

Center for Middle East Studies

University of California, Santa Barbara

Fall 2016 Alumni Newsletter (Volume 7, Number 1)

Greetings to the CMES community

Welcome, everyone, to another year of Middle East studies at UCSB. As usual, we also welcome a new group of FLTAs teaching languages in the Religious Studies Department. They are **Madina Galiyeva** (Kazakh), **Abderrahim Mamad** (Arabic), and **Onur Yural** and **Yilmaz Bulut** (Turkish). We also have a new faculty member, Professor **Mona Damluji**, who has joined the Film and Media Studies Department. Professor Damluji received her Ph. D. from the Architecture Department at UC Berkeley with a dissertation entitled, "Petroleum's Promise: The Neo-Colonial Imaginary of Oil Cities in the Arabian Gulf." We also welcome **Christina Orzechowski**, who is the new advisor for the Middle East Studies major, working with Professors **Kathie Moore** (Chair, Religious Studies) and **Sherene Seikaly** (History, Chair, MES Major). Finally, I am told that Professor **Walid Afifi** has returned to UCSB in the Department of Communication.

This Fall, we had a number of exciting events. These included a conference called "Suez at Sixty: Remembering the Suez Crisis and War of 1956", co-sponsored with the Center for Cold War Studies and organized by Professors **Salim Yaqub** (History, Director, Center for

Cold War Studies), **Sherene Seikaly** (History), **Dwight Reynolds** (Religious Studies), and **Adam Sabra** (History). We were also excited to inaugurate a bianual distinguished lecture on the modern Middle East and North Africa endowed by a retired faculty member. This year, our guest was Professor **Judith Tucker** of Georgetown University.



We expect the Winter and Spring Quarters to be no less exciting. On February 13, Professor **Dimitri Gutas** (Yale) will deliver a lecture entitled, "The Reception of Aristotelian Science in Early Islam: A Historical Account." The R. Stephen Humphreys Distinguished Visiting Scholar will be Professor **Everett Rowson** of New York University. Professor Rowson, whose expertise includes Islamic philosophy, Arabic linguistics, and gender and sexuality in classical Arabic literature, will be on campus the week of the week of May 15. **Dwight Reynolds** and **Heather Blurton** (English)

are organizing a cross-cultural conference in the spring on bestselling works in the Middle Ages. There will also be a multi-campus conference on the 1967 Arab-Israeli war in which UCSB will participate. More information about these events and others we are working on will be forthcoming in the Winter.

- *Adam Sabra, Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies*

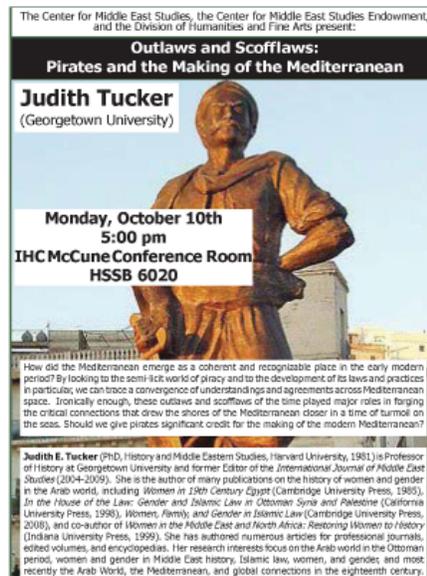
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Judith Tucker “Outlaws and Scofflaws: Pirates and the Making of the Mediterranean”

Thanks to a generous endowment established by a recently retired faculty member, CMES has now established a biannual lecture by a senior scholar focusing on the modern Middle East and North Africa. Following the model of the R. Stephen Humphreys Senior Visiting Scholar, the honoree will deliver a public lecture and meet with graduate students and faculty. Due to matching funds which CMES received from the Division of Humanities and the Fine Arts thanks to the support of Dean **John Majewski**, we were able to invite our first guest, Professor **Judith Tucker** of Georgetown University, this year. Professor Tucker is an outstanding scholar of the social history of the early

modern Middle East. She has



been a pioneer in feminist history and in the history of marriage

and the family in the region. Her monographs include *Women in 19th Century Egypt*, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine*, and *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*.

