Greetings from the Director

It is an honor to succeed my colleague Dwight Reynolds (Religious Studies) as Director of CMES. Dwight not only directed the center for most of its life to date, he was in charge of the Middle East Studies undergraduate major and the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program. Now that he has relinquished these responsibilities to focus on his research and teaching, we are dividing these duties into three parts. Kathie Moore (Chair, Religious Studies) will take over responsibility for the FLTA program, while Paul Amar (Global Studies) has taken over the undergraduate major until the fall, when Sherene Seikaly (History) will become its director. That leaves me with the directorship of CMES, which I assumed for a three-year period, beginning with Spring quarter this year.

CMES continues in its mission of supporting research and language study by graduate students from all over campus. This summer the following students are recipients of Summer Research/Language Study Awards: Sergey Salischev (History, Iran), Navid Yousefian (Political Science, Tunisia), John Thibudeau (Religious Studies, Egypt), Nicholas Ragheb (Music, Egypt), Ali Rahman (Comparative Literature, Middlebury), Victoria Ballmes (Religious Studies, Israel), Caleb McCarthy (Religious Studies, various research collections on the East Coast), Stephanie Wright (Religious Studies, Iran), Marshall Evans (Religious Studies, Greece), Eric Massie (History, archives in the UK), Munther al-Sabbagh (History, Belgium, Netherlands, Turkey). This group represents a strong cohort of graduate students with a wide variety of research interests and specializations.

We look forward to a new faculty member joining us next year. Latila Shereen Sakr, also known professionally as VJ Um Amel, will be joining Film and Media Studies. Her work can be previewed at her website http://vjumamel.com/.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this year’s events at CMES. We had a varied and intellectually stimulating series of lectures and events. In particular, I would like to thank the members of this year’s CMES Executive Committee: Sherene Seikaly, Paul Amar, Scott Marcus, Cynthia Kaplan, Janet Afary, and particularly Dwight Reynolds. I would also like to thank the director’s assistant, Adam Morrison.

I wish everyone an enjoyable and productive summer and hope to see you all in the Fall.

- Adam Sabra, Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies
A Farewell from the Outgoing Director: Dwight Reynolds

It has been a pleasure and an honor to play a role in the growth of Middle Eastern Studies at UCSB, from a loosely knit cluster of faculty members in the early 1990’s, to the creation of the program and the undergraduate major, the founding of the Center for Middle East Studies in 2000, and the amazingly rapid growth in faculty (now nearly 40), participating programs and departments (10 and growing), superb graduate students, former FLTAs from nearly a dozen different countries, and highly successful alumni teaching and working in the field of Middle Eastern Studies at a wide variety of different institutions. I am not sure if any other university in the country has come as far and as quickly in our field as UCSB has in the past two decades.

I am on sabbatical leave this Spring Quarter, devoting myself primarily to working on my next book *The Musical Heritage of al-Andalus*, but it seemed particularly auspicious that my most recently edited volume appeared the very first week of my leave: *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arab Culture*. This work has been many years in the making, but I think the results have been worth the wait. This is, to the best of my knowledge, the first and only book in English to examine the broad spectrum of contemporary Arab culture including chapters on language, poetry, theater, narrative, humor, food, folklore, art, architecture, television, cinema, music, law, the impact of the *Nahda*, the contribution of ethnic and religious minorities, and the significance of the *Mahjar* (diaspora) communities. It is written for the educated general public and continues on p. 6.

Model Arab League Brings Home Multiple Awards

This year, UCSB’s Model Arab League traveled to La Verne, CA to the Southern California Regional Model Arab League competition, hosted by the University of La Verne. Students from nine institutions representing thirteen countries, from Algeria to UAE, spent the weekend of March 6-8 debating issues of defense, politics, and environment that face the Arab League today. Each member of the group did their part to contribute to planning for the weekend, especially our head delegate Zeina Rousan.

Our UCSB delegation represented Iraq. The team spent all of winter quarter under the guidance of graduate advisors Aaron Sokoll and Stephanie Wright, researching the highly complex issues facing the people of Iraq and the political possibilities that Iraqi government attempts to pursue in the face of continuing conflict. Iraq’s current political situation is precarious, but our students stepped up to the challenge, preparing extensive position papers and practicing parliamentary procedure. Their efforts paid off as both our Social Affairs and Environmental Affairs delegations received awards.

