Greetings from the Chair

Welcome to the 2015–16 academic year. The start of a new academic year is always busy and exciting as returning faculty and students re-adjust to university life, and new members of the department settle into their new surroundings. This fall fifteen faculty, students, and visitors are joining the department. Their biographies and photographs are featured in this issue of the Near Eastern Studies Newsletter. Please join me in welcoming them to the department.

Muhammad Qasim Zaman
Chair, Near Eastern Studies

New Members of NES Faculty

Marina Rustow

Marina Rustow has a joint appointment in History and Near Eastern Studies as a full professor. She is a social historian of the medieval Middle East and works with a relatively neglected type of source: medieval documents, especially sources from the Cairo Geniza, a cache of more than 300,000 folio pages preserved in an Egyptian synagogue. She also works with some Arabic papyri and paper documents. Most of her research has centered on Egypt and Syria from the tenth century to the fifteenth, with occasional forays into Europe and modernity.


Rustow runs Princeton’s Geniza Lab, where undergraduates, graduate students, and postdocs can conduct original research. She advises or co-advises projects on medieval Middle Eastern or Jewish history and especially on the world of the Geniza. To date, she has advised Geniza-based theses on domestic slavery, female adolescence and marriage, the India trade, Jews under Crusader rule, and the relationship between Jews and medieval Iraqi polities.

Apart from medieval manuscript fragments, she also has an abiding interest in the classical musical traditions of the Middle East, especially theory and performance practice in the Arab, Ottoman, Persian, Andalusi, and Iraqi traditions. She plays oud, buzuq, and classical piano.

Rustow holds a B.A. in Literature from Yale College. After her undergraduate education, she spent two years as an editor of long-form print journalism and four studying the textual history of the Babylonian Talmud. She did her doctorate in history at Columbia with Yosef Hayim耶鲁什almi, but most of her Geniza-related training extra muros here at Princeton.

Lara Harb

Lara Harb joins Near Eastern Studies as an assistant professor. Her research focuses on classical Arabic literary theory and more generally on Arabic conceptions of the “literary.” She is currently writing her first book entitled Poetics of Wonder: Aesthetic Experience in Classical Arabic Literary Theory, in which she explores the changing theories of literary judgment from the ninth to the fourteenth century CE. The concern with literary evaluation carries over to her teaching, which covers a range of topics relating to Classical Arabic Poetry and Prose, as she insists on an awareness of what is at stake when judging literature from a different time and place. She received her Ph.D. from New York University’s Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in 2013. Her dissertation won the first Seeger A. Bonebakker Prize in 2014 for the best Ph.D. thesis in Classical Arabic Literature. She holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Brown University.
Eve Krakowski
Eve Krakowski has a joint appointment in Near Eastern Studies and the Program in Judaic Studies as an assistant professor. She studies the social history of the medieval Middle East, with particular interests in women’s history, family history, and the history of religious practice. Her research focuses primarily on urban Jews in Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt (969–1250 A.D.), a subfield she was drawn to because of a specific body of source material: the Cairo Geniza documents, a cache of thousands of everyday writings produced mainly in this period and preserved by chance in a synagogue in Fustat (old Cairo).

Most of her research to date has focused on kinship, gender, and rabbinic law in medieval Egypt—as they worked both in theory (i.e., according to prescriptive legal texts) and in practice. Her first book, Coming of Age in Medieval Egypt: Women’s Adolescence, Jewish Law, and Ordinary Culture, will examine how all three institutions interacted to shape Jewish women’s coming of age and transition to first marriage.

With Jessica Goldberg, she is editing an introductory handbook to Geniza research: its history, practice, and future prospects. She is also writing a different kind of handbook with Marina Rustow and Craig Perry, which will trace common terms and features across Jewish and Islamic legal and administrative documents from the Fatimid period (a project funded by fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities).

Before coming to Princeton, she spent two years as a Blaustein post-doctoral fellow in the Program in Judaic Studies at Yale University, and one as a Rabin post-doctoral fellow in the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies at Columbia University. She earned her Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago in 2012.

