It is two years since we published our “annual” newsletter! Last year, we were simply too busy to write one—but for good reasons! Last summer we applied for both a $26,500 grant from the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center in Washington and a two-year $216,801 grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Title VIa/Undergraduate International Education and Foreign Language (UISFL) program. I am delighted to say that both applications were successful.

The grant from the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center provides funds for a conference and teachers’ workshop on Indian Ocean history and networks, to be held in October 2014; $5,000 for library books on Oman and Ibadism, to make the University collection one of the best in North America on this subject; and $7,000 for a new interdisciplinary, team-taught undergraduate course on Muslim cultures and societies. I traveled to the Sultanate of Oman in January to purchase the first installment of books for the Sultan Qaboos collection, and shipped home some 272 volumes—at a drastically reduced cost, thanks to the American Embassy in Muscat!

The UISFL grant enabled us to seed two new instructor positions: an Assistant Professor of Arabic studies in the Program of Comparative and World Literature (CWL) and a Persian Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics. The search for the Assistant Professor of Arabic studies will take place this year, but in the meantime we are thrilled to have Hala Nassar as Visiting Assistant Professor of Arabic language and literature in CWL. Aazam Feizmohammadpour is our new Persian Lecturer. These new positions are vital to Middle Eastern studies on our campus.

Study abroad and language study are important components of international studies. The UISFL grant enabled us to offer grants to faculty for the creation of new study abroad courses in South Asia and the Middle East. Last November we awarded one grant to Ken Salo and Faranak Miraftab for a course on global IT projects and urbanization in Bangalore, India, and another to Stefanos Katsikas for a course on Hellenism in the eastern Mediterranean. There will be another competition for study abroad course development grants this fall. From 2011-2013, our faculty have led or plan to lead study abroad courses in Cyprus, Egypt, India, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and Turkey! The UISFL grant also provides $1,000 undergraduate scholarships for study abroad or intensive summer language study. We awarded seven scholarships last year, and look forward to awarding another five this year.

The grant also funded a team-taught, interdisciplinary undergraduate course on the Arab Spring, which is taught through the ARAB/SAME 150 rubric (Language and Culture of the Arab World). Some 76 students enrolled in the
Best Wishes to Emeriti Faculty

Two distinguished and much-loved professors with deep involvement in CSAMES retired since the printing of the last edition of Akhbar: Rajeshwari Pandharipande, Professor of Religion and Linguistics, in May 2011, and Rajmohan Gandhi, Research Professor in CSAMES and Academic Director of Global Crossroads Living-Learning Community, in December 2012.

CSAMES extends its best wishes to them both.

Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande has just returned from India, where she was Visiting Professor at the Center for Advanced Study and at the Center for Sanskrit Studies at JNU, Delhi, for her research on ancient and modern commentaries on Sanskrit texts.

Rajmohan Gandhi is greatly enjoying retirement, while managing to see campus friends from time to time and continuing to write, taking advantage of the wonderful U of I library. His book, Punjab: A History from Aurangzeb to Mountbatten (New Delhi: Aleph), is due to come out in September 2013. He expects to be in India September 2013-June 2014. He remarks, “May remarkable CSAMES keep growing.”
Welcome, New Faculty!

**Tariq O. Ali**, Assistant Professor History, completed his dissertation titled "The Envelope of Global Trade: Political Economy and Intellectual History of Jute in the Bengal Delta, the 1850s to the 1950s" at Harvard University in August 2012. In his dissertation and current manuscript project, Tariq explores how the Bengal delta's integration into global circuits of commodity and capital shaped very local economic, political and intellectual histories; how economic lives, social and cultural formations, and political processes in the delta were informed and influenced by the cultivation and trade of jute. Alongside his work on jute in east Bengal during the colonial period, Tariq is also working on the history of rural development in post-colonial Pakistan. He is interested in how the discourse and practice of rural development and agrarian modernization informed processes of nation and state formation in post-colonial East Pakistan between 1947 and 1971. Tariq teaches courses on South Asian history, agrarian and peasant histories, and histories of capitalism and commodities.

**Andrew Bauer** is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology who joined the faculty at Illinois in August 2012. He is an archaeologist whose research focuses on human -environment interactions, considered broadly to include the socio-politics of land use and symbolic and material aspects of landscape production. Andrew has previously conducted fieldwork in Turkey, Iran and the United States, but his primary field research is based in South India, where he co-directs a project investigating the relationships between landscape history and emergent social inequalities during the region’s Iron Age and Early Historic periods. As an extension of his archaeological work, he has also started an archival project that investigates the intellectual milieu of colonial geology in India that structured, and in many ways continues to structure, understandings of environmental processes in the region without considering the long-term effects of people.

**Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz** is Assistant Professor of Hinduism in the Department of Religion. She earned her PhD in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago in 2010, and then joined the Department of Religion at Rutgers University as an ACLS New Faculty Fellow. Her areas of research include the comparative study of Hindu religious identity, practice, and literature from the medieval period to the present day, Hindu goddess traditions in Nepal and India, and gender and religion. She is currently working on a book manuscript, under contract with Oxford University Press, that examines the history and development of Nepal’s Svasthani goddess tradition, the widely read Svasthani Vrata Katha, and the role both goddess and text have played in Nepal’s historical construction as a Hindu state. She is also co-editing a volume, under contract with Routledge, on religion and modernity in the Himalayas. Professor Birkenholtz is the Book Review Editor for Himalaya, the journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies.