The success of this team continues a long tradition at UCSB of impressive performances at the Model Arab League competitions and reflects well on the diligence and intelligence of our fine undergraduate student. Continued on p. 6.
On February 20-22, 2015, CMES hosted a remarkable event titled The Musical Heritage of Moorish Spain with support from the College of Letters and Science, the Division of the Humanities and Fine Arts, the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, the UC Institute for Research in the Arts, and the Multicultural Center. The event had three separate components. First, on Feb. 20-21, an academic workshop took place that included ten scholars of Andalusian music who each presented as yet unpublished research for discussion, during which it became clear that a number of exciting new lines of research are taking shape.

On Saturday evening, Feb. 21, six of those scholars – Jonathan Glasser (College of William and Mary), Jonathan Shannon (Hunter College), and Christopher Witulski (Florida State University), as well as Scott Marcus, and Philip Murphy and Dwight Reynolds (all from UCSB) – performed with members of the UCSB Middle East Ensemble in a very special concert featuring guest artist Esti Kenan Ofri. The concert focused on different aspects of living musical traditions that trace their origins back to medieval Muslim Spain, known in Arabic as al-Andalus and in Hebrew as Sepharad. The program included instrumental pieces as well as songs in Arabic and Hebrew from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Finally on Sunday Feb. 22, a public symposium titled Intertwined Traditions: the Untold Tale of Jewish-Muslim Musical Traditions from Medieval Moorish Spain explored the deep-rooted connections between Jewish and Muslim traditions of Andalusian music. For centuries, mixed orchestras of Jewish and Muslim musicians performed this repertory together in secular contexts, but then separated for performances of a more religious nature, with Jewish singers performing the same melodies as hakekasot and piyutim (paraliturgical songs) in the synagogue and Muslims singing those same melodies with more mystically tinged Sufi lyrics in the zawiyyas (Sufi lodges). Presentations by Edwin Seroussi (Hebrew University), Jonathan Glasser (College of William and Mary), and Dwight Reynolds (UCSB) were topped off by a remarkable lecture/demonstration by singer Esti Kenan Ofri.

Altogether it was an extraordinary event that introduced many of those attending to a remarkable and little known aspect of the Middle East – centuries of music shared by Muslim and Jewish communities in North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Yemen.
Richard Bulliet:
R. Stephen Humphreys Distinguished Visiting Scholar

During the week of Feb. 1-5, CMES hosted this year’s R. Stephen Humphreys Distinguished Visiting Professor, Richard Bulliet of Columbia University. Professor Bulliet, the author of some nine academic books as well as a half dozen novels, gave a fascinating and well-attended talk on “Energy in Middle Eastern History.” The talk provided an astonishing synthesis of the impact of various means of power and transport, comparing different types of wheels, chariots, and carts with beasts of burden such as camels, horses, donkeys, and oxen, the impact of the development of various types of irrigation, water wheels, and the emergence of mills, and the effects on increases and decreases of population, urbanization, and the inventions that can be termed the “pre-industrial” revolution.

He also led a graduate text seminar in the reading of a portion of a biography contained in Volume 1 of Al-Tadwīn fi akhbār Qazvin by ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfī’i al-Qazvīnī. The biography is that of the author’s father and constitutes a remarkably long and detailed biography of an “ordinary” medieval ‘alim.

We are very pleased to announce that next year’s R. Stephen Humphreys Distinguished Visiting Professor will be Michael Cook of Princeton University.

5th Annual Islamic Studies Graduate Student Conference

This year’s Fifth Annual Islamic Studies Graduate Student Conference, titled “Constructing and Contesting Islam in Contemporary Contexts,” was held May 8-10, and addressed the ways in which contestations of practice, authority, and interpretation function in the constitution of competing visions of normative Islam. Thirteen graduate students presented papers covering topics related to Muslim youth identify formation through formal and informal educational structures; the navigation and conception of modernity among Muslim thinkers from the colonial to post-colonial era; aesthetic understandings of Islam in fashion, music and dance; as well as papers examining minority Muslim communities in Asia. UCSB faculty members Sherene Seikaly (History), Juan Campo (Religious Studies), and Mary Hancock (Anthropology) joined as moderators for the panel sessions and Adam Sabra (History) and Kathleen Moore (Religious Studies) offered introductory and concluding remarks respectively. The keynote address was delivered by Charles Hirschkind, professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Hirschkind’s address explored practices of historical reflection on religious pluralism in Moorish Spain, considering the works of writers, thinkers and poets as they illustrate a tradition of historical memory from which to reassess Spain’s relation to Islam, North Africa, and the Middle East. This fifth year of the conference was continued on p. 6.
Adam Sabra (Professor of History) was the Baynard Dodge Distinguished Visiting Professor at the American University in Cairo this year. He visited AUC March 7-16, and delivered two public lectures and gave a graduate seminar. The Arabic lecture was entitled “Family and State in Ottoman Egypt: The Example of the Bakri Lords,” and the English lecture was called “Sufism and Political Theory in the Late Middle Ages.” The graduate seminar dealt with his work on family history in pre-modern Egypt.