In her October 10 public lecture, “Outlaws and Scofflaws: Pirates and the Making of the Mediterranean,” Tucker examined the role of piracy in the integration of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Mediterranean. She argued that piracy and the attempts by Mediterranean states to regulate it played an important role in making the modern Mediterranean. Tucker placed this argument in the larger context of arguments about

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Suez At Sixty: Remembering the Suez Crisis and War of 1956

The fall of 2016 marked the 60th anniversary of the Suez War of 1956, a pivotal moment in Egyptian, Middle Eastern, and international history. In response to Egypt’s nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, Britain, France, and Israel launched a coordinated military assault against Egypt. The United States, the Soviet Union, and much of the international community strongly opposed this move, eventually compelling the aggressors to halt the attack and withdraw their forces from Egypt. It is difficult to exaggerate the significance of these events. They constituted the second major Arab-Israeli War

and set the stage for the next war in 1967. They signaled a new complexity in the Cold War, whereby a relatively straightforward bilateral contest increasingly gave way to a more complicated multipolar one. They both symbolized and hastened the decline of British and French empire in the Arab world, permitting the United States and the Soviet Union to increase their own involvement in the region while also accelerating the broader decolonization movement. They thrust Egyptian President Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir to the forefront of pan-Arab nationalism and afforded Egypt a prominent place in the emerging nonaligned movement.

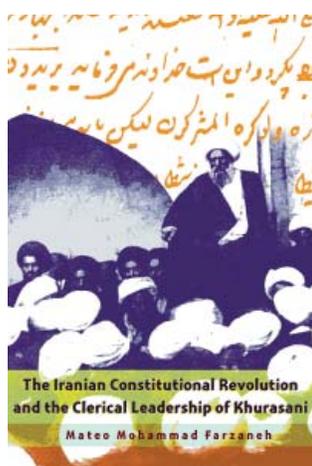
On Thursday and Friday, October 20 and 21, members of the UCSB community gathered to commemorate the Suez Crisis and War. The program began on Thursday evening with a screening of the BBC documentary “The Other Side of Suez,” followed by commentary on the film by Professor **Joel Gordon** of the University of Arkansas. The following afternoon, several specialists in U.S., international, and Middle Eastern history explored the background, meaning, and legacy of the Suez Crisis and War. Professor **Gordon**

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History Associate Professor and UCSB Alum Mateo M. Farzaneh wins Best First Book Award

Phi Alpha Theta, the international honor society for History students and professors, has awarded Northeastern Illinois University Associate Professor **Mateo M. Farzaneh** the 2016 Best First Book Award.

Farzaneh's book, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani*, was published in March 2015 by Syracuse University Press. The book provides an overview of the political history of Iran in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the ideas of the renowned cleric Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani. The Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) was the 20th century's first



such political movement in the Middle East. Khurasani, a Shiite jurist, scholar and spiritual leader, was a leading advocate of consti-

but their most notable leader, Khurasani, found it to be extremely helpful. That alone adds more to the perplexity of Iranian history and its contemporary behavior," said Farzaneh, who engaged on a nationwide campus tour to promote his book after its publication. "But with Khurasani's Islamic justification and friendly disposition toward constitutionalism, the Revolution succeeded in a historically significant period in the region."

tutionalism.

"As a Western concept, constitutionalism found many enemies in the Iranian traditional camp

Farzaneh's research interests are

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Professor Lisa Hajjar on Human Rights Reserach

Lisa Hajjar, professor of Sociology and affiliated with UCSB's CMES, is part of a three scholar-team working on a collaborative research project titled "Human Rights in the Arab World: Research, Advocacy and Public Policy." The research project was launched in 2013 as a joint venture of the American University of Beirut (where she was a visiting professor) and Lund University. In 2016, the team was awarded \$200,000 from the National Endowment of the Humanities; Hajjar is the Principal Investiga-



tor on the grant, which will be run through UCSB. This research

project aims to redress a lacunae of knowledge about human rights in the Arab world and to situate

(or, more ambitiously, to center) analysis of human rights activism and related struggles for social justice and political freedom in the region within the globalized discourse and academic study of human rights. By focusing the empirical research and theoretical analysis on and in the Arab world, the team hopes to contribute to a more thoroughly universalistic notion of international or global justice, and to integrate knowledge from this region into what is plausibly claimed to be the last utopian project of the current era.

