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Chair’s Message

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the newsletter of the Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures! The department was founded in 2011 as the integration of two existing academic units, the Program in Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Studies and the Near Eastern side of the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literatures. Since then we have worked to offer our students courses that are rigorous and innovative, whether introducing them to a new culture, or a new perspective on a familiar culture.

Serving as chair has granted me opportunities to learn more about my colleagues’ work – both in and out of the classroom – and about the university from different perspectives, much of which is shared in the pages of this newsletter.

Continuously thinking about our curriculum, and mining our scholarship for new approaches to established courses, we have also introduced a number of new courses this past year such as “The Sephardic Experience: 1492 to the Present;” “Anthropological and Sociological Study of Muslim Societies;” and “Of Dishes, Taste, and Class: History of Food in the Middle East.” This last course hosted a dinner at Ibby’s for the larger community basing their menu on historical documents. Reservations were a must!

New this year are courses on Syrian Literature, “Jewish Sexual Ethics,” and “Slow Violence in the Middle East.”

After several years’ success as a lively faculty reading group (supported by the Center for the Humanities) the Wastelands Project has expanded thanks to the Mellon Foundation’s Sawyer Seminar Fellowship and the leadership of Nancy Reynolds and Anne-Marie McManus. Vasiliki Touhouliotis joins them this fall as the project’s post-doctoral fellow, helping organize the symposia that will be scheduled throughout the coming year. Check the website jinelc.wustl.edu for events, and see the next page for more details.

Comings and goings:

After almost twenty years, Giore Etzion has retired from the university. While in our department (and its predecessor ANELL) Giore piloted and published the The Routledge Introductory Course in Modern Hebrew: Hebrew in Israel. The Amazon reviews are full of praise: “The BEST modern Hebrew book on the market ... This is really an outstanding book. It is head-and-shoulders above any book on the market today aimed at English speakers.” We hope retirement gives Giore time to finish his current project, a sequel to the acclaimed beginning textbook, as well as to enjoy himself, whether here or on his travels.

And after even more years with the university, most recently with the former ANELL and then with us, JoAnn Achelpohl has also retired. Her contributions to the department and the university are too many to enumerate here, and knowing her, she’d rather it be left unsaid. Suffice it to say that she is missed, and we wish her all the best.

We also said goodbye to Nahrain Al-Mousawi, who finished her postdoctoral fellowship, teaching the seminar in Fourth year Arabic, and courses such as “Undocumented: Clandestine Narratives from the Arab, African, and Afro-Arab World.” While here she made great progress on her monograph on migrant narratives, and we look forward to seeing it in print soon.

We are also missing Hillel Kieval, Nancy Reynolds, and Mohammed Warsi who are on leave, although both Kieval and Warsi are due back for spring semester, and Reynolds next fall.

We welcome back Meera Jain to the Hindi program, and Shlomit Nehorai to the Hebrew program. We are also welcoming two postdoctoral fellows, Rebecca Epstein-Levi and Vasiliki Touhouliotis. And Leslie Smith joins Stephen Scordias in the departmental office, working behind the scenes on everything related to finances and personnel.

Last year we hosted and co-sponsored a wealth of events, including our first arts week. While this year’s calendar is still shaping up, we expect it to be at least as rich. We encourage you to check our website for details (jinelc.wustl.edu), or to email the office at jinelc@wustl.edu to add your email address to our mailing list.
Anne-Marie McManus and Nancy Reynolds are delighted to announce the Mellon Sawyer Seminar for the academic year 2017-2018, “Grounding the Ecocritical: Materializing Wastelands and Living on in the Middle East.” Co-directed by McManus and Reynolds, and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this “Grounding the Ecocritical” Sawyer Seminar launches a comparative, interdisciplinary investigation into ecological, technical, and literary-cultural accounts of wasteland spaces across the region traditionally defined as the Middle East. The seminar invites researchers to Washington University in St. Louis’ campus to join in developing methods and vocabularies to study the specific wastelands—from ruined cities to desiccated environments—that traverse this geographical area. The seminar will do so by highlighting deep and materially inflected understandings of place: soil mechanics, architectural decay, biotic decomposition, desert wind patterns, and more. Through the comparative study of these processes, the seminar explores the poetics and politics associated with particular places.

In the academic year 2017-2018, the Sawyer Seminar “Grounding the Ecocritical” will convene regular meetings with visiting and local scholars in the environmental humanities. In addition, seminar participants (faculty, postdoctoral, and graduate) will develop courses and other forums to promote the Environmental Humanities on campus; produce an edited volume of research studies; organize field trips to local sites; and screen related films.

