that however much we have “been reproached for pursuing our Quaker system, time will affix the stamp of wisdom on it, and the happiness and prosperity of our citizens will attest its merit.”

Scholars of international relations have tended to downplay, even ignore such Jefferson quotes on “peace” as pleasing, if luxurious statements of idealism, in need of “realist” adjustment or explanation. When taken seriously at all, Jefferson’s peace comments tend to get grudgingly assessed as evidence of being a “half-way pacifist,” – if that.

Yet just what would Jefferson think of a curriculum focused upon peace and conflict resolution? We don’t have to speculate. Jefferson himself carried on a lively correspondence and debate with leading peace activists of his day.

For example, in an 1817 letter to Noah Worcester, the founder of the Massachusetts Peace Society, Jefferson wrote that while he hoped to “lessen the disposition to war, of its abolition I despair.” Still, he found the quest worthy:

"Although I dare not promise myself that [peace] can be perpetually maintained, yet if, by the inculcations of reason or religion, the perversities of our nature can be so far corrected as sometimes to prevent the necessity, either supposed or real, of an appeal to the blinder scourges of war, murder, and devastation, the benevolent endeavors of the friends of peace will not be entirely without remuneration."

TJ to Noah Worcester, 1817

Most tellingly, Jefferson accepted Worcester’s invitation to enroll his name in the Society of Peace.

It’s hardly a stretch then to imagine Jefferson welcoming our own studies of peace, perhaps even more so amid such difficult days of conflict.

SCOTT HARROP



We've Come a Long Way: From a Founder's Dream to a Global Department



Farzaneh Milani
Photo Courtesy of Sanjay Suchak

The academic year 2015-2016 was quite an exciting year for the department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures. Together we successfully completed three important searches and welcomed to our Department: Samhita Sunya, Tessa Farmer (joint appointment with Global Studies), and Bilal Humeidan. Our students won Boren Scholarship, Helen Abbott Award, and Critical Language Scholarships. Geeta Patel completed the first semester of our Study Abroad in India Program with glowing colors. Hanadi Al-Samman was selected for the Mellon Humanities Fellows Program in the Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures (IHGC). Mehr Farooqi got a most prestigious fellowship at The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in India; Rich Cohen got a visiting fellowship by Jamia Millia University in India. We authored books, we wrote articles, and opinion pieces; we gave talks, including TedXUVa; we appeared in media. Cameron Clayton was enthusiastically nominated for the Leonard W. Sandridge Outstanding Contribution Award.

On the eve of the University of Virginia's 3rd century, we bask in our interdisciplinary and transnational mission, composition, and orientation.

We are the only department in Virginia and one of the few in the country to offer regularly an array of courses in six of the languages of the Middle East and South Asia. These are Arabic, Persian, Modern Hebrew, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Urdu. The languages we teach require many years of consistent study and the ability to place oneself in the language's culture. Most of the languages we teach are of the less commonly taught variety and some are listed among the "most difficult languages" to learn by the Department of Defense. In addition to this rigorous language training, we also offer undergraduate and graduate courses in the literatures and cultures of this area.

We are growing and the growth in our enrollment is matched by exciting new courses and initiatives. We have proposed the creation of a MESALC/Global Studies major. I am convinced we will greatly benefit from the innovative and unconventional methodologies this collaboration will afford. Without flattening historical, cultural, religious, and artistic specificities of our region, the synergy between our department and Global Studies Program will recognize and respect its distinctiveness while revising and refashioning our understanding and teaching of it in a global context. It will help us adopt an aesthetic of alternatives, reject artificial divisions, look for new commonalities, come up with new questions and new answers. I am very excited about this partnership.

When Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia almost 200 years ago, generating a curriculum with truly global perspectives was one of his top priorities. As Philip Alexander Bruce writes in his *History of the University of Virginia*: Jefferson's "inquisitive eyes looked abroad unerringly for the best in the practical or intellectual life of every foreign land in order to employ it for the betterment of his own." We take great pride in fulfilling our visionary founder's dream in our Department.

Hanadi Al-Samman

TEACH-IN ON SYRIA



Hanadi Al-Samman

Professor Hanadi Al-Samman gave a series of lectures, both locally and nationally, designed to inform the public of the complications of the Syrian peaceful uprising which took place in March 18, 2011, the ensuing civil war, and refugee crisis resulting from the Assad regime's violent crackdown on legitimate demands for dignity and freedom. Local Teach-in events took place in Charlottesville Pubic Library under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, and in Piedmont Virginia Community College. Similarly, she delivered lectures on the Syrian refugee crisis in national conferences in Christopher Newport University and Duke University.

Professor Al-Samman further outlined the intersections of national and personal traumas with the literary in a lecture, inspired by her recently published book, titled "Trauma, Diaspora, and the Syrian Uprising in Arab Women's Writings," at Virginia Tech University on March 28, 2016.

HANADI AL-SAMMAN

Praise for MESALC Students!



MESALC Alumnus, Mostafa Allam

This academic year, our DMP and Master's students examined a variety of research topics pertaining to the political, cultural, and artistic in the Middle East and beyond. We are proud that two of our undergraduate DMPs (John Al-Haddad and Margaret Squires) and one of our Master's students (Adrienne Resha) were chosen to present their work in the Open Grounds Research on the Lawn. They discussed with the public and President Teresa Sullivan the inspiration and implications of their research projects.

Additionally, two of our Arabic current and past students have garnered some of the most prestigious awards in Language and international studies. Dominick Giovanniello received a Boren Award to pursue his study of Arabic in Jordan, and Mostafa Allam, a Schwarzman Scholars award which will allow him to complete a one-year master's degree program at Tsinghua University in Beijing. We are thrilled to see our MESALC graduates thrive in their perspective chosen fields.

