The Annual Newsletter of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University
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A Message from the Chair

The past four years have seen many changes at our department, some that augur optimism and others pose ongoing challenges for our future growth.

In case of the latter, we have witnessed the loss and departure of good colleagues, some who have not been replaced as of this time. While here, they have enriched NELC by their collegiality, diversity, energy, concern for the mutual good of the group and disciplinary diversity and depth that, overall, linger as an unfilled gap in what our students and we have hoped to fill to enhance and enrich the ways by which we can serve all.

Yet, and despite such deficits, NELC has been thriving by exhibiting an array of new areas of strength, such as by flipping our excellent Arabic language program into one of the few (and only five at the time) Arabic Flagships; adding a specialist in Byzantine Studies and, witnessing the growth of our Egyptology programs and, most recently, restarting our History of the Modern Middle East program of studies.

Our faculty has gone from strength to strength, and it has been my goal to support all projects and plans they shared with me to the best of the department’s and my abilities. I dare not begin to identify and name all out of concern that I may have neglected to mention each and every one, but many have been recognized variously, and often, for their scholarly accomplishments and their proposed endeavors with impressive internal and external awards. Such grants and recognitions have not just added to the scholarly caliber of our department but have the potential to deepen our academic strength and scope. Together they have contributed to honor the recipients and bring university and world attention to what NELC is capable of doing. It is my ongoing hope that this trend will continue and thus enable the department to grow and flourish as it covers with greater intensity the plethora of spheres that constitute the study of the Near East, its languages and cultures.

Stephen Katz
Chair, NELC
NELC was proud to honor Mohammed Al Ameri as this year’s Outstanding Graduate Student, Mahmoud Hassan as this year’s Outstanding Associate Instructor, and Nicholas Wernert as this year’s Outstanding Senior! This year’s Haddawi Scholarship went to Margaret Vanschaik! Congratulations!

All four recipients 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!
Richard Solomon has spent the past academic year as a Boren Scholar on the Arabic Flagship Program in Meknes, Morocco.

He will continue his studies on the CASA Fellowship Program in Cairo, Egypt 2019-2020.

In the Fall of 2018, Ahmed Hassan presented his paper “Leo Strauss on al-Farabi’s Reconciliation of Philosophy and Religion” at the annual meeting of Middle East Studies Association (MESA). He also gave a lecture on Leo Strauss and al-Farabi hosted by the IU Center for the Study of the Middle East (CSME).

In the Spring of 2019, he presented his paper “Analytic Islamic Theology: Al-Mutazilah vs. al-Ashariyyah” at the annual meeting of the Midwest Region of the American Academy of Religion (MAAR).

He has also received travel awards from the IU College Arts & Humanities Institute (CAHI), College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Near Eastern Languages & Cultures, and Islamic Studies Program.

El-Hussein Aly published two articles last Fall. One of them discusses the image of women in the Qur’an English translations and the other discusses a practical model for translation teacher education:


El-Hussein Aly is currently working on a second edition of his Arabic translation of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English commentary on the Qur’an. The first edition was published early 2016. He has also two papers accepted for publication and expected to appear next Fall.

Issam Albdairat has won the best presentation of the IU Foreign & Second Language Share Fair. The IU Foreign Language Share Fair is a semi-annual event that encourages both graduate students and faculty to share inspiring ideas, useful teaching strategies, and new activities that can be widely applied in language classes. In his presentation, Issam presented the Word Wheel strategy that can be used to teach students new vocabularies in a more interactive way.

Issam gave an oral presentation at the 11th Annual Meeting of the Illinois Language and Linguistics Society (ILLS11) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign at the end of April.
It has been another productive year for our Arabic Flagship program:

Total enrollment as of Spring 2019 is 67 students with 32 different majors represented. We had our greatest number of students qualify for the Capstone year in Morocco (9 students) and will be sending 2 to the summer program in Morocco.

We had four students apply and be selected to participate in the Flagship Hackathon in Washington DC from October 19 - October 20, 2018. Many were awarded for their contributions and projects, and several were asked to serve as Ambassadors for the Flagship Technology Center due to the strength of their projects.

During the past academic year, the Flagship Program has also organized a number of workshops, clubs, and prorgammatic activities.

Winners of the 2019 Building Bridges Award pose with James C. Wimbush, vice president for diversity, equity and multicultural affairs. Pictured from left are Mariama Bah, Raquel Anderson, James Wimbush, Trishnee Bhurosy and Cristian Medina.

