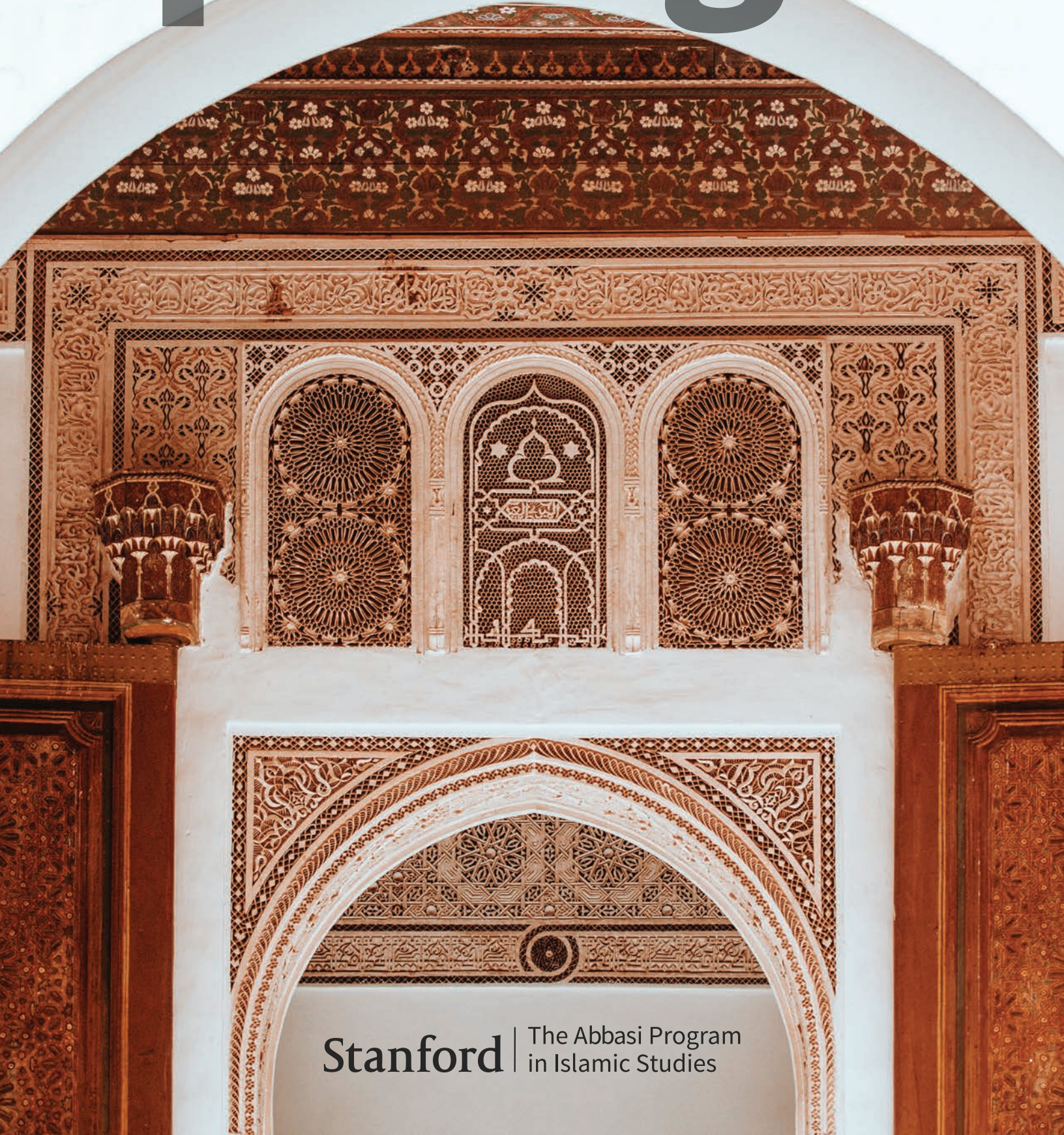


2019

spotlight



Stanford | The Abbasi Program
in Islamic Studies



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Director's Letter
- 4 New Affiliates
- 5 Faculty Profiles
- 6 Student Updates
- 8 Event Highlights
- 10 Announcements
- 11 Gifts & Support

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Above: Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Mosque, Shah Alam, Malaysia. Photo by Firdouss Ross on Unsplash.

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

In this edition of *Spotlight*, I am thrilled to share a few highlights that took place over the past academic year in the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies.

Faculty and students

Research and scholarship on Islam and Muslim societies continues to thrive at Stanford. We were proud to host a number of international researchers and postdoctoral scholars as well as support many outstanding student projects. We welcomed several new faculty members to campus, including Denise Gill, an ethnomusicologist and accomplished kanun player, and Samer Al-Saber, a scholar of Palestinian theater and a theater director. Their presence has generated excitement around Islam and the arts on campus. We were also delighted to welcome Anna Bigelow, professor of religious studies, and lecturer Dr. Jesse Izzo to the program.