HANADI AL-SAMMAN

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Benjamin Cosgro

Benjamin Cosgro is a rising fourth year majoring in Middle Eastern Studies and Economics. He is from outside of Charlottesville and enjoys southern food, cutting firewood, and biking. He is the President of an on-grounds safety organization called Hoos Ready as well as being involved with Theological Horizons at the Bonhoeffer House, the Center for Christian Study, and Chi Alpha. Over the past three years he has become fascinated with the Persian language after taking classes under the instruction of Mahshad Mohit and will be putting the scholarship money towards his tuition for his study abroad in Tajikistan this summer for 9 weeks. He will be studying Farsi and Tajik in a full immersion environment. He hopes to utilize his Persian skills in either international finance or diplomacy when he graduates.

BENJAMIN COSGRO



Aenon Kumar

I've just finished my first year of the University of Virginia's MESALC Graduate Program. It has been a very exciting and busy year. As a student assistant I have been able to get to know the MESALC faculty and become acquainted with all of the different interests and research of my peers and instructors. The courses I have taken this year have opened my awareness to areas that I had not yet explored in depth, influenced and redirected the focus of my research, and made me more acutely aware and interested in exploring the intersections of gender, caste, and class. My most recent research traces the historical processes and present consequences and complications of colonialism and neoliberalism in relation to discourses on gender, feminism, human rights, and education. I'm looking forward to a summer full of fun with my family and preparations for my thesis research.

AENON KUMAR



Gaisu Yari

MY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN



Gaisu Yari

I was nineteen in 2007, and had been working for three years as a community radio reporter after being recruited and trained by an international project introducing women into Afghan media. I worked out of a small office in the rural province of Ghazni, where I was born and raised. I really enjoyed reporting on women's issues and my job in general, and while my male colleagues resisted the idea of working with a woman, little by little I gained their respect and collaboration.

I was also one of the lucky ones able to escape child marriage to a warlord. Doing so, however, resulted in the disappearance of my father and death threats, to this day, to force my return. After a presentation, the invitation to an event turned into an unexpected opportunity for asylum. An international women's organization approached and offered me advice and assistance to learn English, obtain a U.S. high-school degree, and U.S. residency.

Eight years later, in May 2015, I finished my last year at the University of Virginia while juggling two jobs, speaking engagements, and other initiatives to promote awareness about Afghan women.

Even more challenging was processing the daily news about the ever increasing escalation of violence in every communication with family back home, in news headlines, and in my classes.

Booking my ticket to Afghanistan was a hard decision to make. I had a raw awareness of the enormous dangers there, had not forgotten the warlord's threats against me, and was not sure if I had the discipline to live in Afghanistan without drawing unwanted attention. As my UVa graduation grew near and passed, and once they learned I was leaving for Kabul in August, everyone I interacted with in Charlottesville pressured me to stay and to accept Columbia's offer to start graduate school that month.

But I had to return to Afghanistan to fulfill my need to experience again the dust of my beloved country and to respond to a seasoned and unrelenting calling to work inside the country on behalf of women's rights. As soon as I got off the plane in Kabul, all my apprehensions dissipated, I felt regenerated, and I was able to see Afghanistan through a different lens.

The ubiquitous dust, its high pollution levels, and the smoke-filled mornings of burning coals and suicide bombs are only one side of Afghan reality. Now the air is saturated with the enthusiasm of students for learning, and the positivism and initiatives of youth, women and others for change. When I left, there were no modern buildings. Now, when I stand at the top of Kabul's mountains, the newly completed parks and schools that I see are the promise of the possibilities of change, and a proof that, through the thick dust, Kabul moves forward.

During my first hours in the country, I realized I had much to learn and decided to not commit to one job. Instead, I packed each day with meetings and supporting projects of government offices, like the Women's and Human Rights ministries, and international development agencies working with Afghan women. I also connected with students, academics, intellectuals, women's rights and other social justice leaders, and have given training and classes, participated in conferences, street art actions, and protests.

MY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN
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Whenever I get a chance, I interview taxi drivers and other people in the street, take meticulous notes, and share my new knowledge through the many diverse interactions with Afghans and others interested in my unique bicultural perspective.

After six months I decided to accept a position with The Asia Foundation (TAF) as its liaison with the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, responsible for implementing, supporting, and overseeing donors to strengthen the government agency. Last month, as one of seven government-appointed members of the Afghan delegation to the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) international summit in New York City, I participated in bilateral meetings with numerous UN agencies and USAID, and assisted other Afghan members with their interactions with these entities. I also provided technical support to prepare Afghan panelists for two side events which I helped facilitate, and even translated, from Dari to English, the Minister of Women's Affairs speech while she was giving it before the entire body.

Meanwhile, I still provide technical advice to Afghan non-profits on prospective women empowerment projects, and recently started a similar non-profit to help women in three Afghan provinces through the production and sale of their handicraft.

I've been here for eight months now. Among the many changes I've noticed are education, the public debate about women's rights, and the use of social media.

As both Afghans and international observers have recognized, public conversations and mobilizations about gender equality and women's rights are constantly on the rise. When I sit in a taxi or a minivan, I hear Afghan drivers and passengers openly conversing about previously taboo topics such as politics and the issues that people face, and the importance of human rights and women's rights for a better Afghanistan.

Such conversations are now significantly more popular in the streets where students, including women, discuss their studies and plans to continue with their higher education and prepare for professional jobs, and where the poor work hard to provide an education for their children. This openness and fierceness in dreaming a better life was not possible before, and was especially unimaginable during the reign of the Taliban.

I've noticed so many changes, even though there is much to be done to gain political and economic stability, peace and justice. Towards these ends is the introduction of social media. While Afghans, like people in the West, are constantly bent over their phones, they are used differently here due to limited and interrupted Internet service and more often than not, in the place of more expensive and less accessible computers.

There is so much to tell about the overwhelming obstacles and all the work that needs to be done here. But one thing is clear. Real changes have led to an Afghanistan that will flourish because of the hope and the passion of those of us who are working to build a new Afghanistan of freedom, justice, and peace.