**Trevor Birkenholtz** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Geographic Information Science. He earned his PhD in Geography in 2007 from Ohio State University. Prior to coming to Illinois, he spent six years in the Department of Geography at Rutgers University. Trevor is a political ecologist and development geographer, with interests in the politics of water development. His research examines the transformation of groundwater-led irrigation since the Green Revolution, and the contemporary process of water’s urbanization through a series of ongoing case studies located in northwestern India. Trevor is currently working on a book manuscript titled South Asian Development for Routledge Press, which examines the processes and conditions of development in South Asia from the colonial period to the present. He also serves as Environment and Society Section Editor for the journal Geography Compass.

**Aazam Feizmohammadpour** is Lecturer of Persian in the Department of Linguistics. She received her Ph.D. in General Linguistics at the University of Florida, with a dissertation titled “Effective Factors in Optional Subject-Verb Agreement in Persian.” Dr. Feizmohammadpour comes to us with advanced training in Persian curriculum design and experience as a Persian language instructor at the University of Florida. Fluent in Kurdish as well as Persian, she worked formerly as officer in charge of the United Nations Higher Commission on Refugees’ sub-office in Kermanshah, Iran. Her research interests are in psycholinguistics, second language acquisition and the structure of Persian language. Dr. Feizmohammadpour will be working on building our Persian language program at all levels.
Welcome, New Faculty!

**Radhika Govindrajan** is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology. She received her Ph.D. in May 2013 at Yale University. Her research interests span the fields of human-animal studies, the anthropology of religion, environmental anthropology, agrarian studies, South Asia, and the anthropology of the Himalayas. At Yale, her thesis, “Beastly Intimacies: Human-Animal Relations in India’s Central Himalayas,” was awarded the Theron Rockwell Field Prize.

**Rini Bhattacharya Mehta** is Assistant Professor of Comparative and World Literature. Professor Mehta’s research focuses on the evolution and synthesis of modernity in colonial, postcolonial and postglobal societies, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. She also teaches and studies Indian cinema; her edited anthology, *Bollywood and Globalization*, was published in 2010. She has made a documentary film on the state of women’s rights in India, *Post498A: Shades of Domestic Violence*, which was released in 2011.

**Laila Hussein Moustafa** is Assistant Professor of Library Administration and the Middle East and North Africa subject specialist in the International Area Studies Library. She first came to the United States to attend a Human Rights Advocates Training Program at Columbia University in 1997, and subsequently worked as a consultant with Middle East Watch, and then with Human Rights First, where she worked as a researcher overseeing the translation, publication, and distribution of their reports, “Islam and Justice” and “Islam and Equality.” She worked with Landmines Survivors Networks to organize the first international conference about mines in the Middle East. She earned an MA in Near Eastern Studies at New York University, with a focus on medieval Islam, early Shi’ism, Islamic law, and international law. She earned an MLS at Long Island University in Information Management in 2010, with a focus on technological and economic trends in the new library world, public library systems, metadata, web 2.0, and digital preservation. She is interested in digitization and archive, and hopes to develop our Middle East collection, not only in printed materials but also in the new formats, such as digital and electronic materials.

**Shankar Nair** is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Religion. Dr. Nair’s main research interests include Hindu and Islamic philosophy and theology, Sufism, mysticism, comparative religion, and South Asian religions. His work has focused on Muslim-Hindu interactions in early modern South Asia, the exchange between Arabo-Persian and Sanskrit intellectual traditions, as well as the history of Islamic philosophy and Sufism more generally.

**Hala Nassar**, aka Dina Khamis, is Visiting Assistant Professor of Arabic language and literature in the Program in Comparative and World Literature. This semester she is teaching CWL 461, on “Theater and Film in the Arab World” and CWL 395/SAME 490, on “Gender and Nationalism in the Writings of Arab Women Novelists.” In the spring semester she will teach ARAB/SAME 150, on “YouTube Arabic: Culture, Society and Politics,” and CWL 190, on “Orientalism in the Middle East and Asia.” Dr. Nassar received her Ph.D. from the Free University of Berlin and has occupied a number of academic positions: Interim Dean of Hind Husseini College for Girls in Jerusalem; Associate Dean of International Academics and Cooperation at al-Quds University in Jerusalem; Dean and Acting Director of the Master of Arts in Teaching of al-Quds-Bard Partnership; and Assistant Professor of Arabic literature, culture and thought at Yale University in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies program, and the Department of Theater Studies. While at Yale, she created a new undergraduate major in Modern Middle East Studies. Her forthcoming book, *Performing Palestine: Commemorating the Nakba* (Interlink Publishing), looks at Palestinian theatrical production from 1850 to today. She is also co-editor, with Najat Rahman, of *Mahmoud Darwish, Exile’s Poet: Critical Essays* (Interlink Books, 2007).

**Mara Thacker** is the South Asian Studies Librarian in the International and Area Studies Library at the University of Illinois. She received her BA from the College of William and Mary where she studied Literary and Cultural Studies with a focus on Indian film, and her MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where, in addition to coursework in library and information science, she also undertook intensive Hindi language training and continued her studies of Indian popular culture. She is currently putting her background in Indian popular culture to good use by building what is set to be the most comprehensive collection of South Asian comics in North America.
Faculty Achievements >>

Congratulations to the following faculty on their promotions, awards and publications:

**Ercan Balci**, Linguistics, was promoted to Senior Lecturer (Turkish) and appointed as Director of the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) Program. He reports that the Summer Institute for Languages of the Muslim World (SILMW-2013) was very successful offering Arabic, Swahili and Wolof at different levels. Plans for SILMW-14 are already underway.

