

News from the Middle East Studies Program

In July 2023, I became Chair of the Middle East Program, and it has been a phenomenal experience. I am proud to work with dedicated and ambitious colleagues. We had a challenging academic year, but we rose to the occasion with grace, compassion, and professionalism. We found solace in each other, and we were able to provide our students and community with a safe space to discuss recent events in the Middle East. We worked tirelessly to offer various educational opportunities that promote tolerance, acceptance and a better understanding of the Middle East. Our approach always was and always will be interdisciplinary. As such, we collaborated with various entities on campus: professors, programs, departments, and administrative offices.

Many of these activities would not have been possible without our donor's generous contribution. For that, we are eternally grateful.

Events 2023-2024

The terrorist attacks of October 7 against Israeli civilians and the on-going genocide in Gaza reaffirmed our belief that peace starts with a strong liberal arts education where honest and hard discussions can take place. As such, MEST offered the following:

- I – In House Response to October 7 (events organized and executed by MEST Faculty);
- II – Guest Speakers (events organized with outside speakers/organizations).

I.: In-House Response to October 7 - in collaboration with Judaic Studies.

Teach-In on Israel/Palestine: covered the history of the conflict and opened the floor for questions from the Dickinson Community (Faculty/Students/Staff).

Media Workshop: provided valuable insights into navigating information sources and understanding media narratives during periods of conflict, empowering individuals to critically analyze and interpret the news. In collaboration with Library and Librarian Ian Boucher.

Candlelight Vigil & Poetry Reading: Judaic Studies & Middle East Studies invited the community to an inclusive space of vulnerability to affirm commitment to human dignity, to mourn loss of civilian lives, and to reject national divisions.

Mental Health Workshop “Navigating Emotions/Media Awareness & Feelings Management” with the Wellness Center. Many students expressed anxiety and frustration over recent events. The goal of the workshop was to help learn to center the self and avoid becoming swept up by the horrific graphic social media images. The workshop was offered twice (December 2023 and February 2024).

War & Violence Around the World: Can Comics Help? MEST and Librarian Ian Boucher hosted a panel discussion on Comics and the role they play in understanding armed conflict.



Events 2023-24 Continued

II: Guest Speakers (events organized with invited speakers/organizations).

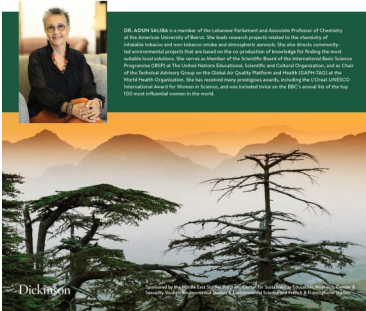
September 2023

The Beirut Barracks Bombing of 1983: The Stories That America Needs to Hear. In observance of the 40th anniversary of the Beirut Barracks bombing of 1983, MEST hosted a panel discussion on the history of the Lebanese civil war and American military intervention in Lebanon, and the duty to remember.

In collaboration with the Clarke Forum, French & Francophone Studies, Military Science, the Army War College, the William R. Gaines Foundation.



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2 | 5 P.M. | WEISS 235
 In the face of alarming indicators of global climate change, scholars, given their capacity for transformative research, often find themselves compelled to play a leading role in constructing a sustainable future. This presentation delves into how academics can play a pivotal role in leading both top-down and bottom-up strategies for adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Using Lebanon as a case study, the talk will shed light on how academic work and feminist activism have responded to the severe impact of environmental devastation in a region considered a climate change hotspot and already grappling with fragility.



February 2024

Turning Tough Choices into Scholar-Led Transformation: MEST invited

Dr. Aoun Saliba, a chemistry professor and Lebanese Member of the Parliament, to discuss her academic work and feminist activism to respond to environmental devastation in Lebanon.

In collaboration with Center for Sustainability Education, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Environmental Studies & Environmental Science, and French & Francophone Studies



Why do Palestinians and Israelis Continue to Fight, and How Might We End Their Conflict?

MEST invited Rami George Khouri, Distinguished Public Policy Fellow at the American University of Beirut and Op-ed Columnist at Al Jazeera, to discuss the key reasons for the continuing Palestine-Israel and wider Arab-Israeli conflict. Mr. Khouri offered concrete diplomatic solutions to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

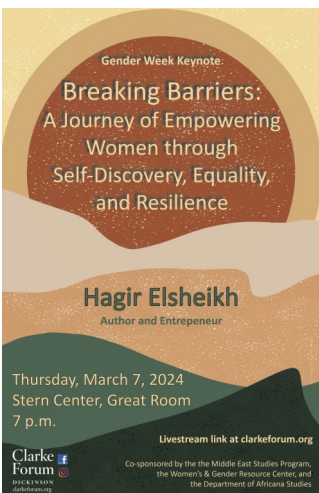


In collaboration with Dialogue Across Differences Program, which is supported by a grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation.