While the seminar co-directors focus on the Middle East in their research, the participants are specialists on a range of areas, including North America, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Vasiliki Touhouliotis joined Washington University as the Mellon Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellow. Touhouliotis received her doctorate in Anthropology from The New School for Social Research in January 2016. During her fellowship year, she will work on her book manuscript, titled "The Bombs Fall Slowly: War and Exterminability in the Middle East." She will teach a course on slow violence in the Middle East in spring 2017. Other courses associated with the Mellon Sawyer Seminar will be home-based in Anthropology and taught by Heather O’Leary.

The seminar will also support two graduate fellows: Waseem-Ahmed Bin-Kasim (History), who is writing a dissertation titled "Sanitary Segregation: Cleansing Accra and Nairobi, 1908-1963"; and Wenjia Olivia Chen (Comparative Literature), who is writing a dissertation on oil literature in America.

"Grounding the Ecocritical" will be housed in the Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Washington University in St. Louis.

For more information on the seminar, please visit the website https://www.materializingwastelands.org or contact the Co-Directors: Anne-Marie McManus, amcmanus@wustl.edu / Nancy Reynolds, nreynolds@wustl.edu.
New Hires

The department welcomed new faces to Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures.

Rebecca Epstein-Levi

Rebecca Epstein-Levi joins the department as the Friedman Postdoctoral Fellow in Jewish Studies.

Epstein-Levi received her PhD in religious studies from the University of Virginia in April of 2017. This fall she will teach a seminar on Jewish sexual ethics, and in the spring will teach the course “Jews, Bodies, and Bioethics.” This course will explore the body in Judaism as a subject of textual and ritual discourse, as a site of ethical problems and moral formation, as a marker of otherness, and as a site of conflict over questions of power and identity. The course will further examine the place of the body in ritual practice, Jewish thought on biomedical ethics, and the ways in which rhetorics of supposed Jewish physical difference have affected Jews’ relationships with non-Jews.

Epstein-Levi is currently working on developing her dissertation into a book manuscript. The dissertation uses rabbinic ritual purity discourse as a model for a new Jewish ethics of sex and public health, specifically focusing on STI transmission. The focus of the book manuscript will expand from treating STIs in particular to looking at the moral implications of treating sex as a species of social interaction more broadly.

Rebecca enjoys cooking, horseback riding, and hand-sharpening her perpetually expanding collection of kitchen knives. She lives in University City with her wife, Sarah, and their cat, Faintly Macabre.

Meera Jain

Meera Jain joins the department as a Lecturer of Hindi.

Jain received her B.Arch from Sir J.J. College, University of Mumbai, India, and her M.Arch in Architecture and Urban Design from the University of Texas at Austin. Her interests include Indian temple architecture, the future of the Indian city, the impact of religion and culture on built environment, and teaching language and culture.

Jain is currently teaching Beginning Hindi I and Advanced Hindi I for fall 2017.

Shlomit Nehorai

Shlomit Nehorai joins the department as a Lecturer of Hebrew.

Growing up in Israel, Shlomit Nehorai took her language for granted. As she matured, she was fascinated by the rich history and miraculous revival of the Hebrew language and chose Hebrew as one of her undergraduate majors, along with a major in educational counseling. So started her career-long dual interest.

When Nehorai and her husband came to the United States to further their education, Nehorai chose a Master’s degree in Marriage, Family and Child Psychotherapy. She had an incredibly rich and rewarding time studying and working in that field, but missed applying her Hebrew language skills. Thus, she started teaching Hebrew at a Jewish high school in Chicago. She continued her Master’s level studies in Hebrew and Jewish related studies, as well as teaching Hebrew as a second language at Hebrew College in Boston.

After moving to St. Louis 11 years ago and taking the time to build a house in Olivette, Nehorai was happy to return to teaching Hebrew working with Giore Etzion, before his retirement. Nehorai also taught Hebrew at UMSL last year.

On a personal level, Nehorai’s deepest joy has always been her beautiful family – her incredible husband, Arye, who brought her to Washington University, and her son, Elad, and daughter, Sharone, both of whom she is extremely proud of!