**Asef Bayat**, Sociology, published *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford University Press, 2013, 2nd edition), which was revised and updated with an additional three chapters on the Arab revolutions and Iran’s Green Movement. He also edited *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2013). In 2012 he was named Catherine C. and Bruce A. Bastian Professor in Global and Transnational Studies.


**Wail S. Hassan**, Comparative & World Literature, has been elected to the Advisory Board of the American Comparative Literature Association for a three-year term, during which period he will also chair the ACLA’s Nominations Committee. In 2012-13, he published “Jorge Ahmad” (on Jorge Amado) in *Comparative Literature Studies* 49:3 (2012): 395-404; “Oyono in Arabic,” in *PMLA* 128:1 (January 2013): 127-32; “Which Languages?” in *Comparative Literature* 65:1 (Winter 2013): 5-14; and the "The Seduction of Seduction" in *Research in African Literatures* 44.1 (Spring 2013): 188-93.


**Junaid Rana**, Asian American Studies, received the Association for Asian American Studies Book Award in Social Sciences for 2013 for his book, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora* (Duke, 2011). In 2012 he was named a Conrad Humanities Scholar by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.


For more information about all faculty affiliated with CSAMES, visit: [http://www.csames.illinois.edu/people/faculty/](http://www.csames.illinois.edu/people/faculty/)
Our Students >>

CSAMES 2012-13 MA Graduates

Sarah Lazare completed the CSAMES MA program in December, 2012. She is currently working as a staff writer for Common Dreams, a progressive news and views publication based in Portland, Maine. Since graduating from Illinois, she has also worked as a freelance journalist in Egypt and Palestine.

Matthew Niemi completed the CSAMES MA program in May, 2012 and married Samiya Nageeb, also an Illinois alum. They honeymooned in Saudi Arabia and Egypt last year. Matt is now teaching ESL and applying to PhD programs in Religious Studies and Linguistics, and he continues to lead his ska band, the Skalaltabs (ska ahl al-kitab), playing gigs in Chicago.

Congratulations!
Congratulations to Sarah and Matt on their accomplishments, and best wishes!

Current Students

Ambar Flores received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Islamic Civilization and Societies from Boston College, where she took classes on Hadith, Ibn Arabi, and modern Middle Eastern literature. She also studied Arabic and Islamic history and architecture in Morocco. Ambar’s past projects include her senior thesis about Latino Muslims and a study of a Sufi order in Mexico City. Her academic interests include modern Middle Eastern history, languages, and anthropological research.

Umair Rasheed completed his undergraduate studies in Politics and Economics at Lahore University of Management Sciences in 2009. Upon graduating, he joined the then newly-launched English language newspaper, The Express Tribune, as a sub-editor on its Lahore city desk. His work as a print journalist provided him with useful lessons about society and politics in the Punjab province of Pakistan. He left the Tribune to join the research unit of a non-governmental organization, Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) Pakistan, in 2012. His areas of academic interests include religious militancy, its political economy and its sectarian roots in Deobandi Islam, and civil society in the development sector of Pakistan.

2012-13 Student Scholarship Winners

Through the CSAMES UISFL grant, seven undergraduate students were awarded scholarships for study abroad or intensive language training. Congratulations!

Margarita Altildis, English; Secondary Education (minor)
Spain and Morocco, Summer 2013

Lauren Fritzshe, Global Studies; Anthropology; Arabic (minor)
Jordan, Spring 2013

Joanne Jose, Human Nutrition; Chemistry; Aging (minors)
Israel, Fall/Winter Break 2013-14

Ida Kutechko, Global Studies; Political Science (minor)
India, Fall/Winter Break 2012-13

Jennan Qato, Anthropology; Arabic (minor)
Intensive Advanced Arabic at Summer Institute for Languages of the Muslim World, Summer 2013

Tariq Shihadah
Spain and Morocco, Summer 2013

Michael Spilg, Global Studies; TESL (minor)
India, Fall/Winter Break 2012-13

Visit www.csames.illinois.edu for information on this year’s competition.
In Memoriam >>

Remembering a Pillar of South Asian Studies at Illinois

Antoinette Burton, Professor, History

The History Department community lost a true scholar and friend when Professor Blair Kling passed away in May of 2011. Blair joined the department in 1962, having received a PhD in Indian history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1960. Born in Chicago in 1929, he received a B.A. in 1950, followed by an M.A. in 1955, from UC Berkeley. Both degrees were in History. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War as a staff sergeant in the Quartermasters’ headquarters in Petersburg, Virginia, where he worked as a technical writer.

Blair was a historian of India whose first monograph, The Blue Mutiny (1966), explored the indigo disturbances in Bengal following the famous rebellion of 1857. This study, which anticipated historians’ later interest in both colonial commodities and labor unrest, was translated into Bengali as Nil Bidroha thirty years after its initial publication. It remains a go-to book for anyone interested in histories of global trade. His other works include Partner in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India (1976) and a collection co-edited with Michael Pearson, The Age of Partnership: Europeans in Asia before Domination (1979). He also wrote numerous articles on economic history, including one on the Tata iron and steel company for the prestigious journal International Labor and Working Class History in 1998.

As anyone who knew him would tell you, Blair and his wife Julia had a love-affair with India that dated to their first trip in the late 1950s, just a decade after Indian independence. They made lifelong friends in Calcutta and hosted a variety of American colleagues and friends there over the years as well. Blair accumulated quite an extensive collection of Indian books, thanks to a local Bengali bookseller, K.L. Mukhopadhayay.

