

Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures

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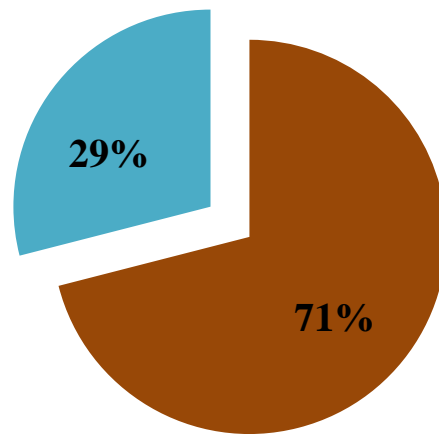
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Percentage of World Population Whose Languages Are Taught in MESALC



2010 World Population:
6.9 billion

Population of Countries Covered in MESALC:
2.0 billion

The chart above illustrates that 29% of world population speaks languages taught in MESALC. This percentage is sure to increase in coming years.

Please see “We Dream With Our Eyes Wide Open” on page 3.

Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*.

<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>.

New “Three Plus One” Initiative

MESALC AMONG THE FIRST AT U.Va.

Starting this Fall, the University of Virginia is moving ahead with implementing President Teresa A. Sullivan’s bold new 3+1 initiative, enabling entering students with credit from advanced placement or similar programs to receive a BA in three years and enter an MA program in the fourth year, graduating with both degrees in the time it used to take for one. The 3+1 track is not for everyone, or for all departments. Some students will wish to take the traditional path to a BA, maximizing their university experience and “taking time to smell the roses.” And the structure of some departments and degree programs may make the 3+1 track a bad fit. But MESALC’s history reveals that the program will only build on the department’s legacy.

In order to benefit from the new initiative, students would need to begin planning early in their high school careers. This could mean the university might need to reach out to prospective applicants early with helpful information about accelerated study at U.Va. Students entering MESALC with 15 college credits or more would then need to notify their advisors of their wish to participate. Together, they will plan the student’s course of study, including J-term and Summer session classes to build up more credits.

In the second year, MESALC students would contact Graduate

Director Bob Hueckstedt about their wish to continue on for a Master’s degree in Middle Eastern or South Asian Studies. In the third year, students would act on the information they receive from Dr. Hueckstedt, applying to the MA program in their region of choice. Graduating with a BA at the end of their third year, they would proceed to enroll in the MA program the year following. The end result would be an impressive set of credentials attained with maximum efficiency.

A survey of MESALC students beginning in 1982 reveals an interesting statistic. 20% of our majors have graduated in less than four years.

Says Professor Hueckstedt, “Many, if not most, students need some time to figure out what they are good at and what they want to devote themselves to for the rest of their lives. Some students, however, know from an early age what they want to do, and it is good of the university to accept that, get out of their way, and in fact smooth the way for them.”

A survey of MESALC students beginning in 1982 reveals an interesting statistic. Twenty percent of our majors have graduated in less than four years.



President Teresa A. Sullivan

Given the challenges of taking a degree in non-Western languages, MESALC can be proud of its record.

The expansion of the 3+1 initiative takes place against the backdrop of Governor Robert F. McDonnell’s Higher Education Opportunity Act, whose goals include 100,000 more university degrees to be awarded within the next fifteen years statewide. MESALC looks forward to a future wherein many of our graduates are counted among that number.

For more information on the “3+1 Initiative,” please consult the following websites:

www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=16125

www.virginia.edu/provost/3+1

www.virginia.edu/provost/3+1/programs.html. ●

FROM THE CHAIR We Dream With Our Eyes Wide Open



Photo Courtesy of Jack Mellott

Although autumn in its full glory and majesty is upon us in Charlottesville, the year 2011 will be remembered for its perennial spring—the Arab Spring—a time of transformative change, of rejuvenation, of birth and growth. A non-violent, desegregated, youth-generated, technologically savvy movement aims to end autocratic, violent, male-dominated, geriatric governments. Indeed, in spite of local variations, all these uprisings are driven by audaciously moderating and modernizing forces. They herald a turning point in the contemporary history of the region. Yet, as indicated in several of our courses, these awe-inspiring women and men have not appeared on the scene out of nowhere. They are, in fact, the daughters and granddaughters, the sons and grandsons of successive generations who sacrificed life

and limb in the name of human dignity, democracy and gender equity.

As history is being made, the department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures offers, through its courses, invited talks, books, articles, and opinion pieces, a better understanding of a volatile region. Thanks to a generous grant from the Center for International Studies, we are currently teaching a course on “Recent Revolutions in the Islamic World.”

By its very nature, our department is interdisciplinary and cross-regional. We teach seven languages: Arabic, Bengali, Hebrew, Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit, and Urdu. We hope to be able to add Turkish to our already impressive repertoire of languages in the near future. As confirmed by the chart on the cover, we teach the languages of 29% of the world’s population in our department. We also focus on the deep historical ties between the cultures, literatures, and languages of the Middle East, the Arab world, and South Asia.

To cross academic disciplines and wide-ranging regional and conventional boundaries even further, we have undertaken a variety of interdisciplinary/multi-cultural initiatives that engage, examine, and celebrate the literatures and cultures of the

Middle East and South Asia. For instance, thanks to a Jefferson Funds Grant, we will offer this Spring and for the first time a course aptly titled, “Crossing Borders: Middle East & South Asia.” Three other courses—“Women in Middle Eastern & South Asian Media,” “On Fact and Fiction in Middle Eastern and South Asian Novels, Biographies, and Autobiographies,” and “The Prospect of Peace-building in the Middle East and South Asia” will also be taught for the first time. These new offerings, we hope, will foster in our students a greater appreciation of sacrosanct differences and commonalities that define the two regions.

In the department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, we continue to dream with our eyes wide open. We endeavor to instill in our students the desire to build a more equitable world, where we can celebrate the oneness of diversity and embrace our full humanity regardless of nationality, race, faith, class, language, gender, or ethnicity. Beyond self-declared superiorities and pieties, we envision a heightened international sensibility, imbued with an understanding of shared values and aspirations, yet keenly aware of the common challenges and tender vulnerabilities of our global village. ●

FARZANEH MILANI

Rocking the Casbah at U.Va.

MESALC HOSTS AUTHOR ROBIN WRIGHT

On October 24th, the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures and the Center for International Studies sponsored a lecture by one of the leading international journalists on the Muslim world, Robin Wright, based on her latest book, *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World*.

