UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



College of Liberal Arts & Sciences | Illinois Global Institute

Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies



























































TABLE OF CONTENTS

- DIRECTOR'S NOTE ERIC CALDERWOOD
- FALL 2024 RECEPTION
- PALESTINE IN THE WORLD EVENTS
- MODEL ARAB LEAGUE 2025
- CSAMES EVENTS FALL 2024 & SPRING 2025
- OUTREACH: SCHOOL VISITS AND **PRESENTATIONS**
- GEEO TRIPS TO MOROCCO & TURKEY
- FLAS AWARDS
- STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS
- CALL FOR DONATIONS











Annual Newsletter خبار



DIRECTOR'S NOTE By Dr. Sric Calderwood

Dear CSAMES affiliates, students, and friends, Welcome back to a new year at CSAMES! I'm happy to start my second year as CSAMES Director. As I look ahead to the new year, I'm excited to see the continuation of some of the programs that we launched last year.

The "Palestine in the World" series, a collaboration between CSAMES and other units at IGI, will continue through the end of 2025. This semester's events in the series kicked off on September 16 with a visit from poet Lena Khalaf Tuffaha, recent winter of the National Book Award. Please keep an eye on the CSAMES website for announcements about more events in the series.

Last year also marked the launch of the new South Asian Studies initiative, an effort to bring increased visibility to South Asian studies at Illinois. I'd like to thank my colleague Rini Mehta, the Faculty Director for South Asian Studies, for spearheading this initiative.

In addition to these continuing programs, we also look forward to an exciting line-up of new events. In the fall semester, several CSAMES faculty affiliates will give talks about their latest research. And we have also scheduled screenings of two recent films from Morocco and Palestine. You can check out the CSAMES website or our weekly newsletter for the most up-to-date information about all of our events and programs.

I hope to see you at one of our upcoming events. For now, I wish you a happy fall semester!

Sincerely,
Eric Calderwood
CSAMES Director



Fall Reception 2024







The Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies hosted a reception in Fall 2024 to formally introduce our new Director, Eric Calderwood, and our Faculty Director for South Asian Studies, Rini Bhattacharya Mehta. The event served as an occasion to outline the Center's vision and strategic goals for the future, while fostering meaningful engagement among colleagues and community members. Attendees enjoyed thoughtful conversation and refreshments in a collegial atmosphere. CSAMES is always looking for new initiatives and ways to further strengthen ties within our academic and local communities.













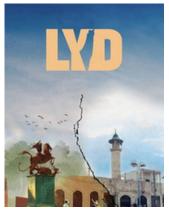
"Palestine in the World" Events

The IGI Series on Global Responsibilities brings multidisciplinary and global perspectives to major contemporary questions. For calendar year 2025, the spotlight is on Palestine in the world today.



"WHY IS PALESTINE IMPORTANT?" LECTURE BY USSAMA MAKDISI (2/25/2025)

This talk delivered by Ussama Makdisi, Prof. of History, University of California Berkeley, called "Why is Palestine Important?" traced the historical and geopolitical significance of Palestine. It drew a full audience of more than 150 attendees. The event was a powerful space for learning and dialogue. The room was filled with thoughtful silence, reflection, and a shared sense of urgency as he unpacked the enduring impact of colonial legacies.



FILM SCREENING: LYD (3/27/2025)

The series continued with a screening of the film LYD, a powerful story of a city that once connected Palestine to the world-exploring what it once was, what it is today, and what it could have become. Professor Laura Goffman (History, UIUC) led a discussion following the film.



BOOK TALK WITH DR. NADIM BAWALSA (4/1/2025)

This was followed by an online book talk with Nadim Bawalsa, PhD in History, New York University, on Transnational Palestine, which drew attention to the often-overlooked histories of Palestinians in Latin America. Attendees were captivated with its nuanced exploration of migration and identity.



"PALESTINE IN THE WORLD" SERIES PANEL DISCUSSION (5/2/2025)

The last event for the Spring 2025 semester was a roundtable about Palestinian history before 1948, with two thought-provoking lectures: "Unmixing the Holy City: Religion, Politics, and Neighborhood Segregation in 19th–20th Century Jerusalem" from Michelle Campos, Assoc. Prof. of Jewish Studies and History, Penn State University and "The Palestinian National Movement Between Constitutionalism and Revolt, 1929–1939" from Charles Anderson, Assoc. Prof. of History, Western Washington University. They focused on the multiethnic, multireligious, and multilingual realities on the ground before 1948 and how many harmonious relationships among neighbors of various backgrounds were upended in the unraveling of competing nationalisms and European interventions in segregating the inhabitants.