According to Julia, he even saved a few volumes from destruction during the annual eastern Indian rainy seasons. Blair was a senior fellow at the American Indian Institute in Calcutta in the mid-1960s and served as the University of Illinois trustee at the AIIS for 14 years.

Colleagues remember Blair as a quiet intellect and a convivial companion. Apparently he was also quite influential in shaping how we came to inhabit our current quarters in Gregory Hall. Professor emeritus Fred Jaher recalls a department meeting where a move from the Armory was being discussed. There was great debate and indecision. “Blair, who rarely spoke at these meetings, convinced us that for community and scholarly developments we would be better off at Greg.” Fred also recalls that Blair was “an excellent trainer of graduate students.” One such student, Geraldine Forbes (now professor at SUNY Oswego), has fond memories of him as a graduate mentor. At a moment when there were few women in the profession and even fewer being encouraged to do PhDs, Blair was extremely supportive of Forbes, urging her to take an intensive Bengali language course and pointing her toward all kinds of archives and vernacular materials. Now an internationally renowned scholar of India and winner of the Rabindranath Tagore prize for her dissertation-cum-book, Positivism in Bengal (1979), Forbes commented, “I would not have done a PhD without his encouragement.”

According Professor Harold Gould, who was in the Department of Anthropology around the time Blair came to Illinois, when Blair arrived in Urbana, “he came with a dream: it was to create what was called an ‘area studies program’ in South Asian Studies on the model of the one which had spawned him at the University of Pennsylvania.” In this approach, “the region as a whole was comprehended from the standpoint of history, the social sciences, and the classical disciplines.” At Illinois, Blair “found an institutional setting for his mission within the ambit of the recently established Center for Asian Studies, founded by Solomon Levine [Professor of Labor and Industrial Relations (1951-69) and Director, Center for Asian Studies (1963-1968)], where scholars from several relevant disciplines could be accommodated under a common programmatic roof.”

Kling and Gould collaborated on the establishment of the first “Indian Society and Civilizations” course, which they taught jointly. According to Gould, this class “became the reference point from which courses in related aspects of Indian society and civilization flowed – e.g., Hindi and other Indian languages in the Department of Linguistics, under Professors Braj and Yamuna Kachru; political science courses initiated by Professor Stephen Cohen, etc.” Blair served as Associate Director of the Center, helping to build programming and to establish a core of South Asianist faculty on campus.

Warmth, patience and conscientiousness are the characteristics that made Blair so well-regarded among his students, graduate and undergraduate alike. He and Julia were quick to embrace fellow India-lovers, and so many more, through the wonderful dinner parties and social gatherings they had over the years in their Champaign home. As Gould (now at the University of Virginia) recalls fondly, Blair and Julia “reached out to everyone, both students and faculty, through their warm hospitality and their caring ways . . . Blair made everyone feel ‘at home’ in the little corner of South Asia which he created in Champaign-Urbana.” A scholar who was critical to the development of Indian history and South Asian studies, Blair left a legacy that continues to be felt in History at Illinois and beyond.
Conferences >>
Conference on “The New Middle East”

Valerie Hoffman, Director of CSAMES; Professor, Department of Religion

From October 18-20, 2012, CSAMES hosted a conference on “The New Middle East: Social and Political Change in the Twenty-First Century,” with 22 speakers examining trends in the Middle East from many disciplinary perspectives: sociology, religious studies, political science, history, anthropology, economics, literature, music, art, media studies, and women’s studies.

The first keynote lecture, delivered by Prince Moulay Hicham ben Abdallah of Morocco and Stanford University, emphasized that the Arab Spring is a process, not an outcome or event. He said that liberal ideology cannot be expected in the short term, but what matters is the creation of democratic institutions: elections, parliaments, and constitutions. He argued that a showdown between secularists and Islamists is unproductive; by starting with power-sharing, democracy can emerge. Street politics, on the other hand, can undermine democracy’s consolidation; what is needed is a coherent party system that aligns religious and nationalist interests.

Friday’s sessions featured panels on religion, politics and new social movements, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, the state of the economy, and gender dynamics. Asef Bayat, Professor of Sociology at Illinois, spoke on the role of Islam and Islamists in the Arab Spring, stressing that, although both religious and non-religious people participated in the uprisings, religious language did not play a role in the revolutions and religious groups were reluctant to become involved, in contrast to the 1980s and 1990s. Jeremy Walton of Georgetown University spoke on Turkish negotiations of liberalization, secularism and Islam. Joyce Dalshem of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte spoke on nongovernmental Israeli and Palestinian peacemaking initiatives. Abbas Vali of Boğaziçi University spoke about Iranian policies toward Iran’s Kurdish population and Kurdish involvement in Iranian politics. Anthony Shenoda of Leiden University College analyzed Coptic political activism, the military’s attack on Coptic protesters at Maspero in October 2011, and the role of visions and miracles in Coptic negotiations with political realities. Senem Aslan of Bates College spoke on recent policy changes in Turkey toward the Kurds and in Morocco toward the Berbers. Bassam Yousif of Indiana University spoke on the role of economic grievances in the Arab uprisings, and Hadi Esfahani of Illinois spoke about economic development in the Arab world. Haideh Moghissi of York University discussed the unsurprising triumph of Islamists in post-revolutionary elections in the Arab world and its dismal implications for women’s rights, drawing comparisons with Iran. Zakia Salime, an alumna of Illinois and professor at Rutgers University, said that activists in Morocco’s February 20th Movement did not self-identify as feminists but nonetheless campaigned for full gender equality. Gul Aldikacti Marshall of the University of Louisville spoke of the impact of candidacy for EU membership on Turkish gender equality reforms. Paul Amar of the University of California at Santa Barbara analyzed the phenomenon of the baltagi (thug) in Egyptian politics and the emergence of subaltern alternatives to the “thug state”.

