

News from the Middle East Studies Program

The Middle East continues to be the center of heartbreaking news: the on-going genocide in Gaza and starvation of the Palestinian people, the brutal death of Israeli hostages, the rise of violence in Sudan, and the shift in power in Syria, among other news.

Middle East Studies responded to these several crises by offering numerous educational opportunities to students/faculty/staff and outside community members to learn and understand the different challenges.

However, despite the bad news, it is important to recognize the beauty of the Middle East and the resilience of its peoples. For this reason, some events focused on cultural elements such as music, art, film, and food precisely to offer a different narrative on the Middle East and showcase its unknown diversity and beauty.

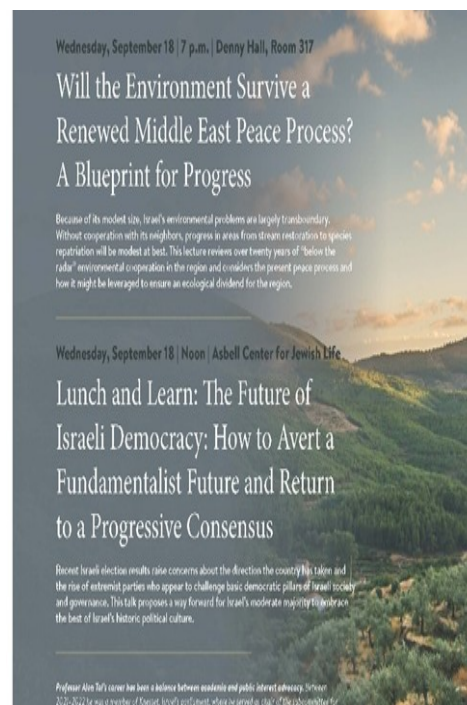
Events 2024-2025

- 1. Will the Environment Survive a Renewed Middle East Peace Process? A Blueprint for Progress.** Middle East Studies partnered with The Asbell Center for Jewish Life on this talk by Prof. Alon Tal.

September 18, 2024.

- 2. Remembering One Year- October 7, 2023.**

October 7, 2024



Middle East Studies partnered with the Judaic Studies Department and the Asbell Center for Jewish Life in a remembrance of October 7, 2023. The event included a self-guided exhibit about Oct.7, a screening of the documentary *Supernova*, and a candlelight poetry vigil.

3. Career Conversation: Where the Humanities and Data Meet.

Conversation with Alumna Grace Ingle'20. Co-sponsored by the departments of Data Analytics, Math & Computer Science, and Russian.

October 24, 2024

4. The Impact of the Gaza War on the 2024 Elections and Our Democracy - A Talk by Dr. James Zogby

October 29, 2024.

Abstract: Israel's war on Gaza and Lebanon looms large over the upcoming US election. In this talk, Dr. Zogby will argue that a pro-Palestinian shift in public opinion among key demographic groups (particularly younger and non-white voters) is having a profound effect not just on electoral politics, but on our democracy overall. Pro-Israel groups and their supporters in Congress, in response to this demographic shift, are now desperately seeking to silence debate and arrest the growth of pro-Palestinian sentiment and activities, as attested to by a spate of new bills on the state level that penalize individuals and groups that endorse sanctions against Israel; a massive effort to expand the definition of antisemitism to include legitimate criticism of Israel; and Congressional intimidation of university presidents leading to severe restrictions on pro-Palestinian campus demonstrations.