Professor emeritus R.K. Ramazani, who began teaching Middle East politics at U.Va. in 1953, introduced Robin Wright not only as an acclaimed journalist, but also as “a genuine scholar” whose insights “resonate profoundly with Mr. Jefferson’s University.”

Wright began her presentation by starkly juxtaposing the bombing of the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut, which she covered on Oct. 23rd, 1983, with Tunisia’s first national elections, exactly 28 years later -- the day before her U.Va. talk.

For Wright, the “most important single story anywhere in the world” is the “Arab Spring,” an “epic political convulsion” fueled by youthful and educated populations, able and willing to raise a “real voice” against “geriatric autocrats.”

Having covered 140 countries, six Mideast wars and two intifadahs, Wright was struck by a new “common denominator” in these uprisings: “the overwhelming desire to use peaceful means in defining their future,” despite “desperate” regimes trying to crush them.

Yet beyond revolts against tyrants, Wright also illuminated the



Guest Robin Wright on October 24, 2011

growing rebellions within Islam itself, against radical, violent extremism.

Wright regaled her large U.Va. audience with lively impressions of the diverse trends at work: hip-hop anthems, rap rebels, pink-hijabs, Islamic feminists, daring comedians and playwrights, comic books and fun parks, even “YouTube Imams” and “Satellite Sheikhs,” – preachers with popular TV shows asking, “what would He [Prophet Muhammad] have done?”

For Wright, such fervor amounts to a “counter-jihad” – a cultural “struggle” to recast and return Islam toward positive values, to the everyday quests for justice, learning, and living.

Today’s “martyrs,” from Tunisia’s Mohamed Bouazizi to Egypt’s Khaled Said to Syria’s Hamza Khatib, are honored not for killing, but for their deaths shaming governments, with far greater effect

than ever mustered by al-Qaeda terror.

What Happens Next?

While cautious, Wright urged optimism not fear. The dramatic cultural changes within Islam, in her judgment, bode well for sustaining political transformations toward democracies rather than theocracies.

Wright still foresees “unprecedented turbulence” that will often be “confusing and confounding” in the West. The same peoples seeking greater political participation, justice and equality, the end of corruption, will also exhibit “greater interest in Islam.”

Yet it will be “a different kind of political Islam,” one “where Islam is not the goal,” but “the means to an end.”

MESALC WELCOMES New Faculty Members

ROBIN WRIGHT continued
from page 4

Islam will serve as a familiar shelter – a pillar – amid present storms, a way to emerge and rebuild societies.

Wright memorably illustrates her point by asking what one does when faced with a tornado: “You go to the basement and cling to the pillars and then you come up and rebuild.” Likewise, in a “political tornado, people go to the sources of their identity.”

Islam then will serve as a familiar shelter – a pillar - amid present storms, a way to emerge and rebuild societies.

While conceding that “we may only be seeing the beginning of the beginning,” Wright illustrated her confidence that “*it is a beginning*,” by citing Dalia Ziada, a concerned, yet undaunted aspirant to Egypt’s parliament: “I know today that I have power, and I know what to do with it.”

As Professor Ramazani suggested in his introduction, Robin Wright gives us reason to contemplate that Jefferson’s “ball of liberty” will yet “roll around the world.” ●

WM. SCOTT HARROP



Ghayda Al Ali

I was born in Baghdad and attended the University of Almustansrya, earning an undergraduate degree in English, and later, a

Masters in English-Arabic translation. I taught English -Arabic translation for eight years in Iraq and Libya. I have also worked as a translator and as a freelance journalist, having been published in several Arab newspapers. While attending the University in Malaysia, earning my PhD in Language and Translation, I worked as assistant to the cultural attaché at the Libyan embassy in Kuala Lumpur. I worked as visiting professor at Bucknell University, PA, where I taught Arabic, “Women in Islam,” and “Middle East Culture.” At present, I am a Lecturer teaching Arabic. I am the author of *How Arab Journalists Translate English-Language Newspaper Headlines: Case Studies in Cross-Cultural Understanding* and *Learn Arabic with Ala-Den's Journey through Baghdad*. My research interests lean heavily toward news discourse analysis of Arabic print media and its interaction with the Western media. I have a strong passion to improve communications and understanding between the two disparate cultures of the Arab World and the West.



Fauzia Farooqui

I am very happy to join the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures. I started my teaching career as a founding

teacher of the AIIS Urdu Language Program in Lucknow, India, in 2000. Since then, I have been teaching Urdu and Hindi at the post-secondary level in various settings. Besides teaching, I have

NEW FACULTY continued from page 5

been involved in several teaching material and assessment development projects for Urdu and Hindi. Before joining the University of Virginia, I worked as the Urdu-Hindi Language Specialist for STARTALK, a federally funded project administered by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

I completed my PhD in Urdu language and literature in 2004 from Lucknow University, India, where I wrote my dissertation on Urdu prose poetry. I have published a monograph on Urdu prose poetry based on my PhD work. I have also co-authored parallel introductory Urdu and Hindi textbooks that are under publication by Georgetown University Press. In addition to these, I have published several pieces of original Urdu poetry, fiction, and literary criticism in leading Urdu literary journals. My academic interests include Urdu-Hindi language and literature, literary criticism, women's studies, and the tradition of poetry recitation in Urdu, more specifically the tradition of recitation of *marsiya*, a genre of Urdu poetry devoted to depicting episodes from the battle of *Karbala*.

In terms of hobbies, I enjoy reading fiction, non-fiction, and poetry—anything well written; watching period dramas and Bollywood films, cooking, and spending time with my friends and family.



Bilal Maanaki

Prior to my arrival to U.Va., I was finishing my coursework in a double PhD degree at Indiana University, in the departments of

Near Eastern Languages & Cultures and Communication & Culture. My areas of study are in classical Arabic poetry of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period and (1) the theories of communicative practices as modes of action, (2) ways of accomplishing social ends by focusing on the poetics of communicative practice, and (3) the ways in which communicative acts are crafted and communicative skill is displayed.