GAISU YARI

Gaisu Yari graduated from UVa in May 2015 with degrees in Women's and Middle Eastern Studies. Visit her blog at www.anotherafghanistan.org



Grace Erdmann

MY MESALC EXPERIENCE



Grace Erdmann (center) celebrating her birthday at the Jadal Cultural Center in Amman, Jordan

It was not until I had been studying Arabic for two years that I first heard the joke, “You know what they say about learning Arabic?” – “The first ten years are the hardest.” Rather than fill me with dread, this quip actually gave me a strange feeling of confidence: a sense that I had chosen to pursue something meaningful. Although I understand where this joke is coming from, my experience with Arabic has felt like less of a grind than the joke would suggest. It has been a gift.

MESALC’s emphasis on language and literature is perhaps the single most significant factor that drew me to study there. I researched dozens of programs in international relations, foreign policy, security studies, Middle Eastern studies and the like, yet not one of them stood out to me the way MESALC did.

I studied Arabic language in the department for both of my years as a graduate student, along with several literature and culture classes.

When I arrived at UVa, I had taken Arabic for two years as an undergraduate at Georgetown and lived abroad in Egypt for one year but there were gaps in my studies during which I barely used Arabic at all. I did not pursue an Arabic course during my last semester of college, for example, and I spent the year after I returned from Egypt interning at a think tank in Washington, D.C., using Arabic only sporadically. I felt, and continue to feel, fortunate that I was able to find the Arabic classes that were the right fit for me at UVa.

The program supported me as I made the transition from language classes to content

courses.

I took UVa’s fourth year of the Arabic language sequence with Professor Suad Mohamed during my first year, adding a course on Media Arabic (also with Prof. Suad) that spring semester. In the fall of my second year, I studied modern Arabic poetry with Professor Mohammed Sawaie, and in the spring I took an Arabic novel course with Professor Hanadi Al-Samman.

I also benefited from the department’s diverse offerings of literature and culture courses. My first semester, I studied Arabic literature in translation with Professor Al-Samman, and during the fall of my second year I took a course on the poetry of Rumi, also in translation, with Prof. Alireza Korangy, which heavily influenced the path of my studies. It sparked my curiosity about mystical Sufi poetry in Arabic and ultimately led to my writing my Master’s thesis on some of the poetic writings of Ibn Al-‘Arabi: religious scholar, traveler, mystic, and poet.

My passion for Arabic language and literature, which the MESALC department nurtured, continues to shape my personal and professional goals. Living in Amman, Jordan, I use Arabic every day both at work and socially. Studying Arabic has helped me to be more successful at my job, where almost all of my colleagues are Jordanian. When I first arrived, I started colloquial Jordanian Arabic courses at the lovely Jadal Cultural Center,

where I have since met some of my closest friends here. A strong foundation in Modern Standard Arabic was a great help to me in becoming comfortable with and making advances in Jordanian Arabic. This has helped me to appreciate a wider range of cultural events spanning concerts, plays, lectures, and films. One obvious highlight was hearing the poet Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said) give a reading of some of his poems at a cultural foundation here in Amman. Ultimately, the wonderful instruction I received as a student in MESALC gave me the confidence to continue with Arabic and to work in the Middle East, and the training I got there has helped me meet more people and thus feel more at home in Jordan.

GRACE ERDMANN



“Adonis” Ali Ahmad Said (center) after giving a poetry reading in Amman, Jordan



Grace Erdmann at the Jadal Cultural Center in Amman, Jordan

Public Days



Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar

This research project centers around methods of displaying Islamic art in major museums of the world. After studying the Islamic art and visiting several installations, I began to see fundamental problems in the way it was being displayed. The category of Islamic art is a Western invention of the nineteenth century, as is the museum, an institution to which there is no equivalent in the Islamic world. Now curators face the problem of finding a way to display works such as carpets, textiles, ceramics, metalwork, woodwork and illuminated manuscripts that do not fit into the traditional Western paradigm of fine art in a format invented for painting and sculpture. This problem is addressed with varying degrees of success. For my project, I have visited the galleries of Islamic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, New York, the Aga Khan museum in Toronto, Canada, and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the methods of display utilized, I am comparing publications put out by the museums themselves with receptions of their galleries, as well as researching the history of collecting and displaying Islamic art in Western museums and more recently, new museums in the Islamic world. This project utilizes my Arabic language skills as well my knowledge of Islamic art, museology, the contemporary Middle East, and broader concepts of Orientalism to critically analyze an institution with the potential to either combat or encourage Orientalist stereotypes.

MAGGIE SQUIRES

Adrienne Resha

A MARVELOUS THESIS



Adrienne Resha and President Sullivan at Public Days on the Lawn

Last fall I walked into my advisor's office hours and pitched him what would become the basis for my master's thesis. I wanted to write about Kamala Khan, Marvel Comics' Muslim Ms. Marvel, a teenaged Pakistani-American girl whose superpowers allow her to shapeshift. I am as grateful now as I was then that Professor Hueckstedt took me seriously.

Ms. Marvel first went into publication in February of 2014, the same month that I accepted an offer of admission from MESALC's graduate program. When I first started, I had absolutely no intentions of taking any more than my one required literature class. By spring of 2015, all of my plans had fallen through and I was taking three literature courses offered by MESALC.

Taking three at once, one on Sufi literature, another on Arab women's writing, and the last on Persian poetry, was, sufficed to say, daunting. Thankfully I had the privilege of taking these courses with some of the most amazing faculty members that this university has to offer.

Professor Nair, Professor Al-Samman, and Professor Milani, I offer each of you my sincerest thanks. If it had not been for your classes that spring, I would not have even considered literature as the foundation for my thesis and, yes, comic books qualify as literature. I promise.

By the time this gets passed out at graduation, I will have presented my thesis in both English and Arabic, at the Huskey Graduate Research Exhibition, in a poster for Public Days, and for my department. Every time that I have been able to talk about this character I am reminded of why I wanted to write about her in the first place.

In my research, I look back at the history of comics, connecting major figures like Superman and Spider-Man to Judaism and Christianity, and at the ways in which comics interact with what it means to be American. Kamala Khan may be the first Muslim American superhero to lead her own title, but she will not be the last. The success of the *Ms. Marvel* series, from being a best-selling title to winning multiple industry awards, has already resulted in an increase in diverse titles from major publishers like DC and Marvel.

