# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. A Message from the Chair
2. Recent Graduates
3. Student Updates
6. Teaching Hebrew in Saudi Arabia
9. New Faculty, New Topics
10. Faculty Updates
13. Asma Afsaruddin prompts students to interrogate assumptions about the Islamic World
15. This Year’s Events
16. Flagship Program Annual Update
17. Alumni and Friend Updates
18. About the Editors/Photo Credits

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A Message from the Chair

This has been an eventful year for NELC. As is the case with such a generalization, it harbors good and the less-than-good. As we settle into our modern and comfortable offices in the new School of Global and International Studies Building, we are also poised to move ahead to confirm our prominent position as a leading department in the study of the Near East and its cultures.

We began the academic year as two of our dear colleagues left us for greener pastures (Professors Gonzalez and Hannouchi). Replacing the latter, we soon hired Professor Attia Youseif, who has quickly proven himself to be a top-notch teacher of Arabic and has already begun to gather a coterie of admirers around him.

We have begun to see signs of the overall enhancement of our offerings in the coming year. A new colleague, Professor Joshua Georgy will be joining NELC for Fall 2018 as a Visiting Assistant Professor to teach courses in the history of the Modern Middle East. We look forward to his coming and expect that he will draw interest in courses that have been neglected for so long. These courses are certain to draw a new students, whose interests in history will create new bridges to other departments at IU.

Professor Georgy’s arrival will also fill a void in our overall course offerings. Several of our colleagues will be on leave for part, or all of the coming academic year, and to them we wish a productive time of experiences and study so they should return with new energy and ideas to offer innovative courses for all our students.

Congratulations are also in order to two of our colleagues who were promoted in the past year. Professor Stephen Vinson is now Full Professor and Professor Alsaleh has been awarded tenure with promotion as Associate Professor. They, and other members of our faculty, have been on the receiving end of a number of prestigious awards that will enable them to develop their fields of interest, and involve our students in their projects as well. To all, go our congratulations and best wishes for continued excellence in their scholarly endeavors.

We wish to pay special appreciation to our colleague, Professor John Walbridge, who has established a fund in memory of his dear departed wife, Linda. The Linda S. Walbridge Doctoral Fellowship aims to support, in a minor but growing way, the graduate studies of needy students from specifically identified countries of the Middle East. This is a competitive scholarship that has already been initiated. This year’s recipients are two of our deserving graduate students, Derya Dogan and Ayesha Butt. The Fellowship will continue to be awarded annually in support of graduate students as they progress toward their final degree.

We have also held our annual Wadie Jwaideh Memorial Program in the fall of 2017. Our speaker, Professor Justin McCarthy, of the University of Louisville, gave a rousing lecture, “The British and the Turks: Enemies in the Guise of Friends” that taught us of the complex relations wherein states, rather than having friends, have interests. In the spring, our Victor Danner Memorial Program featured Professor Roy Mottahedeh, of Harvard University, who spoke on the subject of “Medieval Kashan: Crossroads of Commerce and Culture.” His riveting presentation, accompanied by a colorful selection of images to illustrate the arts of Kashan, enlightened the pack room about this cultural gem of a city.

Our plans for the coming year are already taking shape, with speakers Hamid Dabashi (Columbia) and John Esposito (Georgetown) scheduled to deliver the Jwaideh and Danner talks accordingly. Topics for the two are still pending, so do stay tuned.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to the help and effective staff that has been the support behind NELC’s endeavors, especially to Connie Sue May, our Program Specialist and her assistants, Feier Gao and Amin Sophiamehr. Also my appreciation to John Boyd, the NELC Graduate Studies Administrative Associate, who has been efficient and helpful in all manners pertaining to the needs of our graduate students. As a last note, I wish to extend our wishes for a wonderful future to our graduating students. As a last note, I wish to extend our wishes for a wonderful future to our graduating students, graduates and undergraduates as they take the next step in their continued education or by commencing their careers.

