

Center for Middle East Studies

University of California, Santa Barbara

Spring 2017 Alumni Newsletter (Volume 7, Number 2)

Greetings from the Director

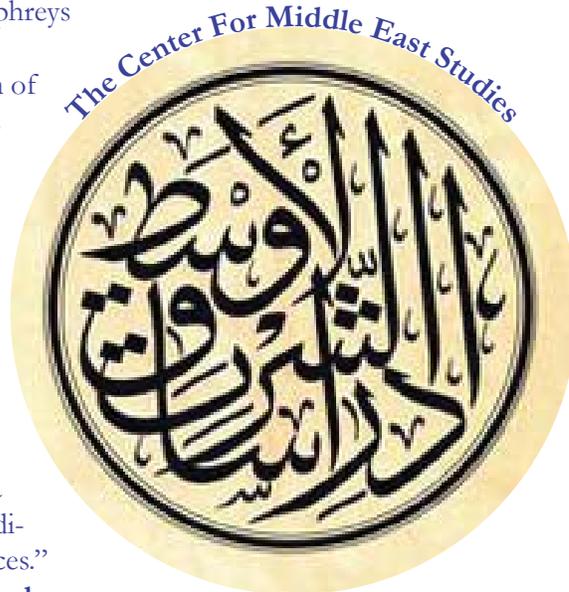
This has been a very busy and exciting year at CMES. We hosted a number of events over the course of the year, and in the Winter and Spring in particular. These included visits by scholars such as **Dimitri Gutas** (Yale), **Julia Bray** (Oxford), **Hanan Kholoussy** (AUC), **Sami Hermez** (Northwestern-Qatar), **Zachary Lockman** (NYU), **Michael Bonner** (Michigan), and **Andrew March** (Yale), who spoke on subjects as varied as medieval Arabic poetry and the formation of modern Middle East Studies. The R. Stephen Humphreys Distinguished Visiting Scholar this year was **Everett Rowson** of New York University, who has been a teacher and mentor to a number of CMES faculty. He spoke on the topic "It's Complicated: Sexuality in Premodern Islamic Societies." There were also a number of workshops. **Heather Blurton** (English) and **Dwight Reynolds** (Religious Studies) organized a workshop on the subject "Medieval Bestsellers and Masterpieces." **Felice Blake** (English), **Richard Falk** (Global Studies), **Lisa Hajjar** (Sociology), **Sherene Seikaly** (History), **Jennifer Tyburczy** (Feminist Studies) spoke at an event commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 war entitled, "Thinking Palestine, 1967 and Beyond." Faculty published books. **Salim Yaqub** (History) published his *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the*

1970s with Cornell University Press. **Adam Sabra** (History) published his translation of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī's *Advice for Callow Jurists and Gullible Mendicants on Befriending Emirs* with Yale University Press. We are particularly proud that **Sherene** received the Harold J. Plous Award for "outstanding performance and promise as measured by creative action and contribution to the intellectual life of the college community." The awardee is selected by the Faculty Executive Committee of the College of Letters and Science.

cology), **Alvaro Luna** (Comparative Literature), **Adam Morrison** (Religious Studies), **Ali Rahman** (Comparative Literature), **Ranjani Atur** (Religious Studies), and **Yevgeniy Runkevich** (Religious Studies). Congratulations to all of them, and we look forward to reading the fruits of their labors!

I hope everyone has a relaxing and productive summer, and look forward to seeing you all again in the Fall.