In being able to write about this, I am grateful to the MESALC faculty members for their support. Outside of the department, I am grateful for the guidance of Professor Shilpa Davé. Further thanks must go, again, to Professor Hanadi Al-Samman, for pushing me throughout the drafting process and for believing in me enough to do so. The very last words in the first series of *Ms. Marvel* are "The end... of the beginning!" and they seem especially apt as I finish my thesis and near graduation. The last words that I would like include here are also from the text and I hope that stay with you as they have with me.

"Good is not a thing you are. It's a thing you do." *Ms. Marvel* #5

ADRIENNE RESHA

STUDENT AWARDS

Boren Scholarship



Dominick Giovanniello

Dominick Giovanniello is a 2nd year from Vienna, Virginia majoring in Arabic and Global Security and Justice. He will be spending a year abroad in Amman, Jordan studying Arabic. Dominick is excited to travel to the Middle East for the first time and to be studying Arabic there.

Boren Scholarships, an initiative of the National Security Education Program, provide unique funding opportunities for U.S. undergraduate students to study less commonly taught languages in world regions critical to U.S. interests, and underrepresented in study abroad, including Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Boren Scholars represent a vital pool of highly motivated individuals who wish to work in the federal national security arena. In exchange for funding, Boren Scholars commit to working in the federal government for at least one year after graduation.

DOMINICK GIOVANNIELLO

Helen Abbott Award



Nour Sulaiman

Nour E. Sulaiman is a fourth year student from Kuwait majoring in Foreign Affairs, and minoring in Middle East Studies at the University of Virginia. Nour won the Helen Abbott Community Service Award, which honors outstanding students each year whose academic and extracurricular pursuits reflect a devotion to community service, selfless acts of care, and interest in improving the quality of life for others. She will be attending Northeastern Law School in the fall as a Public Interest Law Scholar (PILS). During the summer, she will be working to combat Arab-American discrimination with the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) in Michigan.

NOUR SULAIMAN



Welcome to MESALC!

NEW FACULTY HIRES



Samhita Sunya

I am elated to join MESALC this fall, as an Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian Cinema. After completing my PhD at Rice University (2014), I joined the American University of Beirut. My location in Lebanon complemented my earlier fieldwork at the National Film Archive of India, enabling me to continue probing circulation histories of Hindi film/songs across the Middle East. My interests span world film history; Asian cinemas; intersections of audio-visual media and literature; and sound studies. I also have a curatorial background in the collaborative administration of film exhibitions. I look forward to teaching both surveys and seminars, and developing Middle East - South Asia-focused thematic courses on topics such as cinephilia, adaptation, and genre; methods courses in areas such as film programming, sound studies, and film festival studies; among so many other possibilities! For offering a unique confluence of people and opportunities – the Middle East - South Asia orientation of MESALC, the wonderful Media Studies department, and the presence of the Virginia Film Festival – this upcoming transition feels quite serendipitous.

SAMHITA SUNYA



Bilal Humeidan

Bilal Humeidan earned his BA in English for Applied Purposes from the Jordan University of Science and Technology. Then he received his MA as a joint degree from Wake Forest University and the Jordan University of Science and Technology in Applied Linguistics. Bilal has taught Arabic as Foreign Language at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he earned his second MA, and Ph.D. Degrees in African Languages and Literature with a focus on Second Language Acquisition. His interdisciplinary academic training, especially in second language teaching and applied linguistics, have prepared him for effective engagement in the field of teaching and research. His dissertation examines students' and teachers' perceptions of the use of Arabic language in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) classrooms in the United States. However, Bilal's research interest extends beyond his dissertation topic. He is interested in conducting research on (a) post-program proficiency; (b) intercultural and communicative competence through study abroad programs; (c) heritage learners of Arabic; (d) influence of colloquial Arabic on spoken MSA; and (e) teaching language through literary texts.

BILAL HUMEIDAN

NEW FACULTY HIRES
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Tessa Farmer

Tessa Farmer earned her B.A. at the University of Rochester, and M.A and Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. Farmer is a sociocultural anthropologist of the Middle East specializing in the environmental and social dynamics of urban life, specifically in Cairo, Egypt. Her research explores the ways in which lower income residents of Cairo work to obtain sources of potable water and deal with the ramifications of sewage in their urban ecology. Farmer will be offering courses on water, built environment, and urban studies in the Indian Ocean area. She previously taught at Whittier College in Whittier, CA.

TESSA FARMER



UVA in Morocco



Al-Akhawayn University

The Arabic Program is launching a new summer program at al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco starting June 6, 2016. The duration of the Program is eight weeks during which students will cover the equivalent of a year at UVA in Modern Standard Arabic, and acquiring some Moroccan dialect. Students will be accompanied for the Program duration by Ms. Suad Mohamed, Lecturer of Arabic at MESALC, as Director-en-Residence. Mohammed Sawaie, Professor of Arabic is the Academic Director.

On-campus housing (double room, Moroccan roommate, en-suite bathroom), all meals, all travel expenses associated with scheduled class travel (Fes, Meknes, the Moroccan desert Tafilalet, Marrakech, and Tangier), library recreational facilities, health insurance, textbooks, airport pick-up and drop-off at Fes. For 2016, this program replaces UVA in Jordan. For more information, visit www.virginia.edu/studyabroad.

MOHAMMED SAWAIE

NEW COURSES

..... 2016



MEST 3559-001 **Islamic Calligraphy**

Instructor: Amanda Phillips

Calligraphy is the most important of all the arts in the Islamic world. We'll look at writing across media, from architecture to the books arts to ceramics and textiles and to popular souvenirs and street art – and at how it works among highly literate and less literate populations alike. This course is also designed to work with a **ground-breaking exhibition of Qurans** opening this autumn at the Sackler Gallery in Washington, DC—we'll be travelling together to see and study the objects there.

Pre-requisite: Art history, or Islamic / Middle East studies, or Arabic/Persian/Urdu language.