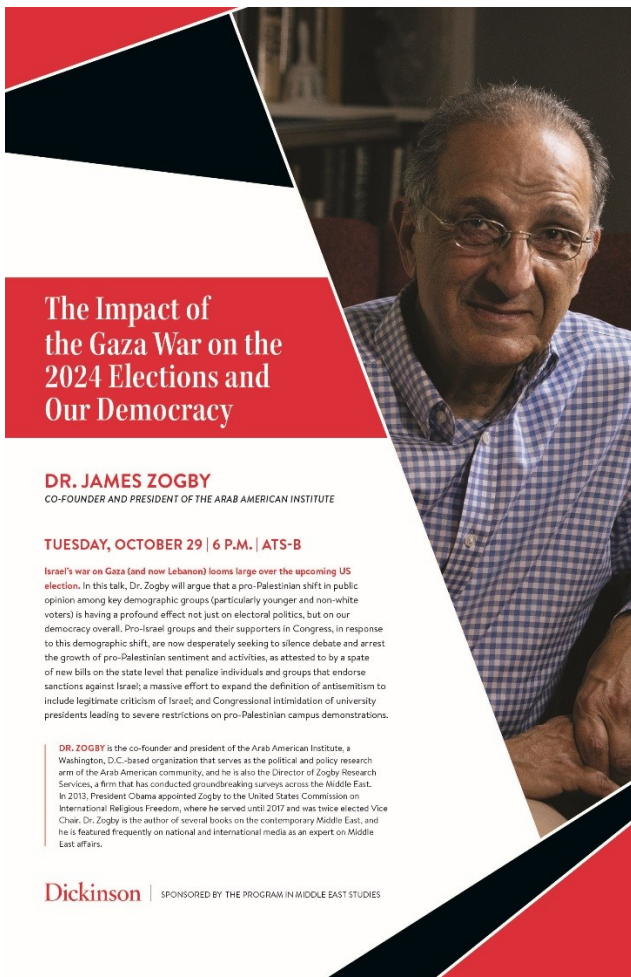
About the speaker: Dr. Zogby is the co-founder and president of the Arab American Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that serves as the political and policy research arm of the Arab American community, and he is also the Director of Zogby Research Services, a firm that has conducted groundbreaking surveys across the Middle East. In 2013, President Obama appointed Zogby to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, where he served until 2017 and was twice elected Vice Chair. Dr. Zogby is the author of several books on the contemporary Middle East, and he is featured frequently on national and international media as an expert on Middle East affairs.



Co-sponsored by the departments of Data Analytics, Math and Computer Science, Middle East Studies, and Russian.

Grace Ingle '20 (Russian & Middle East Studies) is Technical Investigator at Alethea Group. Previously, she worked at Accenture Federal Services, where she supported clients in the Applied Intelligence practice.

Grace will show how humanities skills and language proficiency are valuable for tech and data careers, including how humanities majors can position themselves for jobs in data, government, international development, security, and more. She will walk students through some of the data tasks and tools that she uses in her work, offering a window into professional careers that merge data, artificial intelligence, the humanities, and world languages. At Dickinson, Grace studied abroad in Cairo and Moscow.



The Impact of the Gaza War on the 2024 Elections and Our Democracy

DR. JAMES ZOGBY
CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB AMERICAN INSTITUTE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29 | 6 P.M. | ATS-B

Israel's war on Gaza (and now Lebanon) looms large over the upcoming US election. In this talk, Dr. Zogby will argue that a pro-Palestinian shift in public opinion among key demographic groups (particularly younger and non-white voters) is having a profound effect not just on electoral politics, but on our democracy overall. Pro-Israel groups and their supporters in Congress, in response to this demographic shift, are now desperately seeking to silence debate and arrest the growth of pro-Palestinian sentiment and activities, as attested to by a spate of new bills on the state level that penalize individuals and groups that endorse sanctions against Israel; a massive effort to expand the definition of antisemitism to include legitimate criticism of Israel; and Congressional intimidation of university presidents leading to severe restrictions on pro-Palestinian campus demonstrations.

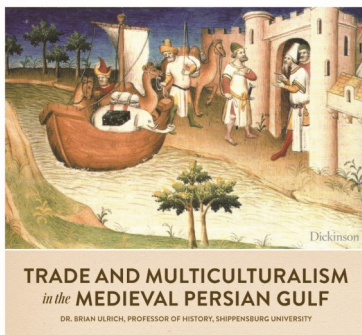
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5. The Arabic Club, the Muslim Educational & Cultural Association (MECA), and the Middle East Studies Program hosted a dinner for all students/faculty/staff who identify as Arab, Arab American and/or Muslim.
November 19, 2024.



6. Trade and Multiculturalism in the Persian Gulf. A Talk by Dr. Brian Ulrich.
November 22, 2024. Event co-sponsored by the Departments of History and Religion.



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22 | NOON-1:15 P.M. | WEISS 235 | PIZZA WILL BE SERVED

Long before the oil industry, cities along the Persian Gulf were trade hubs for horses, pearls, and aromatics, and their populations included merchants and seafarers from around the Western Indian Ocean in a society that had both exploitation and cosmopolitanism. Join us for this talk, in which Dr. Ulrich will talk about that trade and the people who made it, from Christian monks on island monasteries to Muslim merchants meeting their Hindu associates' dietary restrictions.



Brian Ulrich is a Professor of History at Shippensburg University, where he teaches courses on world history, the theory and practice of history, and upper-level courses on Islam and the Middle East from the rise of Islam to the present. He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin in 2008 and is the author of two books, *Arabs in the Early Islamic Empire: Exploring al-Azad Tribal Identity* and, more recently, *The Medieval Persian Gulf*.