I also worked extensively on theories of performance as a special class of events, such as rituals, spectacles, festivals, or fairs, in which a society's symbols and values are publicly displayed, interpreted, and transformed. I am currently working on my thesis, which aims to look closely at the trajectory of the love story of Majnun Layla (Layla's Fool) since its first inscription during the 9th century Umayyad era up until its publication as a verse drama with the Egyptian poet Ahmad Shawqi in early 20th century. Hobby wise, needless to say, reading and books top my list. Second is drama and theater, which is an old passion of mine. I studied theatre at the Lebanese University and was heavily involved in acting and directing for the stage. Lastly, sailing is another passion and dream of mine. I promised my family that sometime in the future we will cross the Atlantic on a 68-foot sailing boat. Who knows, maybe Virginia would be our launching pad. Right now, I am teaching three sections of advanced Arabic and one introductory Arabic course. My students are incredibly motivated and I enjoy each and every class. We are planning on starting a MESALC Drama Club, and my students are working hard on finishing up the details. Hopefully, we will bring you the good news shortly before the end of the semester.



Zvi Gilboa

In numerous ways, my current engagement with the instruction of Hebrew both completes a circle of former teaching experiences and opens a new one. I started my

career as a musician and pianist, and thus came to the United States to pursue first a Master's degree, and consequently, a Performer Diploma in piano. Shortly after my arrival in Bloomington, I started teaching Hebrew at Indiana University. I was lucky to enjoy a great freedom of choice with respect to teaching methods as well as materials, and was thus able to utilize and adapt my knowledge and experiences from the field of piano pedagogy for the instruction of a foreign

NEW FACULTY continued on page 8

Pakistani Women Fiction Writers

A DISCUSSION

September 28th – Guest Speaker Neelum Basheer

We were delighted to welcome prominent fiction writer Neelum Basheer from Pakistan to converse with our students on a variety of topics, from the role of Pakistani women writers to the changing culture between generations. Originally from Lahore, Basheer lived in the United States in the 1970s and early 80s. She has published four collections of short fiction, notably, *Ek Thi Mallika* (Once there was a Princess), *Gulabonwali gali* (Lane of Roses), *Lay Sans Bhi Ahista* (Breathe, but Softly), and *Sitamgar Sitambar*, a personal account of the tragedies of 9/11.

Most recently, she published autobiographical sketches of her literary family titled *Char Chaand*. Her stories are mostly about the vulnerability of women at various stages in their lives, written with a view to communicate the unwritten, unarticulated angst of women's subjectivities. She draws from her own experiences of life lived at home in Pakistan and in the West. In her talk, Basheer discussed the importance of her family background in writing and poetry. She mentioned that while the status of women in Pakistan is fragile, they still have a voice, and she feels it a duty to express herself through words. "The more you try to curb [Pakistani women], the more they're able to express themselves," she said. "We are not afraid."



Neelum Basheer in Prof. Mehr Farooqi's class "Women Writing from India and Pakistan," Sept. 28, 2011

She emphasized that the topics in her stories vary because everything is a part of life. "[The stories] are not meant to shock," she said. Rather, she uses the freedom of writing to "bring out subjects that have not been touched upon." Basheer also discussed how her stories are drawn from her experiences in Pakistan and the United States. She noted the deep disconnect from her culture that she experienced when she was sent to live here in 1972 through an arranged marriage and the difficulty in trying to teach the new generations about this traditional culture. She says, "[My children] won't see the world as I did. I am the same person, I carry the same fears." In analyzing her stories, the class discussed certain aspects of Pakistani life, including the cultural osmosis between Pakistan and India, the textual and social space of women's writing in Pakistan, issues of identity, the stigma associated with divorce, and the role of marriage.

Neelum Basheer's visit to Professor Farooqi's "Women Writing from India and Pakistan" class was jointly sponsored by the Indian Student Association and the Pakistan Student's League. Dr. Fauzia Farooqi, lecturer Hindi-Urdu, and Griffith Chaussée, Senior lecturer Hindi-Urdu, joined Professor Farooqi in welcoming Neelum Basheer. ●



Neelum Basheer (L) & Fauzia Farooqi, Lecturer of Hindi-Urdu

NEW FACULTY continued from page 6

language. As a DAAD research fellow in Berlin during the academic year 2007-08, I realized to my own surprise, that my true mission did not lie in a dissertation that would focus on music in German culture, but rather in a project that would look at contemporary works by authors that had chosen not only to *learn* a foreign language, but also to *live* and *write* in it. Entitled *National Scripts, Transnational Legacies: Cultural Imagination in the Works of Yoko Tawada, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Wladimir Kaminer, and Alexander Belousov*, my dissertation thus pursues national and transnational tendencies in contemporary literature as these emerge from the German-language works of Tawada, Özdamar, and Kaminer, as well as Belousov's Yiddish poetry. As I argue, modern nations and nation-states should be considered entities which are not succeeded by globalization or contemporary cosmopolitanism, but rather co-exist with society's transnational elements, constantly transforming and being transformed by them.

Having taught mostly German in the past years, teaching Hebrew once again in the college classroom not only takes me back to my cultural and pedagogical roots, but also prepares me for my next big project, which will entail the expansion of my dissertation into a monograph featuring a comparative study of minority German- and Hebrew-language literature, as this takes place in Germany and Israel, respectively.

As my wife and I raise our children with Hebrew and German, and are planning to have them learn Arabic as well, I find that the project is part of my life outside of academia just as much as it is part of my endeavors within it.

Here at U.Va., I am very lucky to be working with inspiring colleagues and highly-motivated students. So motivated, that a group of them even joins me once a week for an informal Hebrew conversation at Para Coffee!