Professor Dwight Reynolds Here and Abroad

In May 2016 **Dwight Reynolds** gave two presentations in Paris, one in the Ethnomusicology program at the Sorbonne and the other at the Institut du Monde Arabe. Over the summer he presented papers at two conferences (Musicians in the Mediterranean: Narratives of Movement in Naples and the School of Abbasid Studies in Leiden), and also gave an invited lecture at the Free University, Berlin. In between these engagements he hiked Il Sentiero degli Dei (“The Path of the Gods”), a breathtaking trail along the cliffs of the Amalfi Coast with dizzying drops of 1500 feet and more down into the Mediterranean, and spent a week bicycling around the Netherlands. There, the highlights were the extraordinary Kröller-Müller Museum and sculpture garden hidden away in De Hoge Veluwe National Park (it has the second largest collection of Van Goghs, among many other gems) and visits with various Dutch scholars of Arabic literature and ethnomusicology.

More recently he co-organized and hosted two conferences at UCSB in October 2016:



Suez at 60, a commemoration and analysis of the Suez Canal War of 1956, and Re-Framing the Folktale, which featured 13 presenters who examined the re-use and re-purposing of classic folktales in Native American, Middle Eastern, and European traditions. And in early November he gave a series of lectures at Cambridge, the School of Oriental & African

Studies (SOAS), and Oxford University and, among other memorable experiences, dined at high table at St. Anthony’s college.

Four new essays are now in press: “The Qiyam of al-Andalus,” “Song and Punishment in Early Islamic Culture,” “From Sawt to Muwashshah: A Musical Revolution,” and “Abu Zayd al-Hilali: Trickster, Womanizer, Warrior, Saint.” The next items on the to-do list are an essay about the eroticism of musical imagery (Music as Desire: The Eroticism of Musical Imagery in the Muwashshah) and another comparing medieval European and Arabic autobiographies (Medieval Autobiographies: Dreamers, Monarchs, Mystics, and Scholars), both due frighteningly soon, along with a third essay “Women are Smart, Men get Eaten: Arabic Ghoul Tales as Performed by Female Narrators.”

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Professor Amr El Abbadi on Teaching and Running

Professor **Amr El Abbadi** (Computer Science) recently completed instruction of a mini-course at AUB (American University in Beirut) in CAMS (Center for Advanced Mathematical Sciences) on “The Practical Challenges of Managing Big Data in the Cloud.”

In addition, Dr. El Abbadi delivered a keynote address at the British University in Egypt



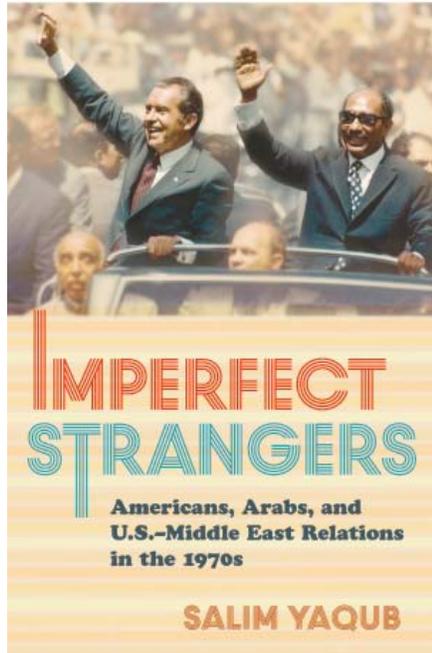
(BUE) Symposium on Sustainable Vital Technologies in Engineering and Informatics on Nov 8, 2016 entitled “The challenges of Practical Big Data Management in the Cloud.”