Satyel Larson
Satyel Larson is an assistant professor specializing in women, gender, and sexuality in the Middle East and North Africa. Her work is ethno-historical, and mostly based in Morocco. Her scholarship focuses on how legal, medical, and religious culture influence practices of kinship and reproduction, and on the flow of ideas and technologies of gender and sexuality between the Middle East, North Africa, and Western Europe. She has written on the politics of kinship, ethnicity, and Islamic identity in Maghrebi law and society. Her current book project examines the resilience of unconventional kinship and reproductive practices in modern Morocco. The book is based on archival research and fieldwork conducted in an Islamic family law court, a maternity hospital, and popular healing sites in Rabat and Casablanca.

Larson holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. She was a Harp er-Schmidt Fellow in the Social Sciences and Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago from 2012–15. At Chicago, she taught courses in political economy, social and political theory, feminist and postcolonial thought, and cultural analysis, for which she was awarded an outstanding distinction in undergraduate teaching and mentoring. In her teaching as well as her research, she attends to questions of knowledge production and social marginalization, and to discourses of progress, normalcy, health, freedom, and resistance. She has held fellowships from various institutions, including the American Association of University Women, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, the Empirical Legal Studies Group at Boalt Law School, and the Al-Falah Program in Islamic Studies at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, UC Berkeley.

Hassan Ansari
Hassan Ansari earned his doctorate at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) of the Sorbonne, Paris. He also studied at the Hawza ‘Ilmiyya, Tehran and Qum, where his work focused on the study of philosophy, theology, canon law, and legal theory. He is currently a Member at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His publications include Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr, eds. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro, and Sabine Schmidtke, Islamic History and Civilization series (Leiden: Brill [in press]; L’imamet et l’Occultation selon l’imamisme: Étude bibliographique et histoire des textes (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); and a critical edition of Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s Tuḥfat al-mutakallimin fī l-radd ʿalā l-falāṣifa (Tehran 2008, with Wilferd Madelung).

George A. Kiraz
George Kiraz joins Near Eastern Studies as a lecturer in Syriac. He first encountered Syriac when his father sent him, along with his sisters, to study the language with a local priest in his hometown of Bethlehem. Following his immigration to the U.S. in 1983, he studied computing in college and continued to teach himself Syriac on the side. A chance encounter with James Allen’s Natural Language Understanding (1987), which discusses how to program computers to process language like humans, led him to see a connection between his professional background in computer science and his passion for Syriac, and, after completing his undergraduate studies, he pursued an M.St in Syriac studies at Oxford and a doctorate in computational linguistics at Cambridge.

While at Oxford and Cambridge, he began to put to practice what he had learned. He produced A Computer-Generated Concordance to the Syriac New Testament in six volumes (Brill, 1993) and Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels in four volumes (Brill, 1996). After graduating,
he worked at Bell Labs as a research scientist from 1996 to 2000, and he revised his dissertation into a monograph entitled *Computational Nonlinear Morphology with Emphasis on Semitic Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 2001). After leaving Bell Labs, he received a one-year research position at Columbia University for the academic year 2004–2005.

Among his other publications are several works on Syriac philology and pedagogy, and he co-edited with Sebastian Brock the *Gorgias Concise Syriac-English, English-Syriac Dictionary* (Gorgias, 2015), and with Sebastian Brock, Aaron Butts, and Lucas Van Rompay the *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Gorgias, 2011). He has also been involved in the new field of digital humanities, working on projects ranging from digitizing audio recordings of Syriac sacred music, to establishing a peer-reviewed online journal (*Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*), to digitizing archival material from Mardin, Turkey.