The second keynote lecture, by Roger Allen, Professor Emeritus of Arabic and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, concerned depictions of political corruption in Moroccan historical fiction and the role of such works in the Arab Spring. His lecture set the stage for Saturday’s presentations on the music of the Egyptian revolution (Ted Swedenburg of the University of Arkansas), artistic representations of the Egyptian uprising (Dina Ramadan of Bard College), Iranian internet cinema (Hamid Naficy of Northwestern University), the emerging Arab media environment (Joe Khalil of Northwestern University in Qatar), state-sponsored media, cultural production and information wars in Iran (Niki Akhavan of Catholic University of America), the political role of social media in advancing Israeli military occupation in the West Bank (Rebecca Stein of Duke University), how power and counterpower operate in the Arab world in the age of social media (Linda Herrera of the Department of Educational Policy, Organization and Leadership at Illinois), and the future of the Arab Spring (Al Jazeera Washington Bureau Chief, Abderrahim Foukara).

The conference ended with a moderated discussion on the future of democracy in the Middle East, in which all speakers and panel chairs were invited to participate.

This conference was made possible by a Hewlett international conference grant from the Office of International Programs and Studies and by CSAMES’ Title VIa grant from the U.S. Department of Education, with generous co-sponsorship from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Center for Advanced Study, the European Union Center, the Program in Comparative and World Literature, the Program in Jewish Culture and Society, the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program, the Departments of Anthropology, Gender and Women’s Studies, History, Media and Cinema Studies, Political Science, Religion, and Sociology.
Conferences >>

Ethnicity, Citizenship and Human Rights in Burma: History and Plight of the Rohingya

Valerie Hoffman, Director of CSAMES; Professor, Department of Religion

On November 8, 2012, CSAMES held a public forum titled “Ethnicity, Citizenship and Human Rights in Burma: History and Plight of the Rohingya.” With the formation of a new government in August 2011 and the freeing from house arrest of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was subsequently elected to parliament, the world has applauded Myanmar’s moves toward democracy. Nonetheless, the situation for Myanmar’s ethnic minorities remains dire and has attracted little notice. No group has suffered more than the Rohingya, a Muslim people in the Arakan region of western Myanmar. Successive governments have discriminated against them, asserting that they are foreigners with no right to live in Burma, a view shared by much of the Arakan population. This forum proposed to address the following questions: Are the Rohingya a fairly recent community of migrants or a community with roots that go back centuries? Are they desperate victims whose very existence is threatened, or are they Islamist terrorists and illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, as claimed by their opponents? This forum brought together a diverse group of scholars and activists to analyze the situation of the Rohingya from the distinct perspectives of history, contemporary politics, and international law. In general, the activists knew each other and the historians knew each other, but this forum uniquely brought these very different specialists into conversation.

Matthew Smith, Burma specialist with Human Rights Watch, provided an overview of the situation, highlighting the limits of Burma’s democratic transition. Thibaut d’Hubert, Assistant Professor of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, showed slides of coin inscriptions and manuscripts from the region in Arabic and Persian and described the long history of Islamic scholarship in Arakan. Jacques Leider, then Director of l’École Française d’Extrême Orient in Chiang Mai, Thailand, gave a broad historical perspective on Buddhists and Muslims in Arakan and traced the conflict between Buddhists, on one hand, and Muslims and Hindus, on the other, as far back as the late sixteenth century. Nonetheless, he sees “Rohingya” as a political title of recent origin. This perspective was vigorously denied by Abid Bahar, Vice-Chairman of South Asia Watch and professor at Dawson College in Montreal. He said that the term “Rohingya” dates from at least as far back as the seventeenth century and is the name they officially adopted for themselves in the 1950’s. A native of Chittagong, Bangladesh, Dr. Bahar said that the entire population of Chittagong was dispossessed from Arakan—the opposite of the government’s allegation that the Muslim residents of Arakan are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Nora Rowley, physician and human rights activist, said that British colonial bias against the Buddhist Rakhine led to resentment, perceptions that Indians “took our land,” and violence against Hindus and Muslims in the 1920s. She described present-day Myanmar as an “Orwellian authoritarian state” that has terrorized the Rohingya for decades. Wakar Uddin, Director General of the Arakan Rohingya Union, Chairman of the Burmese Rohingya Association of North America, and professor at Pennsylvania State University, described the magnitude of the atrocities perpetrated against the Rohingya, describing it as ethnic cleansing and genocide. Benjamin Zawacki, Southeast Asia Regional Representative for the International Development Law Organization, explained that, according to international law, states cannot deny nationality on the basis of race or religion. There are two international treaties on statelessness, but Burma is not a signatory to either. Over the last twenty-five years, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have been displaced; at present, more Rohingya live outside Myanmar than within it because of state policy. He described them as stateless persons who are forced to dwell outside their habitual territory of habitation, and pointed out that Bangladesh and Thailand ignore the legal obligation to protect them. Patrick Keenan, Professor of Law at the University of Illinois, said that appeals to conscience are ineffective at stopping oppression; economic interests, however, do provide an incentive. He said that the European Union and the World Bank are providing economic assistance to Myanmar without the onerous terms of privatization that used to be common, but with stipulations concerning rights for the deprived.