Finally, he also recently completed the Alexandria 10K race, placing 7th in his age group at a competitive time of 50:02.

Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S. –Middle East Relations in the 1970s

A New Book by UCSB History's Salim Yaqub

In September 2016, Cornell University Press published Salim Yaqub's second book, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S. –Middle East Relations in the 1970s*. In this monograph, Yaqub argues that the 1970s were a pivotal decade for U.S.-Arab relations, whether at the upper levels of diplomacy, in street-level interactions, or in the realm of the imagination. In those years, Americans and Arabs came to know each other as never before. With Western Europe's imperial legacy fading in the Middle East, American commerce and investment spread throughout the Arab world. The United States strengthened its strategic ties to some Arab states, even as it drew closer to Israel. Maneuvering Moscow to the sidelines, Washington placed



itself at the center of Arab-Israeli diplomacy. Meanwhile, the rise of international terrorism, the Arab oil embargo and related increases in the price of oil, and expanding immigration from the Middle East forced Americans to pay closer attention to the Arab world.

Yaqub combines insights from diplomatic, political, cultural, and immigration history to chronicle the activities of a wide array of American and Arab actors—political leaders, diplomats, warriors, activists, scholars, businesspeople, novelists, and others. He shows that growing interdependence raised hopes for a broad political accommodation between the two societies. Yet a series of disruptions in the second half of the

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New Book Series with I.B. Tauris on Sex, Marriage, and Family in the MENA

Series Editors: Janet Afary and Claudia Yaghoobi

Janet Afary and Claudia Yaghoobi (UCSB Ph.D. 2013) are thrilled to announce a new book series with I. B. Tauris on Sex, Marriage and Family in the Middle East.

Marriage and family remain fundamental institutions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). However, when people think of marriage in the MENA cultures, they tend to assume that many existing practices were originated with the birth of Islam and without subsequent interactions

with other religions and cultures of the East or the West. This innovative series will explore the connections and influences among ancient, early Islamic, medieval, early modern, and contemporary marriage practices and traditions of the region. Through the lens of marriage laws and practice, we can see how these communities interacted, or resisted interacting with one another, in order to strengthen communal identities or secure communal boundaries.

The series will examine a diverse set of issues such as various types of matrimonial bonds, the status of women in marriage, slavery, concubinage, divorce, polygamy, widowhood, parenting, pilgrimage rituals, and rules of property and inheritance for women, among others. This inter-disciplinary series, will include both edited volumes and monographs, and welcomes contributors from various disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Political

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A Spring in Iran with Dr. Stephen and Gail Humphreys

For more than forty years Iran had lain beyond our reach, even though it is a place so crucial in the history of Islam and the Middle East that any self-respecting student of the region has to get there somehow. But there were always insurmountable hurdles—money and family responsibilities in the 1970s, politics ever since.

By 2014, however, prospects seemed brighter, and Gail began working out a trip. With the help (via email) of a local guide she carved out an ambitious itinerary. It took us first to the famous cities of southwestern Iran—Yazd, Shiraz, and Isfahan, along with the Achaemenid and Sasanian complexes of Pasargad, Persepolis, and Naqsh-e Rostam. A second leg stretched from

Tehran to the northeastern frontier at Mashhad, home to the most important shrine in a country stuffed to the brim with shrines. So in April 2015 we disembarked at the Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran, met our guide Reza, and set off in his battered Nissan SUV for the great shrine city of Qom—the first stage in a month-long journey that would cover some 3000 miles.