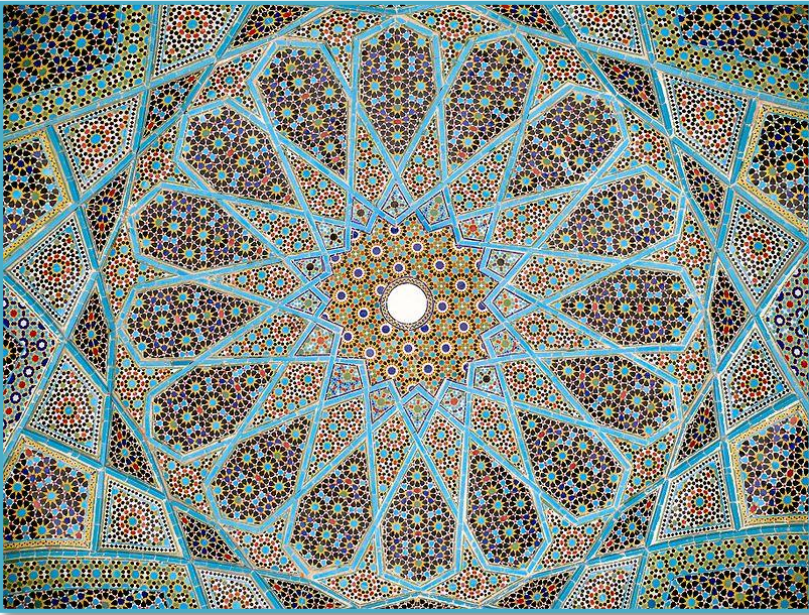
Alla Hassan

Marhaba! I am very pleased and excited to be joining the MESALC faculty this year! As an Arabic Teaching Assistant in the department for the past two years, I had the opportunity to witness and be part of the very rewarding experience of helping our students acquire a new language in which they had no previous experience. I find the work to be very exciting and enjoyable. Needless to say, I am very delighted to be teaching three sections of the Elementary Arabic courses (ARAB 1010 and 1020) this year!

Outside of the classroom, some of my current research interests include learning about The Islamic Finance Model- an alternative, interest-free financial system, and one of the fastest growing industries in the world today. In my free time, I also enjoy traveling and playing sports. My favorite is soccer, and I regularly play the sport competitively.

I look forward to meeting and working with all of our new students, and I hope that they, and all of our faculty members, have a wonderful and blessed year. ●

Three Portraits



Inside the Hafez Shrine in Shiraz, Iran

Hafez, Iran's revered 14th century lyric poet, is flatly untranslatable. This widely agreed upon fact hasn't stopped many from trying their hands at rendering his consummate artistry into English verse, however. Paradoxically it seems the more effort devoted to suggesting the original's melodious magnificence – the combined effect of wonderfully intricate internal and end rhymes, metrical mastery, the everywhere-splendid play of words – the more dismal the failure. This is to say nothing of the challenges posed by vastly different referential and symbolic worlds. Translation, as many have noted, is to some degree always an exercise in failure but it is nonetheless a miraculous bridge from which to view the depths of linguistic and cultural differences as well as the conduits of human commonality.

An additional skill, companion to the core four proficiencies our students begin with, translation is a means by which the intermediate-advanced student of language uncovers the myriad untraveled avenues, the endless side streets of meaning that convey a foreign literature. It was my great pleasure to meander these side streets with Matt Melvin-Koushki, Adam Snodgrass, and Blake Atwood, the first three students who concentrated in Persian for their MESALC B.A. Each excelled in particular ways; each gave not just concentration, but his heart to Persian studies. Blake Atwood tackled a translation project of considerable heft and difficulty with meticulous attention to both the translation work itself and to the relevant literary theory and criticism. Adam Snodgrass was

an adept translator as well; he also pushed himself unusually hard to develop his expressive skills in Persian and succeeded, writing creatively, and speaking Persian at every opportunity. Matt Melvin-Koushki tried his hand at translating the untranslatable Hafez for a semester and produced translations that left many others I had read looking more stodgy and dead than ever before. His attempts were totally fresh, imbued with the spirit of Hafez' voice, and fairly flying off the page with playful inventiveness, with their own distinctly English musicality -- not failures at all.

One of the most extraordinary rewards of teaching is that occasionally students take the simple paints you've shown them, create color combinations you've never seen and proceed to paint in ways you could never have imagined. It is a mysterious alchemy that transforms beginning language students into talented scholars, teachers, and translators; a process wondrous to watch and humbling to be a part of.

How often I've encountered the one-word exclamatory question, "Persian?!" accompanied by a quizzical look, when I share the nature of my profession. "What kind of students do you have?"

We have very wonderful ones.

ZJALEH HAJIBASHI

Blake Atwood ('06)

I graduated from U.Va. in 2006 with a BA in Middle Eastern Languages and Literatures (Persian), and I am currently a lecturer of Persian at the University of Pennsylvania in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, where I also serve as the coordinator of the Persian Language Program. Immediately following my studies at U.Va., I enrolled in the graduate program in Persian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. I completed my MA in 2008 and I am scheduled to defend my PhD dissertation in November 2011. I have published articles and given presentations on modern Persian literature and Iranian cinema. Additionally, throughout my academic career, the development of new methods and materials for teaching Persian has been a top priority, and I am the co-author of *Persian of Iran Today* (with Anousha Shahsavari), a multimedia curriculum for beginning students.

Whenever someone asks me how I got interested in Persian, I think fondly back to the time I spent in the Persian program at U.Va., where professors Hajibashi and Milani patiently nurtured my interests in the language and culture of Iran. Their courses inspired me and opened up a new linguistic and cultural world. I was initially drawn to Persian and Iran because I was intrigued by a culture with such a long literary history. But I continue to be fascinated by Iran because Iranian society is constantly changing and redefining its relationship to that long history. The Persian

language acts as a site for the articulation of these changes, and it is continually evolving itself. I discovered that even though Persian is the language of the *Shāhnameh* and poems of Hāfez, it is also a young and hip language. The study of Persian and Iran forces me to stay on my intellectual toes, and I find that immensely rewarding.

Adam Snodgrass ('06)

As I was growing up, I never thought that I would make a career and a life out of a language spoken on the other side of the world (and certainly by no one in my family). When I started college, Persian seemed like nothing more than a series of squiggles and dots, which, depending on my mood and how much I had slept, appeared either elegant or chaotic. I envied my heritage speaker classmates who could call a parent for help on homework; if only such an easy resource were available to me!

But at the same time, learning Persian became an exciting challenge. After a few semesters, I felt tremendously excited to take a classical poetry course and actually understand and appreciate the beauty of words written nearly a millennium before. (Incidentally, the translated snippets in popular culture of Rumi and Khayyam are truly incomparable to the original verse!) When I perfected the crust on a traditional Persian rice dish, one of my professors told me that it was time for me to get married – according to Iranian customs, at least. And I felt like the darling of the Persian Cultural

Society's Iran Day 1384 (2005) festival, where I recited a poem by Forough Farrokhzad for all the patient Iranian parents who had assembled for the event (along with my own parents, who smiled politely through my recitation).