ARAB 4559/5559 **Studies in Classical Arab-Islamic Texts (Prose)**

Instructor: Nizar Hermes

In this course, we will provide students with a foundational knowledge of classical and postclassical (i.e., premodern) Arabic-Islamic literature, culture, and thought. Students will gain insight and learn to appreciate some of the most influential 'Arab' literary figures and some of the most celebrated classical Arabic prose masterpieces. Our "salon" (*majlis*) indulges participants in some of the most fascinating works of classical Arabic-Islamic prose. We are exceptionally privileged to host literary and cultural luminaries such as Basra's "goggle-eyed" al-Jahiz, Baghdad's irrepressible al-Tawhidi, and Córdoba's own doctor of love, Ibn Hazm. While the general approach is thematic, students will ultimately be able to grasp the chronology /geography of the rich Arabic-Islamic literary heritage and examine its wide range of humanistic subjects. Students will also broaden their critical and comparative perspectives with regard to some of the most important literary and cultural issues related to the overall poetics and politics of the Arabic-Islamic heritage. This is a high advanced reading class and discussions are exclusively conducted in literary Arabic. The original Arabic texts (excerpts for undergraduate students and in full for graduate students) will be uploaded on UVaCollab for the class, as well as other required or recommended materials and information.

MEST 3559-002 **Writing Israel from the Margins**

Instructor: Irit Dekel

Seminar: focuses on writings peripheral to mainstream Israeli culture. We will study the juxtaposition of center and periphery through the writings of women, Palestinians, Mizrahi Jews, the poor, and Holocaust survivors and ask how they have affected Israeli culture in the past 70 years.



NEW PUBLICATIONS

Spoken Levantine Arabic: An Introduction

- ❖ Mohammed Sawaie
- ❖ Modern Book's World, 2016

The Levant, aka. Greater Syria in modern times, forms a dialectal region of the Arabic language, characterized by shared features at the levels of lexicon, syntax and phonology. Yet, there is some variation in these levels from one sub-region to another, variation determined by residence (city *versus* country-side), variation determined by gender (male *versus* female), and variation determined by socio-economics (educated *versus* uneducated).

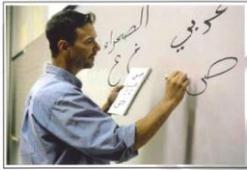
Spoken Levantine Arabic: An Introduction, published by Modern Book's World in Irbid, Jordan, introduces learners of Arabic to the spoken varieties of the language in the Greater Syria regions (the Levant). It explicates the grammar of spoken Levantine Arabic, provides its phonology with the discernible variations, and introduces common, shared vocabulary. The book is accompanied by a CD featuring recorded portrayals of real-life situations.



إعداد محمد سواعي
جامعة فرجينيا

العربية المحكية
في بلاد الشام

طبعة مقفلة وهزينة

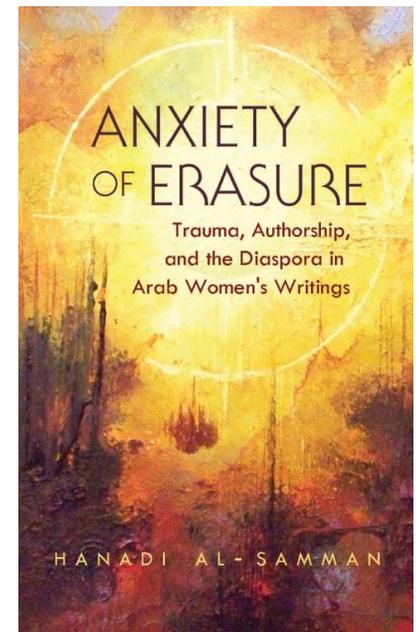


Anxiety of Erasure: Trauma, Authorship, and the Diaspora in Arab Women's Writings

- ❖ Hanadi Al-Samman
- ❖ Syracuse University Press, 2015

Far from offering another study that bemoans Arab women's repression and veiling, *Anxiety of Erasure* looks at Arab women writers living in the diaspora who have translated their experiences into a productive and creative force. In this book, Al-Samman articulates the therapeutic effects of revisiting forgotten histories and of activating two cultural tropes: that of the *maw'udah* (buried female infant) and that of Shahrazad in the process of revolutionary change. She asks what it means to develop a national, gendered consciousness from diasporic locals while staying committed to the homeland.

Al-Samman presents close readings of the fiction of six prominent authors whose works span over half a century and define the current status of Arab diaspora studies—Ghada al-Samman, Hanan al-Shaykh, Hamida al-Na'na', Hoda Barakat, Samar Yazbek, and Salwa al-Neimi. Exploring the journeys in time and space undertaken by these women, *Anxiety of Erasure* shines a light on the ways in which writers remain participants in their homelands' intellectual lives, asserting both the traumatic and the triumphant aspects of diaspora. The result is a nuanced Arab women's poetic that celebrates rootlessness and rootedness, autonomy and belonging.



“Breaking the Cast(e)”

Linguistic Diversity in SATR 3300: Literature & Society in South Asia



Erin Vines

In our class of 39 students, we speak a collective total of 24 different languages. These languages range all over the globe from Spanish to Hindi, Telugu to Tagalog, Arabic to Amharic. Our class focuses on literature written by empowered members of India’s most marginalized group, the Dalits (formerly known as Untouchables). Our classmates come from a diverse array of cultural backgrounds - as evidenced by the wide variety of languages spoken. Each one of us brings to the class a varied linguistic and cultural experience, which leads to rich class discussion and enhanced understanding of not only the literature, but where it fits within the broader global context.

In our discussion of Dalit literature, we are learning the historical and cultural context of what it means to be a Dalit. Many of the students have a connection with South Asia and so come into this class already with knowledge of how Dalits fit within the cultural fabric of Indian society. Many of us, though, come in with none of this cultural background.

As a result, we are able to apply our diverse perspectives to draw a variety of comparisons and parallels to the first-hand accounts of Dalitness that form the foundation of our class.