-Professor Stephen Katz, Chair, NELC
**Recent Graduates**

**FALL 2017**
- Yasmin Koury, B.A.
- Daley Law, B.A.
- Keaton Schulchter, B.A.
- Katherine Solkey, B.A.
- Diana Nabulsi, Minor

**EXPECTED SPRING 2018**
- Kassandra Leuthart, B.A.
- Sophia Saliby, B.A.
- Andrew Schell, B.A.
- Kyra Triebold, B.A.
- Ava Ahmad, Minor
- Courtney Caruso, Minor
- Marwan Elkamash, Minor
- Fiona Kelly, Minor
- Aimilia McDonough, Minor
- Jessica Olson, Minor
- Nur Syahirah Rosli, Minor

**Congratulations Graduates!**

**FALL 2017**
- Yasemin Kole
- Julia Puglisi
- Phillip Raad
- Alexander Shepard

**EXPECTED SPRING 2018**
- Mohammad Aldousari

**FALL 2017**
- Can Yuce

**EXPECTED SPRING 2018**
- Michael Bevers
- Ghassan Nasr
El-Hussein Aly published his translation of Bayan Al-Qur’an. It is a voluminous interpretation of the Qur’an published originally in English 1917 by Muhammad Ali. The interpretation included modernist understanding of concepts like jihad and eternity of Hell, and influenced many later thinkers.

Aly also published three papers last Fall:
Bandar Alghmaiz presented his dissertation research (which is in progress) at the Indiana University Three Minute Thesis competition and received second place. Bandar was selected with 19 other doctoral students from different schools and departments and we are delighted that he represented NELC with this award.

Amin Sophiamehr gave a lecture in Fall 2017 on Alfarabi’s political philosophy hosted by CSME. He also published an article “Alfarabi and Possibility of a Universal Virtuous Regime” in Analytica Iranica.

Ahmet Hatipoglu presented a paper in Graduate Student Colloquium on Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies on April 8th-9th, 2017 at the Diyanet Center of America in Lanham, Maryland. It was co-organized by the Diyanet Islamic Research Institute and the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University (GMU). The title of the presented paper was: “Religious Education Policy in Turkey: A State-in-Society Approach”.


Ahmet Hatipoglu was awarded a Grant-in-Aid of Doctoral Research Award by the IU Graduate School. The Grant-in-Aid program is designed to support faculty research and scholarship; initiate new faculty research and creative activities; and supply modest support at unusually critical times.
NELC was proud to honor **Abdelhalim Elamroussey** as this year’s Outstanding Graduate Student, **Issam Albdairat** as this year’s Outstanding Associate Instructor, **Yassmin Mohamed Fashir** as this year’s Outstanding Undergraduate, and **Mariam Bah** as recipient of this year’s Haddawi Scholarship! All four have shown exemplary performance in the classroom in addition to making active strides in the department and community as a whole! We look forward to their continued accomplishments and wish them future success!

Sophia Saliby graduated from NELC this spring and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa (PBK), the nation’s oldest academic honor society for students in the arts and sciences. She also was the recipient of IU’s Kate Hevner Mueller Award which is granted to an IU senior who has proven leadership on campus both inside and outside the classroom and who have improved the IU community by their presence.

NELC would like to extend a heartfelt congratulations to Ashley Bisutti who has accepted a position as a Visiting Instructor of Arabic at Grand Valley State University (Allendale, Michigan) beginning August 2018. We wish her the best of luck as she takes her next steps in her career!
Teaching Hebrew in Saudi Arabia

Hebrew studies are now legitimate in the desert kingdom, but demand is low - so far

By Elhanan Miller

This story originally appeared in Tablet Magazine, at tabletmag.com, and is reprinted with permission.

A strange post made the rounds on Saudi Arabian social media in recent weeks. It claimed that the Israeli national anthem, “Hatikvah,” included a line lauding Jews for coming to the Land of Israel to intimidate the Canaanites, Babylonians, and Egyptians and chop their heads off.

“Many people turned to me as a Hebrew expert to ask whether the translation was right or wrong,” said Dr. Mohammad Alghbban, a professor at King Saud University in the capital, Riyadh, and one of the kingdom’s few Hebrew speakers. “The translation was completely corrupt and untrue.”

The Saudi professor took the opportunity not only to debunk the myth, but also to provide an accurate translation of the anthem and mention its author, Naftali Herz Imber, and the background of its publication in 1886.

“Engaging in Hebrew and Judaic studies used to be an adventurous endeavor in Saudi Arabia,” Alghbban said in a Skype interview from Riyadh, in a conversation that fluctuated easily between Hebrew, English, and Arabic. “You would very easily be viewed by society as a traitor to your people or your religion.

“But today, thank God, with the new Saudi government, we have more freedom of speech on social media, and things are completely different.”