AN EVENING WITH LENA KHALAF TUFFAHA (9/16/2025)

The first event for the Fall 2025 semester was a poetry night and book signing with poet, essayist, and translator Lena Khalaf Tuffaha. She discussed her book Something About Living, winner of the 2024 National Book Award and the 2022 Akron Prize for Poetry. With over 120 people in attendance, it was a huge success! She also had an insightful lunch chat with interested students. It was a fantastic start to the fall events for the IGI's "Palestine in the World" series.

<u>ן</u>

Annual Newsletter اخْدَبَار

Center Events

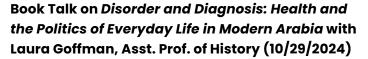
CSAMES Book Talks and Featured Events





A conversation with Moroccan writer Yassin Adnan, author of the novel *Hot Maroc* (10/23/2024)

Hot Maroc sheds light on Morocco's struggles with press freedom through the story of Rahhal Laâouina, who gets pulled into the online world of corruption and scandal. It was longlisted for the 2017 International Prize for Arabic Fiction. The book talk with Yassin Adnan had an impressive turnout and lively dialogue!



Dr. Laura Goffman discussed the launch of her book, Disorder and Diagnosis: Health and the Politics of Everyday Life in Modern Arabia. Her book traces the history of medicine and public health in the Persian Gulf from the late 19th century to the 1973 oil boom. It reveals how health policies shaped political power, racial divisions, and connected the region to other countries.









"Music, Race, and the Sonic Architecture of Colonial Morocco" with Samuel Llano, Senior Lecturer in Spanish Cultural Studies, University of Manchester (11/18/2024)

Dr. Samuel Llano gave us a compelling presentation. We learned about how the Mashriq's influence shaped the Western Mediterranean's musical history and its impact on national identities and dynamics.

Annual Newsletter يُخبار

Center Events

CSAMES Book Talks and Featured Events

"What Happened, and What's Next, for Syria?" with Rana Khoury, Asst. Prof. of Political Science, UIUC (1/28/2025)

Dr. Rana B Khoury's insightful talk explored the journey of Syria's revolution and its path forward. We had an intriguing conversation about such an important topic.







Water on Fire: A Memoir of War with Tarek El-Ariss, James Wright Prof. and Chair of Middle Eastern Studies at Dartmouth College (2/6/2025)

Dr. Tarek El-Ariss's memoir is a gripping account of the Lebanese Civil War, displacement, and resilience that blends history, humor, and introspection. The book talk and discussion was engaging and deeply moving.







"On Translating Arabic Poetry" with Huda Fakhreddine, Assoc. Prof. of Arabic Literature, University of Pennsylvania (3/4/2025)

Dr. Huda Fakhreddine visited us and inspired us with her wonderful work! We had a discussion of her recent translations of poems by Hiba Abu Nada, Ibrahim Nasrallah, and Salim Barakat.





"'The sight that I offer is the fairest of sights': Ivory, Concubines, and Transcultural Exchange in Umayyad Cordoba" with Abigail Balbale, Assoc. Prof. of Graduate Studies, New York University (3/25/2025)

Dr. Abigail Balbale shared her research about Madinat al-Zahra and the Cordoban Umayyad caliphate. We had a fantastic turnout and a thoughtprovoking discussion!





Model Arab League 2025 Success!





We are thrilled to share that the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign delegation had an outstanding performance at the Regional Model Arab League Competition 2025 in Bloomington, Indiana at the University of Indiana on February 20-22, 2025. MAL is a diplomatic simulation and leadership development program designed to give students insights into the Middle East and Arab world, as well as build critical leadership skills from public speaking and writing to negotiation and compromise. The keynote speaker was Ambassador Majid Abdulaziz, the permanent representative of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

CSAMES supported the MAL with funding from the U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant. We had nine students participate in three separate committees: Joint Defense Council, Palestinian Affairs Council, and Social Committee! Representing Oman, our dedicated students earned prestigious awards:

> Distinguished Delegation Award – Joint Defense Council Mohammad Fakhreddine & Rachel Simpson Distinguished Delegation Award – Palestinian Affairs Council Grace Denton & Rosette Pavkov Honorable Delegation Award – Overall Representation of Oman

A special thank you to Maha Chahine and Awad Awad for being there to support and guide our students throughout the event. Their mentorship and encouragement played a key role in our success! This achievement is a testament to our students' hard work, diplomacy, and commitment to excellence in international affairs. We are incredibly proud of their efforts in fostering critical discussions and representing UIUC at the highest level. Congratulations to our winning team!