Before taking this class, Erin had never even heard of the term “Dalit”, which is common for many of the students who have come in with a Western education. Many of us learned about untouchability, but it was in a purely academic context that didn’t accurately portray the harsh realities of being Dalit. In the first week of class, Erin was assigned to compile a list of all the languages represented in the class, and she was shocked at the vast number, many of which she had never heard of before. Unlike other parts of the world or areas in the United States, we have the opportunity to be surrounded by a diverse array of cultural experiences here at UVA. The openness of American higher education allows us the privilege to learn about Dalitness, a topic that is often not even touched in South Asian schools.

Like Erin, Sophie had also never heard the term “Dalit” before discovering this class, but as a Foreign Affairs major, approached the subject with an eagerness to learn how Dalit activism tied in with India’s post-colonial transition to democracy. Sophie’s interest in this particular topic stems from her semester abroad last spring in South Africa, another post-colonial democracy. During the semester, Sophie lived with a local, Zulu-speaking family and as a result learned some conversational Zulu. Zulus, and other black Africans, were marginally oppressed during South Africa’s era of apartheid - much like Dalits have been and continue to be oppressed in India. Sophie feels that being able to compare the black South African experience with the Dalit experience allows her a deeper understanding of the political elements of societal oppression in conjunction with the actions the governments and society have or have not taken to integrate the most marginalized groups. She likes to think that she is able to contribute to the class a useful perspective that no one else has, even though it is not one that directly ties in with an Indian cultural understanding.

“BREAKING THE CAST(E)”
continued from page 16



Sophie Friedman

Many of the texts we read in the class have been translated into English from Indian subcontinent languages. Although translation is never perfect on a one-to-one scale, it is the medium which allows us to bridge the gap between cultures and gain insight into other societies. With so many languages represented in our class, we are able to have a more nuanced discussion of the texts because many of our classmates speak the original language of the literature. Not only is the linguistic diversity in our class useful, but it is also unusual. According to Professor Farooqi, there are typically 8-10 languages represented in the class, but never 24. Usually many students in the class speak languages from northern India, but our class also has many languages from southern India represented. We are lucky that, by coincidence, our class has so much linguistic diversity. While the class would still be eye-opening, the wide array of perspectives allows us to develop a truly global understanding of the issues.

ERIN VINES &
SOPHIE FRIEDMAN

Critical Language Scholarship



John Al-Haddad and John Wilder

The Persian program is pleased to announce that two of its students, John Wilder and John Al-Haddad, have received the prestigious Critical Language Scholarship, and will be studying in Tajikistan this summer. John Wilder will also be studying in Turkey this summer on a Fulbright Scholarship.

Thanks to the MESALC scholarship, another of our students, Benjamin Cosgro, will travel to Tajikistan as well.

Languages Spoken by Students in SATR 3300

Amharic
Arabic
Bangla
English
French
Gujarati
Hindi
Italian
Kannada
Korean
Maithili
Mandarin
Nepali
Pashto
Persian/Farsi
Portuguese
Punjabi
Spanish
Tagalog
Tamil
Telugu
Urdu
Vietnamese
Zulu

Michael Goolsby

FROM VIRGINIA TO TUNISIA



Michael Goolsby



The smell of crisp salt air fills my senses as I jog down the boardwalk of Boujaffer. The sight of families enjoying a mid-morning *futour*, nestled in the soft white sand of the Mediterranean, brings joy to my heart. The steady crash of gentle waves upon the seashore has been like the ticking of a clock heard here by civilizations dating far back into the reaches of time, when Phoenicians founded this city in the 11th century BCE. Welcome to North Africa. Welcome to Tunisia. Welcome to Sousse.

Sousse, Tunisia is the place I have called home for the past seven months. After graduating in the spring of 2015 from Mr. Jefferson's grand institution with a major in Middle Eastern Languages and Literatures, I decided I wanted to put my Arabic skills to the test. In September I moved to Sousse and began putting my proper Modern Standard Arabic to use immediately on these dusty streets that seemed oh so foreign back then, but are now as close to my heart as McCormick Avenue.

Spending four years during undergrad studying Modern Standard Arabic was difficult, tedious and exhausting at times, but completely worth it.

The UVa Arabic department prepared me well for these seven months of living and breathing Arabic. From Professor Hanadi's class on modern Arabic fiction to Professor Sawaie's in depth advanced grammar class, and every other Arabic class in between, each has set me up for success here. I have thrived in my acquisition and communicative production of Tunisian Arabic, because of my strong base in Modern Standard I received at UVa.

In many ways my experience with Arabic during my four years at UVa can be compared to a tree. My first year the tree took root, and instead of shooting up out of the ground, my professors trained me to send my roots deep into the complexities of MSA. By the time I graduated from UVa, the tree was not tall, but I had an expansive immovable system of roots. Now that I am here living in the Arab World, these roots have allowed the trunk to grow great and strong and fruit to grow abundant. The in depth conversations I have on a daily basis about politics, culture, religion and society are all a result of the excellent basis in MSA I received at UVa.

MICHAEL GOOLSBY

HOPE EMERGED FROM YOU, AND TO YOU

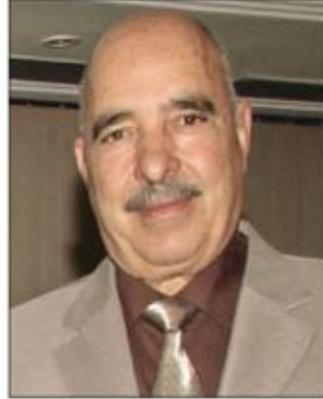
Tunisia and the Nobel Peace Prize



Houcine Abbassi



Wided Bouchamaoui



Abdessattar



Fadhel Mahfoudh

Recipients of the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet

While Millions in the Arab world today feel angry and outraged as a result of their disappointment with the dreams and the buried hopes for change, democracy, and a free dignified life they aspired for, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2015 awarded to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet arrived last week to revive that hope and has reached many hearts of Arabs, including mine.

The Arab Spring in a number of countries was sparked spontaneously and simultaneously after its pioneer the Tunisian Jasmine peaceful revolution of 2010- 2011. However, unfortunately most of those countries are today instead experiencing political turmoil, and civil wars; they could barely make any peaceful transition.