**Alberto Rigolio**

Alberto Rigolio holds a B.A. in Classics from UCSF Milan, and an M.Phil. in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies and a D.Phil. in Classical Languages and Literature from Oxford University. His work focuses on the transmission of Greek literature into Syriac and into Arabic during the Late Antique and Byzantine period. In his dissertation he argued that the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius provide insight into the developments of higher education during Late Antiquity, and they call for a reassessment of inherited views on “monastic” and “scholastic” education. He is endlessly fascinated by the uses (and misuses) of classical authors during Late Antiquity, and, being generally unsatisfied with too narrow subject boundaries, finds a continuous source of interest in intercultural and interlinguistic interactions throughout Antiquity. He has also written on the Syriac and Arabic translations of Aristotle, and on Christian literature in dialogue form composed in Greek, Latin, and Syriac. His post-doctoral project addresses the bewildering career of possibly the most influential statesman of the fourth century AD, Themistius, a teacher of rhetoric and philosophy who, albeit pagan, was active at the court of four Christian emperors. Before moving to Princeton, Alberto taught Greek and Latin languages and literature as a College Lecturer in Oxford, mostly at St. John’s and Merton Colleges; he carried out research as a Junior Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC, and at the Fondation Hardt in Geneva; and he has studied spoken classical Syriac at the Monastery of Mor Gabriel in Turkey. In the 2015–16 academic year, he is lecturing within the sequence *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Western Culture* (HUM 216–219) and is running a Graduate Seminar in *Intermediate Syriac* (NES 547). He is a Faculty Fellow at Mathey College.

**Postdoctoral Research Associates**

**Craig Perry**

Craig Perry is a social historian of the medieval Near East and earned his PhD at Emory University in 2014. At Princeton his post-doctoral research is supported by a Collaborative Research Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Together with Marina Rustow and Eve Krakowski, he is at work on a project that advances a new methodology based on the insight that scribal legal formulae in documents from the Cairo Geniza, far from being rote language, can be used to illustrate how institutions functioned on the ground. He analyzes the evolving formulae used in slave bills of sale to demonstrate how courts served as a privileged site for the incorporation of Islamic legal norms into Jewish legal practice.

Perry is also in the midst of revising and expanding a book manuscript tentatively entitled *Masters and Slaves in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt: Practices of Domestic Slavery in the Islamic World, 11th–13th Centuries*. His focus on Egyptian Jewry is partly explained by the patterns of medieval source survival. It happens that the best evidence currently available for slavery comes from documents that were preserved in the Cairo Geniza. *Masters and Slaves* will demonstrate how Jewish documents and subjects from the Geniza can be used alongside Islamic sources to narrate the history of the larger Egyptian society and Near Eastern slave trade.

**Naim Vanthieghem**

Naim Vanthieghem obtained M.A.s in Classical Studies (2009) and in Modern Languages and Literatures (2010), with a focus on Arabic language and literature, at the Free University of Brussels (ULB).

He then specialized in the field of Arabic papyrology at the University of Zurich (2010–11) and at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz (2011–12). He received his Ph.D. at the Free University of Brussels with a dissertation, “Contributions à la reconstitution, à l’édition et à l’étude des archives dites d’Hérōninos,” devoted to the archive of Heroninus, who managed a large estate in mid-third-century Egypt (2015).

Vanthieghem has written several articles and reviews in the fields of Greek, Coptic, and Arabic papyrology. He has a special interest in the study of multilingualism in medieval Egypt, and he has highlighted in several contributions the existence of an Arabic-Coptic bilingualism that emerged in Egypt in the ninth century and disappeared in the late Fatimid period (twelfth century). He has also worked for several years on Arabic legal documents, partly in the framework of the project “Islamic Law Materialized” funded by the European Research Council. He is now working on *Fatimid Arabic documents of the Cairo Geniza* for a project, “The Cairo Geniza as a Source for the History of Institutions and Documentary Practices in the Medieval Middle East,” under the direction of Marina Rustow.