SPONSORED BY THE PROGRAM IN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES AND BY THE DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY AND RELIGION

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7. Kurdistan: The Struggle of a People Without a State – Identity, Human Rights, and the Fight for Self-Determination. A Talk by Rez Gardi, international human rights lawyer, advocate, and speaker.
February 18, 2025. Co-Sponsored with Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies.

Abstract: In this talk, human rights lawyer Rez Gardi will explore the complex realities of the Kurdish people, focusing on their experiences throughout the 20th and 21st centuries and their ongoing struggles for self-determination. Gardi will explore the intersection of international law, human rights, and the geopolitical barriers that have hindered the Kurds' quest for statehood, as well as the implications of the Kurdish question for regional and international stability.

About the Speaker: Rez Gardi is an international human rights lawyer, advocate, and speaker, dedicated to advancing justice and amplifying marginalized voices on the global stage. Born stateless in a refugee camp after her family fled genocide and persecution in Kurdistan, she draws upon her lived experience to champion the rights of displaced and stateless people worldwide. She is the Co-Managing Director of R-SEAT (Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table), the only global refugee-led organization working to enhance the effectiveness of global refugee responses by ensuring the inclusion of refugees in decision-making spaces. Currently based in New York, Gardi works to expand R-SEAT's presence, working at the United Nations in New York and Geneva.



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CO-SPONSORED BY WOMEN'S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES, AND BY THE DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY AND RELIGION



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8. Citizenship in an Age of Perpetual Conflict by Marine Corps Veteran and Author Phil Klay. Middle East Studies partnered with the Clarke Forum on this event. Also Phil Klay visited Professor Mireille Rebeiz's class, "The Good Invisible Soldier: Gender Equality and Disability in the U.S Military."

February 10, 2025.

Abstract: Though the war in Afghanistan ended in failure and the war in Iraq wound down to a small troop presence, America remains enmeshed in military conflicts around the world. From Africa to the Middle East, we have troops directly in harm's way, while in countries like Ukraine and Israel we provide support of various kinds, from munitions to critical intelligence. How should we think about our role as citizens of a country so deeply involved in warfare, and how might literature help us better understand the stakes of the killing done in our name? *A book signing will follow the presentation. Books are available for purchase at the college bookstore.*

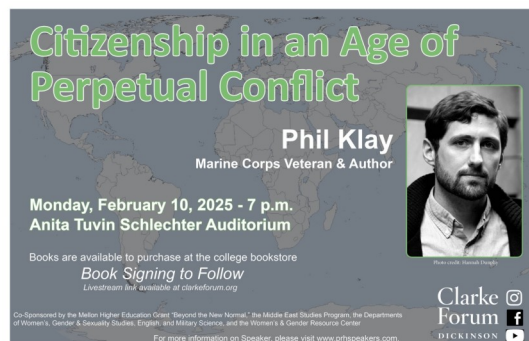
The program is sponsored by the Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues and co-sponsored by the Mellon Higher Education Grant "Beyond the New Normal" and by the Middle East Studies Program, the departments of women's, gender & sexuality studies, English, and military science, and the Women's & Gender Resource Center. This program is part of the Clarke Forum's [Leadership in an Age of Uncertainty Series](#) and its annual theme, [Alternative Models](#).

About the speaker: Phil Klay is a graduate of Dartmouth College and a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in Iraq's Anbar Province from January 2007 to February 2008 as a public affairs officer. After being discharged, Klay received his MFA from Hunter College. He is the author of [Redeployment](#) (The Penguin Press), a powerful collection of short stories that takes readers to the front lines of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In his book and public lectures, Klay explores the complex feelings of brutality, faith, guilt, and fear that a soldier experiences during war, while also revealing the isolation and despair that can accompany a soldier's homecoming.

With his stark, realistic depictions of war, Phil Klay's book has been praised as "one of the best debuts of the year" by the *Portland Oregonian* and author [Karen Russell](#) calls his writing "searing and powerful, unsparing of its characters and its readers." *Redeployment* won the 2014 National Book Award for Fiction and the 2015 Chautauqua Prize. His writing has also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Granta*, *Newsweek*, *The Daily Beast*, the *New York Daily News*, *Tin House*, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2012*.