Currently, Nehorai is very excited to join the department and has been hard at work preparing for classes, attending a national conference, and just settling in.
New Hires

Vasiliki Touhouliotis

Vasiliki Touhouliotis joins the department as the Mellon Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellow. Touhouliotis received her PhD in Anthropology from The New School for Social Research in 2016. Touhouliotis’ first visit to Lebanon in 2006 coincided with the beginning of the 2006 Lebanon War, which consequently sparked her sustained interest in bombing and its social and political effects. Her dissertation research, which was based on over a year of ethnographic fieldwork, tracks the diverse socio-material worlds formed by unexploded cluster bombs in the South of Lebanon as they generated jobs in humanitarian de-mining, re-distributed care for injured bodies, and gave rise to new forms of slow and belated environmental violence. As a postdoctoral fellow for the Wastelands Mellon Sawyer Seminar, Touhouliotis will expand her research on the slow violence of war, to include in the relationship between militarized violence and climate change, and the role that bombs have played in the desertification of Iraq.

In spring 2018, Touhouliotis will teach “Slow Violence and the Environment in the Modern Middle East.” This course surveys slow violence in the Middle East to understand the conditions that produced it, how it transforms the environment, and its racialized and gendered distributions. At the same time, it attends to the voices that inhabit the environments produced by slow violence in order to better understand how the multiple and overlapping temporalities of violence are lived in and what sort of futures are imagined and demanded.

Leslie Smith

Leslie Smith joins Busch Hall as a shared services position, specifically serving the department as an Accounting Assistant II.

Smith started her career at Washington University in St. Louis in the Department of Mathematics in 2008, then transferred to Biomedical Engineering. After joining the School of Arts & Sciences in September of 2016, Leslie now assists with finances and human resources for Arts & Sciences, Busch Hall based departments, Interdisciplinary Project in the Humanities, and the Humanities Digital Workshop.

Farewells

Three members of the Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures left in 2016.

- After 30 years of service to the Washington University in St. Louis community, JoAnn Achelpohl announced her retirement in 2016. JoAnn was a dedicated and highly regarded employee to many departments during her tenure: Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures; Asian and Near Eastern Languages & Literatures; East Asian Studies; University College; and Alumni and Development.

  JoAnn’s institutional knowledge was impeccable, and her abilities in all aspects of her positions always proved to be top-notch. Most notably, JoAnn was a supportive, loyal, and caring friend. While we greatly miss her efficiency and wise counsel, we wish her the best on her many new adventures.

- After twenty years of teaching Giore Etzion retired following the Fall semester of 2016. Prof. Etzion taught first and third year modern Hebrew courses at the university, and was much liked by both his colleagues and his numerous students throughout the years.

  Prof. Etzion was creative and innovative and contributed tremendously to the Hebrew program. His textbook The Routledge Introductory Course In Modern Hebrew is a great manifestation to his care for, and seriousness about, his profession. He will be greatly missed and we wish him well on his new journey.

- After serving as a Postdoctoral Research Associate for the department over the 2016-17 academic year, Nahrain Al-Mousawi has accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Postcolonial and World Literature at Balamand University in Lebanon. We congratulate Nahrain on her new position and wish her the best of luck.
Speakers’ Spotlight

In the 2016-17 academic year the Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures speakers’ series flourished with preeminent scholars from around the world addressing diverse topics.

The department thanks the various departments, programs, and community organizations that cosponsored many of these lectures. We extend special appreciation to the speakers who shared their research with students, faculty, and the general public:

- **Samer Frangie**, Associate Professor of Political Studies and Public Administration, and Director for the Center for Arab and Middle East Studies at the American University of Beirut, “Protests in Lebanon: The ‘Trash Uprising’ and the End of the Post-War Republic,” November 30, 2016
- **Joseph Massad**, Professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History at Columbia University, “Between Islamophobia and Homophobia: Gender, Sexuality, and Liberal Engagements with Islam,” February 16, 2017
- **Raymond P. Scheindlin**, Professor of Medieval Hebrew Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary and Director of the Shalom Spiegel Institute of Medieval Hebrew Poetry, “Vulture in a Cage: Ibn Gabirol in His World,” February 27, 2017
- **John Renard**, Professor of Medieval Islam at Saint Louis University, “Biblical Themes, Muslim Artists,” March 27, 2017
- **Shimon Attie**, “Sites Unseen,” March 30, 2017
- **Sara Taksler**, “Tickling Giants,” April 7, 2017
- **Yasser Munif**, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Emerson College, “The Syrian Tragedy and Grassroots Struggles,” April 13, 2017

Left: Shimon Attie. Photo by Whitney Curtis/WashU Photos
Below: Photos from Facts on the Ground by Shimon Attie.