Our Flagship student Mariama Bah received the undergraduate award for the MLK Building Bridges Award; only one undergraduate from the entire campus is selected for recognition. The news report was posted on News at IU by April Toler. Below is an excerpt of the original news report: “As part of the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies’ student ambassadors, Bah helped recruit students from different socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds to IU’s Arabic Flagship Program. She also takes part in the School’s Mentor Collective program and is founder of Lend a Hand, which fundraises and collects donations for communities in Guinea...”
Congratulations to Nader Morkus and Aziza Khazzoom for having been approved by the Trustees on their voyage to attain Tenure and Promotion!

Asaad Alsaleh has published his article “Approaching Sa'dallah Wannus's Drama: The Manifestos for a New Arab Theater” in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 39. 2019. 190-205. He also published “Translation of Sa'dallah Wannus’s “Manifestos Toward a New Theater” in the same special issue. This is the first full translation of an influential theory on Arab theater, conceptualized by the pioneering Syrian playwright Sa'dallah Wannus (1941-1997).

Asal was a Visiting Scholar at Australia National University, Canberra, Australia in May 2018. This was part of the Faculty Exchange of the Pan-Asia Institute, jointly administered by Indiana University and Australia National University. He also went to Jordan over the summer. The result of these two visits were the following lectures:

- 2018. “Misreading the Quran in the Age of Technology and Terror,” August, the America Middle East Educational and Training Service (AMIDEAST), Amman, Jordan.

He is now an “Honorary Affiliate” with the Middle East Studies Program, Univ. of Wisconsin–Madison.

Aziza Khazzoom has published:


Congratulations to Zaineb Istrabadi for being awarded the 2019 Indiana University Trustees’ Teaching Award!
In the past academic year, Iman Alramadan has hosted a virtual meeting with two of the most famous novelists and award winners in the Arab World: Youssef Ziedan and Alaa Aswani. She has hosted Dena Alsaffar to play music in the classroom and talk about healing through music. She has also connected the students with the Bloomington community where she started a project called “a cup of coffee in an Arab’s house.” Two families have hosted them: Dr. Khalaf Alharbi (linguistics) and Dr. John Labban (well known gynecologist).

Zaineb Istrabadi was interviewed by Michael G. Glab. The interview article titled “Big Mike’s B-town: Zaineb Istrabadi, Baghdadi Hoosier”, was posted on Limestone Post.

She was also invited to give four lectures on the general theme of Islam and Reform in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (July 17-20, 2018), which coincided with the launching of the Malay translation of her book The First Muslims. She also gave the following invited talks in 2018: “Feminist Interpretations of Religion and Gender,” American University, Washington D.C. (Feb. 14); “Islam and the West,” (by Skype), Chappaqua Public Library, New York (April 2); and “Valorizing Religious Dialogue and Pluralism within the Islamic Tradition,” in Casablanca, Morocco (July 9).

She was an Invited discussant at the workshop “Liberty, Religion, and Fortune in the Arabian Nights,” held in Miami, Florida (March 1-4). She also gave a conference paper on “Revisiting War and Peace in Classical Islamic Texts,” at the University of Osnabruck, Germany (September 20). With Professor Abdulkader Sinno, Afsaruddin organized a year long seminar series on “Islam in the Global Sphere” and she continues to serve on the Committee for the Public Understanding of Religion within the American Academy of Religion. On April 8, 2019, she was inducted into the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars.

Asma Afsaruddin was officially inducted into the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars on Monday, April 8, 2019 in the George Peabody Library in the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. During the ceremony presided over by President Ronald J. Daniels and Provost Sunil Kumar, she, along with sixteen other inductees, was presented with a university certificate and a medallion signifying membership in the Society of Scholars.

The first group of its kind in the nation, the Society of Scholars was established in 1967 by the university’s Board of Trustees. The Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars honors individuals who completed their graduate, postdoctoral, professional or performance training at Johns Hopkins, but are not currently affiliated, and who have achieved marked professional or scholarly distinction in their fields.
NELC’s annual Danner Lecture in 2019 continued the tradition of an engaging lecture with great attendance. We welcomed Professor John L. Esposito from Georgetown University. He gave an engaging lecture titled, "Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring."