Phil Klay's next work, [Missionaries](#), is a novel of extraordinary suspense infused with geopolitical sophistication and storytelling instincts that are second to none. *Missionaries* is a window not only into modern war, but into the individual lives that go on long after the drones have left the skies. [Missionaries](#) was included on Barack Obama's "Favorite Books of the Year" list and hailed as "A sweeping, interconnected novel of ideas in the tradition of Joseph Conrad and Norman Mailer" by the *Wall Street Journal*. Klay's next book, [Uncertain Ground](#) is a powerful series of reckonings with some of our country's thorniest concerns, written in essay form over the past ten years.

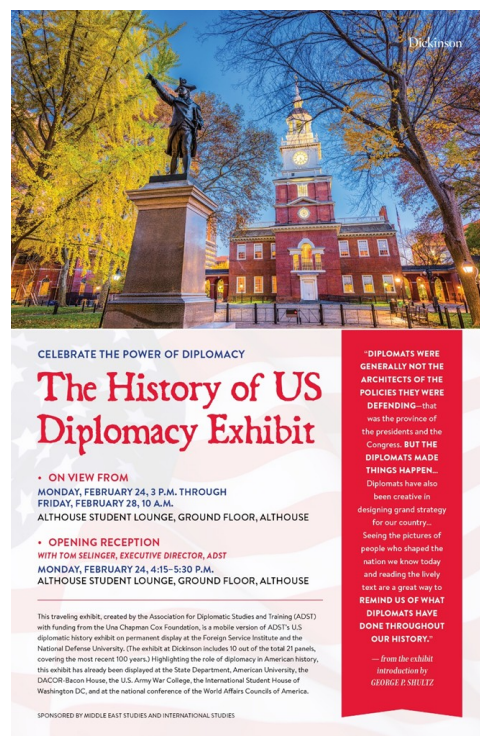


9. Exhibit: The History of US Diplomacy. February 24, 2025.

This traveling exhibit, created by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) with funding from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, is a mobile version of ADST's U.S diplomatic history exhibit on permanent display at the Foreign Service Institute and the National Defense University. Highlighting the role of diplomacy in American history, this exhibit has already been displayed at the State Department, American University, the DACOR-Bacon House, the U.S. Army War College, the International Student House of Washington DC, and at the national conference of the World Affairs Councils of America.

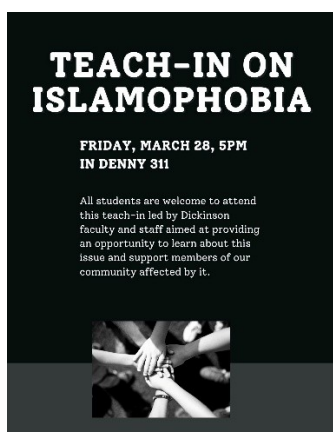
"Diplomats were generally not the architects of the policies they were defending — that was the province of the presidents and the Congress. But the diplomats made things happen ... Diplomats have also been creative in designing grand strategy for our country ... Seeing the pictures of people who shaped the nation we know today and reading the lively text are a great way to remind us of what diplomats have done throughout our history."

--from the exhibit introduction by George P. Shultz



10. Teach-In on Islamophobia.

March 28, 2025.



Students/faculty/staff were invited to attend this teach-in, which was led by Dickinson students and faculty. The goal was to provide an opportunity to learn about this issue and support members of the community are affected by it.

11. Poetry Reading with Rick Black.

March 30, 2025.

About the Speaker: Rick Black, a former New York Times reporter in Jerusalem, explores Israel's paradoxes through poetry and art. He will read poems capturing the country's stark landscapes, where peace and war, and hope and fear intertwine.



12. The Armenians of Palestine. A Talk with Q & A Bedross Der Matossian, Professor of Modern Middle East History and the Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

April 3, 2025.

Abstract: The Armenians of Palestine today are facing significant challenges that could jeopardize their future in the region. This talk will explore the historical development of the modern Armenian community in Palestine, with a particular focus on Jerusalem. It will examine how political and socio-economic transformations in this volatile region have impacted both the Armenian Patriarchate and the broader community. The discussion will highlight the key challenges currently confronting the community and propose a strategic roadmap for preserving the historical presence of Armenians in Jerusalem, while safeguarding their rich cultural heritage, which spans over a millennium.

About the speaker: Born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem, Bedross Der Matossian is a Professor of Modern Middle East History and the Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He is the author, editor, and co-editor of seven books. His most recent edited volume, *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century*, was published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2023.