Attie’s artistic practice includes creating site-specific installations in public places, accompanying art photographs, immersive multiple channel HD video installations for museums and galleries, and new media works. In 2013, Attie was awarded the Lee Krasner Lifetime Achievement Award in Art.
Other Departmental Events

Courses and Cupcakes: Students and faculty join together enjoy cupcakes and discuss exciting courses for each upcoming semester.

Middle East - North Africa Film Series: Organized by Younasse Tarbouni, the film series showcases multiple films throughout each semester. Followed by a discussion, the event challenges students’ cultural and political ideas and perceptions, while exposing them to language based media.

Hindi Table: Hindi/Urdu, with rich historical antecedents, is an exciting language to learn. Our goal is to achieve communicative proficiency and cultural competence from the very first day in the language classroom, as well as through monthly Hindi tables and other language-related activities. The regular, but informal, setup of the Hindi Table provides an opportunity for students to speak Hindi without the pressures of the classroom or grades. We encourage students to speak Hindi as much as possible (even broken) to gain greater fluency. The practice of the Hindi Table has boosted students’ confidence levels and continued to elevate their language proficiency.

Hebrew Table: Roughly twice a month, Hebrew speakers from around campus meet-up at the Bear's Den to immerse themselves in Hebrew language. Students’ levels range from beginning to fluent proficiency. The department provides Israeli snacks and students enjoy communicating while strengthening their Hebrew language skills. As one student, Sara Miller, expresses, “I love this even, as I am able to practice Hebrew while meeting new people who share my passion for the Hebrew language.”

Arabic Calligraphy Workshop: Established by Younasse Tarbouni, this workshop was designed to introduce Arabic students, as well as the university and St. Louis communities, to the history of different calligraphy styles using Arabic-based language and art. This two-day, hands-on, workshop was an exciting event celebrating Arabic history, language, and creativity. Outstanding examples of calligraphy created each year are housed within the department. (See calligraphy examples below.)

A Week of Art: The department, in collaboration with Kemper Art Museum, offered a week of art with two events. The first event was John Renard’s talk on Muslim illustrations from Medieval and early-modern periods. The second event was with internationally acclaimed artist Shimon Attie, who presented selected works from the past 25 years, with a special focus on the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Islam Awareness Week: The department was a co-sponsor in the Washington University in St. Louis Muslim Student Association's Islam Awareness Week. This week-long event included fun and engaging talks, lectures, community service, and other faith-based activities — all related to different aspects of Islam.

Medieval Middle Eastern All-You-Care-To-Eat Dinner Buffet: In collaboration with Professor Hayrettin Yücesoy's course "Topics in Near Eastern Cultures: Of Dishes, Taste, and Class: History of Food in the Middle East," Ibby's Bistro offered a Medieval Middle Eastern Buffet. The dishes presented were based on premodern recipes from a tenth century book on cooking, chosen by the class, and reconstructed by the Chefs at Ibby’s.

2017 Graduate History Association Conference - The Spatial Turn: The department co-sponsored this two-day event with the Department of History, which showcased many talks with scholars throughout the university.
Faculty News

Pamela Barmash


Barmash delivered the Samuel Sandmel Lecture at Greenville College, Greenville, Illinois on “Job and Jewish Theological Responses to the Holocaust,” and delivered a paper on “Empire and History: History at the Conjunctures of Empire and Exile (A Statement of the Problem),” at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. Currently, Barmash is finalizing a manuscript on the Laws of Hammurabi and editing the Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law.

Housni Bennis

Last summer, Housni Bennis taught CLS (Critical Language Scholarship) students at AALIM (Arab American Language Institute in Morocco) in Meknes. During this experience, Bennis coordinated the Darija (Moroccan spoken Arabic) program for all levels, as well as the MSA (modern standard Arabic) program for the advanced levels. Further, Bennis conducted a workshop at AALIM titled, “The Importance of Incidental Vocabulary Teaching and Learning.” From December 1st-7th, 2016, Bennis was an academic adviser for the annual CLS conference in Amman, Jordan.

Nancy E. Berg

Nancy E. Berg co-convened a conference on American Hebraism at the University of Washington. In conjunction with the conference, Berg founded and curated a pop-up museum, The Museum of Pro/Found Objects. Items on display represented the relationship of Hebraists with the language, creating an archeology of the authentic. Her co-edited volume What We Talk About When We Talk About Hebrew (with Naomi Sokoloff) was recently accepted for publication by The University of Washington Press.

