



DARTMOUTH

MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES PROGRAM

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2020

<https://mes.dartmouth.edu>

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It's an exciting time to be part of Middle Eastern Studies (MES) at Dartmouth! Launched on July 1st, 2018, our new program continues to gain momentum as it expands its offerings and enhances its presence across the college. Whether arranging memorable conversations with leading writers or organizing campus-wide film screenings with innovative directors and concerts with world renowned bands, MES has made a concerted effort to place students, faculty, and members of the greater Upper Valley community into direct dialogue with the Middle East and the region's rich history, diverse inhabitants, and vibrant cultures. On these fronts, a few events in particular stand out.

During an electrifying weekend in October 2018, MES welcomed two renowned artists: Youssra El Hawary, a prominent performer in Egypt's independent music scene, and Tamer El Said, a brilliant filmmaker from Cairo. Youssra attended multiple classes, where she spoke with and sang for several undergraduates before entertaining and engaging a broader audience through the nearby Lebanon Opera House, which hosted a thrilling concert. Tamer, meanwhile, participated in a thought-provoking Q&A with students and locals after an on-campus screening of his film *In the Last Days of the City*, a vivid account of Cairo on the eve of revolution.

As a result of these visits, students and members of the wider Upper Valley community developed a deeper understanding of the Arab uprisings and the power of cultural productions to both inspire and document dissent.

Below: Alaa Al Aswany, Ezzedine Fishere, Jamila Chahboun, Mahmoud al-Batal, and Kristen Brustad (left to right) discuss the future of Arabic during an exciting roundtable.



Dartmouth students and faculty pose with members of Mashrou' Leila at Dartmouth's Bartlett Hall.

CURRENT & UPCOMING MES COURSES

- The Middle East in the United States: Jews and Arabs in American Society (Fall 2019)
- Women and War in Modern Arabic Literature and Film (Winter 2020)
- Arab Jewish Culture in the Modern Middle East (Winter 2020)
- History of Technology in the Middle East (Spring 2020)
- Cold War Arab Culture (Spring 2020)
- Arabic Prison Writing (Spring 2020)



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Building on these themes, MES welcomed two celebrated writers as visiting professors in 2019. First, during winter term, preeminent Egyptian novelist and political commentator Alaa Al Aswany taught two courses, one on creative writing and the other on dictatorship. He participated in a wide range of events, from a roundtable discussion on the future of Arabic with Dartmouth faculty and co-authors of the Al-Kitab book series Kristen Brustad and Mahmoud al-Batal to a Q&A following a film based on his best-selling book *The Yacoubian Building*. Additionally, Al Aswany partook in a reading and a conversation at Northern

Stage theater in White River Junction, VT. This event was a tremendous success, drawing a sold-out crowd from across the Upper Valley.

Then, during the spring term, Lebanese author Hoda Barakat, winner of the 2019 International Prize for Arabic Fiction, joined our program. Hoda led two popular courses on the novel as an art form, and on the relationship between language and rebellion, in addition to participating in a

series of campus-wide conversations on timely topics. During one such event, Iman Mersal, a prominent Egyptian poet and professor of Arabic literature at the University of Alberta, joined Barakat for an insightful public discussion of

motherhood, violence, and displacement in the Middle East. On another occasion, Sinan Antoon, a leading Iraqi author and professor at New York University, accompanied Barakat for a conversation on "Writing Wars." Both events were tremendous successes.

In addition to authors and filmmakers, MES collaborated with Dartmouth's Hopkins Center for the Arts to host the leading Lebanese Indie-Rock band Mashrou' Leila for a residency in September 2019. Known for their activism and socially engaged music, the band visited classes, took part in panel discussions with faculty and students, and held an



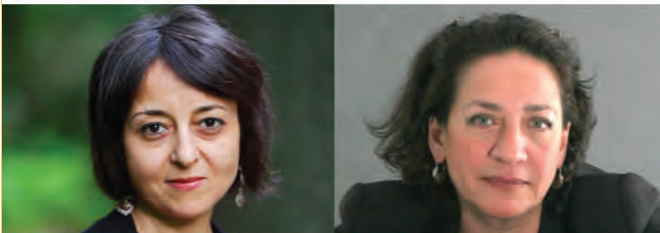
Above: Dartmouth students & faculty, along with scores of Upper Valley community members, show their enthusiasm for Mashrou' Leila after a scintillating performance.

Below: In April, esteemed authors Iman Mersal and Hoda Barakat held a public discussion at Haldeman Center on motherhood, violence and displacement.

**A Conversation with Iman Mersal
and Hoda Barakat on**

**MOTHERHOOD, VIOLENCE
AND DISPLACEMENT**

FRIDAY • APRIL 26, 2019 • HALDEMAN 028 • 4:30 PM



IMAN MERSAL

HODA BARAKAT



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unforgettable concert on September 28 at the HOP's Spaulding Auditorium, which drew people from across the college and the region. The residency also involved an open house in MES's Bartlett Hall, a panel discussion with the band, and student presentations about music and culture in the region.

