

# USC DORNSIFE DEPARTMENT *of* MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

## SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

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FACULTY UPDATES, EVENTS, AND MUCH MORE





# CONTENTS

- 03 LETTER FROM THE CHAIR
- 05 NEW FACULTY
- 06 THE YEAR'S EVENTS
- 15 GRADUATING STUDENTS
- 16 LOOKING AHEAD

## USC DORNSIFE

Department of  
Middle East Studies

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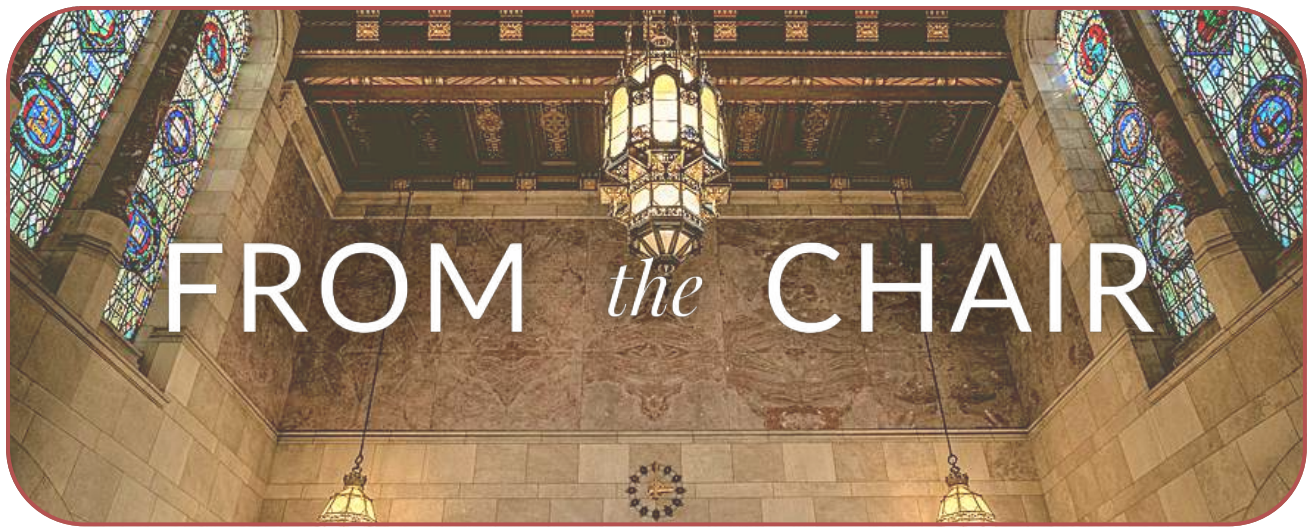
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### **Are Flying Carpets Real? \***

In 2022-23, Middle East Studies (MDES) students have yet again excelled academically. Our graduates are again among the best. Congratulations! In addition, faculty colleagues were recognized for their innovative research and outstanding teaching. Yes, and our staff did so well in such a short time that they have already reached the level of being sorely missed. Bravo James! On occasion, I'm reminded of just how special our department truly is.

That's what happened to me a few weeks ago when an alumna/parent confided in me that she was "pleasantly surprised" to see that at a relatively late hour of the day she saw a student completely absorbed in her Persian homework while another was working with one of our Arabic professors to sound out difficult Arabic words. Too much?

Ok then, how about this last year we added an Iranian Studies track to our major! This makes us one of the few programs in the country that offer an integrated curriculum focusing on Iran. The combination of serious language study and a broad interdisciplinary training will now offer interested students an opportunity to learn about the contributions of a rich culture that face serious contemporary challenges like climate change, mass migrations, and economic upheavals. Iranian Studies track graduates will be sophisticated thinkers and engaged actors in a world in constant flux.

And with the pandemic switching gears, our students are now able to travel again. This summer, some will study in Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt, and checking out the local flying-carpet markets, while a few others will be "suffering" in France, Germany, and Middlebury, VT. Imagine having to learn things when friends are enjoying the time of their life on Instagram. Summer language study is one of the most identifiable features of our program and almost everyone does it at some point.