The first public indication of Israeli-Saudi rapprochement took place in July 2016, with the visit of retired Saudi general Anwar Eshki to Jerusalem. In October 2017, the kingdom denied reports of a secret visit by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman to Israel. But the following month, IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot gave a first-of-its-kind interview to the Saudi news portal Elaph, expressing Israeli willingness to share sensitive intelligence and jointly combat Iran. The icing on the cake, at least as far as Israelis are concerned, was the Saudi decision earlier this year to allow commercial Air India flights to fly over Saudi airspace to and from Israel, cutting costs and travel time to numerous Asian destinations. The first such flight occurred last Thursday.

“I can now speak about Hebrew culture, language, and society both in public and in private, and even in Saudi newspapers,” Alghbban said. “Ten years ago this was taboo.”

Alghbban stumbled into Hebrew accidentally. As a child raised in the Red Sea town of Duba, he would visit the resort of Haql near the Saudi-Jordanian border, from which he could view Eilat in the distance and listen to Israeli Army Radio. Later, he moved to the Saudi capital of Riyadh for college but had no idea what he wanted to study. His brother, an archeology professor at King Saud University, introduced him to an Egyptian colleague who taught ancient Hebrew.
Teaching Hebrew in Saudi Arabia (cont.)

“I sat with him and told him that I listen to Hebrew and speak a few words. I liked the idea and signed up for Hebrew studies.”

In the mid-1990s Hebrew was not taught in Saudi Arabia as an academic degree, so Alghbban completed a three-year diploma and returned to his hometown. When King Saud University launched its first official Hebrew program 20 years ago, Alghbban returned to Riyadh, obtaining his bachelor degree as part of the first cohort of Hebrew students in 2000. Alghbban fell in love with Hebrew, but no advanced courses were available in Saudi Arabia. A scholarship to study in the United States sent him to Indiana University in Bloomington, one of the few American universities with a graduate program in Hebrew and translation. There, Alghbban encountered Jewish and Israeli students for the first time. “I was the only Arab, the only Muslim, the only Saudi in a classroom filled with Israeli and American students who were mostly Jewish,” he recalled. “It was emotionally challenging at first. People looked at me, not knowing whether I’m a friend or a foe, wondering why I chose to study Hebrew. I also came with zero knowledge of English, having only studied Arabic and Hebrew.”

Professor Stephen Katz, now head of the Near Eastern Languages department at Indiana University, helped Alghbban get admitted to the graduate program after completing his English requirements, later supervising his academic work. One day, Katz suggested that Alghbban visit the Hillel House on campus and help beginners practice Hebrew. “Everyone was staring, wondering who this guy is,” Alghbban recalled. “Is he a Yemenite Jew? An Arab? What is he doing here? No one sat with me at the table. It was extremely uncomfortable, and I wanted to leave. Later, with the help of the Hillel director, people got to know me as a friend.”

But it wasn’t just Jewish students who raised their eyebrows at the Saudi. In his general linguistics classes, students would wonder why he had to travel thousands of miles to study Hebrew when Israel was just a couple hours’ drive from his hometown. “What could I answer? It’s not up to me.”

In 2011, Alghbban completed his doctorate, examining Hebrew and English translations of Naguib Mahfouz’s 1947 novel Midaq Alley, and returned to his alma mater in Riyadh to teach Hebrew literature and translation. “King Saud University is the only institution in the Gulf that teaches Hebrew at the undergraduate level,” he said. The four-year degree begins with two years of intense language skills using Hebrew textbooks, followed by translation studies and Hebrew culture. Students practice translating online news in Hebrew, while Alghbban’s advanced literary translation course features short stories ranging from S.Y. Agnon to Etgar Keret. I love Agnon; he’s the leader of modern Hebrew literature,” he said.

Despite rumors of Saudi-Israeli rapprochement, Hebrew remains a neglected field of study in the kingdom, to Alghbban’s chagrin. “Student numbers are really low,” he said. “There is no interest in learning Hebrew since there’s no job market for Hebrew-language graduates.” Graduates typically find jobs as news translators or teaching assistants. Alghbban’s Hebrew program, located within the department of modern languages and translation, includes about 40 students and just four faculty members. Hebrew is one of the easiest departments to get accepted into because there is virtually no demand. “The lowest of the low-ranking students study languages. This is very bad,” he said, noting the high drop-out rate of students searching for more lucrative careers.