The forum was co-sponsored by the Center for Advanced Study, the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, the College of Law, the Center for Global Studies, the Department of Religion, and Global Crossroads Living-Learning Center. The conference website (http://rohingyaforum.csames.illinois.edu/) includes news, resources and historical information on the Rohingya, as well as videos of all the presentations and panels.
Events

Promoting Persian Language, Literature and Culture

During the 2013 spring semester, CSAMES hosted a series of events to promote Persian studies on campus and the appreciation of Persian culture within the community. On February 7, 2013, Dr. Richard Davis, Professor Emeritus of Persian, Ohio State University, delivered a public lecture entitled “The Perils of Princesses: Real and Imagined Women in Medieval Persian Literature,” and on February 25, Dr. Michael Hillmann, Professor of Persian, University of Texas at Austin, gave a lecture entitled “What Persian Language and Literature Say About Iranian Culture, 1941-1978.” These lectures were funded in part by a grant from the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language program, International Studies Division of the U.S. Department of Education. The campus and community were also treated to two events later in the semester devoted to Persian music. On the evening of March 7, Bruno Nettl, Professor Emeritus of Music and Anthropology and Massoud Rostam-Abadi, Principal Chemical Engineer Honorary at the Prairie Research Institute, formed a tag-team to explain and demonstrate several aspects of classical Persian music. On March 29, Dr. Lily Afshar, Professor of Music at the University of Memphis and one of the world’s foremost classical guitarists, and the first woman in the world to gain a Doctor of Music degree in guitar performance, played for a full audience of campus and community members. She performed a collection of pieces, including four Persian and Azerbaijani ballads adapted for guitar. The concert was co-sponsored by the School of Music, and the Iranian Cultural Association.

India Studies Lectures

The India Studies Distinguished Lecture is an annual CSAMES event and part of a larger goal to expand Indian Studies at the University of Illinois through the India Studies Fund, which is made possible by the generous contributions of donors in the community.

The 2012 India Studies lecture was delivered by Dr. Rahul Mehrotra and entitled, “Backwards into the Future: Reflections on Conservation in India.” Mehrotra is Professor of Urban Design and Planning and Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Executive Director of the Urban Design Research Institute, which promotes awareness and research on the city of Bombay.

The 2013 India Studies Lecture was given by award-winning British historian and writer, William Dalrymple. Dalrymple delighted the audience with his storytelling skills during his lecture, “Return of a King: The Battle of Afghanistan, 1839-42,” which he delivered on April 26. Information on giving to the India Studies Fund can be found at: http://www.csames.illinois.edu/giving/

Thank you to the donors and to all those who continue to support India Studies at Illinois!
Events>>

Brown Bag Series Hosts Egyptian Economists

The CSAMES noontime lecture series, known as the Brown Bag Lecture Series, held on Tuesdays from 12:00 – 1:00 PM in Lucy Ellis Lounge in the Foreign Languages Building, continues to be an effective venue to reach across units in all colleges on our campus and connect scholars across disciplines.

The lectures held during the 2012-13 academic year reflect a great diversity of topics. Regionally, fourteen of the lectures were on the Middle East, twelve on South Asia, and three on Muslims in Europe and the U.S. Topics included agriculture, art and architecture, earthquakes, ecology, economics, the Egyptian revolution, history, language policy, landscape conservation, law, leisure, literature, music, public health in India, and water management.

The 2013 spring series was kicked off by lectures by two leading Egyptian economists. Dr. Gouda Abdel-Khalek, Professor of Economics at Cairo University and former Minister of Solidarity and Social Justice in the post-January 25 Egyptian government, spoke on “Social Justice: The Unfinished Business of the Arab Spring: An Insider’s View,” on January 16, while Dr. Karima Korayem, Professor of Economics at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, gave a lecture on “The Egyptian Economy after the Arab Spring Revolution: Current Situation and Prospects for the Future,” on January 17.

Abdel-Khalek’s and Korayem’s lectures were co-sponsored by the Department of Economics, the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences Office of International Programs, the Center for Advanced Study, the Department of Anthropology, the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, the Center for Global Studies, the Department of Political Science, and the Vernon K. Zimmerman Center for International Education and Research in Accounting. The Egyptian economists’ lectures can be viewed online at [http://www.csames.illinois.edu/news/lectures/](http://www.csames.illinois.edu/news/lectures/).

Fall 2013 Brown Bag Schedule

Brown Bag Lectures are normally held on Tuesdays from 12:00 PM—1:00 PM in Lucy Ellis Lounge in the Foreign Languages Building and include a lunch of pizza and soda.

Sept 3 Andrea Bordeau, Study Abroad Office
“From Kurdish Problem to Kurdish Solution: Transforming the Middle East Paradigm”

Sept 10 Trevor Birkenholtz, Geography and Geographic Information
“Water Grabbing in India: From Agrarian to Urban (GDP) Growth”

Sept 17 D.F. Ruggles, Landscape Architecture
“Listening to Islamic Gardens”

Oct 1 Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, Religion
“Divine Body Politics: The Embodiment of a Nepali Goddess”

Oct 8 Derek Monroe, Independent Journalist
“Kurdistan, Iraq: A U.S. Success Story?”