In January of 2017, Berg was invited to give a special address at the Mediatization, Culturalization, Language Alteration conference at the Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, India. Berg spoke about the media’s role in the revival of the Hebrew language. She also traveled twice last year to the UK: in the fall to participate in the annual conference of the European Association of Israeli Studies, and then in the spring for a special symposium on the writings of Ronit Matalon. Several of her articles – about Mizrahi and Sephardi literatures, about the Iraqi-Israeli author Sami Michael’s last novel of Baghdad, and about the food of Arab Jews – have recently seen publication.

Berg is also looking forward to her courses this year, as well as to a conference she is hosting in April. This conference will celebrate seventy years of Israeli literature, allowing the opportunity to examine Israeli literature, and offer new perspectives through a retrospective with colleagues from around the country and overseas.
Faculty News

Martin Jacobs
In the summer of 2016, Martin Jacobs did research on early modern Jewish chronicles at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem and the State Library of Berlin. His travels there were supported by a faculty research grant from Washington University’s Center for the Humanities. Based on this research, he wrote an article “Sephardic Migration and Cultural Transfer: The Ottoman and Spanish Expansion through a Cinquecento Jewish Lens,” which has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Early Modern History. While in Germany, Jacobs gave a paper at Goethe University Frankfurt titled “Flying Camels and Other Wondrous Creatures: Natural Marvels in Medieval Jewish Travel Literature.”


Hillel Kieval


This coming year Kieval will be finishing his book on the structure and significance of turn of the century trials against Jews for “ritual murder” titled Blood Inscriptions: Modernity, Science, and Ritual Murder in Fin de Siècle Europe. He has recently been named co-editor of a new history of Jewish life in Central Europe (the Bohemian Lands) titled Prague and Beyond.

Erin McGlothlin
In Fall 2016, Erin McGlothlin co-edited (with Jennifer Kapczynski) and contributed a chapter to Persistent Legacy: The Holocaust and German Studies. McGlothlin also published an article in the October 2016 volume of Narrative entitled “Empathetic Identification and the Mind of the Holocaust Perpetrator in Fiction: A Proposed Taxonomy of Response.” The article won Honorable Mention for the James Phelan Prize for the Best Essay in Narrative 2016.

Currently, McGlothlin has one article under review and two book chapters forthcoming. She is hard at work on her manuscript, Constructing the Mind of the Holocaust Perpetrator in Fiction and Documentary Discourse. McGlothlin is also in the process of co-editing a volume entitled The Invention of Testimony: Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah in the Twenty-First Century.

McGlothlin gave papers at the German Studies Association Conference (October 2016), the Notre Dame German-Jewish Studies Workshop (February 2017), the Narrative Conference (March 2017), the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University Seminar Modeling the Humanities in Higher Education (March 2017), and the American Comparative Literature Association Conference (July 2017) where she was also a co-convener of the seminar titled Ambivalent Affect: Perpetration in Contemporary Representations of the Holocaust. McGlothlin presented talks at the Technische Universität Dortmund (June 2016), Wagner College (January 2017) as the Keynote speaker at a tribute to Elie Wiesel, Northwestern University (March 2017), and the St. Louis Holocaust Museum and Learning Center (April 2017).

During the 2016-2017 school year, McGlothlin served as Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures and Secretary of the Faculty Senate/Faculty Senate Council. She also organized and led of the annual Scholarly Writing Retreat at the WU Center for the Humanities. McGlothlin was co-editor of the Camden House book series Dialogue and Disjunction: Studies in Jewish German Literature, Culture, and Thought and a member of the editorial board for German Studies Review. McGlothlin was also a member of the Rubin and Gloria Feldman Family Educational Institute Advisory Committee of the St. Louis Holocaust Museum and Learning Center.
Faculty News

Anne-Marie McManus

Anne-Marie McManus returned from leave in fall 2017. Last year she spent the first semester in Berlin and spring in Abu Dhabi. In Berlin, she was an Alexander von Humboldt Foundation fellow at EUME (Europe in the Middle East), a research cluster on comparative approaches to the Middle East, and in Abu Dhabi, she was a Humanities Research Fellow at NYU Abu Dhabi.

During that time, McManus completed an interview with the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury published as “Between Solidarity and Pleasure: An Interview on World Literature with Elias Khoury,” forthcoming in The Journal of World Literature, and presented her research at the University of Chicago, Phillips University of Marburg, and Forum Transregionale Studien.