The experiences of the Arab Spring and its demise shape the way people view the future of democracy in the Muslim world. Is democracy in trouble, are Islam and Muslim political culture incompatible with democracy, or is the world entering the next democratic century?
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 03 April, 2019: Professors Jaroslav Stetkevych and Suzanne Stetkevych have been named as the winners of the 2019 Cultural Personality of the Year Award at the 13th edition of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award.

The husband and wife have received their award at the prize winners’ ceremony held at Louvre Abu Dhabi Auditorium Plaza on 25 April, which took place during Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. “Through enlightening Western audiences about Arabic culture, the Stetkevyches have enriched the global perspectives of our people and traditions,” said HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) and Deputy Chairman of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award Board of Trustees. “The authors’ new methodologies focus on how Western scholars should read Arab literature, tackling orientalist takes on Arabic poetry. The Stetkevyches’ research portrays Arabic culture as one that is marked with compassion and tolerance.”

In bestowing the honour of Cultural Personality of the Year, HE Dr. Ali Bin Tamim, Secretary General of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, said: “The Stetkevyches have made a distinguished and unparalleled contribution to Arab culture and literature in the English language, and the positive impact their research has had on Arabic culture cannot be overstated. There have been numerous examples of Arabic families whose members have been prolific in promoting cultural projects, such as the Timur family in Egypt and the Bustani family in Lebanon. Arabic poetry has consistently seen several families rise in prominence due to their literary talents, a phenomenon which had almost disappeared in the modern era, until the Sheikh Zayed Book Award reinstated the Arabic tradition that focus largely on the importance of family by awarding this honour to the Stetkevyches.”

Arabic poetry is the central focus of the couple’s research, concentrating on this complex art form that contains numerous metaphors and linguistic tools to convey a diverse range of cultural content. The Stetkevyches’ work presents a series of key studies that demonstrate the authors’ comprehensive knowledge of Arab literature. Additionally, their work displays a critical understanding of poetry which underscores the very essence of Arabic poetic rhetoric.
Jaroslav Stetkevych is Professor Emeritus of Arabic Literature at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago and a Research Associate in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, Washington DC. He received his PhD in Arabic Literature from Harvard University in 1962. His seminal works include The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in The Classical Arabic Nasib, which details the development of the literary Arabic language, as well as focusing on poetry in Arabic music.

Professor Jaroslav Stetkevych considers Arabic poetry to be lyrical in essence. He said: “Focusing on classical Arabic poetry, it was clear that nostalgia was the consistent and dominant theme throughout. Poetry often deals with feelings of sadness and loss, and a longing for deeper meaning. I realized that Arabic music had slowly evolved to become negative in character and I found myself wondering whether the very essence of an Arab’s soul was negative, filled with a kind of despair and inability to work. However on closer examination this is simply not the case. Arabic poetry is simply nostalgic and strives to find the secret to salvation rather than submit to a life of despair.”

In his book Muhammad and the Golden Bough, which took him 20 years to write, Stetkevych tried to access the vague origins of Arab history, and instead landed upon the actual history of Arabic tribes, particularly the tribe of Thamud. Stetkevych reconstructed and analysed the tribe’s stories through his own reading. He presented the story of the Thamud as one of the major tales of Arab culture, from its earliest moments right through to the modern day.

Professor Suzanne Stetkevych is the Sultan Qaboos bin Said Professor of Arabic & Islamic Studies and Chair of the Department of Arabic & Islamic Studies at Georgetown University in Washington DC. She is also the Ruth N. Halls Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Cultures at Indiana University, USA. She is the Executive Editor of Brill Studies in Middle East Literatures and sits on the board of the Journal of Arabic Literature. Suzanne Stetkevych obtained a PhD from the University of Chicago in 1981, and is known for her important works on Arabic classical poetry from the pre-Islamic era to the neo-classical periods, which have been published in both English and Arabic. She has written several books, including Abu Tammam and the Poetics of the Abbasid Age. In her work, she explores Arabic poetry since the Abbasid age, and her study of Abu Tammam serves as a starting point for understanding the poetry and aesthetics of that era. The book sheds light on Abu Tammam’s life, his poetic innovation and refutation of opposing views. The work focuses first on the Arabic critical tradition, followed by the poetry of Abu Tammam and finally examines selected works of the poet from his collection Al Hamasa.