March 2024

Breaking Barriers: A Journey of Empowering Women Through Self-Discovery, Equality, and Resilience. MEST hosted Hagir ElSheikh, a Sudanese Author and Entrepreneur to discuss recent events in Sudan. She was the keynote speaker for Gender Week.

In collaboration with the Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues, Women's & Gender Resource Center, and The Department of Africana Studies.



Guest Speakers 2023-24 Continued

March 2024 (Continued)

Piece for Peace with “Women Wage Peace” Founded in 2014, Women Wage Peace is an Israeli movement that aims to change the narrative surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is non-partisan and does not support any one specific solution. Instead, it empowers women from diverse communities to build trust across divides, leading in turn to a unified demand for diplomatic negotiation, with full representation of women, to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. MEST hosted “Piece for Peace”, which allowed participants to design fabrics with messages of peace. These designs will be used to create peace quilts to be displayed in WWP’s activities. In collaboration with Judaic Studies, the Asbell Center for Jewish Life, the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the Women's and Gender Resource Center, Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies, Theatre & Dance, and the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity.

Abrahamic Panel at the United Nations: Professor Mireille Rebeiz and students from MEST and the Dialogue Across Differences Program were invited to participate in a panel discussion on Abrahamic religions and women empowerment in the Middle East. The event was organized by Empower Women Media and Abraham Women’s Alliance, two organizations that aim to promote peace and inter-religious harmony.

In collaboration with Dialogues across Differences Program.

**April 2024
Celebrating Arab American Heritage Month:
The Simon Shaheen Quartet in a Performance
of Arab Classical and Folk Music.**

Simon Shaheen is Israeli American of Palestinian origin. He ranks among the most important Arab musicians, performers and composers of his generation, masterfully performing everything from traditional Arabic music to modern jazz on the oud (a short-necked lute that is a staple of the Arab music tradition) and the violin. Shaheen performed at Dickinson College; he was accompanied by Firas Zriek on the qanoun, Rami Abuolaya on the nay, and Tareq Rantisi on percussion.



In collaboration with the Asbell Center for Jewish Life, the Department of Music, the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity, the Provost’s Office, the Division of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

War in Gaza: An International Lawyer’s Perspective: Leila Sadat.

Leila Nadya Sadat is the James Carr Professor of International Criminal Law at Washington University and a visiting fellow at the Schell Center for Human Rights at Yale. She served as Special Adviser on Crimes Against Humanity to the International Criminal Court Prosecutor from 2012-2023. She provided attendees with a legal analysis of the war in Gaza.

In collaboration with the President’s Office, Provost’s Office, and the Department of History .

THURS., APRIL 25 | 6 P.M. | STERN GREAT ROOM
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC | LIVESTREAM: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/2J3F8M](https://tinyurl.com/2j3f8m)

PROFESSOR LEILA NADYA SADAT is the James Carr Professor of International Criminal Law at Washington University and a Visiting Fellow at the Schell Center for Human Rights at Yale. She served as Special Adviser on Crimes Against Humanity to the International Criminal Court Prosecutor from 2012-2023. A devoted teacher and prolific scholar, she is widely renowned for her expertise in international law, human rights, and international criminal law, with over 170 articles and books to her name published by leading journals, academic presses, and media outlets throughout the world. Sadat is also the Director of the Crimes Against Humanity Initiative, a project that revives the world's first global treaty on crimes against humanity. She holds law degrees from Columbia University, Tulane University, and the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

Dickinson | Sponsored by the Middle East Studies Program in collaboration with the President's Office, the Provost's Office, and the Department of History.

Faculty News: Research, Teaching, & Service

Mohammad Abu Shuleh

Attended the STARTALK conference in summer 2023 (STARTALK is a federal grant program managed and funded by the National Security Agency);
Worked as a lead instructor in two summers in a row 23, 24 at the STARTALK program in VMI (Virginia Military Institute);
Was recertified as an AAPPL Arabic rater (ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages).