What did we find? First of all, Iranian people on the

street were unfailingly welcoming, courteous, and intensely curious. No surprise, since American visitors have been a great rarity for the past thirty-five years. They were desperately eager to tell us that they were not terrorists (to their minds that was an Arab thing), and to disclaim any interest whatever in developing a nuclear



bomb. “What would we do with it if we had it?” However, Iranians were acutely preoccupied by the sanctions. We saw no lack of basic goods in the markets, but people were clearly hard-pressed (by severe inflation as well as a lack of good jobs) to afford them. The mullas (religious leaders) who dominate politics, the economy, and public discourse were widely unpopular—people did not hesitate to speak their minds about that—but nobody thought they were going to fade away anytime

soon. Among some members of a certain generation, there was even a quiet nostalgia for the days of the Shah and the American military presence—just the opposite of what one heard from Iranian students and intellectuals back in the seventies.

Iran is decisively a modern country, even in the smaller cities, with a functioning electrical grid, clean water, and serviceable roads. Retail commerce, whether situated in the classic covered bazaars or in storefronts stretched along the streets, is always small scale; we saw no supermarkets or department stores. That suited us just fine. There are lots of new ugly industrial complexes scattered throughout the countryside.

However, these are largely controlled by the mullas and other elements of the revolutionary elite, and so they likely reflect political power rather than economic vitality.

Tucked away within this modern landscape are the great monuments and the historic urban cores. They did not disappoint. Isfahan, with an architectural tradition dating back to the 11th century, certainly deserves its reputation—Isfahan is half the

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Suez

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spoke on representations of Suez in Egyptian cinema, while Professor **Dwight Reynolds** of UCSB discussed Egyptian musical traditions connected with the canal. The other speakers were Professor **Jennifer Derr** of UC Santa Cruz, who explored the politics surrounding the construction of the Aswan Dam, a project intimately connected to the Suez Crisis; Professor **Miram Haleh Davis**, also of UC Santa Cruz, who examined the legacy of Suez in Algeria; Professor **Salim Yaqub** of UCSB, who spoke about U.S. policies toward the Middle East in the 1950s; and Professor **Sherene Seikaly** of UCSB, who showed how the Suez experience reverberated through the politics of the Israel/Palestine dispute.

Suez at Sixty was co-sponsored by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Center for Cold War Studies and International History, and the College of Letters and Science.

~ Salim Yaqub, Department of History

Afary

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Science, History, Religious Studies, Gender Studies, Literature, and Media Studies.

If interested in submitting a proposal please contact the editors.

~ Janet Afary, Mellichamp Chair, Professor of Religious Studies and Feminist Studies, UCSB

~ Claudia Yaghoobi, Roshan Institute Assistant Professor in Persian Studies Persian Program Coordinator

Farzaneh

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constitutionalism and Iranian Shiism. However, he's taking his knowledge in a different direction for his next book about Iranian women in the Iran-Iraq War. "Iranian Women and Gender in the Iran-Iraq War" will be published in summer 2018 on the occasion of the 30-year anniversary of the end of that conflict. Farzaneh continues to travel nationally and internationally to promote his book and his upcoming publications.

Farzaneh is the recipient of a COR grant, which he used to travel to Iran to examine a recently opened archive in Tehran for a project that explores the last years of the Pahlavi regime before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and will spend part of his sabbatical leave in 2017 to conduct research for his current project.

~ Association of Iranians Studies

Yaqub

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decade thwarted such prospects. Arabs recoiled from a U.S.-brokered peace process that fortified Israel's occupation of Arab land. Americans grew increasingly resentful of Arab oil pressures, attitudes dovetailing with broader anti-Muslim sentiments aroused by the Iranian hostage crisis. At the same time, elements of the U.S. intelligentsia became more respectful of Arab perspectives as a newly assertive Arab American community emerged into political life. These patterns left a contradictory legacy of estrangement and accommodation that continued in later decades and remains with us today.