In Yemen, Tawakkul Karman won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 as one of the youths who contributed to nonviolent uprising. However, the glimpses of hope vanished with the vanishing of the six months of National Dialogue Conference (NDC) that comprised all parties and sectors in society with international community supervision. The prolonged NDC had suffered several setbacks but the Yemeni people continued to hold high hopes on the NDC to work and manage the peaceful change.

Violence was noticeably creeping in Yemen as a result of two major causes of disruption to peace. One immediate cause was the hidden political games and muddling of the former president, and the second was a sectarian military group known as Huthis or Ansar Allah. Those two recognized sources were the cause of two conflicts and insurgencies. The first occurred when the deposed president Ali Saleh was granted full immunity with the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council, but only to abuse it and manipulate his power to disable the political transition and the consensual legitimacy. The second and most dangerous one is the recent conflict that led to a full scale internal and external war in Yemen. The militia group known as Huthis were initially a part of the nonviolent youth uprising and constitute only about 10 % of the population. They shocked the people when they rebelled against the NDC, its output, the constitution, arrested the legitimate president, made a coalition with the deposed president and launched a war to wreck a weak state, a poor country. They oppressed people and freedom of speech, excluded others from power- sharing, and refused to implement United Nations resolutions to withdraw their military forces from cities. Furthermore, the Huthi militia group forced the

“TUNISIA AND THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE”
continued from page 19

legitimate government to seek assistance from the Arab League by launching external airstrikes not sparing the lives of innocent people in conflict areas. Thousands fell prey to either the internal or the external war. Thus, the Yemeni peaceful uprising ended sadly in a volatile situation leading the country today to a war from inside and outside, causing destruction of infrastructure, the cut-off of electricity and water, and deterioration of basic needs. Thus a complete failure in 2015 was brought to the political peaceful transition that the Nobel Peace Prize hoped for Yemen in 2011.

This year's prize to Tunisia amounts to a wake-up-call to return to respect of our demands by the world, and to recognize the Arabs' serious voice for building democracy and peace by their own people.

This Prize, regardless of some views who see it sometimes in a Western political framework and agenda, is actually very important, for many reasons. Firstly, its significance is embodied in the selection of and honoring independent institutions which implement civil values rather than selecting individuals. Secondly, in its contribution to the peaceful political process and its emphasis on the notion and culture of dialogue, it is sending a strong message to other Arab countries, Yemen and Libya among them, which confront internal and external crises. It is encouraging to resort to peaceful negotiations and to rely on the value of dialogue rather than civil wars. Thirdly, it has been received as a significant recognition of the big potential and real possibilities for democracy in Tunisia and of the role of vibrant diverse civil societies that can contribute to the success in the transitional phase. Tunisia can serve as a model for the rest of Arab countries.

Despite all the challenges that face Tunisia today as in building a strong economy, resolving unemployment and counter corruption and terrorism, the prize is symbolically a prompt to the idea that only through peace and dialogue democracy will be attained.

The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet has comprised four organizations in Tunisian civil society: the Tunisian General Labor Union, the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handcrafts, Union Tunisian de l'Industrie, and the Tunisian Human Rights League. The Quartet deserves this prize, in my view, because it cultivated its means through efforts and hard work toward building pluralistic democracy and respect of the rights of the other. The Quartet assumed its national duty with open mindedness when it supported and secured approval of the constitutional process that enabled the country to establish democratic elections, a constitutional system guaranteeing rights for all regardless of gender, religious or political conventions.

We only hope other Arab countries will follow suit one day!

SUAD MOHAMED

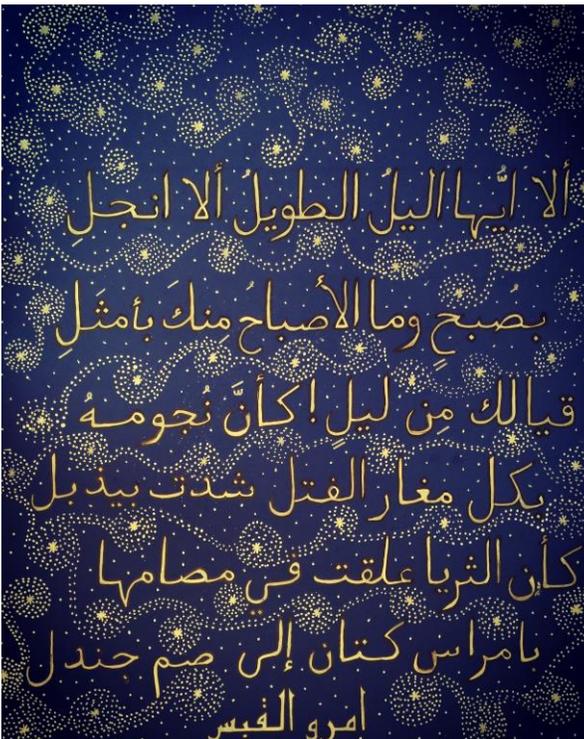




Arabic Calligraphy at UVA



Maggie Squires



Art by Maggie Squires

In the fall of 2015, the MESALC department offered its first-ever class in Arabic calligraphy. Taught by Instructor Mohammed Shihab, the course covered both the history of Arabic calligraphy and how to write several of its scripts. The course drew students from all levels of Arabic, and even some with no prior exposure to the language.

The first part of the semester focused on learning to use the traditional reed pen or *qalam* to write in *riqa'a*, a relatively simple calligraphic script which resembles handwriting. After a few weeks of screeching *qalams* and blotched ink, the students painstakingly mastered each letter of the script, eventually using their newfound skills to create a small mid-semester artistic project featuring the *riqa'a* script. Around this time, each student also wrote an essay about a topic of their choosing in the subject of Arabic calligraphy.

After the midterm, the class began to study the *naskh* script, a more elegant calligraphic style commonly used for copying manuscripts. Along with this came an in-depth history of Arabic calligraphy and its masters as students researched different periods in the history of Islamic art and important figures such as Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwab. Students progressed in their use of the *naskh* script, using it to write short phrases and create small calligrams.

Finally, the class learned the *kufic* script, an angular form of calligraphy used in the early Islamic world and commonly seen in the arts of North Africa and al-Andalus. The semester culminated in a large-scale artistic project in which students could use any or all of the styles of calligraphy covered.