- Adam Sabra, Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies



This has also been a year in which a number of our graduate students have traveled to present their work at conferences and workshops, as well as to carry out research and learn languages. CMES made travel awards in the Winter and Spring to **Sergey Salushev** (History), **Gokh Alshaif** (Global Studies), **Jesilyn Faust** (Global Studies), **Liza Munk** (Ethnomusi-

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Everett K. Rowson:

R. Stephen Humphreys Distinguished Visiting Scholar

This year the honoree of the R. Stephen Humphreys' distinguished visiting scholar was Professor **Everett K. Rowson**, associate Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. Rowson is one of the most distinguished Arabists of his generation; a rare polymath whose scholarship draws on a remarkable variety of Medieval Arabic sources. His work deals with topics as wide ranging as the history of philosophy in Islam, the various genres of Arabic Humanism, and the social history of Medieval Islamic societies. Of note is his work on the tenth century philosopher al-'Amiri on the immortality of the soul, his contributions to the translation project of the 10th century historian al-Tabari, and his

pioneering co-edited volume on homoeroticism in Classical Arabic literature. Among his leadership roles in many authoritative encyclopedic projects is his task as an



executive editor of Brill's monumental *Encyclopedia of Islam Thre*. Moreover, Professor Rowson's support for generations of Ara-

bists remains unique and beyond measure, and can be gleaned from the breadth of contributions to the recent festschrift written in his honor entitled *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Everett K. Rowson*.

During his visit to UCSB, Professor Rowson gave a talk entitled *It's Complicated: Sexuality in Premodern Islamic Societies*, in which he overviewed the understudied topic of sexuality in Islamic societies, by drawing on many Arabic genres, including literary, historical and legal sources. His seminar with graduate students conducted a close reading of the preface to the first book on "love theory" in Arabic entitled *Kitab al-Zahra*, by the 9th century author Ibn Dawud.

Another Successful Year for UCSB Model Arab League

Students from colleges around Southern California gathered at the University of La Verne, March 4-6, 2017, in order to participate in the annual Model Arab League Southern California Competition. Our UCSB team represented the countries of Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine under the guidance of graduate advisors **Caleb McCarthy**, **Sergey Salushev**, and **Stephanie Wright**. This year's team worked hard throughout the winter quarter learning about each of these nations and the preparation paid off at the competition. We had an impressive number of students partici-

pate this winter and fifteen formally competed, including **Ali Abouesh**, **Fatima Abdel-Gwad**, **Maribelle**



Boutros, **Cameron Richey**, **Kevin Lau**, **Nathaniel Chase Frydel**,

and **Peri Propper**. We are especially pleased to note the work of **Lola Maraiyesa** who received the Outstanding Delegate award for her representation of Egypt in the Joint Defense Council. Additionally, **Jacob Morales**, **Kate Dolbear**, **Logan Clement**, **Dhishal Jayasinghe**, **Alex Markovich**, **Catherine Anz** and **James Harrington** received Distinguished Delegate awards, and the entire Palestine delegation received Distinguished Delegation. The fantastic success of this year's delegates maintains a fine tradition of UCSB's Model Arab League.

- *Caleb McCarthy, Sergey Salushev, and Stephanie Wright, Model Arab League Advisors*

First Arabic Language Alumni Gaucho Reunion at UCSB

On Saturday, April 29, 2017, **Magda Campo** organized for the first time, an All Arabic Language Alumni Gaucho reunion at UCSB. In addition to the presence of the alumni, all Arabic classes at UCSB were invited to attend the reunion with professors **Juan Campo**, **Dwight Reynolds**, **Racha el-Omari**, **Scott Marcus**, and the chair of the Religious Studies Department, **Kathleen Moore**, all of whom gave short talks after the alumni presenters. Dr. Marcus also performed with a small group from the Middle East Ensemble. Three alumni of Arabic Language made presentations on the benefits of learning Arabic at UCSB and how the language was used in



their working and private lives.

Eric Staples, PhD graduate from the History Department, talked about how he used Arabic in Oman, speaking the language with Omani ship builders building three old dhows (old Omani ships). **Samuel Adelson**, undergraduate student from Global Studies explained to students

that little did he know while learning Arabic, that he was going to land a job as a translator of Arabic for army intelligence in Georgia. Finally, **Leonard Ellick** undergraduate student from History, told students and alumni how he fell in love with his Egyptian wife who was a Fulbright TA of Arabic at UCSB while he was learning Arabic, and how he used the language for the two years they lived in Egypt. He also mentioned that he thinks he was hired to teach in the New Horizon School in LA because he knew the language. The students were very happy and interested to hear from alumni's experiences and the many and varied benefits for learning

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Thinking Palestine: 1967 and Beyond

June 2017 marked fifty years of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. The anniversary makes all too evident what activists and scholars have long noted: the Israeli military occupation is not temporary. It is a defining structure of the Israeli and Palestinian political landscape.