Nadia Alahmed

Finished manuscript *Black Intifada: Black and Palestinian Solidarity and Black Radical Tradition in the 20th Century*, forthcoming in 2026 with University of Virginia Press as part of the Carter G. Woodson Institute's book series "Black Studies at Work in the World".
Interviewed in July 2024 by National Public Radio (NPR) about article "'The Shape of Wrath to Come': James Baldwin's Radicalism and Evolution of his Thought on Israel". The interview will be released under the CodeSwitch podcast, hosted by Neda Ulaby.
Created new course for Spring 2025 on Afro-Arabs: "Ethno-Racial Formations in the Middle East and the Shifting Discourse on Racism in MENA".

David Commins

Designed course on Arab Israeli Conflict in connection with Dialogues across Differences Program and with Center for Global Study and Education;
Collaborated with Professor Siekert to hold zoom sessions on Palestine/Israel peace activism
Held classes on the impacts of climate change during Climate Action Week in April
Published book review *Charity in Saudi Arabia*, by Nora Derbal, in *Die Welt des Islams*.

Erik Love

Published in 2023 "Identity and Discrimination." In *Biopsychosocial Perspectives on Arab Americans: Culture, Development, and Health*. Second Edition. Edited by Sylvia C. Nassar, Kristine J. Ajrouch, Florence J. Dallo, Julie Hakim-Larson. New York: Springer.
Published in 2022: "Looking Muslim." Selections from *Islamophobia and Racism in America*. In *Sajjilu Arab American: A Reader in SWANA Studies*. Edited by Louise Cankar, Pauline Homsy Vinson, and Amira Jarmakani. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
Presented in 2023 "Muslim Americans and Racialization Across Generations." Invited panel discussant for a special session at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Session organized by Rebecca Karam.
Served as the discussant for a panel at ASA 2023 featuring three amazing scholars who have recently published groundbreaking new studies in the area of racism and Muslim Americans: Inaash Islam, Saher Selod, and Hajar Yazdiha.
Created courses on "Race and Ethnicity" SOCI 225 which includes discussions about anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism, and "Islam and the West" SOCI/MEST 272.
Worked with the Center for Civic Action and Learning (CCLA) and Dickinson Votes, the non-partisan, volunteer group of faculty, staff and students dedicated to enabling Dickinsonians to cast ballots in local, state, and federal elections, worked with the League of Women Voters of the PA Capital Region to develop [multi-lingual resources for voters in our community](#). The languages include Arabic, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Urdu, and Vietnamese. The work to translate these resources was accomplished by many people, including Dickinson students.
Met with the League of Women Voters to consult with them on this project.

Faculty News Continued

Mireille Rebeiz

Organized all MEST events listed above in collaboration with numerous departments and colleagues;

Finished manuscript *The State of Hezbollah*, forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press in 2025;

Published 3 book chapters, 2 peer-reviewed articles, 12 editorials

Invited to speak at Shippensburg University on Israel/Palestine and at New Castle University on Hezbollah;

Received the 2024 Torch Award from the World Affairs Council for peace activism;

Received Honorable Mention by Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation, April 2024;

Invited to the United Nations Ceremony Honoring Blue Helmets and Peacekeepers in Switzerland in May 2024;

Interviewed by BBC News on the impact of the assassination attempt on Trump and American elections in July 2024;

Hosted Hagir ElSheikh, Sudanese Author and Entrepreneur, shared her experience as refugee and activist with students in Women of the Middle East;

Collaborated with Professor Andrea Lieber: combined classes on Women of the Middle East and Women and Judaism to discuss the Israeli film *Sabbaya Cinema*.

Collaborated with Professor Sarah McGaughey: combined classes of advanced German and Media and Women of the Middle East to discuss German documentary *A Regular Woman* and Kurdish migration to Germany;

Hosted Esq. Shadan Ahmed from Penn State Dickinson Law who discussed Kurdish women's rights in Iraq with students in Women in Women of the Middle East;

Met regularly with Chair & Professor of Judaic Studies Andrea Lieber to discuss campus climate;

Met regularly Rabbi Marley Weiner, Director of the Milton B. Asbell Center for Jewish Life, and facilitated multiple meetings and dinners between Arab/Muslim/Jewish students.



Magda Siekert

Invited by I.B.Tauris (imprint of Bloomsbury) to review book proposal on US policy in the Middle East since 1914;

Collaborated with Professor David Commins and with Dialogue Across Differences Program;

Collaborated with Parent Circle to discuss Israel/Palestine.