Nevertheless, Alghbban believes that negative attitudes in Saudi Arabia toward Hebrew study are gradually changing. Some see it as a necessity dictated by the maxim “know thine enemy,” while others see it as a means for mutual understanding. The latter approach has now become prevalent in the Arab world, he opined.

“A decade ago, Hebrew used to be considered the language of the enemy. Now it’s the language of the other,” said Alghbban, who is obviously an advocate of the peaceful approach. “One cannot be
Teaching Hebrew in Saudi Arabia (cont.)

blamed for being Jewish or speaking Hebrew,” he said. “I make a distinction between the policies of the occupying Zionist forces who kill innocents, and Jews as people with religious beliefs. There’s a difference between the two. I don’t like engaging with people who fight Muslims and wage wars, and many Jews don’t like that, either. Many personal acquaintances of mine in Israel oppose war and search for peace in any way possible. I will shake their hands and respect them.”

Alghbban’s Twitter account, @Israeli_Issues, translates Israeli headlines into Arabic and vice versa. Recent tweets included stories on Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman’s meetings in the U.S. and Ultra-Orthodox demonstrations against the army draft in Jerusalem.

The purpose of my account is to convey Hebrew media to the Arab reader without distortion or hyperbole,” he said. “Social media has advantages and disadvantages. There are so many Israeli and Arab accounts, both fake and real, managed by people seeking fame rather than truth. They spread fake news about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Israeli public and vice versa to exacerbate animosity between us.

“My account seeks out only good things, to bring the sides closer together,” he said. “I avoid any political or religious disagreements.”

Yet Alghbban’s lonely stand in favor of dialogue may soon become less lonely. Another Saudi citizen, 35-year-old Loay al-Shareef, dazzled his Twitter audience March 19 with a video reassuring Israelis in fluent Hebrew that his country posed no threat to its neighbors.

“It took me two days to make the video, using a dictionary,” he told me in a Skype interview from Jeddah, peppered with Hebrew. “There’s nowhere to practice Hebrew in Saudi Arabia. I am deeply interested in Jewish heritage.”

Unlike Alghbban, al-Shareef learned Hebrew not on a Saudi campus but in a Paris home. A software engineer who graduated from Pennsylvania State University, he came to the City of Lights in 2010 to study French and was billeted with a Jewish family of Yemeni descent. The family’s daughter, Judith, introduced him to the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud.

“She said, ‘You know, Hebrew is the language of the prophets.’ I responded: ‘No, no, Arabic is the language of the prophets!’ Instead of learning French I learned Hebrew.”

Al-Shareef became enthralled with the Judaeo-Arab writings of Maimonides and Rabbi Sa’adia Gaon. He acquired his Hebrew through online courses and by listening to Israeli speeches on YouTube. Today, al-Shareef maintains the language by memorizing the songs of deceased Israeli singer Ofra Haza.

“I translated her song ‘Jerusalem of Gold’ to Arabic. You cannot imagine my grief over her loss.”

Al-Shareef is aware of the Israeli interest in him but says societal change will have to evolve gradually.

“I’m glad my video reached out and I believe we can build on it,” he said. “But I want Israelis to understand we have to take things one step at a time. Peace has to happen and Palestinians should get their rights because things can’t continue this way. Changing people’s mind-sets is difficult, but the benefits of peace will be overwhelming.”
This year, NELC welcomed Dr. Attia Youseif to the department. Dr. Youseif earned his PhD in Linguistics at Alexandria University, a Diploma in Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, an MA in Arabic Syntax and Morphology, and a BA in Arabic Language and Literature.

His research interests include Teaching Arabic as a foreign language; Arabic grammar and morphology, phonology, and syntax; Arabic literature; Dialects; the role of culture in learning a foreign languages; theories of language acquisition; Comparative linguistics.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Youseif and wish him the best!
**FACULTY UPDATES**


**Asaad Alsaleh** was awarded one of twelve openings at the 2018 Winter Hoover Library & Archives workshop on Authoritarianism and Democratic Breakdown held at Stanford University. For ten days, Dr. Alsaleh joined top scholars in the field to conduct personal research, meet daily to present their current work, attend lectures, and exchange ideas over meals. Hoover workshops promote multi-disciplinary, scholarly discourse, and have resulted in numerous publications in the form of books, magazine and journal articles, blogs, and monographs. Each workshop includes lectures delivered by leading researchers and authors in the specified area of study.

We would also like to extend our congratulations to Dr. Alsaleh who has also been promoted as Associate Professor and received tenure.