Along with UCLA and UCB, UCSB hosted a commemoration included a panel, a poster exhibit, and a reception. On April



28th, the panel built on decades of critical thinking and political organizing around Palestine and justice more broadly. It engaged how legality, legitimacy, and history have intersected over the last half a

century. Participants included: **Lisa Hajjar** (Sociology), speaking on "Understanding Israel's Occupation through the Lens of International Law;" **Richard Falk** (Orfalea Center), speaking on "After 50 Years: Legality, Legitimacy, and History;" **Felice Blake** (English), speaking on "Looking Black at Palestine: On the Anniversary of the Black Panthers;" and **Sherene Seikaly** (History), speaking on "The Politics of Naming: 1967 and Beyond." The panel was moderated and chaired by **Jennifer Tyburczy** (Feminist Studies).

Advice for Callow Jurists and Gullible Mendicants on Befriending Emirs

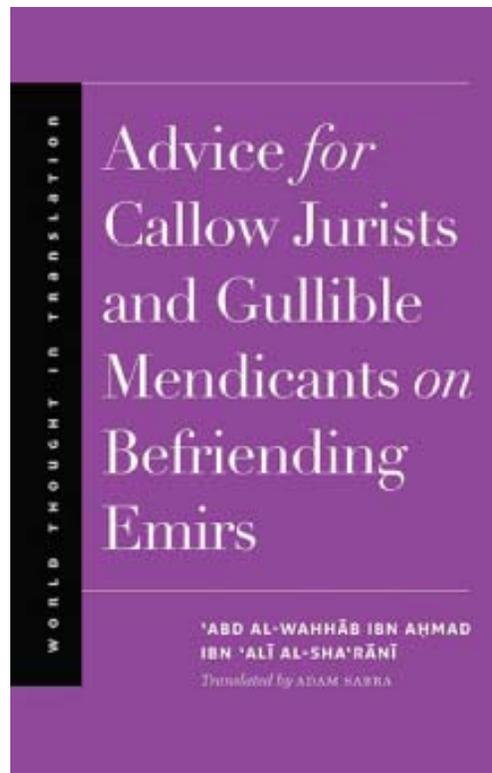
A New Book By UCSB History Professor Adam Sabra

Most of what Western readers know about Islamic political thought pertains to institutions such as the caliphate and sultanate or to the role of Islamic law in the construction of an Islamic society and polity. But if we examine texts that are older than our daily newspapers, we can peer through a window into a flourishing early modern Islamic world. Translated into a Western language for the first time, *Advice for Callow Jurists and Gullible Mendicants on Befriending Emirs* presents a Sufi understanding of the role of politics and political etiquette as practiced in Ottoman Egypt in the sixteenth century. The author's theoretical approach to government is largely implicit, as he focuses on the proper conduct of a Sufi spiritual adviser towards his politically important friend, and vice versa.

The author, 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Ahmad ibn 'Alī al-Sha'rānī (1493-1565), was one of the most prolific and widely-read writers of the early modern Middle East. He authored dozens of works on Sufi theology and practice, hagiography, and Islamic law, among other topics. The thousands of surviving manuscripts of his works are spread throughout the Islamic world. He continues to be one of the influential Sufi authors in contemporary Egypt, so his works are of more than historical interest.

One of the appealing aspects of his writing is that while al-Sha'rānī was highly conversant with the cosmopolitan high cul-

ture of the Muslim world written in classical Arabic, he was also heavily influenced by the local culture of Ottoman Cairo and his familial roots in the rural world of the Nile Delta. His works are full of references to popular culture



and religious practice, as well as to the experiences of common people. In particular, he often articulated the complaints of peasants and artisans about the behavior of the wealthy and powerful.