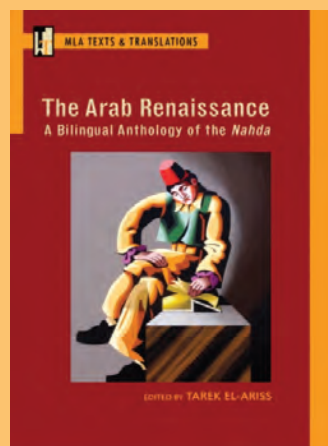
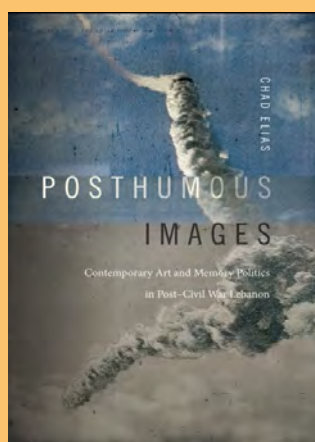
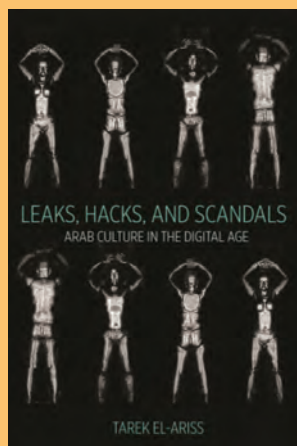
Inside and outside the classroom, MES is actively building the strongest Middle Eastern Studies community possible by working closely with a wide range of institutions across campus such as the Hopkins Center, the Leslie Center for the Humanities, the Hood Museum, and the Dickey Center

for International Understanding. Likewise, we are committed to strengthening our relationships with local entities beyond the college, such as Northern Stage theatre in White River Junction, with which we are planning future collaborations.

These highlights of events and residencies are complemented by a rigorous and innovative course offering including: "The Middle East in the United States: Jews and Arabs in American Society" (Fall 2019), "Women and War in Modern Arabic Literature and Film" (Winter 2020), and "History of Technology in the Middle East" (Spring 2020). In collaboration

with Jewish Studies and the Leslie Center for the Humanities at Dartmouth, MES will be cross-listing courses by the new postdoctoral fellow, Daniel Behar (PhD Harvard 2018), who specializes in Arabic and Hebrew and will be teaching a course entitled "Arab Jewish Culture in the Modern Middle East" (Winter 2020). In the spirit of further expanding this lineup, we will be welcoming Professor Muhsin al-Musawi, a distinguished literary critic and scholar of Arabic literature from Columbia University, who will be teaching two courses in MES in Spring 2020: "Cold War Arab Culture" and "Arabic Prison Writing."

RECENT FACULTY PUBLICATIONS



From left to right: *Leaks, Hacks, and Scandals: Arab Culture in the Digital Age*, by Tarek El-Ariss. *Posthumous Images: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post-Civil War Lebanon*, by Chad Elias. *The Arab Renaissance: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda*, ed. Tarek El-Ariss.

Above: The latest novel by visiting professor Ezzedine C. Fishere: *The Egyptian Assassin*, translated from the Arabic by Jonathan Wright.



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Professor Peter Limbrick of UC Santa Cruz delivers a rousing lecture on Moroccan cinema to students on the summer Arabic LSA+ in Rabat, Morocco.



Hoda Barakat receives enthusiastic Middle Eastern Studies students after a successful performance of her play.

During the summer of 2019, 15 students and Dr. Tarek El-Ariss, the chair of MES, participated in an LSA+ in Rabat, Morocco. The students lived with Moroccan families in the old Medina of Rabat while they honed their skills in Arabic on one of Dartmouth's most engaging

language-focused study abroad programs. Morning language classes were supplemented by the director's seminar, where artists, writers, and filmmakers discussed their craft, their lives, and modern Morocco. By providing such organic learning experiences as

visiting artist and Montgomery Fellow Eric Van Hove's workshop and meeting filmmaker Nabil Ayouch in his studio, the Morocco LSA+ encouraged students to look beyond the classroom for crucial learning opportunities.

The students carried this lesson with them on their funded trips to the north and south of Morocco, where they broke off into

smaller groups to plan their own exploration of the country. A classwide trip to the Sahara Desert organized by Dartmouth left everyone with unforgettable memories. The entire program encouraged independent study and exploration in an unfamiliar environment, making for an incredibly successful LSA+.

The sky is truly the limit for Middle Eastern Studies at Dartmouth. We are excited to see what this upcoming year has to offer to our students and members of the broader Middle Eastern Studies community in the Upper Valley.

- Tarek El-Ariss
Chair, Middle Eastern Studies

Below: Dartmouth student Katelyn Zesser and Professor Susannah Heschel perform their interpretation of a play by visiting author Hoda Barakat.