Since I graduated in 2006, I've continued to translate Persian, and I've built a successful career from it. My experience at U.Va. prepared me perfectly for life outside of Charlottesville, as well as giving me the foundation to continue learning and studying Persian to this very day. In the next few years I'm hoping to pursue a Master's degree in Persian, and just to improve my chances during the application process, I'll practice my Persian cooking skills to impress my new professors.

Matthew Melvin-Koushki ('04)

My doctoral research at Yale deals with Islamic occult philosophy in early 15th century Iran and its intersections with contemporary Islamic philosophy and mysticism and Persian and Arabic literature. Specifically, in my dissertation I examine as a test case Sa'in al-Din Turka Isfahani (1369-1432) both as a preeminent occult philosopher of the period and celebrated stylist of Persian prose. In 2012 I will be joining the Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford as a postdoctoral researcher with the project "From Late Medieval to Early Modern: 13th to 16th Century Islamic Intellectual History (IMPACT)," under whose aegis I plan to explore the same themes as they operate during the

PORTRAITS continued
from page 10

transition from late medieval to early modern in the Islamicate heartlands, particularly in the millenarian form that is endemic to the intellectual and sociopolitical energies of these centuries—whether in Timurid Iran or Renaissance Europe.

I can't imagine being in this position were it not for my two years in the MESALC program at U.Va. (2002-2004); without the academic guidance, intellectual inspiration, and simple human generosity of Professor Hajibashi, Professor Hueckstedt, and Professor Farooqi in particular, it would not have dawned on me that I too could join the Great Work in some modest capacity. I'll be forever grateful to Prof. Hajibashi for setting me on the path to the Iran of Hafez, truly a gift that keeps on giving.

Because the late medieval period in the Islamicate lands is still for the most part shockingly unstudied, much of the Persian and Arabic material I work with remains in manuscript form; among my tasks at Oxford over the next four years will be to publish editions and translations of the gorgeous but recondite works of Sa'in al-Din Turka and his circle. (My Sanskrit I'm afraid has decamped for greener pastures!) As for the future, I can only pray the job gods let me teach in a program like MESALC once I come full circle. ●

NEW COURSES 2012

MESA 2559-001

Women in Middle Eastern & South Asian Media

Lisa Goff

Tues/Thurs 2:00 - 3:15pm

Gibson Hall 341

MESA 2559-002

Crossing Borders: Middle East & South Asia

Ahmad Obiedat & Richard Cohen

Mon/Wed 2:00 - 3:15 PM

New Cabell Hall 430

MESA 2559-003

On Fact and Fiction in Middle Eastern Novels, Biographies, and Autobiographies

Marie Ostby

Tues/Thurs 3:30 - 4:45 PM

Chemistry Building 411

MESA 2559-004

The Prospect of Peacebuilding in the Middle East and South Asia

Roy Hange

Tues/Thurs 6:00 - 7:15 PM

Dell 2 100

MESA 2559-005

Introducing Iranian Cinema

Sahar Allamezade

Thurs 2:00 - 5:00 PM

Pavilion VIII 103

For more information on new courses offered in Spring 2012, please visit the MESALC website:

www.virginia.edu/mesa/

Please be sure to check the Student Information System's Course Listings for up-to-date information on all Spring 2012 courses.

Elizabeth Hogan Luna This summer I studied Arabic in Lebanon. I attended Lebanese American University and studied Lebanese Arabic through their SINARC program. It improved my speaking abilities and I also had a great time. I'm currently debating with myself about changing my (de facto) thesis topic from the portrayal of Muslim women in the media to something related to female militants in Lebanon. I was going to graduate this semester, but I decided to stay on until May. Studying and doing research in the MESALC department has been a great experience.

Dana Wilson My experience at U.Va. as part of the Middle Eastern Studies program has proven to be a very challenging, yet rewarding experience. I have been afforded the opportunity to take part in cutting edge courses, being taught by professors that are the best in their respective fields. In just three semesters, my curriculum has included learning Arabic, as well as traveling to Syria last winter at the dawn of the Arab Spring. I have had the unprecedented opportunity of meeting with Mrs. Asma Al-Asad, the Syrian president's wife. This past summer, I traveled to Turkey to study in Istanbul and Ankara. During my time there, I met with various members of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and discussed with them their critical role and instrumental part they will play in the turn of events currently happening throughout the Middle East.

NEWS of MESALC Graduate Students

Justin Roberts During this past summer, I had the opportunity to travel to India for ten weeks where I was able to complete my coursework for the MESALC Master's degree program through my attendance at an Urdu language school. Luckily, I was able to be accompanied by my wife and son, making my experiences all the more memorable. While we did some sightseeing in Delhi, Agra, and Goa, the majority of our trip was spent wandering the streets and markets of Lucknow where the American Institute of Indian Studies' Urdu Language Program is located. Sharing innumerable cups of chai (and a considerable amount of paan as well) with everyone from shopkeepers and policewale to bankers and neighbors, I not only improved my speaking skills, but also made a new diverse group of friends. Despite the captivating architecture and fascinating history I was able to witness, it is these experiences that I value the most. In the process of learning more about others, I learned much more about myself.

Rasmieyh Abdelnabi This past summer I interned for the United Nations Development Programme – Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People's (UNDP-PAPP) gender specialist in Jerusalem, working on a project

concerning gender and Palestinian statehood. Early this year, the Palestinian Authority began discussing and evaluating a plan to petition the United Nations to recognize Palestine as a state. Largely missing from the conversation have been the women of Palestine. With a goal of promoting discussion among Palestinian female activists on their desired state, the UNDP-PAPP organized a workshop on gender and statehood. We held simultaneous workshops in Ramallah and Gaza City in July, since Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank cannot travel freely between the two areas. The two workshops were linked at times by videoconferencing. For weeks before the workshop I helped prepare for it, took notes at brainstorming meetings, translated workshop materials and compiled an extensive database of Palestinian female activists. Additionally, I created and coordinated a Facebook group intended to be a central information-sharing site for female activists to stay connected. After the workshop, I helped draft a summary report and conducted a video project in which a colleague and I went around historic Palestine, interviewing women on their vision of a state. Those videos are now available on YouTube and Facebook. My internship gave me great exposure into the internal workings of the women's movement and civil society in Palestine, which are both research interests of mine.