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THE ARMENIANS OF PALESTINE

ZOOM TALK AND Q & A WITH
BEDROSS DER MATOSSIAN
Professor of Modern Middle East History and the Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln

THURSDAY, APRIL 3
6-7:15 P.M. EDT | ZOOM

RSVP'S ARE REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE.
A Zoom link to the talk will be sent to everyone who registered by 5 a.m. EDT on Thurs., April 3.

VISIT [TINYURL.COM/SNW9T7TY](https://tinyurl.com/snw9t7ty) TO REGISTER OR ENGAGED OR SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.

THE ARMENIANS OF PALESTINE TODAY ARE FACING SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES THAT COULD JEOPARDIZE THEIR FUTURE IN THE REGION.

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SCAN HERE to RSVP!



13. RIPPLES OF EXILE: A Literary Reading and Discussion of Palestinian American Life with Susan Muaddi Darraj, award-winning Palestinian American writer April 14, 2025.

RIPPLES OF EXILE

A LITERARY READING AND DISCUSSION
OF PALESTINIAN AMERICAN LIFE

SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ
AWARD-WINNING PALESTINIAN AMERICAN WRITER



MON., APRIL 14 | ATS

5 P.M. | ATS LOBBY
RECEPTION AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

6 P.M. | ATS-B
READING, DISCUSSION AND Q & A FOLLOWED BY A BOOK SIGNING.

Susan Muaddi Darraj, an award-winning Palestinian American novelist and essayist, will read from her latest book, *Behind You Is The Sea* (Harper Collins), named a Best Book of 2024 by *The Washington Post*, NPR, *Ms. Magazine* and *The New Yorker*. She will discuss Palestinian American immigrant life in the United States as part of the inspiration for her fiction and will read a selection of excerpts from the novel. A Q&A and a book signing will follow.



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SPONSORED BY THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES PROGRAM AND THE DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH AND WOMEN'S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES, IN CELEBRATION OF ARAB-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Life with Susan Muaddi Darraj, award-winning Palestinian American writer

April 14, 2025.

About the speaker: Susan Muaddi Darraj, an award-winning Palestinian American novelist and essayist, will read from her latest book, *Behind You Is The Sea* (Harper Collins), named a Best Book of 2024 by *The Washington Post*, NPR, *Ms. Magazine* and *The New Yorker*. She will discuss Palestinian American immigrant life in the United States as part of the inspiration for her fiction and will read a selection of excerpts from the novel. A Q&A and a book signing will follow. Event co-sponsored by the Departments of English and Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies.

The author met with students and signed their books.



Faculty News: Research, Teaching, & Service

Nadia Alahmed presented the following:

- “Malcolm X in Gaza: Foundations of Black Radical Discourse on Palestine in the Late 20th Century”. Yale University. April 2025
- “Black Intifada: The Roots of Black and Palestinian Solidarity”. Johns Hopkins University. April 2025
- “Black Intifada: The Roots of Black and Palestinian Solidarity” Kenyon College, March
- “How to Build a Fire: James Baldwin Centennial Convening”. Columbia University, Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture. October 2024
- “James Baldwin and the Roots of Black-Palestinian Solidarity”. Literary Hub, August 2024
- “What James Baldwin Can Teach Us About Israel, and Ourselves”. National Public Radio (NPR), Codeswitch, August 2024.

David Commins: published [*Saudi Arabia. A Modern History. Yale University Press, 2025.*](#)

Mireille Rebeiz was awarded:

- the Unsung Hero Award – Leadership Ceremony 2024-2025;
- Dean’s Fellow for Public & Engaged Scholarship, Summer 2025;

Subgrant of \$3,000 from Dickinson for the project “Veterans, Gender, and Disability” (Summer 2025) through a Mellon Foundation Grant entitled “Beyond the New Normal: Disability, Literature, and Reimagining Social Justice.”

She published (selected publications):

Hezbollah in International Law. Edinburgh University Press, 2025.

“Amnesty Law and The State’s Obligation to Prosecute Serious Crimes: The Case of Lebanon,” *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, vol. 53, no.1, 2025, pp. 75-107.