McManus also convened a workshop titled "Reading for Critical Regionalism? Alternative World Literatures of the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf" at NYU Abu Dhabi in May 2017.

Aria Nakissa

Aria Nakissa has spent the past year revising and adding to his first book manuscript on Islamic education at al-Azhar.

Nakissa has also spent several months conducting fieldwork in Southeast Asia for his second book project on Islam and human rights.

In addition to his research, Nakissa has designed new courses on modern Muslim societies and Islamic traditions of philosophy, mysticism, and theology.

Rami Pinsberg

Rami Pinsberg has been involved with both updating and reshaping his courses to accommodate the new course schedule for Hebrew language that went into effect in the Fall semester of 2017. He is also excited about the prospects of teaching a third year Modern Hebrew course for the first time in Fall 2017.

Pinsberg served as Chair for a sessions at both the National Association of Professors of Hebrew conferences at Brown University (June 2016) and NYU (June 2017).

Nancy Reynolds

Nancy Reynolds continues to research and write her book project on the building of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt during the 1960s. She presented material from this project at conferences and workshops in Manchester, England, at the University of Pennsylvania, and at Washington University in St. Louis, as well as the annual meetings of the Middle East Studies Association and the Association for the Study of Environmental History. Her article, “City of the High Dam: Aswan and the Promise of Postcolonialism in Egypt,” appeared in City & Society, vol. 29:1 (2017).

In 2016-2017, Reynolds served on the editorial board of the International Journal of Middle East Studies and as director of graduate studies in History. Over the past summer, Reynolds spent time researching the changing management of heat and Egyptian flora in the United Kingdom, at the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh, the British Museum, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Reynolds co-facilitated a faculty seminar, “Wastelands,” that is funded by the Center for the Humanities and was in its third year. She also spent the past year preparing for the upcoming Mellon Sawyer Seminar that she co-directs with Anne-Marie McManus: “Grounding the Ecocritical: Materializing Wastelands and Living on in the Middle East.” During 2017-2018, Reynolds will be on leave as a Mellon New Directions Fellow training in environmental sciences, including taking science courses at Washington University in St. Louis.
Faculty News

Younasse Tarbouni

For the 10th year in a row, Younasse Tarbouni facilitated and organized the department’s Middle East - North African (MENA) Film Series. This year’s film series, focused on the theme of migration and refugee crisis, was a robust series and well attended.

Tarbouni also led a group effort to develop an on-line Arabic achievement writing test for Middlebury Arabic language school, and shared that experience with the Arabic program at Washington University. Further, he participated in the departmental assessment committee and drafted the section related to language assessment criteria.

In May 2017, Tarbouni participated and presented a paper on migration and refugee/human crises in the Mediterranean at The 5th International Conference in Erice, Sicily. His paper was also selected for publication in the conference magazine.

Tarbouni is currently working on a project on migration, integration, and participation regarding the Arabic diaspora in Europe. He is also finalizing a project titled "It's Not an Arab Season, it's An Arab Century." Field work for this project took place in France, Belgium, Italy, The Netherlands, and Spain, as well as some MENA countries, (e.g. Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan).

Looking forward, Tarbouni is working on a novel and a collection of poems, both to be published in Arabic. Further, Tarbouni lead a first-year reading discussion of Frankenstein, as well as giving a talk on calligraphy for the St. Louis Art Museum.

Mahavi Verma

Madhavi Verma joined the department in Fall of 2016 as a Lecturer of Hindi Languages and Cultures.

Starting in December 2016, Verma began work on a book about Bhojpuri culture and wedding rituals.

In June 2017, Madhavi Verma attended the eight-day residential workshop of Hindi teachers at New York University, through the STARTALK program.

For the 2017-2018 school year, Verma is teaching Beginning Hindi I/II and Intermediate Hindi I/II. In spring 2018, the department plans on offering a Hindi for Heritage Speakers course taught by Prof. Verma. This course will focus on reading and writing for students who already speak Hindi. Starting with the Devanagari script, the course will then cover the basics of Hindi grammar. After completion of this course, students will be prepared for the Advanced Hindi course.

Mohammad J. Warsi

Over the past year, Mohammad Warsi has had several papers and articles published: four in The Deccan Herald, two in the Asian Age, one in the Aligarh Journal of Linguistics, and one in the Longman’s History and Civics text book.