New in the MESALC LIBRARY

Maryam Ashraf Though I did not get a chance to go abroad over the summer like many of my classmates, it was still full of Arabic! I worked with the Summer Language Institute (SLI) at U.Va., mainly to assist the professor of first-year Arabic incorporate fun, educational, and cultural activities into the class. The students had a rigorous daily schedule, with six hours of language instruction, five days a week. It is easy for cultural activities to take a backseat to vocabulary, grammar, and all the other challenges of learning a language, so I tried to spice up their learning experience, as well as challenge them to think about the Middle East differently than they had in the past. We watched movies from around the Arab world, both political and humorous, and had great discussions about the themes they portrayed. We had cooking events and learned to make a variety of popular dishes, from tabbouleh and baba ghanoush, to great (and easy!) lentil soup. Our professor even shared his grandmother's recipe and helped us cook delicious Palestinian kafta! Most importantly, we had conversations with native speakers of Arabic and fellow university students. The students always found this to be the most helpful element to their learning of Arabic and understanding more about realities in the Middle East. The class was lucky to have discussions with students who were raised in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Eight weeks of summer flew by in the Arabic SLI! ●

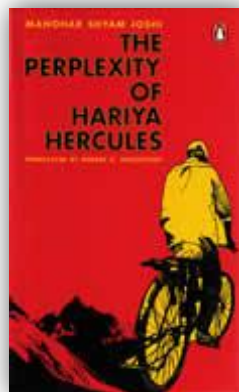
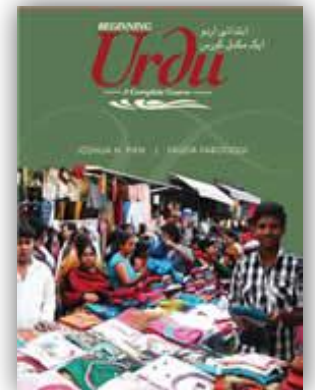


Ghayda Al Ali

How Arab Journalists Translate English-Language Newspaper Headlines: Case Studies in Cross-Cultural Understanding is a comparative descriptive analysis of seventy English language headlines and their Arabic translations gathered from the Arab national and international press and news agencies over the period of January 1, 2002 through August 1, 2002, a period that happened to include the months leading up to the second Iraq war (Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).

Fauzia Farooqui

Beginning Urdu: A Complete Course is a complete first-year textbook designed to help learners acquire the language by actively using it in realistic situations. The book and its accompanying audio CD contain all that is needed to complete one full year of study (Georgetown University Press, Dec. 2011).

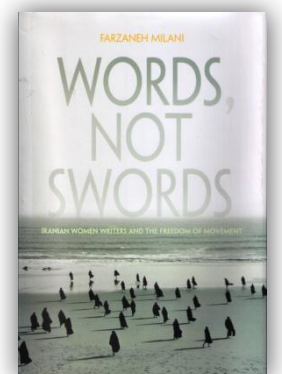


Robert Hueckstedt

The Perplexity of Hariya Hercules is a translation of Manohar Shyam Joshi's story from Hindi to English (Penguin Books India, 2009).

Farzaneh Milani

Words, Not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement explores the legacy of sex segregation and its manifestations in Iranian literature, cinema, notions of beauty, and the erotics of passivity (Syracuse University Press, May 2011).



Studies in Dushanbe

FROM A MESALC GRADUATE

As an undergraduate of the Middle Eastern Studies Department, I am honored to be a U.Va Alum. The credentials of the professors, in addition to the variety of subjects they teach, have given me the opportunity to have multiple experiences beyond the classroom. The resources in the MESALC department and coursework from faculty specialized in Persian Language and Literature provided me with skills, knowledge, and additional cultural appreciation for the Middle East. Studying Persian made me more receptive to the possibilities of concentrations and focuses within my major. My chosen concentration, Studies of Women and Gender, in addition to Persian, aided my studies in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Most of all the tools and lessons learned from specific classes and professors in the MESALC department helped me integrate into my host mother's household and her community. There was always

something to talk about and do at the Dushanbe Language Center with fellow American students, Tajik, Iranian, Afghan and Uzbek professors, and staff members. Whether it was discussing classical Persian poetry, women's issues, education, politics, or the art of bread making, I was able to carry my experience from MESALC with me and build strong lasting relationships. I had two friends make the journey before I did and met another friend and U.Va. Alum in Tajikistan. It just goes to show that Persian students are always on the move - brave, open minded to different dialects, and willing to go to one of the most beautiful, intriguing, yet crucial, countries in Central Asia. I plan to return in January to teach English in Dushanbe, improve my Persian, and work on Women's Development Projects. I'm excited to live with my host mother again and connect with old and new faces. I hope to meet

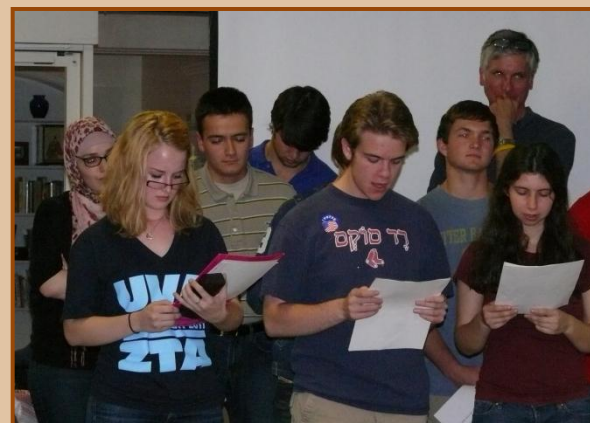
other MESALC department students during my journey and become a resource for them. I know they will get the same thrill I got when translating Persian to Cyrillic Script, overlooking Hector (a 19th Century Madrassa), camping and visiting villagers in Iskandar Kuk (a beautiful lake in the Fan Mountains named after Alexander the Great), talking to scholars at the Dushanbe Academy of Sciences Building, and examining ancient manuscripts such as Qurans, Persian poetry, medical text, and more. Most of all, I hope other students get a chance to dance, laugh and eat delicious Tajik food at weddings and other ceremonies. I feel more globally connected in my area of study and will contribute the same skills, patience and understanding that MESALC has bestowed upon me to the international community. To all U.Va. students who decide to partake in this amazing journey, I will be sure to use the same response as my Tajik-Persian Grammar Teacher, thrilled by students answering questions correctly: "THANK YOU VERY MUCH, I AM GLAD TO SEE YOU!"