Events

Throughout the year, the Abbasi program organized and co-sponsored more than 45 lectures, conferences, seminars, and events covering a diverse set of topics. I am particularly proud of two initiatives we spearheaded: *Islam in America*, a series of evening events that highlighted the diverse experiences of Muslims in the United States and in the Americas, and *Modern Turkey Encounters*, which focused on contemporary Turkey.

#KareemAtStanford

In May 2019, the Abbasi program held a special event featuring NBA champion Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Mr. Abdul-Jabbar spoke about his views on race, religion, sports, and politics in a dynamic on-stage conversation with Abbasi postdoctoral fellow Dr. Alaina Morgan and political science Professor Hakeem Jefferson. The engagement from the audience—one of the largest ever at an Abbasi event—during the live Twitter Q&A was electrifying. We are grateful to the Department of Religious Studies, the School of Humanities & Sciences, and Stanford Global Studies for helping support this event.

We are thankful to all who made 2018-2019 a memorable year, and we look forward to another rich and exciting year with you.

Sincerely,



Lisa Blaydes



Lisa Blaydes

Director of the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies, Professor of Political Science, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

NEW FACULTY AFFILIATES



Anna Bigelow is an associate professor of religious studies specializing in Islamic studies and the religions of South Asia and the Middle East. Her work focuses on Muslim devotional life, especially sacred spaces and ritual practice. Her current research concerns the circulation of devotional objects at Sufi shrines in India and Turkey.

Jesse Izzo is a lecturer at the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies. He is a historian whose research and teaching explore the connected histories of Western Europe, the Near East, and Inner Asia from late antiquity to the age of the Crusades. He is currently working on a book project, *Franks and Mamluks: Diplomacy, Politics, and War in Medieval Syria*.



Courses Supported by the Abbasi Program 2018-2019

Women and Islam
Islam in America
Sufism: Past and Present
History of Philosophy from Al-Kindi to Averroes
Contemporary Muslim Political Thought
History of Modern Turkey

Visiting Scholars 2018-2019

Murat Somer

Visiting Scholar, Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Koç University in Istanbul

Shimaa Hatab

Cairo University, Fulbright Visiting Scholar

Mehmet Mim Kurt

FSI-Stanford Humanities Center International Visitor, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow

Pelin Ayan Musil

Anglo-American University in Prague

Postdoctoral Scholars & Lecturers

Halil Ibrahim Yenigun

Alaina Morgan

Aziza Shanazarova



Image: "The Impossible Dream" by Laila Shawa

FACULTY PROFILES

Samer Al-Saber, Assistant Professor, Theater & Performance Studies, Stanford University

How did you become interested in studying the theater of the Middle East?

My study of the Middle East was always a journey of self-exploration and a quest for intellectual, artistic, and political liberation, just as it was my way of contributing to the production of knowledge about a misunderstood area of the world. With the constantly changing political landscape of the region, which continues to be determined by state politics and a history of Western imperialism, I became increasingly drawn to Arab cultural production as a counter force, resistant act, and coping mechanism. Although the pan-Arab nationalism project failed politically, pan-Arab culture continues to be a powerful uniting force.

You are both a scholar and an artist as a theater director and a professor of theater and performance studies. How do you balance these unique roles, and how do they intersect?

As a scholar/artist, the foundations of my work are in postcolonial theory, and its conceptions and critiques of nationalism, race, and ethnicity. Because questions of identity and representation are at the core of my work as a director and scholar, I am constantly exploring an ongoing conversation between how we might perceive ourselves in relation to the way we are represented.

What are your current research interests?

My current research is on Arab theater in the Middle East, but more specifically, theater in the Levant across several periods in history, including the antiquity. I have primarily written on Palestinian theater and performance since 1967. While the majority of my focus has been on theater taking place in the Middle East, I have also taken an interest in productions that have toured in the United States and Europe, as well as Arab American theater.

How may your work inform our understanding of the region?

I attempt to achieve two main goals in my work. The first, and more difficult one, is to document and narrate the region's more recent history through the lens of cultural production. The foundations of this research are in a combination of ethnographic and archival research. The second goal is to analytically interpret creative ephemeral artifacts and to communicate these findings in ways that dispel myths about the region. Despite the violence and unrest often seen on the news, Arab and Islamic societies are not merely byproducts of the modern state, colonial oppression, and their politics. Artists show us that a place is



much larger and more complex than narrow nationalisms through their resilience, resistance, and refusal to limit their imagination. By looking at the region through the expansive lens of culture, we can go beyond the limitations of the state.

What courses will you be teaching in the next academic year?

I'll be teaching two courses that I think will be of interest to SGS students and the Abbasi program in particular. I have a new intro-seminar, TAPS 22N: *Culture, Conflict, and the Middle East*, which explores how we might encounter the region through cultural production, such as the arts, poetry, food, theater, performance, film, and music. I am also teaching TAPS 157S: *Edward Said, or Scholar vs Empire*. In this course, we'll look at the life's work of an imminent scholar, his journey, writings, battles, growth, and intersections with the arts in scholarship and practice.

What inspires or motivates you in your work in theater and performance studies?