The Baynard Dodge professor is selected on a yearly basis by the Department of Arabic and Islamic Civilizations. Previous honorees include Edward Said and, mostly recently, Professor Dwight Reynolds of the Religious Studies Department at UCSB. Each honoree is expected to give a public lecture in Arabic and another in English. In addition to meeting with members of the Department and the AUC community, Sabra also met with fellow historians from the Egyptian state universities and some of their graduate students.

- Adam Sabra, Professor of History

CMES Alumni Updates

Jonathan Sciarcon, Assistant Professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Denver, and Laura Sciarcon are pleased to announce the birth of their first child Phineas Beniamino Sciarcon this past October 10, 2014. Phineas is already getting a crash course in Israeli and Palestinian historiography.

Syracuse University Press has just published The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani, by Mateo Farzaneh (class of 2010). This is a revised version of his dissertation that he completed under the guidance of professors Humphreys, Gallagher, and Reynolds and outsider readers professors Ali Gheissari (University of San Diego) and Mohsen Kadivar (Duke University). Farzaneh is an assistant professor of history at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. It is noteworthy that he has already been invited to University of California Irvine and San Diego for book talks in Fall 2015 and is scheduling talks locally in Chicago and the greater Midwest.

Heidi Morrison (PhD, ’09) and Danh Huy Nguyen were delighted to welcome the birth of their son on June 6, 2015. His name is John Nam Nguyen. The family is healthy and happy.
Reynolds  
continued from p. 2

for university students – so feel free to buy your mother a copy! (And I am very pleased to say that the paperback and Kindle versions are very reasonably priced.)

Being on leave will also allow a bit of time for travel, so I am about to depart for London to attend the Muwashshab conference, May 3-4, 2015 at SOAS, then on to speak at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, May 7-12. After a month and a half back in Santa Barbara in May-June, I will attend the Mamluk Studies Conference in Liège (Belgium), go for a very quick visit to Granada where I was EAP director 2002-05, and then a month in Barcelona as a participant in the NEH Summer Institute Negotiating Identities: Expression and Representation in the Christian-Jewish-Muslim Mediterranean, during which I hope to polish one of the chapters of the book on Andalusian music.

Since one cannot work on a book all day every day (or at least I cannot), I continue to go hiking on the Channel Islands, putter in my nearly all native Californian drought-resistant garden, am studying Catalan in preparation for my stay in Barcelona, and trying (rather unsuccessfully so far) to learn to juggle. I thought that after years of juggling paperwork and bureaucratic tasks learning to do it with physical objects would be easy, but apparently the two skills are not as closely related as I had supposed.

I close with my very best wishes to my successors – Adam Sabra as the new Director of CMES, Sherene Seikaly, the new Chair of Middle East Studies, and Kathleen Moore, the new supervisor of the FLTA program. I am certain that Middle East Studies at UCSB will continue to grow and thrive under their leadership.

- Dwight Reynolds, Department of Religious Studies, UCSB

MAL  
continued from p. 2

students: Zeina Rousan (Outstanding Delegate, Social Affairs), Bridget McWaid (Outstanding Delegate, Social Affairs), Sukayna Ibrahim (Honorable Mention, Environmental Affairs), Mark Yun (Honorable Mention, Environmental Affairs), Ansel Lundberg, Yajaira Lopez, Sam Weaver, Hubert

Zhang, Katrina Padilla, Travette Copeland, James Harrington, Aurora Gutierrez, Natalie Klein, Patrick McCoy, and Jacob Morales. These students did an excellent job preparing for the competition and demonstrated superior teamwork. We are proud of their dedication and their achievements.

- Aaron Sokoll and Stephanie Wright, Model Arab League Advisors

ISGSC  
continued from p. 4

made possible thanks to the continued generous support of the Center for Middle East Studies, as well as the College of Letters and Sciences, Graduate Division, the Office of Diversity, Equity, & Academic Policy, the Department of History, the Department of Religious Studies, the Department of Global Studies, and the Mellichamp fund.

- Caleb McCarthy, John Thibdeau & Stephanie Wright

2015 ISGSC Planning Committee