This combination of high learning and a familiarity with the experiences of common people is also reflected in his language. He writes in a simplified form of classical Arabic, accented with the use of colloquial terms and expressions, some of which are recognizable from modern Cairene dialect. The sixteenth century was a time when a number of

writers used colloquial dialect and poetry to represent the experiences of the common people during the period of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and the establishment of Ottoman rule. One such figure is the chronicler Ibn Iyās (1447-circa 1522), who wrote the most detailed narrative of the Ottoman conquest. His writing also reflects this shift to give greater voice to the lower classes and to the popular culture of ordinary Egyptians. The use of colloquial Arabic, generally rejected by medieval Muslim authors as a sign of coarseness, became more common, although not to the degree one finds in some eighteenth-century chroniclers who wrote entire works in the colloquial dialects of Egypt and Syria.

Al-Sha'rānī's use of colloquial phrasing and expressions in a purportedly classical Arabic text presents a number of problems for the translator. How does one represent these different registers of language, especially when the classical text sometimes transposes a colloquial expression into classical vocabulary and phrasing? There is no easy answer, but to the extent possible, I have attempted to replicate these sometimes abrupt shifts between formality and informality in the translation. This sort of language may sound strange coming from an educated religious scholar famous for his piety and political influence, but it is precisely this manner of addressing varied audiences in familiar language that made al-Sha'rānī

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2017 Harold J. Plous Memorial Award Recipient Sherene Seikaly

Sherene Seikaly (History) was awarded one of UCSB's most prestigious prizes, the Harold J. Plous Memorial Award. The Plous Award was established in 1957 to honor Harold J. Plous, Assistant Professor of Economics. The award is given annually to a faculty member of the rank of Assistant Professor or Instructor who has demonstrated outstanding performance by creative action or contribution to the intellectual life of the college community. As the 2017 recipient, Dr. Seikaly delivered the 60th annual Plous Award Lecture entitled "Exploring the Economic Forces of Mandatory Palestine," based on her recent



publication *Men of Capital* (Stanford University Press, 2016).

Seikaly's *Men of Capital* examines British-ruled Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s through a focus

on economy by illuminating dynamic class constructions that aimed to shape a pan-Arab utopia in terms of free trade, profit accumulation and private property. Seikaly explores how Palestinian capitalists and British colonial officials used economy to shape territory, nationalism, the home, and the body, which marks an important departure from expected histories of Palestine.

In her Plous Lecture, Seikaly sought to position Palestine and Palestinians in the larger world of Arab thought and social life, moving attention away from the
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Medieval Bestsellers vs. Masterpieces

On May 6, **Heather Blurton** (English, UCSB) and **Dwight Reynolds** (Religious Studies, UCSB) convened a conference titled *Medieval Bestsellers vs. Masterpieces* that brought together Middle Eastern and European Medievalists to discuss a fascinating paradox: In both regions, many of the medieval texts that are now most famous and most commonly taught have come down to us in one single copy – as *unicum* manuscripts. Such works include *Beowulf*, *The Neck-Ring of the Dove*, *the Oxford Roland*, the "Memoirs" of *Usama ibn Munqidh*, *Sir Gawain* and the *Green Knight*, the *Autobiography of Ibn Buluggin*, the *Book of Margery Kempe*, and others. On the other hand, many of the works that circulated most widely

Sponsored by the Center for Middle East Studies, Department of English,
the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, Medieval Studies Program, and the College of Letters & Science.



**Medieval
BESTSELLERS vs.
MASTERPIECES**

In both European and Middle Eastern Medieval Studies, many of the texts that we now study and teach as the most canonical representations of their era have only survived in a single manuscript and were virtually unknown in their day. While curiously, the texts that were most widely read and circulated scarcely figure in canonical accounts of medieval literature or in university curricula. This symposium will provide cross-cultural insights into both the literary tastes of the medieval period and the literary and political forces behind the creation of modern canons of medieval literatures.