ROSE MINOR

Multicultural Poetry Night

MIDDLE EASTERN
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On November 8, the Middle Eastern Leadership Council (MELC) hosted a Multicultural Poetry Night at the International Residential College (IRC). The event was organized by Michelle Sawwan, fourth-year Arabic student and intern for Multicultural Student Services in the Office of the Dean of Students. Seven Middle Eastern student organizations in MELC and various MESALC students and faculty showcased poetry and performed cultural presentations in a variety of languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, Pashto, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. Students of all levels of language study participated, and the evening resulted in a full house during the readings. "The purpose [was] to encourage reciters to engage more profoundly in their language of interest," says Sawwan. "Poetry recitation is one of the best ways to do that." Sawwan encouraged both students and faculty to participate, emphasizing the event's objective as an appreciation for the diversity of the various languages and cultures presented.



Students reading poetry

REPORT ON NEW FALL 2011 COURSES

..... AN ONGOING MAHFIL:
READINGS IN URDU POETRY

An Ongoing Mahfil: Readings in Urdu Poetry is a new MESALC course this semester taught by Professor Mehr Farooqi. *Mahfil* means gathering, and is commonly referred to as lively gatherings of poetry recitation and musical performance. Similarly, this course is designed to be a gathering of students reciting, analyzing, and appreciating Urdu poetry. To fully understand the poetry, we also discuss the evolution and development of Urdu and other South Asian languages. The selected readings are carefully chosen to reflect both the classical and modern eras of Urdu literature, as well as to complement the linguistic capacity of the students. A thorough analysis of the Urdu poem, the *ghazal*, not only gives one exposure to the finer aspects of language, but also includes built in lessons of history, culture, political circumstances,

and the society of the time. In addition to professor Farooqi, our class is fortunate enough to benefit from the presence and expert insights of our department's talented instructors of Urdu and Hindi, Griffith Chaussée and Fauzia Farooqi.

The benefits of this course to me, as a student of Arabic, have been profound. The roots of Urdu and its relationship with Persian, Arabic, and Indic languages, underscore an interconnectedness of the histories, languages, and politics of the entire MESA region, and prove that there is much to learn about one's own area of interest by exploring the surrounding regions.

Though the push to learn MESA languages seems to be greatly impacted by the United States' current security ambitions, I hope it also affords us students an opportunity to gain exposure to the poetry, the

The roots of Urdu and its relationship with Persian, Arabic, and Indic languages, underscore an interconnectedness of the histories, languages, and politics of the entire MESA region, and prove that there is much to learn about one's own area of interest by exploring the surrounding regions.

hidden jewels, these languages have to offer. Poetry imprints the heart, tugs at the soul, and leaves the reader longing for more. Such has been my experience in this *mahfil*, and I am deeply appreciative of the instructors and the department for this new course offering.

MARYAM ASHRAF

FALL REPORT continued
on page 16

U.Va. Receives "Project GO" Grant Extension from the National Security Education Program

The US Department of Defense through the ROTC Language and Culture Project of the National Security Education Program has extended U.Va.'s two-year "Project GO" grant by one year, adding \$298,360, increasing the total grant award to \$798,360. The Project GO program incentivizes the study of critical languages and cultures by students enrolled in the Army, Air Force and Navy ROTC programs. The main thrust of the program focuses on intensive summer sessions courses and study abroad programs. Seven languages are supported by the grant: Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Hindi/Urdu, Persian, Korean, and Swahili. The grant provides funding to ROTC affiliated students in the form of tuition, stipend and in some cases travel funds connected with on grounds summer session language study, as well as study abroad. A total of 56 ROTC cadets have received scholarships between June 2009 and August 2011, participating in U.Va.'s Summer Sessions and Summer Language Institutes, as well as studying in Morocco, Jordan, India, China, Korea, Tajikistan and Russia. Dr. Richard J. Cohen, managing director of the U.Va. Asia Institute, is the principal investigator of the grant.

RICHARD COHEN

FEATURED FACULTY Mehr Afshan Farooqi

Mehr Farooqi, assistant professor of Urdu and South Asian Studies, is finishing work on her book manuscript tentatively titled, “Urdu Literary Culture: Vernacular Modernity in the Writing of Muhammad Hasan Askari,” which will be published simultaneously from Oxford University Press (for sale in South Asia) and in Palgrave-Macmillan’s prestigious series, *Literatures and Cultures of the Islamic World*. She is also the editor-contributor of *The Two Sided Canvas, Perspectives on Ahmed Ali*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 2012.

Farooqi presented a paper on Askari at this year’s American Association of Asian Studies Conference at Honolulu, Hawaii. She was the organizer of the interdisciplinary symposium, “The Literary City in South Asia,” held the first week of November (SEE PAGE 13).

Farooqi’s two volume anthology, *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Urdu Literature* (Delhi 2008), has recently been released in a paperback edition.



Professor Mehr Afshan Farooqi

FALL REPORT continued from page 15

The first time I encountered an Urdu *ghazal* was during my first year in Hindi 1020. I’ve always been passionate about poetry, but never before had words mesmerized me so completely. We continued to read *she’rs* (couplets) periodically in class, but my desire to know more was insatiable. This is why I was beyond excited to learn that a course called *An Ongoing Mahfil: Readings in Urdu Poetry* with Professor Mehr Farooqi, would be offered this fall, and consequently, jumped at the opportunity to sign up.

My excitement has intensified with each class. As the syllabus states, the purpose of URDU 3559 *An Ongoing Mahfil* is to understand the cultural milieu that produced the Urdu language.

We have explored the linguistic development of Urdu and its shared history with Hindi. We have read both classical and modern poetry, and attempt not only to fully analyze the poems, but also to recite them as in a true *mahfil* - a gathering in which poetry is shared and recited. I knew coming in to the class that I would enjoy the poems, but this class has opened up an entirely new world of meaning in the poems for me. Each rhyme, each word, each embedded metaphor is chosen deliberately to suggest multiple meanings and pack in a powerful punch with each one.