Annual Newsletter Morocco GSSO trip

CSAMES Associate Director Dr. Angela Williams joined colleagues from the Center for African Studies (CAS), the Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO), and twelve fellow educators on a cultural tour of Morocco in June 2025. Supported by funding from the CAS U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant, participating educators enriched their classrooms by submitting lesson plans inspired by the experience.

Below, we share a glimpse of their reflections and highlights from the journey.



Al-Qarawiyyin University, Fes



Sunrise breakfast before hot air balloon ride, Marrakech



Essauoira



Tangier



Frances Rivera at hotel in Chefchaouen

immersion, professional growth, and personal reflection. The vibrant markets, stunning architecture, and warm hospitality offered powerful reminders of the value of global perspective in education. One memorable moment was visiting a local school, where the sense of community and creativity was deeply inspiring. It challenged us to think differently about engagement and resourcefulness in our own classrooms. For me and my colleagues, the trip reinforced the importance of cultural responsiveness and global awareness in our work with students."

"Traveling to Morocco was an unforgettable experience that blended cultural

- Frances Rivera, Special Programs Coordinator, Unified Student Supports at Indianapolis Public Schools



"When I applied to this program, I knew I wanted to delve deeper into the geometric patterns that are so characteristic of Islamic art. I also recognized that I could connect this art to the geometry scope and sequence in the 8th-grade curriculum. My arrival in Casablanca and the tour of the Hassan II Mosque cemented this idea. At the entrance to the mosque, there is a small museum exhibiting Moroccan art, filled with beautiful geometric pieces. I took pictures of the artwork and decided to use them as inspiration for my lessons."

- Nancy Ibarra, 8th Grade Math/Geometry, Chicago Public Schools

Tile and ceramics workshop and showroom, Fes



Argan production



Breakfast at women's cooperative



Marzouka Desert



Chefchaouen



"For the lesson I created for 2nd and 3rd Grade Reading, I was inspired by the beauty and diversity of Morocco. As we traveled throughout the country, I reflected on misconceptions about Africa and learned about Morocco's free healthcare, free college, natural beauty, and the kindness of its people. The inspiration comes from the journey as a whole."

- Marybeth Ryan, Barack Obama Elementary, Richmond, VA

Turkey GSSO trip

CSAMES Outreach Coordinator Maha Chahine joined a GEEO group of nine educators, most of them high school teachers specializing in history, geography, art history, and religion. They developed lesson plans on a wide range of topics, drawing inspiration from sites such as Çatalhöyük—one of the earliest known proto-city settlements in human history. Below are a few reflections from the teachers.

"Educators can't teach what they don't know, so grant-funded travel opportunities are essential to provide teachers with fieldwork and research experiences. In my case, the most effective way to study the world's religious traditions is in the field, not through a textbook. The grant from CSAMES enabled me to interview tour guides, mosque leaders, artisans, and everyday citizens across Türkiye. This year, I bring back their histories, faith practices, and values to enrich my classroom. Furthermore, my stories model to the next generation how learning happens not just through books, but through the lived experience of others."

- Drew Holtmann, High School World Religions Teacher, Nerinx Hall, St. Louis, MO



Tuz Golu



Çatalhöyük



Canakkale



Ephesus



Goreme Open-Air Museum

"As an educator, it is imperative that I am an example of a global learner for my students. Through my program with GEEO and CSAMES, I was able to learn much more about Turkish culture, religion, and ancient history through an immersive educational experience. This experience will forever change how I view, interact with, and teach my students with Middle Eastern heritage. This journey would never have been possible on my own, and I am extremely grateful to have had this opportunity to grow both as an educator and human being!"

 Victoria Zinda, 5th grade teacher at Ella Baker Global Studies and Humanities Magnet School in Minneapolis Public Schools



Cappadocia



Konya



Çatalhöyük

"Travelling to Turkiye has allowed me to gain greater insight into my students and staff who have come from Middle Eastern countries. I have learned about the cultures, languages, religions, history, and ethnic diversity that make up this area, thereby developing a deeper understanding and increased empathy for the people that I serve".

Outreach school visit and presentations

Building Bridges with K-12 Schools

These professional development sessions with Units 4 and 116 brought together K-12 teachers for an engaging training on cultural awareness in the classroom. Angela, Maha and Parya led thoughtful presentations focused on the Middle East, sparking lively discussions and meaningful connections with the educators. Together, we explored holidays, languages, geography, history, and art from the region, creating space to reflect on how inclusivity can be fostered in our schools. This experience was not only a fantastic opportunity to deepen cultural understanding but also to share valuable insights that the teachers greatly appreciated. Teachers left with fresh insights and a renewed commitment to fostering inclusive classrooms.