The development of technique from the start of the semester to the end was really striking. In addition to learning this new artistic skill, students were able to take away the realization that the Arabic language is not only a means of communication and understanding, but an incredibly rich and beautiful art form.

MAGGIE SQUIRES

Playing, Seeing, Working, Thinking: Citizenship in the Global South



Students visit Humayun's Tomb in Delhi, India

In a classroom in Delhi: The first time I screened a film, “Amar Akbar Anthony (1977)” starring Amitabh Bacchan who excites crowds all over South Asia and the Middle East (especially in Egypt), in my class on Bollywood at Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi with students from Jamia and American students who came to Delhi through the UVA in India program, it showed me how different teaching and interactions between students might look if the class I had taught for so many years in the US were to be taught in India. The class sang along with “Humko Tumse Ho Gayā hai Pyār,” (I have fallen in love with you), “My Name is Anthony Gonsalves,” and “Shirdī Wāle Sai Bābā,” they cheered and stamped their feet when the villain flew across the room in a fight, they offered tidbits of advice to encourage the heroes and heroines. This was intercultural communication at its most vociferous and joyous. This was what so many articles on somatics of watching film in India articulated—but being present was such a fleshy, embodied experience of learning for my students from UVA. And one Jamia student Ekta Handa articulated the experience of watching familiar pleasures from the vantage point our students provided, “The fact that the students from America can actually pinpoint many things while watching Hindi movies which most of us skip brings a whole new perspective to the way we look at our cinema.” Here lies the heart of learning to be a culturally attuned global citizen.

What it took: UVA in India was several years in the making. So many people came together to enable it to take shape. On the Jamia side, Dr. Mukesh Ranjan, working closely and tirelessly with the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Professor Talat Ahmad, shepherded it through the multiple layers of permission that any such program demands with nimble finesse; it would not have been possible without his resolute and rigorous work. Along with him, the Dean of the AJK Mass Communication Research Center, Dr. Iftekhhar Ahmed, Professors Shohini Ghosh, Sabeena Gadihoke, Sabina Kidwai, Sohail Akbar, K.S. Kusuma, the registrar and all the staff helped put courses through the Jamia structure, arranged and unlocked classrooms, set up screening and computers; the type of courses I was offering fit the new design of semester courses at Jamia but necessitated a different kind of engagement than the usual year-long exam heavy model. On our side, Farzaneh Milani and Charlotte Patterson's commitment to the new and innovative project in the global south, John Echeverri-Gent's co-directorship, Len Schoppa, Ian Baucom and Francesca Fiorani's as well as Jeff Legro's financial, intellectual allegiance, Study Abroad – Dudley Andrew, Ryan Hathaway and Carol Brown's-- steadfastness made sure that the program got off the ground and landed up in Delhi! Purnima Mehta, Rajendar Kumar, Mini in Delhi and finally Philip Lutgendorf who presides over the American Institute of Indian Studies have provided the ground support. But our own students have also been key. Johnny Vater, an alum, is the TA/RA who has been holding everything together, supervising classes and internships, guiding the American students here into their first forays along the Delhi metro, arranging all the home cooked meals, bargaining for food in the bazaar and designing menus, even as he has been translating fiction, writing his own short stories and polishing up his Urdu. Another UVA student Kunal Aggarwal and his mother Anju gave us the stunning 6 bedroom house, painted it, cleaned it, set up all the beds, the carpets, the staff with such loving care that each student arrived to a basket of goodies by their bedside when they stumbled off the plane tired and excited.

So what is it like?: It’s fun, it’s work, it’s exciting. Students go to their internships once a week – what do they do? One UVA group at the feminist NGO “Action India” is working on urban space and waste, sanitation, informal building, class and gender; designing future plans for the capital city. Katherine Phillips says about the experience: “They really believe in us, trust us, and have given us a great deal of responsibility, which is very different from any internship that I’ve had in the States. It can be a little daunting sometimes, but it is nice to feel like there is something I do actually know a lot about that I have to contribute to this extremely successful, development team.”

UVA students study, talk, write in groups with students at Jamia in my classes on Bollywood and interdisciplinary methods. The first project in the methods class had them go out onto the campus, and draw with pens and pencils on large unrolled sheets of paper— plants, insects and animals, people wandering across space, trees shading lawns or dusty pathways, benches, the edges of buildings, the bits and pieces people, animals and insects leave behind when they traverse space. They were learning how to do field studies in biology and archaeologies of the contemporary.

And then they play—they have gone on trips across India in a group or in pairs, beaches, monuments, camel rides in the desert. Erin, our student from Barnard is being inculcated into the nuances of “Wahoo-ness.” The students have traversed the length and breadth of Delhi, from markets to bars. Katherine Phillips speaks about how much more she has learned about Hinduism as well as other religions by being in India, but learning in this way is also very much about fun: “We try to use every chance we can get to go to see different monuments, temples, or attractions. We’re always doing something. You could honestly spend a lifetime exploring India and we only have the short five months so we try to make the most of it. So instead of homework and Trinity on a Thursday night, last night we went to a Sikh temple at 9pm.”

Perhaps this multitude of possibilities that opens up for students on the program is why the US Ambassador to India Richard R. Verma said the University of Virginia’s new semester-long study-abroad program in India is a model for the types of engagement his office is encouraging with its Passport to India program, which is aimed at increasing Americans’ engagement with India.

“We have a limited number of U.S. government-funded exchange programs bringing Americans to India, such as the Fulbright students, scholars and English teaching assistants,” Verma said.

“I am excited to learn about the University of Virginia’s new spring semester study-abroad program with Jamia Millia University. Under the tutelage of UVA Professor Geeta Patel, six American students are taking courses during the week at the school alongside Indian students – including on Saturdays! – and interning with local organizations.

“This is exactly the type of audience that we are trying to reach with our Passport to India initiative.”

GEETA PATEL



Amanda Finn, Katherine Phillips, and Erin Byrk at Dili Haat Market in Delhi, India



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