Thanks to those generous alumni and parents who pitched in this past year, more will get a shot at it. This means that our students will be even better. The envious eyes of enemies be blinded!

One last thing before I let you review the year's exciting happenings. As I was drafting this letter, I received an email about a software package that will help professors tell whether a paper was written by a person or generated by AI. According to the software, the likelihood that the words you just read were written by AI is 93 %. Not sure why I didn't get 100% but I promise to try harder next year!

**\* Question from a student in MDES 201 (Fall 2022).**

-Ramzi Rouighi  
Department Chair



If you would like to give a gift or make a pledge to USC on behalf of the Department of Middle East Studies, please scan the QR code



# MEET THE NEW FACULTY

Freshly minted with a Ph.D. from UCLA, the department welcomed Brady Ryan as a Lecturer of Arabic in Fall 2022!

1. What do you enjoy the most about your work/research?

Witnessing how the experience of learning Arabic shapes my students' sense of their own potential is a joy and point of pride for me. Learning Arabic is a huge ambition, challenging but very rewarding. As an Arabic teacher, there is nothing more fulfilling than watching how my students are transformed when they prove to themselves that they can achieve this huge ambition.

I especially like when former students tell me how they have gone on to use Arabic in their lives: having meaningful conversation with overseas family for the first time, conducting advanced linguistics research in Egypt, or working with Syrian refugees. In all of these cases, Arabic enriched my students' lives and opened doors. A teacher can't ask for more than that!



*Brady Ryan, Ph.D.*

2. Why study Arabic? And what do you hope to impart on our students?

Advanced Arabic skills open up exciting career opportunities. I see Arabic graduates successfully combining their language skills with another field of expertise (law, linguistics, journalism, business, etc.) to land fulfilling and well-paying jobs in government, international law, refugee services, think tanks, NGOs, international business, and tech companies. Arabic also opens doors to a diverse and dynamic cultural sphere.

Over 400 million people from over 20 countries speak Arabic. Arabic is your key to a wealth of music and film, international travel and friendships. Yes, learning Arabic requires commitment. But no other language opens up the same range of professional and cultural opportunities.



# DEPARTMENT *Happenings*




We kicked off the year with senior leadership of Dornsife and the Farhang Foundation to celebrate the installation of the new Junior Chair in Iranian Studies, Ciruce A. Movahedi-Lankarani. Congratulations!



MDES welcomed Professor Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet of the University of Pennsylvania to deliver our annual Farhang Distinguished Lecture on October 10th, 2022

Iranian Studies Initiative Annual Distinguished Lecture Series



**BANNING AND BELONGING:  
IRANIANS OF THE SOUTHERN  
PERSIAN GULF COAST**


A LECTURE BY  
PROFESSOR  
**FIROOZEH KASHANI-SABET,**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
PENNSYLVANIA

**OCTOBER 10TH, 2022**  
4:00 – 6:00pm PST

Doheny Memorial Library  
DML 240

3550 Trousdale Pkwy  
Los Angeles, CA 90089

For virtual viewing, RSVP @  
[bit.ly/FARHANGFDN](https://bit.ly/FARHANGFDN)



**FARHANG  
FOUNDATION**

**USCDornsife**  
Dana and David Dornsife  
College of Letters, Arts and Sciences  
Department of Middle East Studies

For more information, check out <https://dornsife.usc.edu/mdes/>





## DEPARTMENT *Happenings*



In early October, we hosted a roundtable discussion on the protests in Iran. Students and faculty were present, with Prof. Sarah Gualtieri leading it.






With Prof. Emerita Laurie Brand moderating, the department hosted two virtual presentations, featuring Prof. Jillian Schwedler (right) and Prof. Ruken Sengul (below)


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Book Conversations with  
Professor Laurie Brand