Central High School







Central High School





Craft activities at Carrie Busey International Night on April 10, 2025. Students made an evil eye and a star, which represent cultural art.



In this visit on February 25, 2025, we presented a lesson plan about the book Mama Shamsi at the Bazaar, a story of a young girl excitedly going with her grandmother to the Tehran market for the first time. We asked the class of English language learners how a typical day in the market looks for them.

Annual Newsletter الخيار

FLAS Awards

Foreign Language & Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships support study in modern foreign languages. The purpose of the FLAS program is to train students to integrate global knowledge into a future career.

SUMMER 25 UNDERGRADUATE

MASON ACQUAVIVA (HISTORY), ARABIC AT UIUC
GRACE DENTON (POLITICAL SCIENCE), ARABIC AT MIDDLEBURRY
SAMI KHALIL (HISTORY), ARABIC AT UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

SUMMER 25 GRADUATE

MACKENZIE GUTHRIE (COMPARATIVE WORLD LITERATURE), ARABIC AT UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

NOOR HAMAWY (COMPARATIVE WORLD HISTORY), ARABIC AT MIDDLEBURY JESSICA WIKLE (FRENCH STUDIES), ARABIC AT UIUC SLIMW PROGRAM SEBASTIEN BROWN (ART HISTORY), ARABIC AT UIUC SILMW PROGRAM

Academic Year 24-25

UNDERGRADUATE

NAREEN AYDOGAN (CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING), ARABIC
WITTER BAILEY (GLOBAL STUDIES), TURKISH
LORIAN TADROS (POLITICAL SCIENCE), ARABIC

GRADUATE

ELIZABETH CODER (EPOL), ARABIC

SARAH KISHTA (COMMUNITY HEALTH), HEBREW

NADIA DERVISH (EPOL), TURKISH

BRENNAN DELL (LINGUISTIC), TURKISH

ASENA KARIPEK (SOCIOLOGY), ARABIC



FLAS Fellowship Testimonal and Competition

"I am writing to express my profound gratitude for the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship and share how it has significantly changed my academic studies, personal growth, and professional development. I have deepened my linguistic ability, cultural understanding, and friendships in ways I never imagined possible.

The FLAS Fellowship has been an invaluable asset to my academic, linguistic, and professional journey. Its support has given me many connections, friendships, and opportunities. I am beyond grateful for its help and to apply the skills I have gained toward my future academic and professional endeavors."









CSAMES Celebrates Students

Muskan Khowaja

Muskan was a GA for CSAMES who designed eye-catching and engaging announcements. After just one semester of teaching advertising undergraduates, Muskan did something extraordinary: she won a campuswide Teaching Excellence Award 2025, standing out among professors and instructors from every department. Muskan graduated with her Master's in Advertising from the College of Media.





Sahar Amini

Sahar Amini (CSAMES Middle East Studies, 2024) was admitted to Indiana University's Middle East Studies Ph.D. program and will also be working as a teaching assistant for the International Studies department.

Sami Suhwail

Sami is a CSAMES MA student. He earned his bachelor's degree in Historical Studies from the University of Texas at Dallas in 2021. Before joining UIUC, he spent the past five years teaching middle school Special Education, including Math and Science. His research interests include early Islamic intellectualism and the impact that Islam had on influencing regional dynamics. He also has an interest in the Levant region with a focus on Palestine.



Parya Jangjou

Parya was a GA at CSAMES during the 2023–2024 academic year. She is a Ph.D. student in Global Studies in Education. She created interdisciplinary teaching resources and contributed to CSAMES' digital outreach to expand the accessibility of the Center's educational programming. Parya is currently pursuing her doctoral research on transnational education, identity, and the experiences of international students in higher education.



Courses offered at CSAMES



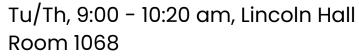












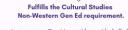


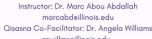


SAME 250

















Introduction to the study of the region known as the "Middle East." Students will gain an appreciation of the variety of cultures, ethnicities, and religious traditions in the region, as well as how recent history has changed long standing norms, and the resulting challenges.

Call for Donations

We are grateful for the generous support of alumni and friends to provide a strong and dynamic educational mission. The programs focus and build upon events to further our academic community's awareness of and knowledge about the societies of South Asia and the Middle East. Our donors help us maintain existing programs and undertake new initiatives.

To make a gift, go to: https://csames.illinois.edu/donate-csames You will be directed to the CSAMES giving page and then the University of Illinois Foundation's secure online giving site for your personal and credit card information. To clear all inputs and selections click "Start over."