Reynolds

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In May 2017 he will co-host a conference with colleague **Heather Blurton** (English, UCSB) titled "What they read then, What we read now" that will examine the remarkable disjuncture between the medieval texts we read and teach in modern times and those texts which actually circulated widely in the Middle Ages. Many of the most famous texts for modern readers are found in only a single manuscript, including Beowulf, Ibn Hazm's *The Neck-ring of the Dove*, *El Cid*, the *Oxford Roland*, *Usama ibn Mundhir's Book of Contemplation*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Ibn Buluggin's Kitab al-Tibyan*, the *Book of Margery Kempe*, and others, while the books that are attested in hundreds of manuscripts are often not taught or studied at all! (Anyone ever hear of "The Prick of Conscience"? It is the single most widely attested Middle English poem with 130 complete manuscripts.) The conference will examine how the modern canon of medieval Middle Eastern and European has come into being, why we so often ignore the texts that enjoyed great popularity in that period, and the implications of presenting a modern selection of works as the "masterpieces" of medieval literature.

Tucker

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the unified character of the Mediterranean world going back to Antiquity, and passing through the early modern world described by Fernand Braudel in his classic *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*.

Humphreys

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world, as they say. Some of the loveliest work in the country comes from the 18th and 19th centuries (the Zandi and Qajar eras), periods not usually regarded as the apex of Iranian glory. However, we found ourselves most entranced by the historic centers of the smaller towns—an almost unknown, intricately decorated tomb tower in Abarquh, the archaic mosques in Na'in and Damghan, the shrine complex dedicated to the mystic Bayazid in the pretty village of Bistam, and so many more.

It is foolhardy to generalize about the women of Iran, but why not try. Despite the ironclad law requiring women to cover their heads and upper bodies in public, their sense of themselves and their place in society varies enormously. It depends on whom you ask. Some accept the dress code and other restrictions as appropriate, others would be rid of it all in a second. Gail, never shy about asking questions, plunged into a lot of frank conversations, especially with younger women, and still keeps in touch with a couple of high school students that she met in Yazd.

Most women, in the great cities as well as towns and villages, do wear the black chador, with their hair fully covered. However Iranian women also wear very heavy makeup with strong hues, and they love flashy shoes—perhaps a subtle protest against the gloomy dress code imposed by the mullas. In the larger cities, younger women in particular often dress more casually, with colored

jackets or tunics down to mid-thigh, and—another quiet protest—they often push the obligatory head scarves as far back on their hair as possible. Altogether women are a very visible and lively part of street life and the marketplace; the rigid gender segregation of Saudi Arabia (another state based on religious ideology) is not in evidence.

Since Iran is the Islamic Republic, a word on religious practice seems in order. Oddly enough—in our experience at least—the big congregational mosques are little frequented by most people except for the Friday noon prayer, and even then many people do not bother to attend. Many of the historic mosques are in fact treated as museums during the week, and you can enter and wander around without even taking off your shoes. On the other hand, shrines dedicated to the innumerable descendants (both male and female) of the Prophet are everywhere—some 14,000 at last count—and teeming with pilgrims and students. We visited many, including the three largest, and were struck by the intense piety of the people there. I felt a bit queasy about penetrating into such sacred spaces, but we were always treated with courtesy or at worst indifference. Gail still recalls with gratitude the “angel” (a devout young woman from Tehran) who led her through the labyrinth of Mashhad. Iranians are by and large a religious people, but they seem to prefer the guidance of the holy figures of ages past to that of the present-day mullas.

Iranians are almost equally entranced by their poets. The tombs of Hafez, Omar Khayy-

am, Firdawsi, and many others have a constant flow of visitors, including crowds of boisterous schoolchildren, barely kept in check by their teachers. Poetry is imbedded in Iranian thought and speech to a degree we can hardly imagine in America anymore; perhaps literary-minded circles in Victorian Britain would be the closest analogue.

So, would we go back to Iran? In a minute. Half the country we did not see at all, and there is a vast amount to be learned about the places we did get to. Our sense is that the political situation is tenser now (very much so post-Trump) than it was in the spring of 2015, and that people with Iranian surnames might do well not to go. The partial lifting of sanctions has not brought the benefits ordinary Iranians were hoping for, due in some part to U.S. policy, and so the tone of conversations on the street might be less hopeful than it was when we were there. But even given all that, Iran is a unique place. Our experience there was irreplaceable, and we would not have missed it for the world.

~Stephen and Gail Humphreys