In 2017, Warsi presented two research papers: the first titled “New Style and Expressions in News Media isn't Worrisome- It’s Fun and Fascinating” at the International Conference on Mediatization, Culturalization and Language Alteration held at Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, India on January 5-7, and the second titled “Issues in Literary Translation: An Experiment with Premchand’s ‘kafan’” at the International Hindi Conference held at Rutgers University, NJ on April 3-5.

Warsi also received a grant from National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL), Government of India, to work on a new dialect that he discovered in the northern districts of Bihar, India spoken by the minority Muslim community that has no written record or name. He continues work on his book addressing grammar on this dialect, “Mithilanchal Urdu: A newly discovered dialect of Bihar.”
Faculty News

Hayrettin Yücesoy

Hayrettin Yücesoy presented the following papers last year: “Muhammad and the Hour: Messianic Time and the Irony of Mundane Politics” at the Mediterranean Studies Association Meeting in Valetta, Malta on May 31-June 4, 2017; “Language of Food: Culinary Values and Social Distinctions in Abbasid History” at the symposium Pleasure, Providence and Purity: An International Conference on Food and Drink in Islamic Societies and Cultures, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, April 26-27, 2017; and “Mapping a Political Landscape: Ibn al-Muqaffa and the Contending Visions of Politics in the Abbasid 8th Century” at In Quest of a Proper Polity: Political Discourses in the Early Abbasid Period, Tobunken Symposium and the First ASPS Gilas Seminar in University of Tokyo on January 11, 2016. Yücesoy also chaired the panel “Mediterranean Spiritualities” at the Mediterranean Studies Association Meeting.


In 2016, Yücesoy published Messianic Beliefs and Imperial Politics in Medieval Islam: The Abbasid Caliphate in the Early Ninth Century. It also was published in Turkish as Ortaçağ İslam’ında Mesihçi İnançlar ve İmparatorluk Siyaseti: Dokuzuncu Yüzyılın Başlarında Abbasi Hılaleti, (İstanbul: Klasik Publications).

In the summer of 2016, Yücesoy spent his time in Morocco, Rabat, writing his book manuscript on the history of Abbasid political thought supported by the Grimm Summer Research Travel Grant, through the Center for the Humanities.

Library Collections and Services News

Deborah Katz
Librarian for Jewish & Near Eastern Studies, Classics, and Philosophy

AJ Robinson
Librarian for Islamic Studies, South Asian Studies, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

Starting this Fall, the library’s new and improved Streaming Reserves will play within the web browser and does not require any additional software. This can be viewed on the University Libraries website.

In the area of collections, several new subscriptions and archives of general interest have been added to library holdings: the full run of London Review of Books; Immigrations, Migrations and Refugees: Global Perspectives, 1941-1996 which contains Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) news and analysis from reports from early 1940s-1996; LGBT Thought and Culture which gives archival coverage of LGBT activism and political thought from the 20th century onward.

Our valued colleague Marty Cavanaugh, Reference Services Coordinator and American History, European History, and Religious Studies Librarian, assumed his well-earned retirement August 16, 2017. He will be greatly missed.
Graduate Student News

Michael Kaplan

This past year I served as a student representative to the Graduate Student Senate. The experience not only kept me in the loop regarding happenings around campus, it also allowed me to meet students from a wide variety of departments. I was able to discover overlaps between my interests and the research interests of other students. Further, the role allowed me to advocate for the interests of the department’s students through a university-wide platform, as well as to learn about issues of concern to Washington University students and graduate students more broadly. As a student representative, we were each responsible for a particular committee; I was part of a three-person committee that oversaw the Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards. We created a nomination process to identify 14 faculty and staff members from across the university to receive awards for their mentorship and organized a reception where those awards were presented. I am glad I had the opportunity to branch out beyond my department and learn about student life, issues of concern, and events across campus, as well as meeting fellow graduate students in departments very different from my own.

Jacob Kildoo

The Vagantes Conference board of directors was kind enough to accept my submission to present my research at the University of Notre Dame this past March. This conference welcomed graduate students to present on topics falling broadly under the umbrella of "Medieval Studies" since its founding in 2002 at Harvard University. I presented a paper titled "The Construction of a Hermeneutic Jew in Early Christianity and Islam," which I wrote for the departmental capstone seminar taught by Prof. Hillel Kieval. In this paper, I compare several historical and theological developments that gave rise to different conceptions of Jews/Judaism in both early Christian and early Islamic thought. In addition to hearing and discussing our research, we also had the opportunity to tour Notre Dame’s Medieval Institute, attend lectures from keynote speakers, and enjoy dinner off campus with students and professors alike. Support from the department aided in my ability to attend the conference, which proved invaluable not only as a learning tool, but also as a way to connect with other junior scholars from all over North America.

