

# Arabic & Middle Eastern Studies Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 4  
May 2022



Welcome to the fourth edition of the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies monthly newsletter! We wish all students, staff, and faculty a strong finish to the semester and an excellent summer break. Recently, the program team attended the Project GO annual conference, received approval for an exciting grant, hosted the launch event for our Speaker Series, and is working on creating new opportunities for students for the Fall 2022 semester. Check out the contents of this newsletter for information on all this and more, and stay tuned for the summer edition of our newsletter, coming soon!

## Upcoming Events

### May 6th, Program Director Eric Nigh's Home, 6:30pm

*Final Semester Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies and MENA Cultural Club Event* - Come celebrate the end of the semester with us and enjoy lots of Middle East and North African food, music, student recognition, and a look back at this year's accomplishments. Email [mknepper@uwyo.edu](mailto:mknepper@uwyo.edu) to RSVP!

### May 13th, 5:00pm (Priority Deadline)

*Arabic and Middle East Studies Program Internships* - Deadline to apply for Fall 2022 internships with interviews to be held the week of 5/16.

### May 13th

*Final day of the Spring 2022 semester* - Register now for Fall 2022 courses!

### May 30th-June 2nd

*Project GO Pre-Departure Orientation* - ROTC students will be on the UW campus for four days of orientation activities before departing for Jordan to study Arabic.



## Fall 2022 SPPAIS Course Offerings!

Registration is upon us, and we know students are thinking about their Fall 2022 schedules. Consider these great courses for next semester!

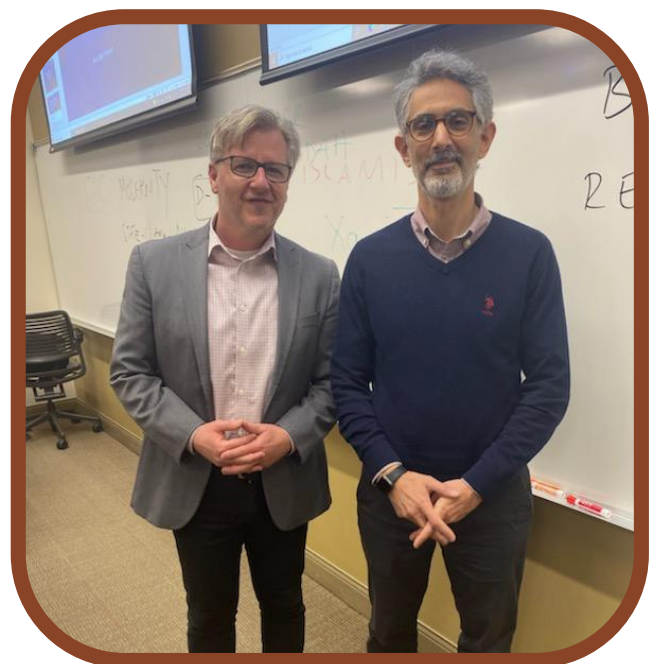
- RELI/HIST 2320 - History of Islam\*
- RELI/HIST/WMST 4335 - Women and Islam\*
- INST 4990 - ME Security Studies: Iran Expansionism\* - taught by visiting scholar Admiral Farkad Aboodi (Ret.) of the Iraqi Navy
- ART 3720 - Art & Architecture of Medieval and Contemporary Islam - contact Tracey Eckersley, [teckersl@uwyo.edu](mailto:teckersl@uwyo.edu), for permission
- INST 4990 - US Foreign Policy in the Middle East\*
- INST 4990 - Topics: Refugees and Forced Migration
- ENG 3200 - Topics in: Medieval Literature

\*Fulfills requirement for the Africa and Middle East Regional Track



# Myth & Reality: Islam & Democracy in the Middle East

The Arabic and Middle East Studies Program recently hosted the launch event for a new Speaker Series! Visiting scholars Dr. A. Kadir Yildirim of the Baker Institute at Rice University and Dr. Justin Curtis of Chadron State College engaged in three days of classroom visits and talks with students and professors on the subject *Myth & Reality: Islam & Democracy in the Middle East*. The scholars spoke in visiting scholar Dr. John Rees' classes, *Nationalism in Global Perspective* and *Religion in World Politics*, as well as *Government and Politics of the Middle East* and *Modern Middle East*. The culminating event was a panel discussion on the subject between the two scholars and the University of Wyoming's own Dr. Khaled Ksaibati, and moderated by School of Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies professor Dr. Nicholas Crane. The panel was followed by questions from the audience. After the event, the Muslim Student Association and Arabic & Middle East Studies Program hosted an Iftar dinner for those in attendance. This event was made possible by a Wyoming Humanities Council SPARK Grant with additional support from the Religious Studies Department and the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming. Special thanks, also, to the Muslim Student Association and SPPAIS. The Arabic and Middle East Studies Program is excited to be continuing this Speaker Series in the fall by hosting other academics, politicians, and media personalities.



## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Penelope Shihab



Born in Palestine and raised in Jordan, Dr. Penelope Shihab is now an accomplished scientist and entrepreneur. She was recently named director of the University of Wyoming's new Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI).

Penelope Shihab will lead the key component of the Wyoming Innovation Partnership (WIP) at UW. WIP is a collaboration among UW, the state's community colleges, the Wyoming Business Council, the Department of Workforce Services and other state agencies - endorsed by Gov. Mark Gordon - to develop innovative solutions that will support and enhance Wyoming's economy and workforce.

Shihab is the CEO and founder of Jordan Company for Antibody Production (MonoJo Biotech), a leading biotech company in the Arab region. The company was established in 2005 in Amman, Jordan and was selected by the World Economic Forum in 2019 as among the 100 Arab startups shaping the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Furthermore, out of these 100 startups, MonoJo Biotech was selected as one of the 10 startups that are helping to change the Arab world.

Dr. Shihab has been a dedicated partner to the Arabic & Middle Eastern Studies Program, actively speaking in related classes and sharing her cultural and political experiences with students. The program envisions her taking a more formal role as Deputy Director with the acceptance of a pending Department of Education initiative to establish an area studies center here at UW for MENA (Middle East & North Africa).

"I'm honored to be joining the Wyoming community and to contribute to and build on UW's excellence," Shihab says. "I hope to bring my diverse perspectives and experience to the university. It's an exciting time to be among the impressive students, faculty, and staff. I am also ready to help collaborate in exchanges between the university and Jordan as well as other Middle Eastern countries."

## Project GO Annual Conference

The University of Wyoming Project GO team recently attended the Project GO Annual Conference hosted by James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The conference consisted of team members from all 25 Project GO programs around the country. It was a great opportunity for University of Wyoming Project GO team members to work and connect with other institutions regarding best practices for outreach, recruiting, program development, and inter-program cooperation. Ultimately, the UW Project GO team was able to connect with these other programs to create a more robust program here at UW before sending ROTC cadets to Jordan this summer.



## Program Spotlight: STARTALK 2022-2023!

We are proud to announce that the Arabic and Middle East Studies Program has been awarded a STARTALK Grant from the U.S. National Security Agency for the 2022-2023 school year! This three-week, intensive, residential summer language program for high school and early college students aims to spark interest in, appreciation for, and enjoyment of Modern Standard Arabic while bringing students to a novice-mid level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Participants will spend the first week team-building through outdoor recreation activities at Table in the Wilderness conference center in Centennial, WY. The camp then moves to the University of Wyoming, where participants are housed in UW's residence halls and take meals at Washakie cafeteria. Classes are held onsite, with approved field trips off-site.

This grant also funds a full-time, benefitted professional staff member who will develop the program and recruit students around Wyoming and the region during the 2022-2023 academic year as well as faculty to teach online Arabic courses to high school students during the 2023-2024 academic year.

## Fall 2022 Course Highlight: Iranian Expansionism



Are you interested in security? Iran and Iranian politics? Consider taking Fall 2022 INST 4990/POLS 4710 on Middle East Security Studies: Iranian Expansionism, a new course on Iranian (Persian) history from the 15th century to today and the dynamics that led to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. It will also shed light on Iran's goals and strategies in

the regional and global arenas, including Iran's nuclear programs.

This course is being taught by visiting scholar Admiral Farkad Aboodi (ret.) of the Iraqi Navy. Admiral Aboodi saw operational service as a hovercraft pilot in the Iran-Iraq war and in the Gulf War of 1990-1991, both of which resulted in medals for bravery and service. Admiral Aboodi held many positions in the Iraqi Navy and Iraq Ministry of Defense including Defense Attaché and Head of Department until his retirement in October 2017.





*Apply Now:*  
*Arabic and Middle East Studies Program Fall 2022 Internship Program!*

**Priority Deadline: May 13th**

Open throughout the summer based on availability

Contact: [mknepper@uwyo.edu](mailto:mknepper@uwyo.edu)

Intern for the Arabic & Middle East Studies Program during Fall 2022! Join our team and earn 3 upper division INST or POLS credits, learn about the Middle East, and work on some of our many initiatives for students. Bring ideas because there will be lots of opportunities to work on your own initiatives as well! Hours are flexible and we will work with your school/work schedule.

### **Podcast Intern**

The Podcast Intern will be responsible for managing and producing our new Arabic & Middle East Studies podcast! You will be in charge of finding guests such as academics, politicians, or media personalities from around Wyoming and the world to interview on MENA culture, politics, history, or anything else related to the Arab world. You will also be in charge of editing, producing, and potentially hosting the podcast.

#### **Requirements**

- Expected 6 hours per week.
- Must listen to podcasts and be familiar with podcast styles.
- No familiarity with podcast production or Arabic language skills required.

### **Model Arab League Intern**

The Model Arab League Intern will work to recruit high school students from around the state and implement a high school Model Arab League conference in the fall. You will also coordinate with the STARTALK coordinator to promote the Arabic & Middle East Studies Program to prospective students around the state.

#### **Requirements**

- Expected 6 hours per week.
- Must have familiarity with Model Arab League or Model UN.
- No Arabic language skills required.

### **Program Intern**

The Program Intern will be responsible for assisting team members with a wide variety of responsibilities necessary to run the program. This could include anything from helping with website updates, grant writing, running photo or essay contests, writing the newsletter, helping with high school outreach, or bringing speakers to campus! There will also be opportunities to execute any projects or ideas that you have for the program.

#### **Requirements**

- Expected 6 hours per week.
- Must be flexible and able to work on a wide variety of tasks.
- Must be open to new ideas and projects.
- No Arabic language skills required.



**Scan the QR code or email  
[mknepper@uwyo.edu](mailto:mknepper@uwyo.edu) to apply!**

## *Introducing: 2022-2023 MENA Cultural Club Student Advisory Board!*

The Student Advisory Board is a new initiative of the Arabic and Middle East Studies Program's MENA Cultural Club. The following students will serve as the leadership for the club during the 2022-2023 school year. They will plan events for the club and serve as a liaison between the Arabic and Middle East Studies Program and students by obtaining feedback and advising the program on events that students would like to see. Meet the new members of the Advisory Board below!



### **Kaitlyn Polley**

Kaitlyn Polley is a sophomore from Cody, Wyoming studying Political Science with honors. Her interest in the Middle East was sparked by participating in Model Arab League. So far she has competed in two MAL Conferences; first in the Rocky Mountain MAL conference as a delegate from Bahrain and then at National University MAL in Washington DC as an advocate for Oman on the Arab Court of Justice. Kaitlyn's experiences with the Middle Eastern Studies program has further driven her to pursue law school, after which she hopes to practice in either immigration or international law.

### **Andrew Bishop**

Andrew Bishop is a sophomore majoring in International Studies with a focus on Africa and the Middle East. He is originally from Cheyenne, WY, and his interest in Arabic and the MENA region began when he attended the 2018 STARTALK Arabic camp at the University of Wyoming. During his time at UW, he wants to study abroad in a MENA country to experience the culture and language firsthand. As a member of the Student Advisory Board, he hopes to increase awareness of the MENA Cultural Club and associated programs like Model Arab League and Arabic on campus and for incoming students.







## Danny Deming

Danny Deming is a sophomore here at UW and is majoring in political science and international studies. He has participated in both Model Arab League and Model United Nations, winning awards at the regional and national conferences. He hopes to enter into the fields of international law or development.

## Paden Knull

Paden Knull is a third-year transfer student from Alberta, Canada, where he spent two years studying as a double major in Political Science and Physics, with an emphasis on International Relations and Canadian Foreign Policy at the University of Lethbridge, before transferring to the University of Wyoming to continue his double major in Political Science and Petroleum Engineering. Paden comes from a ranching and agricultural background, having grown up on a farm in the middle of the Canadian Prairies, but has a focus on the international realm with his studies. Outside of his academics, Paden holds two Canadian pilot licenses and is an amateur Canadian history buff. Since arriving at UWyo, Paden has taken up great interest in US Foreign Policy and governance, with special interest revolving around the MENA region. After graduation Paden hopes to return to Canada with the goal of serving in Parliament to apply his skills and teachings from his time in Poli Sci.





## Morgan Miller

Morgan Miller is a junior from upstate New York majoring in International Studies with a concentration in Governance and Conflict Resolution in the Middle East. In her studies thus far at UW, she has taken classes including Modern Middle East, Middle East and Israel in Film, U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East, as well as courses in the Arabic and Hebrew languages. This past spring Morgan participated in the Rocky Mountain Regional Model Arab League conference representing Bahrain on the Joint Defense Council and in the National University Model Arab League conference representing the Syrian National Coalition on the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers. Morgan looks forward to helping bring a taste of Middle Eastern culture to the UW campus next year with the MENA Cultural Club!

## Presley Bloom

Presley Bloom is currently a sophomore at the University of Wyoming. He is currently pursuing a double major in International Studies and Environmental Science. His interest in the Middle East came after his first experience in MAL this past year. Prior to this experience, he had a focus on Latin America and Spanish, but he is now looking to the Arabic and Middle East Studies Program to pursue his new interests. He is excited for this opportunity and what the program can do.





## *An Afternoon in Morocco: High School Outreach*

The Arabic and Middle East Studies Program recently collaborated with the Cheyenne Central High School International Club, and students experienced some of the best aspects of Moroccan culture firsthand. High School Outreach Coordinator Michael Newman and Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Ayoub Nachat of Morocco prepared authentic couscous and mint tea for students. The goal of the event was exposure to Moroccan cuisine, music, and culture for high school students in order to pique interest in the University of Wyoming and the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies Program. Special thanks to CHS teacher Sarah Evans for her assistance with this event.



We also recently participated in Laramie High School's



International Night. We presented a decorative booth highlighting aspects of Middle East and North African culture and promoted the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies program to future students.

Our own Ayoub Nachat, a Moroccan native, provided his own presentation reciting the first verse of the Qur'an sung in Arabic.

Both events contribute to the program's broader goals of outreach to prospective students and collaboration with Wyoming high schools. We shared many opportunities with students including study abroad, Model Arab League, Arabic classes, scholarships, and foreign connections across the globe.

## *Contact Us!*

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