The organization is composed of a community of bereaved families who have chosen to work together through their grief and to find meaning in advocating for peace.

Held zoom discussion with the Arava Institute to discuss Israeli – Palestine on environmental/climate change issue.

Hosted via zoom Professor Sa'ed Atshan to discuss his book *Queer Palestine and The Empire of Critique*;

Hosted via zoom Sarah Nishioka who shared her experiences traveling through Israel and Palestine with the Center for International Experiential Learning, and applying for the Peace Corps in Kosovo;

Hosted via zoom Ambassador Tutwiler spoke to my Public Diplomacy class about serving as US Am-



Faculty News Continued

Ed Webb

Participated for the second year running in a Virtual Exchange project in which students in selected classes worked with counterparts at the American University of Sharjah in the UAE. In Fall 2023 students in International Relations course worked with AUS students in a Comparative Politics course to produce case studies on how and why various countries of the Global South are or are not making progress toward the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. In Spring 2024, students in International Politics of the Middle East & North Africa course worked with counterparts in a Comparative Politics of MENA class to produce similar case studies, this time limited to the MENA region.

Developed a new course on Religion & Politics in MENA (WiD), which will be offered for the first time in Fall 2024;

Presented at two conferences: "Racing North Africa: rhetorical geopolitics between the Sahara and the Mediterranean—Tunisia under Kais Saied." ISA Virtual Conference August 1-4, 2023; "The (re-) emergence of a Western Mediterranean Security Complex?" Ifrane 2023—Al Akhawayn-ISA Joint International Conference, Ifrane, Morocco, June 2023.

While in Morocco, conducted a review for the Center for Global Study and Education of our partner program, AMIDEAST Rabat.

Student Success Stories/Honors Theses



Anthony Massaro

Xenia Makosky '24 received an offer from the Peace Corps and curated an art exhibition at the Trout Gallery. A double major in MES and Art History, she graduated with high honors in both fields. She worked with Professor David Commins on her MEST honors thesis "Stitching Palestine: Palestinian Women's Embroidery and the Reformation of National Identity."

Anthony Massaro '24 worked with Professor Ed Webb and wrote an honors thesis on "A Comparative Analysis of Israel's Relations with Selected Arab States."



Xenia Makosky

Arabic Activities Program (AAP) in cooperation with the Arabic club

Prof Mohammad Abu Shuleh organized several events to promote Arabic language and culture: game nights (Kahoot), Ramadan decorations, cooking, calligraphy and henna.

He also showed films and led discussions on *Farha*, *Born in Gaza*, *Amreeka*, and *The Falconer*.

Happy News

Professor Peter Schadler was tenured and promoted to the rank of Association Professor of Religion.

Professor Mohammad Abu Shuleh welcomed baby Sara in March 2024.

Professors Nadia Alahmed, Erik Love, and Ed Webb created a Faculty Music Band, and it is in-demand. Please contact MEST to place your music request!



Baby Sara

Moving Forward

Faculty have already been planning events for academic year 2024-2025. Here are some of the ideas/guest speakers we are considering:

Edmund Ghareeb, Lebanese – American scholar & journalist. He published the first book of Palestinian poetry in English in the United States, *Enemy of the Sun: poetry of Palestinian Resistance*. He authored several other books. He is an icon of Black and Palestinian solidarity movement. Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian – American author and poet. She lives in Pennsylvania and is known for her novel *Mornings in Jenin*.

April 2025 marks the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. MEST would like to invite Bedros Der Matossian, Professor of Middle East History & Armenian politics to discuss Armenians' presence in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.

In collaboration with the Clarke Forum, Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies, Women's & Gender Resource Center, MEST would like to invite Marine Corps Veteran and award-winning author Phil Klay to discuss his creative writing about his deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan.

MEST is also exploring the idea of collaborating with nearby institutions such as Gettysburg College and Shippensburg University, especially on the following topics: Yemen/Houthis, Islamic Art, Islamic Law, Israel/Saudi-Arabia Relations.

Professors Ed Webb and Mireille Rebeiz are working on a MOSAIC course on Morocco for Fall 2026. The course will focus on media and immigration policy, women and indigenous rights in Morocco, and linguistic diversity.

Till Next Year...



MEST ADC Madeline Brown

Our work would not have been possible without the amazing support of our one and only ADC: Madeline Brown .

We are also a pet-friendly program! Magnolia is Professor Ed Webb's latest addition, and she is officially MEST's dog!



Magnolia