**Graduate Students**

**Kyle Clark**

Kyle Clark received his B.A. in History from the University of Arizona and his M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Chicago. His research focuses on nineteenth-century Ottoman diplomacy with the European Powers, with emphasis on Ottoman diplomatic rhetoric. He is interested
in analyzing the “Eastern Question” from the Ottoman perspective in order to illuminate a facet of nineteenth-century diplomatic historiography that is still lacking, as most scholars have examined this question from the viewpoint of one of the Great Powers. Because the Ottomans’ increased emphasis on diplomacy throughout the nineteenth century was both a result and a cause of evolution in Ottoman administration, he views diplomacy as an ideal area in which to show the successes and failures of late-Ottoman statecraft, further discrediting the problematic decline model.

Cevat Dargin
Cevat Dargin graduated from Boğaziçi University with a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations and earned M.A.s from CUNY Brooklyn College in Political Science and New York University in Near Eastern Studies. His research focuses on the transformation of empires into nation-states as an ongoing process in the Middle East, but his interest in the subject is not fixed to state actors and institutions. Rather, “stateless” communities such as the Kurds and their interactions with their immediate environments as well as the global currents at different historical junctures attract much of his curiosity. He envisages engaging theories of empire, nation, state-formation, statelessness, war, and world-systems with recent and contemporary historical developments in the Middle East and beyond.

Hannah Lemonick
Hannah Lemonick studies the history of Greater Iran from the establishment of the Mongol World Empire through the rise of the Safavids. She is interested in the construction of legitimate authority, the interaction of social and intellectual networks, and the ambiguous confessional boundaries between Sunni, Shi’i, and other religious identities in the late medieval period. She received a B.A. in Linguistics from the University of Chicago in 2011 and an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the same institution in 2015. Her M.A. thesis, advised by Prof. John Woods, explored the relationship between the political ideology of diplomatic letters which Mongol rulers sent to Europeans and a similar exchange in Rashid al-Din’s Jami’ al-Tawarikh.

Nadirah Mansour
Nadirah Mansour is a member of Princeton’s Class of 2014 and majored in Near Eastern Studies, where her senior thesis, “From Nationalism to Public Piety: The Faces of Islamic Religious Authority in the Palestinian Context (1929-1935, 1951-1967),” was awarded the Bayard and Cleveland Dodge Memorial Thesis Prize. She spent the 2014–15 academic year on a CASA I fellowship in Amman, Jordan. Her research focuses on Arab intellectual history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with particular attention to themes of religion and authority. Previously, she has studied Islamic governmental institutions in the Palestinian context as well as Quranic exegesis and Islamic law.

Ekaterina Pukhovaia
Ekaterina Pukhovaia earned both her B.A. and M.A. from Moscow State University in History of Asia and Africa. Her research interests focus on the intellectual and cultural life of the Shi’A Arab community in Lebanon and Iraq in the early twentieth century. Of particular interest to her is the participation of the Shi’a Arabs in the Nahda. In the winter and spring of 2015 she conducted research at the Arabic Press Archive of Moshe Dayan Center (Tel Aviv University).

Visiting Student Research Collaborator
Rachid Aarab
Rachid Aarab will be a Visiting Student Research Collaborator October 1–December, 2015. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, where his major field is International Relations & European Integration. Previously, he earned M.A.s in International Relations, Security and Development, Autonomous University of Barcelona, in Philosophy, University of Ramon Llull, and in Cognitive Science and Language, Autonomous, University of Barcelona. His research interests include global energy policy, governance of national oil companies (NOCs), politics in the Arab states of the Gulf, Islam and international relations, and Mediterranean politics. While at Princeton, he will be researching the political factors influencing governance of National Oil Companies.

Class of 2017
The Department of Near Eastern Studies welcomes the following members of the Class of 2017: Alice Catanzaro, Hannelora Everett, Kristen Johnson, Preston Lim, Natasha Madorsky, Zeena Mubarak, Jeremy Rotblat, and Justin Vogel.

Past Issues of the NES Newsletter
To read past issues of the NES Newsletter click on this link: http://www.princeton.edu/nes/publications/newsletters/
Philip K. Hitti

Founding Member of the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures