

2022

# spotlight







## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Director's Note
- 4 Faculty Profiles
- 6 Featured Affiliates
- 7 Student Updates
- 8 Events Highlights
- 10 Student Field Notes
- 11 Gift & Support

### Photo credits

The cover photo, "Citadel" was taken in Cairo, Egypt, by Halima Ibrahim, '24, art history major and Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies affiliate.

Above: Interior of Ayasofya Hagia Sophia Istanbul Constantinople Christian patriarchal basilica, by Raimond Klavins, Unsplash.


## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION


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*Director*


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*Program Coordinator*


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# DIRECTOR'S LETTER



## **Lisa Blaydes**

*Director of the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies, Professor of Political Science, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies*

Dear Friends,

The world is undergoing fast changes and Muslim-majority societies are among the most vulnerable in our new and uncertain post-pandemic reality. To honor the fortitude of Muslim communities worldwide, this year, we chose to focus on the themes that bind and unite, and renew our hope for connection, collective memory, and heritage preservation. Our '21-'22 academic theme of "Memory, Heritage and Cultural Production" inspired our brilliant Abbasi faculty affiliates to organize colloquia and seminars along the same theme. Professor Samer Al-Saber taught a new course entitled "Introduction to Arab Studies" with a focus on memory and cultural production.

Professor Nora Barakat of the History Department, along with Professor Trinidad Ricco (Abbasi Affiliate Visiting Scholar, Director of Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies, Rutgers University) brought together three stellar events and successfully launched The Forum for Interdisciplinary Gulf Heritage Studies at Stanford (FIGHS). Bringing Gulf heritage experts to Stanford such as Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi, FIGHS critically engages the politics of making and mobilizing heritage in the Gulf in the context that confront the legacies of colonialism characteristic of heritage preservation traditions.

At the Abbasi Program, we are always looking for ways to increase our student engagement and inspire a different and unique perspective on Islam and Muslim intellectual production on the Stanford campus. Our stellar inaugural Abbasi-Markaz fellow (who also happens to be a minors student in Islamic Studies) Yusuf Zahurullah organized three successful events, ranging from "the Islamic Golden Age and Silicon Valley" with Professor Asad Ahmed (UC Berkeley) to the breadth of Black Muslim art with Professor Su'ad Abdul Khabeer (University of Michigan).

Continuing the theme of connectivity, we have already begun working with the new AY '22-'23 theme of "Oceanic Imaginaries", as oceans are timeless representations of expanse, exchange, ecology and connectivity. We are pleased to partner with our umbrella division, Stanford Global Studies, to feature courses, exhibits, and performances that engage with the cultures, geographies, and histories of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean world.

We hope you will continue to support the Abbasi Program and stay connected, this year and beyond. Thank you for your partnership. Here is to a more prosperous future for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read "Lisa Blaydes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lisa Blaydes



# FACULTY PROFILES



**Professor Alexander Key,  
Associate Professor of Arabic  
and Comparative Literature**

**Tell us about your current research/  
what excites you in Islamic Studies  
right now.**

Hello! I think of myself as a philologist: someone who studies (and cares about!) words and what they mean, whether these are words in poems or words that make up theories about how the world is and should be. Islamic Studies is in an interesting place at the moment: on the one hand scholars are now finally producing overlapping research on the vast diversity that was always present in the Islamic archive – recent work on Africa (including that of my interviewer Farah El-Sharif) is a good example. On the other hand, we still have not made even the most basic sources readily available to people who do not read the languages in which they were written (the “Classical”

Arabic works that “postclassical” African scholars read and engaged with remain untranslated, for example). But this work is slowly getting done, and I think we will see the benefits across academia in a decade or so. I think particularly of the Library of Arabic Literature series from NYU Abu Dhabi, and projects like Alan Williams’s translation of the Masnavi into blank verse.