Carly Palans

Thanks to generous funding from the Morris Family Foundation and the Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures, I was able to spend my summer improving my Hebrew language skills. The Morris Family Foundation Fund in Jewish Studies provides grants to both graduate and undergraduate students actively engaged in research in any area of Jewish Studies. With their assistance, I was able to enroll in private tutoring with Ulpan Or’s Guided Distance Learning Program. Ulpan Or, based out of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, offers distance learning and immersion programs for rapid Hebrew acquisition. Twice a week throughout the summer, via Skype, I met with an Ulpan Or teacher for private lessons. My teacher with Ulpan Or catered our lessons to my specific needs as a master’s student in the department, ensuring our conversations, my written assignments, and new vocabulary words were focused around my research topics. I cannot overstate how grateful I am to both the Morris Family Foundation and the department for the opportunity to maintain and improve my Hebrew language abilities over the summer. I am excited to begin the Fall 2017 semester confident in my Hebrew skills, and I recommend applying for the Morris Family Foundation Fund grants in the future to other department students.

Tyler Parker

Serving as an Arabic Instructional Aide for the Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures at Washington University in St. Louis has been an amazing professional development experience. I enjoy conducting weekly supplemental lectures to help our students improve their understanding of Arabic vocabulary and grammar. I also hold daily office hours to promote students’ confidence in speaking and writing the language. Teaching our students has provided learning strategies in my personal study of Advanced Arabic. Specifically, I have reincorporated verb charts and weekly journals into my studies. I enjoy working alongside Prof. Housni Bennis to teach Arabic and design dynamic curriculum during our weekly meetings to ensure that the learning process in engaging and, most importantly, fun! I look forward to another year of teaching the next generation of undergraduates this beautiful and politically critical language.
Recent Graduates
The Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures celebrated 7 majors and 6 minors in the graduating class of 2017.
Congratulations to our newest alumni:

**MAJORS:**
Ammar Al-Ghoul  
Lena Bradtke-Litwack  
Ian Marshall  
Holly Ravazzolo  
Danielle Recanati  
Robbie Shorr  
Ted Sorota

**MINORS:**
Ryan Friedman  
Sarah Heintz  
Brooke Layendecker  
Jake Mintz  
Jenna Pearlson  
Ahmet Yücesoy

Local Events of our Alumni
We had the pleasure of welcoming back two of our alumnae last year.

**Sara Taksler, Class of 2001.**
Taksler is a senior producer at The Daily Show, and presented her film, Tickling Giants, (for which she is the director and producer) on April 1, 2017 at Washington University in St. Louis as part of the prestigious Assembly Series. The subject of her documentary is Bassem Youssef, often described as the “Egyptian John Stewart.” Taksler describes her film as "a Cinderella story gone awry. Virtually overnight, Bassem Youssef goes from a doctor to one of the most popular comedians in the world. But, as his country, Egypt, struggles with the parameters of free speech, telling jokes becomes dangerous for Bassem and his staff." When asked what impact she hopes the film has on viewers, Taksler replies, "I really want people to feel inspired. Hopefully, Bassem will empower people to see that that they can find non-violent ways to take on the giants in their own lives, big and small."


**Emily Robbins, Class of 2012.**
Author Emily Robbins discussed and signed her debut novel, A Word for Love, at Left Bank Books on February 22, 2017. Set in Syria on the cusp of political unrest, A Word for Love (published by Riverhead Books) tells the story of Bea, a young American woman who travels around the world to study “The Astonishing Text,” an ancient, original manuscript of a famous Arabic love story that is said to move its best readers to tears. In her search, Bea finds herself transformed by language, risk, war, and a startling new understanding of love. In this timely and pressingly relevant novel, Robbins crafts a melodic meditation on the culture, language, and familial devotion that account for the ninety-nine different ways a language expresses the idea we call “love.” Kathryn Davis, author of Duplex and The Thin Place, describes A Word for Love as a work that, “transforms the most impossibly tangled and de-humanizing aspects of the world we live in now into prose so clear and clean you could drink it.”
Alumni Contact Form

We’d love to hear from you! E-mail us at jinelc@wustl.edu or fill out the form below and mail it to us at: The Department of Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Languages & Cultures, Campus Box 1121, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, MO 63130.

Name: ___________________________________________

Degree:____________________________________________

Year: ______________________________________________

What are you up to?

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