“Despite Genocide and Hate, Arab Americans Will Celebrate Our Heritage,” *Middle East Eye*, 3 April 2025. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/arab-american-heritage-month-genocide-hate>

“Selective Outrage and the Palestine Exception. How DEI in Higher Education Failed Arab American and Muslim Communities,” *Project Censored*, 30 January 2025. <https://www.projectcensored.org/selective-outrage-palestine-exception/>

“Assad’s Fall in Syria Will Further Weaken Hezbollah and Curtails Tehran’s ‘Iranization’ of region,” *The Conversation*, 11 December 2024. <https://theconversation.com/assads-fall-in-syria-will-further-weaken-hezbollah-and-curtails-tehrans-iranization-of-region-245606>

She gave numerous interviews including one with Voice of America, “Interview with Mireille Rebeiz on the Future of Lebanon and the Influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” February 2025. https://ir.voanews.com/a/7969463.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawIfHUIleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHXtvwzg8CQtszoVmoL3wIuAxledDV2APKMTDCytsswSIVVmKnK2iWd_-ww_aem_R1kMVvWp7WFIMq-eQIW8Uw

Magda Siekert:

- MEST co-sponsored with INST a traveling exhibit on the history of US diplomacy (February 24-8, 2025). A current US diplomat, Tom Selinger, currently on assignment with the Association of Diplomatic Study and Engagement, attended the opening of the exhibit that included students, staff, and faculty from all departments, and the public. He also spoke to Magda Siekert’s class on US Public Diplomacy.
 - Following the visit, a Dickinson student (Ani Nikogosyan), applied for and won a prestigious and competitive summer internship with ADST. The exhibit, and speaker, showcased how diplomacy, development, and defense are the bedrock of US national security.
- Magda Siekert participated in a Clarke Forum panel on the topic “A World Transformed: Foreign Policy in the Current Moment” that was well attended across disciplines and from the community (March 26, 2025). Siekert outlined US policy and interests in the Middle East under the second Trump Administration, and potential challenges and breakthroughs.

Student Success Stories/Honors Theses

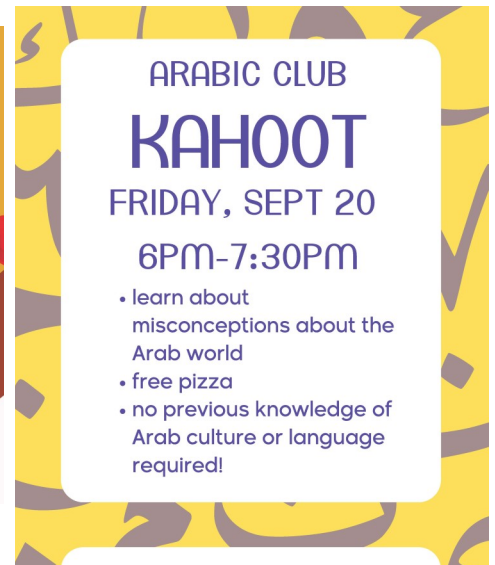
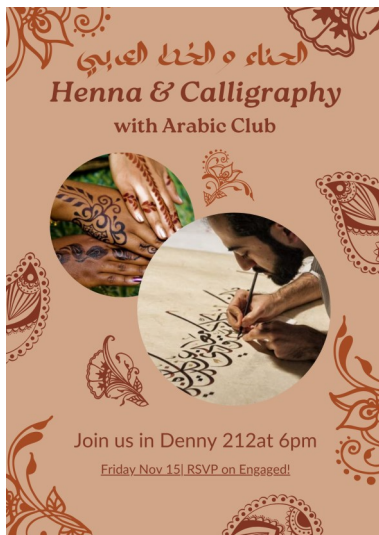
Cameron Nichols worked with Prof. David Commins on “Rentierism in Qatar and Saudi Arabia” and successfully defended his thesis in April 2025.



Alex Rojek worked with Prof. Magda Siekert and successfully defended his thesis: “Beyond Merit: Wasta and the Moral Economy of Access.”

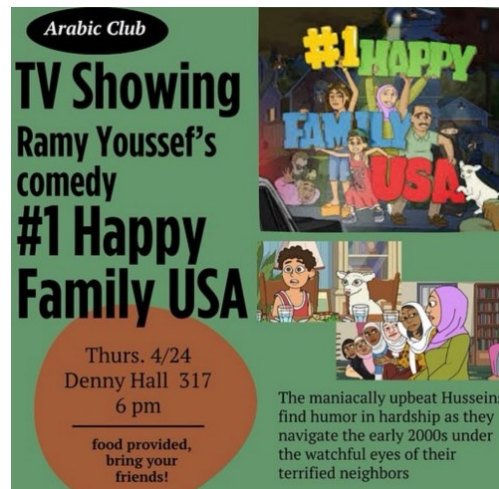


Arabic Activities Program (AAP) in collaboration with the Arabic Club (All events below are sponsored by MEST)





Arabic Club Activities Continued ...



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