A significant number of both the Stetkevyches’ works have been translated into Arabic, highlighting the considerable impact their work has had in generating creative interaction between Arab and non-Arab cultures. The winner of the Cultural Personality of the Year award receives a prize of AED 1 million, a gold medal bearing the emblem of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award and a certificate of appreciation. This year, two categories were withheld from awarding: the ‘Development of Nations’ and ‘Translation’ categories.
### Recent Graduates

#### Undergraduates

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<th>SPRING 2019</th>
<th>SUMMER 2019 (ANTICIPATED)</th>
<th>FALL 2019 (ANTICIPATED)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Zahra Bhow</td>
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<td>Madeline Dippel</td>
<td>Richard Solomon</td>
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<td>Tania Ramos</td>
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<td>Nurullah Hergul</td>
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<td>Yasir Alasiri</td>
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<td>Aya Bassiouny</td>
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<td>Shadi Bayadsky</td>
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<td>Matthew Niemi</td>
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Feier Gao is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Linguistics Department, where her focus is on phonology and linguistic phenomena in Chinese languages. This is her second year working as a Graduate Assistant in the NELC Department, where she has continued working 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 in promoting of courses. Feier was involved in the planning, scheduling, and implementation of the Danner Lecture during Spring 2019, which featured John L. Esposito (Georgetown University). Overall, she has striven to work with the NELC faculty and staff to create a better environment for the department’s students.

In her free time, Feier is an amateur photographer. She also enjoys reading (particularly linguistics papers!) and travelling. She plans to make linguistic research her lifelong career after she receives her Ph.D. degree.

Photo Credits:
Table of Contents (top) food from Arabic dinner; Table of Contents (middle) city of Amman as viewed from the citadel, submitted by Lydia Lahey; Table of Contents (bottom) sand surfing in the Wadi Rum, submitted by Lydia Lahey; Page 1 (top) Stephen Katz, reprinted with permission from the School of Global and International Studies; Page 2 (top left) Danner Lecture, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 2 (middle) John L. Esposito and our grad student, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 2 (middle) photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 2 (bottom left) Mahmoud Hassan receiving AI Award, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 2 (top right) Stephen Katz and Mohammed AlAmeri, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 2 (bottom right) Stephen Katz and Nicholas Wernert, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 3 (top left) Ahmed Hassan, submitted by Ahmed Hassan; Page 3 (bottom left) Aly Hussein, submitted by Aly Hussein; Page 3 (top right) Richard Solomon, submitted by Richard Solomon; Page 3 (bottom right) Issam Albdairat, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 4 (top left) Flagship Student Panel, submitted by Brea Bailey; Page 4 (middle) at Arabic Dinner, submitted by Brea Bailey; Page 4 (middle) Arabic calligraphy, submitted by Brea Bailey; Page 4 (bottom) Winners of the 2019 Building Bridges Award pose with James C. Wimbush, submitted by Brea Bailey and originally posted on News at IU; Page 5 (top left) Nader Morkus and Aziza Khazzoom, profile pictures from NELC website; Page 5 (bottom) Asaad Alsaleh attending a workshop, submitted by Asaad Alsaleh; Page 6 (top right) Zaneib Istrabadi with students, from “Big Mike's B-town: Zaineb Istrabadi, Baghdadi Hoosier”, Limestone Post; Page 6 (middle) Zaneib Istrabadi at campus, from “Big Mike's B-town: Zaineb Istrabadi, Baghdadi Hoosier”, Limestone Post; Page 6 (middle) Zaneib Istrabadi with families, from “Big Mike's B-town: Zaineb Istrabadi, Baghdadi Hoosier”, Limestone Post; Page 6 (bottom) Iman Alramadan with students, submitted by Iman Alramadan; Page 7 (left) Jerusalem, submitted by Lydia Lahey; Page 7 (top right) Asma Afsaruddin with JHU President Ronald Daniels, submitted by Asma Afsaruddin; Page 7 (bottom) submitted by Stephen Katz; Page 8 (top) John L. Esposito at Q&A session at Danner Lecture, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 8 (middle) John L. Esposito with Miriam Danner, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 8 (middle) John L. Esposito with Stephen Katz, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 8 (bottom) Danner Lecture, photo credit to Feier Gao; Page 9 Stetkevych family wins prize at 13th edition of Awards for work in enlightening Western audiences about Arab literature and culture, submitted by Suzanne Stetkevych; Page 12 submitted by Feier Gao.
We want to stay connected with you!

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The Department is grateful to those who have made donations to support its activities in the past. Your donations help us finance many of our annual events. We appreciate gifts to further support fellowships, conference travel, and language study abroad for students, as well as visiting speakers and adjunct lecturers for mini-courses and special events.

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