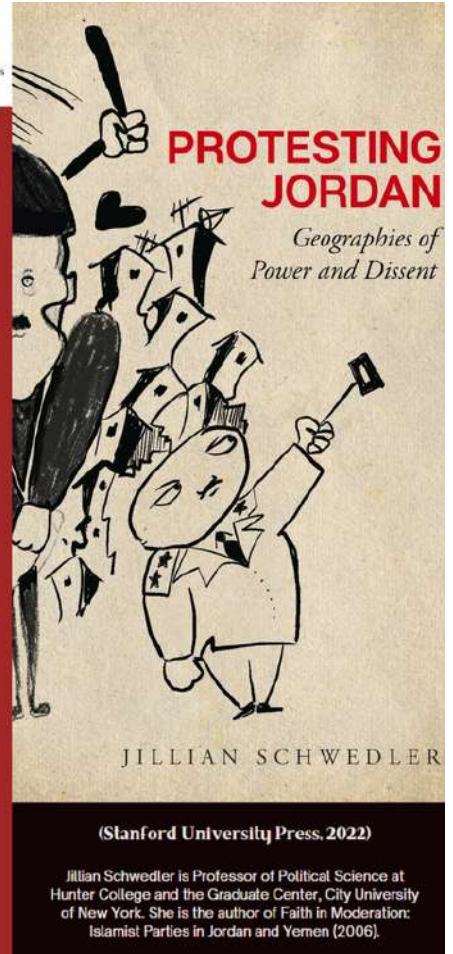


GUEST SPEAKER  
**PROF. JILLIAN SCHWEDLER**  
(Hunter College)

OCTOBER 24TH, 2022  
12:00-1:00pm PST



For virtual viewing, RSVP @  
[bit.ly/PROTESTINGJORDAN](https://bit.ly/PROTESTINGJORDAN)



(Stanford University Press, 2022)

Jillian Schwedler is Professor of Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She is the author of *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (2006).



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*Department of Middle East Studies*

**"A METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE ZONE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE"**




**PROF. RÜKEN ŞENGÜL**  
Fellow, MESA Global Academy

DISCUSSANTS: PROFS. ASLI BALI (YALE)  
SHERENE RAZACK (UCLA)  
ANOUSH SUNI (NORTHWESTERN)


MODERATOR: PROF. LAURIE BRAND (USC)

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4:00-5:30PM (PST) TUESDAY  
**NOVEMBER 15, 2022**



REGISTER:  
[BIT.LY/MESAGLOBAL22](https://bit.ly/MESAGLOBAL22)



FOR MORE INFO, VISIT: [DORNSIFE.USC.EDU/MDE](https://dornsife.usc.edu/mde)

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 **UCLA CENTER FOR  
NEAR EASTERN STUDIES**

**2022 MESA GLOBAL ACADEMY**

IMAGE: CIRCUMCISION FEAST AT THE OTTOMAN IMPERIAL COURT, SURNAME-I VEHBİ (1720)

Our students, Anthony Khoory and Faatima Abdul-Aziz, won the Best Acting awards for their short film, "Empty," at USC's 2022 Multilingual Student Film Festival hosted by the Center for Languages and Cultures.





## DEPARTMENT *Happenings*



Our annual holiday party! We celebrated John Klopotoski as the winner of the Mohamed El Beih paper prize. Congratulations!



## DEPARTMENT *Happenings*



Jumped into 2023 with two gatherings! Above, we invited MDES alumnus Gabrielle Aoki. Below, guest speaker Prof. Michael Gasper of Occidental College.





## DEPARTMENT *Happenings*

With spring comes...Dornsife Language Day!  
Our very own Suzanne Wali, Peyman Nojournian, and  
Brady Ryan represented MDES.





## Nowruz Celebration!





For our Spring Seminar, Prof. Danya Al-Saleh (UW) presented, "Frontiers and Fossil Fuels: A Texas Land-Grant University in Qatar"





# SUPPORT THE FUTURE *of* MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

## GIVE TODAY!



Donors play a critical role in sustaining and enhancing the teaching and research mission of Middle East Studies. The Department uses all support towards the following initiatives:

- Travel grants for undergraduates conducting research for their senior thesis projects
- Summer grants for student research (travel or language study)
- Annual prizes for best undergraduate thesis and/or language achievement
- Work-study positions within the Department
- Faculty support for conference and research

To support the Department of Middle East Studies, please donate online by scanning the QR code below or email [uscadvance@usc.edu](mailto:uscadvance@usc.edu) with "MDES DORNSIFE" in the subject header