Dr. Alsaleh has very active this year, representing IU and NELC in his publications and at academic conferences.


Conference Presentations:
Spring 2018, “Three Dimensions of ISIS Ideology” (Presentation), Hoover Institute, Stanford University, CA;
Spring 2018, “Syria before the War,” Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University, January, Bloomington, IN;
Summer 2018, Faculty Exchange by the Pan-Asia Institute, jointly administered by Indiana University and Australia National University, Canberra, Australia.


A book “God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate of Reason” has been published in Arabic translation.

He also presented a series of his work at conferences:


2017: “Safavid/Qajar Majmu’as as Sources for Intellectual History,” The Thousand Year School of Shi’ah, Berlin, 6 October 2016

He gave lectures at the following universities in PR China in May-June 2017:

Renmin University, Beijing
Xi’an International Studies University
Beijing Foreign Studies University
Congratulations to Dr. Steve Vinson who has been promoted to the rank of full Professor in NELC!


Iman Alramadan welcomed Nisreen Faour; the movie star of “Amreeka,” to her classroom on February 8, 2018. Faour won the Muhr Award as Best Actress at the 2009 Dubai International Film Festival and was nominated for the Independent Spirit Award for Best Female Lead. She spoke with Dr. Alramadan’s class via skype about her journey and her successes.

Abdulkular Sinno co-directs the seminar series “Islam in the Global Sphere” sponsored by the IU Consortium for the Study of Religion, Ethics, and Society with Prof. Asma Afsaruddin.
Asma Afsaruddin prompts students to interrogate assumptions about the Islamic world

By Yael Ksander

"Islam and Modernity." "Islamic Feminisms." The titles of Professor Asma Afsaruddin’s Fall 2017 courses in SGIS’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures are intended to be provocative, she admits. “I picked the titles partly for the shock effect.” As an academic and public intellectual, Afsaruddin has dedicated her career to improving the general understanding of Muslims, but acknowledges that juxtaposing the words “feminisms” or “modernity” with “Islam” still strikes a jarring note on an American campus in 2017.

Once she’s gotten students’ attention, she hopes her classes will help them appreciate the heterogeneity of the Muslim world.

“We do a disservice to the great diversity that we find in Muslim-majority societies by reducing the Islamic tradition to a monolithic phenomenon,” explains Afsaruddin, whose book “Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought” (Oxford University Press, 2013) sought to expand and nuance the concept of jihad. In 2015, the book was recognized as the best new book in Islamic studies with Iran’s Jayezeh Jahani, or World Book Prize, and was a runner-up for the British-Kuwaiti Friendship Society book prize.

The notion that the charged term “jihad” can, as Afsaruddin explores in her book, refer to an inner struggle to better one’s self, may be just as surprising as classical Islamic legal rulings upholding women’s rights to abortion and to property after marriage. Afsaruddin’s courses intend to “interrogate the assumptions” about the Islamic world that are reinforced by its representation in the media. She does this by broadening and diversifying the context in which Islam is considered. That’s why she refers to multiple “feminisms.”

“We assume it’s a singular phenomenon, but it’s not. There are different regional inflections—from Egypt to Turkey to Indonesia. But there are very strong women’s movements in all these societies --some are in contact with one another -- but often they’re working in very culturally specific contexts.”

In Saudi Arabia, for example, there is what Afsaruddin calls a “vibrant women’s movement” that is working to repeal such measures as the injunction against women driving. The 2016 elections ushered more women into Iran’s parliament than there had been since the 1979 revolution. And in Indonesia, a prominent female reformer is working with clerics to draft more progressive interpretations of the law as it applies to women.

The notion of Islamic feminism is not revisionist, Afsaruddin suggests, but rather, emerges out of the
Asma Afsaruddin prompts Students (cont.)

religion’s foundational texts. “There are a number of passages in the Quran that say that men and women are created equal,” she says. “That’s the jumping-off point for Islamic feminism.”

Using the Quran to justify strictures that are repressive of women is a function of an increasingly powerful patriarchy, Afsaruddin explains. “Most of the interpreters since the first century of Islam have been men.” As such, interpretations of scripture reflected culturally specific attitudes and beliefs that were “masculinist – even misogynist,” but not rooted in the original language of the Quran.

“If you go back to the sources, those views simply cannot be supported,” Afsaruddin explains. “They in fact run contrary to the foundational religious texts.”

Certain customs that are ostensibly rooted in scripture were in fact sociologically driven, she points out. The custom of covering one’s hair, for example, is not stipulated in the Quran, but emerged out of contact with Byzantine and Persian societies, in which the seclusion and veiling of women was a marker of upper class affiliation. High-born Muslim women, Afsaruddin explains, adopted the custom by the eighth or ninth century as a way of indicating higher social status, and women of humbler origins imitated them in turn.

Afsaruddin’s course “Islam and Modernity” queries historical assumptions in a similar way, suggesting that a Eurocentric historical narrative has quashed a general understanding of the viability of democracy in the Islamic world. “Democracy is not a western concept,” she states. “We forget about democratic Indonesia, Mali, Tunisia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Muslim societies understand democratic governments to be in agreement with foundational Islamic values of consultation and collective decision-making. This desire for a representative accountable government – one that rules with the consent of the people -- is universal. The Arab Spring could never have happened unless there was a desire for democracy.”

Afsaruddin, who joined IU in 2009 after serving on the faculties of Harvard and Notre Dame, is optimistic about students’ desire to go beyond the headlines when it comes to the Middle East. “I think students realize they need to know more about that part of the world to be an informed person,” she finds.

But curiosity about the rest of the world is on the rise in general, she suspects. “I think the trend toward globalization on university campuses is feeding this interest in other cultures, in other societies, and fostering a desire to learn about other languages; and that’s something that IU has typically done well. Since I’ve been here in the last eight years, that interest in creating more courses in global cultures and languages has continued without interruption and resulted in the creation of SGIS.”

The school was still in the planning phase when Afsaruddin was interviewing at IU, she explains, “but it was something that piqued my interest. The fact that this is a university committed to investing in a global outlook was a categorical factor in my coming here.”
As part of NELC’s Annual Jwaideh Lecture, October 26th, 2017, NELC welcomed Professor Justin McCarthy (Professor of History, University of Louisville) for his lecture “The British and the Turks: Enemies in the Guise of Friends”. The Jwaideh lecture was hosted in the President’s Room at the Indiana Memorial Union. Professor McCarthy’s lecture addressed manner in which the British and the Ottomans were often been portrayed as friends, until the Ottomans joined the Germans in World War I. In reality, the British were second only to the Russians in animosity to the Ottoman Empire. They repeatedly broke promises to defend the Ottomans, and did much to aid the Ottomans’ enemies.

NELC’s annual Danner Lecture in 2018 continued the tradition of an engaging lecture with great attendance. We welcomed Professor Roy Mottahedeh from Harvard University to give us a lecture--Medieval Kashan: Crossroads of Commerce and Culture. The medieval Iranian city of Kashan had an international reputation for its artisanal traditions, in particular, the manufacture of luxury ceramics. Its strong educational institutions produced a significant number of talented officials for the Seljuq and later administrations and some of the most important mathematicians and astronomers of the medieval period. It was a center of Shi’ism and Shi’ite learning almost continuously through its history. During the same night, students were given certificates and awards for outstanding performance throughout the year.
A Year-in-Review: The Arabic Flagship Program

After a successful first year, the Arabic Flagship Program did not suffer from a sophomore slump. A wide range of programs and events made helped make AY 2107-18 wonderful for all. The Flagship Program’s forty-two current students represent sixteen departments from around IU Bloomington’s campus and the diverse backgrounds of its students has certainly contributed to the program’s early success.

The Flagship Program welcomed Dr. Attia Youseif as the new Arabic Language Lecturer. Holding a PhD in Linguistics (Alexandria University), Dr. Youseif specializes in teaching Arabic as a foreign language, Arabic grammar and morphology, phonology, and syntax as well as Arabic literature, dialects, theories of language acquisition, and comparative linguistics.

Richard Solomon will be traveling to the Arab American Language Institute in Morocco (AALIM) this June as the Flagship Program’s first capstone student to travel abroad. Four of his classmates, Ashley Cox, Lauren Ehrmann, Morgan Farrell, and Emily Reeg, who make up the second cohort of students that Flagship will send to the AALIM summer program, will join Richard at AALIM.

The Flagship Program has expanded to include nine clubs focusing on the Bible, cooking, dance, journalism, literature, music, the Quran, theater, and the Torah as well as offering three workshops on Arabic writing, pronunciation, and grammar. In addition to teaching Modern Standard Arabic, the Flagship offered students the opportunity to study three different dialects during the school year at Egyptian, Levantine, and Moroccan Dialect Tables. Students were also able to receive one hour of tutoring and one hour of one-on-one conversation practice every week as they strive to attain a superior level proficiency in Arabic.

Students at IU Bloomington were also treated to three series hosted by the Flagship Program: The Arabic Film Series, The Arabic Lecture Series, and the Navigating Morocco Series. Additionally, the Flagship Program continued the long-standing traditions of the Arabic Dinner and the Arabic Talent Show at IU Bloomington. These events allow students to come together and share their knowledge and love for Arabic language, food, culture, music, dance, and much, much more!

We would like to congratulate the Arabic Flagship Program on a wonderful second year and best wishes for many more to come!
Lingxin Zhang (M.A 2014) is now a Ph.D. candidate in Egyptology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She received the award for “Best Student Paper” at the annual conference of the American Research Center in Egypt in Tucson, Arizona, on Saturday, April 21. Lingxin spoke on an ancient Egyptian astrological papyrus which she is currently studying for her Ph.D. dissertation. The text, which is written in a very difficult cursive script called “Demotic,” contains predictions on whether a woman is liable to give birth to a son, based on when she herself had been born. Lingxin is originally from Chengdu, China. She began working on her MA in Egyptology at IU in 2012. She wrote her MA thesis on Contextualizing the Antinoeion at Hadrian’s Villa, a study of Egyptian-style statues at the villa of the Roman Emperor Hadrian at Tivoli (near Rome).

Dr. Mohammad Alghbban (Ph.D. 2011), is a NELC former graduate and now a professor at King Saud University in Riyadh, recently debunked a strange post in Saudi social media and provided an accurate translation of the anthem. Dr. Alghbban started teaching Hebrew literature and translation in Saudi after he completed his doctorate at IU in 2011, he has been working diligently on developing his Hebrew program, in order to further improve the Israeli-Saudi reapprochement in Saudi Arabia.

Hilo Sugita (M.A 2016) has just been awarded the Midwest Association of Graduate Schools Distinguished Master’s Thesis award, in the humanities category. This is quite an honor and achievement, as she was up against nominees from dozens of Midwestern universities. Hilo’s thesis was awarded the Indiana University Graduate School Distinguished MA thesis award earlier this year. The award ceremony will be Wednesday, April 4, at the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools annual conference in Grand Rapids, MI. Ms. Sugita earned her MA in Egyptology here in 2016 and she’s now a Ph.D. student in Egyptology at Harvard. For her MA thesis here at IU, she did a study of an ancient Egyptian coffin lid here in the Eskenazi Museum; she worked on the history of the object, she deciphered all of the inscriptions, and she also made a three-dimensional digital model of it.
**Feier Gao** is a Ph.D. student in the Linguistics Department, where she has a specific focus on phonology and studies linguistic phenomenon in Chinese languages. She has helped to update NELC’s image and publicity during the past year. She has worked hard to create flyers for the advertisement of NELC’s course offerings, and has helped with class promoting. Feier was heavily involved in the planning, scheduling, and implementation of NELC’s two major lectures during the 2017-2018 school year which featured Justin McCarthy (University of Louisville), Roy Mottahedeh (Harvard University). In addition, she helped design the flyers for the three lectures and correspond with the two lecturers. Overall, she and Amin have striven to work with the NELC faculty and staff to create a better environment for NELC’s students. In her free time, Feier is an amateur photographer. She also enjoys reading and travelling. She plans to devote to linguistic research and regards linguistics as a lifelong career after she received the Ph.D. degree.

**Brendan Devine** is a Master’s student in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies where he studies Sino-Mongolian history, culture, and religion. For the past two years, he has helped to update NELC’s image and publicity. This began with the design of a new departmental logo and a banner to hang in the NELC office and at events. Brendan was heavily involved in the planning, scheduling, and implementation of NELC’s three major lectures during the 2016-2017 school year which featured Malika Zeghal (Harvard University), Roger Allen (University of Pennsylvania), and Khaled Abou El Fadl (UCLA). For the past year he has worked in an advisory capacity helping NELC whenever necessary. Overall, he and the NELC GAs have striven to work with the NELC faculty and staff to create a better environment for NELC’s students. In his free time, Brendan enjoys reading books and watching baseball. He plans on graduating after the upcoming summer and intends to pursue a PhD after graduation.

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