The environment of the class--six students, three extremely knowledgeable professors in the room, sweet Hindi/Urdu music floating in the background,

and usually a thermos of steaming *masala chai*—allows us to completely immerse ourselves in Urdu poetry for two and a half hours every Monday night. I’ve gained a deeper understanding of the material not only through listening to what my classmates and professors have to say, but also from analyzing the poetry in its original language, as profound meanings are so often lost in translation. I also frequently entertain the possibility of studying literature and poetry in graduate school after I leave U.Va., and it seems that this *mahfil* only pushes me further in that direction. This class has been nothing short of a wonderful experience that any lover of language and poetry should experience. ●

RUDHDI KARNIK

Fall 2011 Calendar of Events

September 28

3:30 – 6:00 PM

“Women Writing from
India and Pakistan”

Guest Speaker
Neelum Basheer
Author

Sponsored by the Indian
Student Association and the
Pakistan Student’s League

October 24

4:00 – 5:30 PM

“Rock the Casbah: Rage
and Rebellion Across
the Islamic World”

Guest Speaker
Robin Wright
Author, foreign correspondent and
Senior Fellow at the United States
Institute of Peace

Sponsored by MESALC and
the Center for International
Studies

November 10

5:00 – 6:30 PM

“Understanding
Bahraini Fault-Lines”

Guest Speaker
Scott Waalkes
Political Science Department,
Malone University, and former
Fulbright Fellow in Bahrain

November 15

5:00 – 6:30 PM

“Yemeni Echoes of the
Arab Spring”

Guest Speaker
Jefferson Gray
Former Fulbright Scholar to the
Republic of Yemen and staff
writer for the First Freedom
Center

Sponsored by MESALC and
the Center for International
Studies

December 1

7:00 PM

Nau Auditorium
Showing of “Little
Town of Bethlehem”
Documentary

Please visit:
[http://littletownofbethlehem.
org/trailer/](http://littletownofbethlehem.org/trailer/)

Sponsored by MESALC and
the Center for International
Studies

Date and time are tentative.
Please check the department
website to confirm.



WORKSHOP

November 2:

9:00 – 4:00 PM

November 3:

9:30 – 12:00 PM

“The Literary City in South Asia:
Location, Imagination, and
Discourse”

Paper Presentations:
Alok Rai, English Department,
Delhi University
Rajender Kaur, English Department,
William Patterson University
Rashmi Dube Bhatnagar, English
Department, University of Pittsburgh
Mehr Farooqi, MESALC, U.Va.
Hanadi Al-Samman, MESALC, U.Va.

Discussants:
Frances Pritchett, Middle Eastern,
South Asian, and African Studies,
Columbia University
Farzaneh Milani, MESALC, U.Va.
Anne Kinney, DEALLC, U.Va.
Robert Hueckstedt, MESALC, U.Va.
Richard Cohen, Asia Institute, U.Va.

This workshop was sponsored by MESALC, the
Office of International Programs, and the South
Asia Center.

The Literary City in South Asia: Location, Imagination, and Discourse

Interdisciplinary Symposium | November 2 – 3, 2011

MESALC convened an interdisciplinary symposium on the role particular cities have played in South Asia in determining the politics and socio-cultural life of the region where they are located. Urban centers historically attracted the best talent from artists, writers, musicians, scholars of all stripes and colors; they were also the stamping grounds of politicians and bureaucrats. The symposium brought together scholars of South Asia from across cultural fields in the humanities.

Cities have been lavishly imagined, desired and dreaded in literary representations. City narration was an ancient convention in Indic language literatures notably apabhramsa that mapped out enchantments and invisible foundations of a particular city and gave it a specific theology. This literature was further enriched by Sufi poets who adapted it to the ethics about the travel of the soul from earthly

cities to heavenly ones. The city was extolled and lamented through poems called *shahr ashobs* that described how habitations grew and professions prospered but also how decline, calamity, and exodus ruined cities.

The historic Hindu and Muslim pasts of certain important cities was profoundly changed by the establishment of British institutions. The colonial city was a complex web of tradition and modernity that often found expression in the poetry and fiction of creative writers. While the power of the English language became manifest in colonial times, nationalism's discourse was building on the voice of the vernacular. During the struggle for independence the cultural contour of important cities was colored by competing politics. Afterwards, large scale migrations altered and transformed the nature of many cities. In Punjab, especially, the transformation



Dean Cristina Della Coletta

wrought by Partition was traumatic. The twin cities, Lahore and Amritsar located thirty miles apart were severed by Partition in a way that the symbiotic relationship between them was ruined.

The speakers in the symposium engaged with the above themes. Mehr Farooqi and Alok Rai's papers on Allahabad mapped the intricate relationship between English and the vernaculars and the special role of the English department at the University of Allahabad in nurturing the sub-cultures of north Indian languages. Farooqi and Rai's papers also highlighted the interplay between Urdu and Hindi, Progressive and non-Progressive in the intellectual debates and discourse that emanated from Allahabad.

The symposium transcended the so called boundaries between the different Asias. Hanadi Al-Samman's paper on the



Symposium panel

DISTINGUISHED GUEST

Alok Rai



Alok Rai

We were pleased to welcome a leading litterateur from India, Alok Rai. Professor Rai has a distinguished career, starting with a Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford University, where he was a student of the influential literary critic Raymond Williams. Professor Rai has taught at Allahabad University, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, and most recently, at Delhi University, where he has offered courses on Victorian and modern English literature. As the grandson of the renowned short story writer, Premchand, he is naturally involved with the world of Hindi literature. Recent publications have focused on the role of language and culture in Indian politics, such as the ground-breaking book, *Hindi Nationalism* (2001) and “The Persistence of Hindustani” (*Annual of Urdu Studies*, 2005). Professor Rai was scholar-in-residence at the University of Pennsylvania in Spring 2007.



Rajender Kaur (L) and Rashmi Dube Bhatnagar

resurrection of ancient Beirut in the imaginary of Hoda Barakat’s *Tiller of Waters* opened another dimension of engagement with the concept of the literary city. The symposium’s discussants were diverse and incisive in their remarks. The interdisciplinary pairing of presenters and discussants added a remarkable flavor and depth to the symposium.

The workshop’s interdisciplinary and multilingual premise was further enriched with Associate Dean Cristina Della Coletta’s presentation from her research on a travel narrative of Goa.

The symposium was supported by the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, the Office of International Programs, the Asia Institute, and the South Asia Center.



Chair, Frances Pritchett



Professor Hanadi Al-Samman



Professor Mrinalini Chakavorty



Professor Richard Cohen

Symposium Convener:
Mehr Afshan Farooqi,
MESALC, U.Va.

Special Thanks to:
Richard Cohen, MESALC, U.Va.
Jessica Strang, MESALC, U.Va.

Symposium Chair:
Frances Pritchett,
Columbia University

MEHR FAROOQI

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