Oct 15 Rachel Havrelock, English, University of Illinois at Chicago
“Pipeline: The Iraqi Petroleum Company and the Kirkuk-Haifa Connection”

Oct 22 Andrew Bauer, Anthropology
“‘Ancient’ Land Use and the ‘Modern’ Environment: The Politics of Nature in Northern Karnataka, South India”

Wednesday, Oct 30 Hala Nassar, Program in Comparative and World Literature
“Theatre and Drama in the Arab World and the State of the Discipline”

Thursday, Oct 3 Abdal-Razzaq Moaz, School of Global and International Studies, Indiana University
“Housing and Lifestyle in Damascus and Cairo (15th-17th Centuries): A View from the Shari’a Court Records of the City”

Nov 5 Kristi Barnwell, History, University of Illinois at Springfield
“Understanding Arab Nationalism in the Trucial States, 1952-1971”

Nov 12 Fouad Abd-El-Khallick and Ryan Summers (PhD Candidate), Curriculum and Instruction: “The Assessment of Precollege Qatari Students’ Attitudes toward Science”


Dec 3 Mara Thacker, University Library
“Beyond Amar Chitra Katha: Building a Strong Collection of South Asian Comics”
Events>>

Arab Spring Course and Film Festival Explore Issues in the Modern Middle East

A new interdisciplinary team-taught course on the Arab Spring has allowed undergraduate students to learn from CSAMES faculty while exploring current issues in the Middle East. In Fall 2011 and Spring 2013, CSAMES offered a team-taught course on the Arab Spring that attracted a high enrollment of students each semester from diverse academic, ethnic and national backgrounds. The popularity of the course, which had an enrollment of 80 students in Spring 2013 without any advertising, indicates the need and interest among undergraduate students at Illinois to gain a better understanding of issues in the modern Middle East. The course offered a unique opportunity for students to learn about the Arab spring from experts representing different disciplines and countries, and to see a number of outstanding documentaries that enhanced their understanding of the Arab world and Iran. Faculty who taught the course included Ercan Balci, Maimouna Barro, Elabbas Benmamoun, Francis Boyle, Hadi Esfahani, Wail Hasan, Linda Herrera, Valerie Hoffman, Yore Kedem, Ed Kolodziej, Jane Kunz, Feisal Mohamed, Eman Saadah, and Milan Svolik. In addition, the Consul General of Egypt, Maged Refaat Aboulmagd, spoke on the prospects of Egyptian-U.S. relations after the 25 January revolution.

CSAMES also hosted the first Middle East Film Festival during the second half of the Spring 2013 semester. By holding the Film Festival at the same time as the Arab Spring course and offering students incentives to attend these films, students had an opportunity to gain deeper insights into Middle Eastern societies. The Middle East Film Festival was free and open to the public and aimed at both students and the general public. The Film Festival was held on consecutive Saturdays nights from March 30 through April 27, 2013, showing some of the best recent films from Egypt, Morocco, Israel and Iran, free of charge to the public. The films shown on April 27 included a wonderful documentary made by Mehrnaz Saeedvafa, Professor of Film Studies at Columbia College in Chicago. CSAMES brought her down for the screening of her film, so she could talk about her film after its screening and also introduce the Iranian feature film that followed, which was made by one of her former students in Tehran. Students in the Arab Spring class were offered extra credit for attending the film festival and writing about what they learned about Middle Eastern society from the films. The best of these essays have been posted on CSAMES’s blog, at http://csames-illinois.blogspot.com/.

Indian Film Festival

Mara Thacker and Robert Cagle of the University Library and Rini Mehta of Comparative and World Literature are organizing an Indian Film Festival, which will be entitled, “Past, Present, Future: Indian Cinema at 100,” to be held from October 31-November 2, 2013. The keynote speaker will be activist/screenwriter/director Onir, and the Festival will feature his films I Am and My Brother Nikhil. There will also be a panel discussion, including internationally recognized Indian cinema and popular culture expert Lalitha Gopalan, cultural critic Ajay Gehlawat, industry analyst Manjunath Pendakur, and bibliographer and historian Avinash Maheshwary.

The Middle East Film Festival is being planned for the second half of the fall semester on Sunday afternoons in Knight Auditorium at the Spurlock Museum. Check the CSAMES web calendar or subscribe to the CSAMES list for updates on these and more upcoming events at www.csames.illinois.edu.

The 2014 Joint Area Studies Symposium (JACS) is being organized by CSAMES and will be titled “Children and Globalization: Issues, Policies and Initiatives.” The conference will begin Thursday, April 10, 2014 with a keynote lecture delivered by David Oswell, Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths College in the University of London, and will continue through Friday and Saturday, April 11-12, 2014, discussing a range of topics, such as child labor, international adoption, children and war, homeless children, children and sexuality, migration, and children's rights.

A Call for Papers can be found at http://ilint.illinois.edu/jacs.html. Proposals will be accepted until September 23, 2013.
Egypt has always been one of the countries that I wanted to visit most, initially with the desire to experience firsthand one of the great wonders of the world, and more recently due to the 2011 uprising. I was eager to experience firsthand the mother of the Arab nations and how the nation and its citizens had been transformed.

My time in Egypt was spent in making comparisons and viewing society through my own background and experiences. Having grown up and been educated in Pakistan, a developing country, I was constantly reflecting on how the citizens struggle with similar issues. Political instability, violence, terrorism, extremism, suicide bombings, and lack of good governance continue to plague Pakistan and I saw some of that in Egypt as well. In Pakistan it has resulted in the loss of hope among Pakistanis, especially youth, throughout the nation. However, in Egypt I was surprised and happy to see how Egyptians were united and aspire towards similar goals. The youth in particular were full of passion and motivation, not simply for the betterment of themselves, but with the development of Egyptian society as their concern. These young activists were wise beyond their years and, for me, carried a message for young people around the globe, that they have a place in the shaping of society.

