This edition of the Near Eastern Studies newsletter highlights the achievements of NES graduate students during the current academic year and illustrates the opportunities available to a graduate student in NES. The newsletter also features accomplishments and publications of Near Eastern Studies’ award-winning faculty.

Graduate Student News

Fifth-year Ph.D. student Alexander E. Balisteri’s article, “Turkey’s Forgotten Political Opposition: The Demise of Kadırbeyoğlu Zeki Bey,” has appeared in Die Welt des Islams (55:2). The article, which earlier had been selected as the winner of Brill Publishers’ first Middle East and Islamic Studies Early-Career Paper Prize, “encourages a reevaluation of the role of Anatolian Muslim merchants and notability in the Turkish nationalist movement after World War I [and] offers the political career of Gümüşhane merchant Kadırbeyoğlu Zeki Bey (1884–1952) as one step toward such a reevaluation.”

Fourth-year Ph.D. student Cole Bunzel’s “The Kingdom and the Caliphate: Duel of the Islamic States” was published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on February 18, 2016. The work discusses the conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic State, states which represent “two very different versions of an Islamic state . . . at war over a shared religious heritage and territory.” To read this brief click here.

Bunzel appeared with The Atlantic contributing editor Graeme Wood at a National September 11 Memorial & Museum program, “ISIS Online,” on November 4, 2015, to discuss “the Islamic State’s strategic use of the Internet, including social media, to instill fear and recruit supporters . . . [and] what might be an appropriate response to their tactics.” He was also quoted in a New York Times article, “ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape,” that appeared on August 13, 2015. To read this article click here.

Fifth-year Ph.D. graduate student Zach Foster has published three articles over the last six months. The first article, “The Untold Story of Palestinians Who Learned Hebrew,” appeared October 28, 2015, in Palestine Square: The Blog of the Institute for Palestinian Studies, and discusses the understudied questions of “who and how many Palestinians studied Hebrew before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.” To read this article click here.

The second article, “Was Jerusalem Part of Palestine? The Forgotten City of Ramla, 900–1900,” appearing online on February 6, 2016, in the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, traces the meaning of “Palestine” from the tenth to the early twentieth century and explains that Palestine was seen either as “synonymous with the city of Ramla” or as “a small region based around Ramla, one that did not include Jerusalem, or that Palestine had much more to do with Ramla than it did Jerusalem.” To read this article click here.

The third article, “The Origins of Modern Palestine in Ottoman Documents,” appeared February 9, 2016, in Palestine Square: The Blog of the Institute for Palestinian Studies and uses Ottoman documents to provide a rare glimpse into local public opinion following the establishment of an independent administrative district centered on Jerusalem in 1872. To read this article in its entirety click here.

Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, who defended his doctoral dissertation, “Relocating the Centers of Shi’i Islam: Religious Authority, Sectarianism, and the Limits of the Transnational in Colonial India and Pakistan,” on September 10, 2015, has won the 2016 Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada Dissertation Prize on Pakistan, awarded by the Institute for South Asia Studies at UC Berkeley for the “best work in the humanities, social sciences, law, or public health on Pakistan, the region that is Pakistan, or things to do with Pakistan.” Robert H. Niehaus ’77 Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion Muhammad Qasim Zaman advised the dissertation. In addition to receiving the Prize, Fuchs will give the associated Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada Lecture on Pakistan on April 9, 2016. The title of his lecture is “The West is a Career—Pakistan’s Shi’i Islam between the Local and the Transnational.” Fuchs currently has a four-year position as a Junior Research Fellow in Islamic Studies at Gonville and Caius College at the University of Cambridge.
Faculty news

Marina Rustow, Khedouri A. Zilkha Professor of Jewish Civilization in the Near East and Professor of Near Eastern Studies and History, was named one of twenty-four MacArthur Fellows for 2015. “The MacArthur Fellows Program awards unrestricted fellowships to talented individuals who have shown extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction.” The five-year fellowship comes with a no-strings-attached grant of $625,000. For more about Rustow’s MacArthur click here, here, and here.

Assistant professor Jonathan Gribetz’s first book, Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter (Princeton University Press, 2014), was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title in 2015. In its review of the book, Choice wrote: “In the ever-growing and highly saturated field of Arab-Israeli conflict studies, it is rare for a book to break new ground and challenge long-held and well-entrenched perceptions. This is one of those rare exceptions. . . . Gribetz offers a compelling new reading of mutual perceptions of self and other between the main protagonists of that conflict . . . at the very historical moment it was about to erupt.” To read the full review click here.

Assistant professor Lara Harb’s doctoral dissertation, “Poetic Marvels: Wonder and Aesthetic Experience in Medieval Arabic Literary Theory,” was the first winner of the S. A. Bone-bakker Prize, which recognizes the most important dissertation treating classical Arabic literature. The announcement of the prize described Prof. Harb’s work as a “thoughtfully conceived, well researched, and exquisitely written” study that has “implications going far beyond literature.”

Professor Bernard Haykel was named Old Dominion Professor for the 2015–16 academic year. The Old dominion Professorship “program is designed to provide additional research time for faculty members and to enhance the humanities community more broadly by providing a core group of senior faculty with time and resources to engage colleagues and students from across the university in sustained discussions of their work.” Haykel has been active in the public debate on ISIS. On January 20, 2016, he testified at a U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Hearing, “Inside the Mind of ISIS: Understanding Its Goals and Ideology to Better Protect the Homeland.” His statement may be accessed here. He was also interviewed on the C.U.N.Y. television program CONVERSATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE on the topic, “What is the best way to defeat ISIS?” The interview may be viewed here.

Associate professor M’hamed Oualdi was a co-editor of a special issue of the Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée on “La nationalité dans le monde arabe des années 1830 aux années 1960: Négocier les appartenance et le droit.” “Les études ici réunies permettent de confronter les appréhensions et usages de la nationalité au Maghreb et au Proche Orient, des années 1830 au cours des années 1960, de la fin de l’empire ottomane aux lendemains des temps coloniaux.” To learn more about this issue click here.

Associate professor Michael A. Reynolds was the guest editor for “Constellations of the Caucasus: Empires, Peoples, and Faiths,” volume XVII of Princeton Papers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, published by Markus Wiener Publishers (2016). “Constellations of the Caucasus” studies a key region, Caucasus, that “marks the meeting place of East and West, Europe and Asia, Christendom and Islam. . . . Five leading scholars from around the globe explore the interaction of empires, peoples, and faiths in Caucasus throughout the centuries.” To learn more about this issue click here.

Associate professor Cyrus Schayegh is the co-editor with former NES postdoc Andrew Arsan of The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates (2015). “The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates marks a groundbreaking contribution to the fields of twentieth century History and Modern Middle East studies.” To learn more about his book click here.

Assistant Professor of History and Near Eastern Studies Max Weiss was selected one of 32 Andrew Carnegie Fellows in the “inaugural class of a major annual fellowship program that will provide support for scholars in the social sciences and humanities. The Fellows will receive awards of up to $200,000 each, which will enable them to take sabbaticals in order to devote time to their research and writing.” For more information about this honor, click here.