**How did your interest in Islamic  
Studies begin and how would you  
define your approach to it?**

It’s funny, I never thought of myself as an Islamic Studies specialist during undergraduate or after graduation, even though the Arabic part of my Arabic and International Relations degree included Quranic studies and Classical Arabic literature, and even though I then ended up working in human rights and writing on questions of Muslim access to political and civic rights in Palestine and Israel. It was only when my Ph.D. at Harvard taught “Arabic and Islamic Studies” as a pairing that I started to think of myself as taking part in a field with that label. Now I work in Comparative Literature, which is a discipline both radically open to all forms of human literary and cultural endeavor, and at the same time somewhat behind the curve when it comes to taking advantage of the conceptual resources available in Islamic literature, history, and culture. As a philologist – someone who works closely with words – I find myself in the position of trying to advertise the advantages of Islamic Studies to my colleagues in Comparative Literature.

**What are some of the aspects you  
wish more people knew about your  
work?**

I just published an article on Neoplatonic poetics that deals with al-Hallaj and the Bay Area poet Robert Duncan, among others.

**What is your favorite course to  
teach at Stanford?**

At the moment, I am having a lot of fun co-teaching a course on Islamic science with my colleague in Classics Reviel Netz – we are tackling the way astronomy, mathematics, and linguistics developed in Islamic societies from the eighth century onwards. It is also always a privilege to teach the Comparative Literature Capstone Seminar; the department has a great group of majors in senior year who are working on all kinds of different topics. This quarter, I have been introducing them to Classical Arabic poetics and the way scholars like ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani can help us read poems in English today.

**What advice would you offer to  
students wanting to pursue Arabic  
and the study of Arabic texts?**

Early and often! Arabic is a massively rewarding language that offers access to vast untapped resources for contemporary thought, politics, history, and much more. Arabic does take several years to learn, but college is the best time to do that, and the Abbasi Program offers summer funding that can enable students to get a head start on their Stanford Language Center courses for the next year.

## Professor Marie Huber, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature

### Tell us about your current research trajectory and what questions excite you the most.

Over the past couple of years I have been drawn more and more to questions of poetic performance and the interconnections of poetry and song. In some ways, one could say that I am returning to my professional roots as a musician.

I'll be on Junior Leave in 2022-23 and hope to spend the year working on a monograph with the provisional title *Infinite Events: Poetry, Music, and Spiritual Practice in the Shadow of Sheykh Ahmad-e Jam*. My project sets out to trace how poems are performed to music and understood as part of the spiritual practice of the Mojaddedi Naqshbandi Sufi order centred around the shrine of Sheykh Ahmad-e Jām (1048-1141) in Torbat-e Jām, Khorāsān, Iran. The practice of the Sufi bards defies the modern notion that poetic texts can be separated from the matrix uniting poet, singer, and audience in a ritual of performance where poem, music, and ethics become an indivisible whole. Music here is an essential and formative element of a performance that is at once poetic and spiritual; it also creates an event on which the temporal relation of disciple and guide can be founded.

### In what ways does your work on Persian poetics intersect with the field of Islamic Studies?

This is one of the questions that I will be addressing in my new book. The literary – to use a modern concept – aspects of the poems sung by the dotāri bards cannot be divorced from the Islamic ethics on which their performative practice is founded.

Your 2016 book, *In Memories of an Impossible Future: Mehdi Akhavan Sāles and the Poetics of Time* you trace the quest for a modern language of poetry through different figurations of temporality. What was your favorite aspect while working on this book?

The luxury of spending two years reading and thinking about a poet whose work I believe to be outstanding. It takes patience and the ability to sit in silence before a poem begins to open up, so time is the most



precious resource for a scholar working on poetry. I am infinitely grateful for those silent spaces of suspended time from which my book could emerge.

### What courses are you teaching in Spring '22?

I am teaching two courses that I feel quite passionate about. One is “Songs of Love and Longing,” which will take students on a musical and poetic journey from the Balkans to South Asia. The other course is “Persian Poetry: Text, Space and Image;” I am co-teaching with Ala Ebtekar, which for me is a dream come true. I admire Ala’s work and am excited to see how we can talk about poems from a millennial tradition in ways that combine the lived approach of art with the analytical retrospection of scholarly research.

### What do you wish more people knew about your work?

I hope that my work can lead people to the poems – and singers – I write about.



# FEATURED AFFILIATES



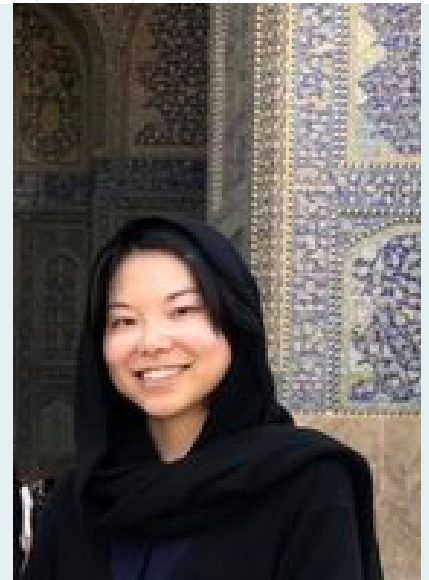
## Toby Matthiesen

Toby Matthiesen is a Visiting Fellow at the Abbasi Program for the Spring of 2022. While at Stanford, Dr Matthiesen will primarily be working with the Baath Party of Iraq archives at the Hoover Institution for a project on *Sunni-Shii Relations in the Middle East*. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 888063.

Dr Matthiesen is a Marie Curie Global Fellow at Ca' Foscari University and Stanford University and is the author of *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring That Wasn't* (Stanford University Press, 2013), and *The Other Saudis: Shiism, Dissent and Sectarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). He is also a frequent commentator in the media and has held fellowships at Oxford, Cambridge, and the LSE.

## Dr. Tomoyo Chisaka

Dr. Tomoyo is Tomoyo a Visiting Scholar to the Abbasi Program from Japan this academic year. She is currently affiliated with the University of Tokyo as a JSPS postdoctoral fellow. Her research examines elections under authoritarian regimes, particularly Iran. She received degrees from Osaka University (B.A.in Persian, M.A.and Ph.D. in International Public Policy). She has done a one-year fieldwork in Iran as a visiting student at the University of Tehran to complete her Ph.D. research on Iran's election management body. While at Stanford, her faculty sponsor will be Professor Blaydes and she will be a part of the communities of the Abbasi Program and the Hamid and Christina Moghadam Program in Iranian Studies. She plans to develop her paper on managing post-election protests in authoritarian regimes and will consult the archives at Hoover institute and Stanford libraries.





## Aya Hilal


Aya is the undergraduate Abbasi-Markaz fellow and Moroccan-American Stanford student from Tinley Park, Illinois. Her major is currently undeclared, but she's "passionate about social justice, anti-imperialism in the Islamic world, biology, writing, and healthcare in marginalized communities, especially the Muslim American community." Aya will organize three events this year, so stay tuned for Abbasi-Markaz Fellowship announcements.

# STUDENT UPDATES

The Abbasi Program Supported 7 students pursuing their summer research, fieldwork, language study, or internship placements over the summer of 2022.

 Internships

 Language Study

 Research or Fieldwork

**Emre Can Daglioglu**  
*Graduate History*  
Ph.D. Research, Istanbul,  
Turkey



**Nina Silvia Iskandarsjach**  
*Undergraduate International Relations*  
Arabic Study at Sijal Institute,  
Amman, Jordan



**Hannah Yuh Watkins**  
*Undergraduate Engineering*  
Mawa Modular Internship,  
Amman, Jordan



**Feyaad Allie**  
*Ph.D. Political Science*  
Ph.D Research, India



**Callum Alexander James Tresman**  
*Undergraduate Comparative Literature*  
Arabic Study at Sijal Institute, Amman, Jordan



**Mahmoud Hamdi**  
UNHCR Internship,  
Amman, Jordan



**Dwight Miners Knighty**  
*Master of Art Student in International Policy*  
Arabic Study at Qasid Institute, Amman, Jordan

# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## Contextualizing the Current Crisis in Afghanistan

September 2, 2021

Zohra Saed, Halima Kazem-Stojanovic, Ahmad Rashid Salim  
Moderated by Mejgan Massoumi

## Religion as the Site of Non-State Politics: Islam, Caste, and the Limits of Secularism in India

January 11, 2022

Shaunna Rodrigues, Shantanu Nevrekar, Shubhangni Gupta



## In Conversation: Artist Ambreen Butt and Curator Elizabeth Mitchell

January 12, 2022

## The Case Against White Feminism

January 25, 2022

Rafia Zakaria, Usha Iyer



## Love in the Islamic Tradition from Islam in Africa

February 14, 2022

Bilal "Butch" Ware



## Black Ink: Exploring the Breadth of Black Muslim Art

February 24,

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer



## The Social Fingerprint: Personal Identification, Social Relationality and Anxieties of Co-existence at the Kurdish-Iraqi Borderlands

March 4, 2022

Kerem Ussakli

## Support Incarcerated Muslims

Workshop on Imam Jamal al-Amin. Imam Jamil al-Amin (aka H. Rap Brown) is a Muslim elder and former Civil Rights Leader.

March 5, 2022

## What is the value of the Persianate to Afghanistan Studies

March 11, 2022



## Rethinking Modern Sunni- Shii Relations: The State, Revolution, and Foreign Intervention

March 15, 2022

Toby Matthiesen



## Towards a People- Centered Recovery of Post-blast Beirut, Lebanon

March 31st 2022

Howayda Al-Harithy

## "What's Secular About Religious Law? Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Perspectives."

March 31st 2022



## Marketing Democracy: The Political Economy of Democracy Aid in the Middle East

April 19th 2022

Erin A. Snider



## REFRAMING ENSLAVED PASTS SERIES (part of Stanford Global Studies Research Workshops Program)

April 28, 2022

## Ensuring a Trauma-Informed Approach to Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL in Iraq

April 28, 2022

Daryn Reicherter, Nenna Ndukwe



## You Have Not Yet Been Defeated: A Conversation with Sanaa Seif and Sharif Abdel Kouddous about Human Rights in Egypt

May 11, 2022

Sanaa Seif





**Cast(e) Away: Conversation and Recognition in Pasmanda Muslim Politics ( 1947-2009)**

May 12, 2022

Sanober Umar



**Book Talk with Professor Khaled Abou El-Fadl: The Prophet's Pulpit: Commentaries on the State of Islam**

June 16, 2022

Khaled Abou El Fadl



**Untapped History: Islam in Eastern Europe with Ermin Sinanović**

June 22, 2022

Ermin Sinanović



**Surveillance, Cartography and Repressed Memory**

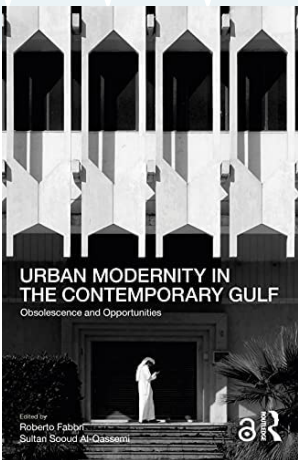
May 6, 2022

Salim Tamari

Salim Tamari was a Visiting Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center this Spring Quarter. He is an Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) senior fellow and the former director of the IPS-affiliated Institute of Jerusalem Studies. He is the editor of Jerusalem Quarterly and Hawliyyat al Quds. He is professor of sociology at Birzeit University and an adjunct professor at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University. He has authored several works on urban culture, political sociology, biography and social history, and the social history of the Eastern Mediterranean. Tamari was nominated by the Department of Theater and Performance Studies.

**SGS Summer Film Festival: Dune Film and Book Discussion with Haris Durrani**

August 17, 2022



**FIGHS Event Series: Stanford University, Spring 2022: Part 1: Mapping Gulf Spaces: Postcolonial Approaches to Textual Heritage**

April 12, 2022

Nora Elizabeth Barakat (Stanford), Mohammed Khalil

**FIGHS Event Series, Part 2: Urban Modernity in the Contemporary Gulf**

May 3, 2022

**FIGHS Events Series, Part 3: Writing and Publishing Gulf History and Heritage**

May 17, 2022



**The Stanford Ottoman Music Ensemble (Music 161F/Z): Spring Concert**

June 4, 2022

Master-musician Necati Çelik (ne-JAH-tee CHEY-lik) was the Roberta Bowman Denning visiting artist in residency at the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies at Stanford University and Spring 2022 lecturer in the Department of Music. Çelik is one of the most important representatives of Ottoman musical traditions and an undisputed master of the ud, or fretless lute. Regarded unanimously as a virtuoso of this era, he is an unparalleled improviser and interpreter of Turkish classical music.

**An Evening of Turkish Classical Music with Necati Celik**

May 14, 2022

Necati Celik

**The Stanford Ottoman Music Ensemble (Music 161F/Z): Spring Concert**

June 4, 2022

Necati Çelik

# STUDENTS FIELD NOTES

**Feyaad Allie** traveled to India in the summer '22 on Abbasi Program Grant to research Muslim marginalization in India. Allie's dissertation, titled "Power, Exclusion, and Identity: The Politics of Muslim Marginalization in India," is broken into several chapters. One of his findings is that when Indian Muslims do secure seats in government, they are actually less likely to win reelection. Allie theorizes that Muslims in India experience a "representation trap" in which the dominant group works to consolidate its power and the marginalized group splits into factions. In the case of Indian Muslims, Allie's research suggests the Muslim community splits along caste lines when there are multiple Muslim candidates, reducing their power as a political bloc.



**Hannah Yuh Watkins** is an undergraduate Stanford student majoring in Mechanical Engineering. She spent two weeks in Jordan this past summer to continue working with Mawa Modular, a company that builds modular, sustainable

housing for refugees in Jordan. This trip allowed Hannah to assist in the project. Hannah also participated in efforts to make significant modifications to the design of the housing structures. After her successful internship at Mawa Modular, Hannah was able to bring back samples of the wall and roof to support a Stanford mechanical engineering capstone project that will be going to Jordan in the winter.

Despite growing up in Abu Dhabi, Hannah never got a chance to immerse herself in Arabic. While the goal of the trip was not for language immersion, Hannah said that "this trip was a way of weaving

personality and culture into the words I spoke. When I went back to Abu Dhabi, I found expressions coming out instinctively. This comfort with the language is something I would not have achieved without this trip."

Hannah reflects fondly on the trip's highlights: how she was able to spend time with her family, coordinate visits with them to Petra and Wadi Rum, enjoy the delicious food, and develop a project to provide dignified housing to refugees in Jordan. Hannah expressed her gratitude to the Abbasi Program "for unlocking such an enriching experience."

## **Emre Can Daglioglu: The Archival Research Report in Istanbul**

The Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies supported Ph.D. Candidate Emre Can Daglioglu's visit to the Ottoman Archives and the SALT Archives in Istanbul. Three bodies of collections housed in the archives—the Commerce, Public Works, Forestry, Mining (CPWFMM) Ministry collections, the Agriculture Ministry collections, and the *Arzuhal*, *Bab-i Ali Evrak Odasi* and *Dahiliye İdare* collections—were of particular importance for his research on how imperial experts and technocrats of the PDA contested to play a role in scientific decision-making regarding silk production.

In his own words, upon his return back to Stanford, Emre said that: "I am very grateful to the Abbasi Program for helping to finance this research. I believe that this sponsorship added to the outreach of Abbasi as a platform addressing the importance of thinking about a global history that bridges various human and non-human actors. This project also paved new ways of collaboration with a new institutional partner to advance research in a not-of-ten visited repository of under examined collections."



# GIFTS & SUPPORT

We at the Abbasi Program express our gratitude to our alumni, parents, students, and friends for their support of our activities at Stanford.

Your gift enhances genuine understanding of the histories, cultures, and languages of Islam and Muslims societies by:

- Equipping the next generation of leaders with rigorous knowledge through courses, seminars, and research or internship opportunities.
- Supporting innovative faculty research and scholarship.
- Deepening our public and K-12 outreach efforts.

Your generosity ensures that knowledge of Islam and Muslim societies is an integral part of the future of America and the globe.

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