“Youth and Democracy in Egypt” with Professor Linda Herrera exceeded my expectations. A typical course is a combination of readings of different theories, discussions and a final paper, and after a week or two those theories no longer stay in our minds, but for me this course was different. We had the opportunity to meet female activists, people engaged in civil rights initiatives, youths who were part of the revolution, school teachers, business people, and the list goes on. This experience has had a great impact on my life, one that created many bonds with Egyptians we met, so much so that I continue to keep contact with some and keenly follow current events in Egypt. My respect for Egypt and Egyptians will always remain in my heart. I am looking forward to seeing a politically established, economically prosperous and united Egypt. God bless Egypt and its people.

Courses Abroad in the Middle East and South Asia

Several courses abroad to the Middle East and South Asia are being offered during the 2013 Fall/Winter Break. Application deadlines are September 15, 2013. See the contacts below for more information!

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity—India
Contact: Dr. Mithilesh Mishra
mkmishra@illinois.edu

Immigration and Cultural Diversity—Israel
Contact: Dr. Yore Kedem
kedem@illinois.edu

Immigration and Integration—Jordan
Contact: Dr. Eman Saadah
esaadah2@illinois.edu

Natural Environment, Religion, Migration, and National Identity—Oman
Contact: Dr. Valerie Hoffman
vhoffman@illinois.edu

Convivencia Then and Today—Spain and Morocco
Contact: Dr. Moira Rogers
moirargs@illinois.edu

Cultural Diversity—Istanbul, Turkey
Contact: Dr. Ercan Balci
ebalci@illinois.edu

Conflict and Post-Conflict Resolution—Cyprus
Contact: Dr. Stefanos Katsikas
skatsika@illinois.edu
Experiencing the Intersections of Spain and Morocco

Tariq Shihadah, Class of 2015

It is one thing to learn about a culture from the outside, and another thing entirely to be deeply immersed in a world different from your own. There is no textbook nor lecture that can compare to smelling the fragrance of a land, walking through its streets, and meeting the faces of its people. This past summer I had the chance to do just that, as I, along with four other students and Professor Mark Dressman of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, trekked through the lands of Andalusia and al-Maghreb.

After learning one evening of this unique opportunity to study the historic intersections of Spain and Morocco, I immediately completed my application and got in contact with the professor hosting the trip. When I applied for the study abroad trip that night, I didn’t necessarily have any intentions of pursuing it seriously; I only wanted to open the opportunity for myself for consideration in the future. However, as time passed and I was accepted to the program, I began to realize just how remarkable an option it was for me. As the day approached for me to make a decision, I nervously chose to join the trip -- a choice which afforded me one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life.

Our journey began the week after the Spring semester had ended, when we met in the Chicago O’Hare airport and flew overseas to the culturally rich city of Madrid, Spain. From this day on through the next two and a half weeks, we explored and immersed ourselves deeply in the cities, towns, and cultures of the Andalusian and Maghrebi regions, leaving no sound unheard and no dish untasted. In Spain we discovered the intricate beauty of the Al-Hambra in Grenada, visited the peculiar and fantastic cathedral within a mosque called the Mezquita, and even had the chance of visiting the British enclave of Gibraltar, named after the famed Muslim conqueror from the Maghreb region. In Morocco, we did everything from spending a night in an Amazigh camp in the Sahara Desert, to washing in a community bath house called a hammam, to wandering through the streets of historic cities such as Fez, Marrakesh and Rabat, intimately encountering exciting history and vivid culture.

As we travelled, we had the opportunity to meet and engage with several locals, who were able to teach us a great deal about the regions of Spain and Morocco, their histories, and their cultural intersections. We collected recordings and other media as we proceeded with our trip, and are now in the process of creating a curriculum supplement for teachers and students to learn about these topics through engaging and relatable materials. Collecting the media and information for this initiative has been a challenging yet exciting and very rewarding experience, and the chance to contribute to the world’s library of educational resources has been an honor and gift.

This spectacular trip was made possible in part for me by the CSAMES Undergraduate Scholarship for Study Abroad. I learned about this scholarship through the professor in charge of our study abroad program, and decided it was imperative that I apply for it to help make the trip a more financially feasible option for me. Shortly after completing a simple application on my computer, I was informed by the CSAMES department that I had been selected for the $1000 scholarship, which was to pay for more than 30% of the costs of the program.

This is only one example of how supportive the University of Illinois and its many departments of study are, as they help their students pursue cultural and academic enrichment. The opportunities for programs and trips similar to mine are everywhere, and the financial and advising support is accessible to all students. There are countless extraordinary and life-changing adventures out there, only waiting for students who are willing to take a step outside the normal and take a step into the breathtaking world around us.
CSAMES Director Valerie Hoffman, writer/journalist/playwright Gowri Ramnarayan, and CSAMES Emeritus Faculty Rajmohan Gandhi, are pictured after Dr. Ramnarayan’s talk commemorating Indian legendary singer and musician M.S. Subbulakshmi on Sept. 15, 2011.

Panel discussion at the 2012 Turkish Studies Symposium on Turkish Transnational Television, organized by the European Union Center and co-sponsored by CSAMES. Mahir Saul, Anthropology, is pictured at the right.


CSAMES Director Valerie Hoffman visits with Marvin Weinbaum, former Director of the Program in South and West Asian Studies (the precursor of CSAMES), and his wife Francine, in July, 2013.


Student work is displayed from the India studio at Orchha during the India Studies Lecture on April 6, 2012.


Kenneth Cuno, History, presents on the Arab Spring uprisings at the 2012 International Summer Institute on Global Protests Movements, organized by CSAMES and co-sponsored by other international and area studies centers.
You can support our programs and events by contributing to any of the following funds:

- Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Annual Fund
- India Studies Fund
- Iranian Studies Fund
- Middle Eastern Studies Fund
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