SATURDAY
MAY 6
2017
9:00 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.
LOMA PELONA CENTER

FEATURED SPEAKERS
HEATHER BLURTON | English, UCSB Santa Barbara
MATTHEW FISHER | English, USC Los Angeles
SHAMMA BOYARIN | English/Religious Studies, University of Victoria
SHARON KINOSHITA | Literature, UC Santa Cruz
CHRISTINE CHENG | English, UC Los Angeles
ELIAS MUIJANNA | Comparative Literature, Brown University
PAUL COBB | History, University of Pennsylvania
DWIGHT REYNOLDS | Religious Studies, UCSB Santa Barbara
DANIEL SELDEN | Literature, UC Santa Cruz

MORE INFORMATION: www.cmes.ucsb.edu/medievalbestsellers.html

in the Middle Ages, as attested by the large number of manuscripts still extant in many different locations, are rarely mentioned and even less frequently taught.

What are we to make of the huge discrepancy between what we read now and what they read then? How did the modern canon of medieval literature in European and Middle Eastern languages come into being? And why is that list of works so different from the list of works that enjoyed fame and popularity in their own period? The conference was well attended and provoked a great deal of spirited debate!

Presentations by guest speakers included:

Contemplating the Fate of Books with Usama ibn Munqidh's Book of Contemplation - Paul Cobb (Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of Pennsylvania)

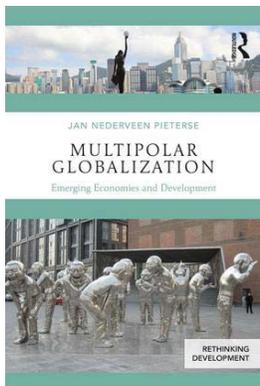
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CMES Alumni and Faculty Updates



Vincent Biondo (Ph.D. 2005) has accepted the position of chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Humboldt

State University. He continues to co-chair the Religion and Politics Unit for the American Academy of Religion. His NEH California Pluralism project (featuring UCSB faculty experts) can be viewed online at www.CaliforniaPluralism.org.



Jan Nederveen Pieterse (Mellichamp Professor, Global studies) is anticipating the publication of

his book *Multipolar Globalization: Emerging Economies and Development* as part of Routledge's *Rethinking Development* series. The rapid growth of economies in Asia and

the global South has led to a momentous shift in the world order. *Multipolar Globalization: Emerging Economies and Development* brings together development studies, global political economy, sociology and cultural studies to ask what these changes mean for domestic and global inequality and how multipolarity could reshape globalization. Accessible and insightful, *Multipolar Globalization* will be an essential guide both for students in the social sciences and for professionals and scholars seeking a fresh perspective.

Stories Continued

Arabic Reunion

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such a difficult language. The reunion was a great success. Some of the Alumni who could not make it for this reunion, expressed hopes for a similar gathering next year.

- Magda Campo, Department of Religious Studies

Seikaly

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limiting debates of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

Seikaly is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is also the editor of the *Arab Studies Journal*, co-founder and co-editor of *Jadaliyya* e-zine, an editor of *Journal of Palestine Studies*, a policy member of *Al-Shabaka*, the *Palestinian Policy Network*, and an advisory member of *R-Shief Online Archive Project*.

Sabra Book

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such an beloved figure in his own day and contributes to his enduring popularity as a religious teacher and moralist.

- Adam Sabra is professor of history and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud Chair in Islamic Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara

Medieval Bestsellers

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"Let No Bad Song Be Sung of Us": *Fame, Memory, and Transmission in/and the Chanson de Roland* - Sharon Kinoshita (Literature, UCSC)

"The Best Book I Have": *Medieval Manuscripts and the Early Modern Imagination* - Matthew Fisher (English, UCLA)

The Alexander Romance: The Original Global Literary Text - Shamma Boyarin (English, University of Victoria)

The Story of Aseneth - Daniel Selden (Literature, UCSC)

Compulsive Translation: The Travels of Tawaddud/Teodor - Christine Chism (English, UCLA)

They Love Me in Shiraz: Teaching the Medieval Islamicate Bestseller - Elias Muhanna (Comparative Literature, Brown University)