When I turn on my television at home, I have access to over 1000 Arabic speaking channels. About 100 of these channels present remarkable performed works and would be considered a staple of the Arab household. Arabic is the fifth most spoken language in the world. Before long, we'll be counting half a billion Arabic speakers. This contemporary moment is far from the Arabsphere I grew up in, when we anticipated the population of Arab league to exceed 200 million before the year 2000, awaited Channel One to broadcast starting at 4:00 p.m., and sought the VHS tape of the latest Egyptian comedy. Being audience to this immense and growing culture through theater and performance is such a privilege. I am motivated by the creativity of Arab cultural producers. What will they make next?

STUDENT UPDATES

The Abbasi Program supported 11 students pursuing their summer research, fieldwork, language study, or internship placements over the summer of 2019.

Nesrine Mbarek

Islam and Tunisian women activism
Paris, France



Alp Akis

Research project on electoral fraud
Istanbul, Turkey



Hagar Gal

Social Science Research Council
Brooklyn, NY



Miray Cakiroglu

Ottoman Turkish Language Study
Ephesus, Turkey




Emilia Groupp


Ethnographic research into the social context of archaeology and cultural heritage
Cairo, Egypt




Nathaniel Stuart

Arabic Language Study at the AUC
Cairo, Egypt

 Internships

 Language Study

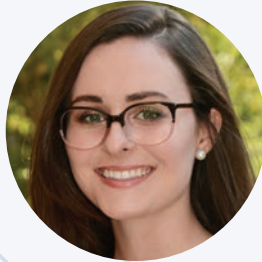
 Research or Fieldwork

Aitran Doan
EcoPeace
Amman, Jordan



Sarah Thompson

Field experiment to improve women's mobility
Lahore, Pakistan



Feyaad Allie

Researching Saudi and Iranian religious influence on Muslims
Delhi, Lucknow, and Cochin, India



Seungah Lee

Pilot study on Gulf State entrepreneurship and innovation among youth
Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE



Shivonne Logan

Center for Arabic Study Abroad Fellow 2019
Amman, Jordan

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Featured Events



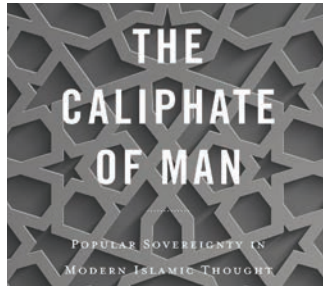
Stanford Mugham
March 16, 2019
Denise Gill, Rüfat Hasanov



Diversity without Adversity? Social Tie Formation and Identity-Based Bias Towards Refugees
May 14, 2019
Konstantinos Matakos

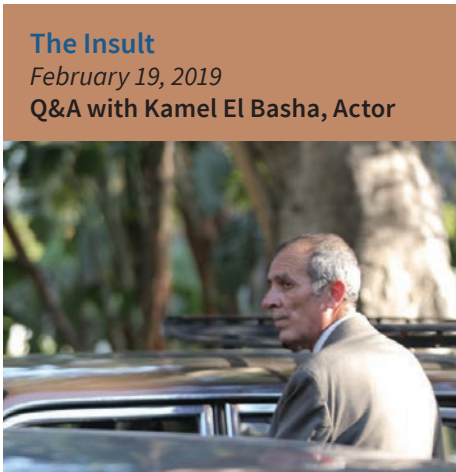


Trans;Form 2018-19 Annual Conference
November 29-30, 2018
Comparative Literature with Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, Urdu

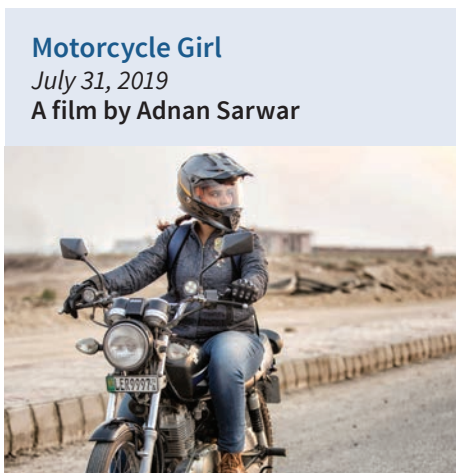


The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought
May 24, 2018
Andrew March
Mohammad Fadel

Films



The Insult
February 19, 2019
Q&A with Kamel El Basha, Actor



Motorcycle Girl
July 31, 2019
A film by Adnan Sarwar

Modern Turkey Encounters



Our Site is Their Landscape: The Lived Experience of an Archaeological Site for its Neighbors in Central Turkey
November 12, 2018
Sevil Baltalı Tirpan



What the Archive Cannot Hold: Violence, Dispossession, and the Writing of Post-Ottoman Art Histories
November 13, 2018
Banu Karaca



Mortal Intimacies: Sovereignty, Sex/Gender Transgression, and Muslim Funerals in Turkey
February 8, 2019
Asli Zengin

The Seven Doors (Yedi Kapı)
March 5, 2019
Mehmet Kurt, Yusuf Kurt

Transnational Imams, Religion, and Politics in Turkey's Mosques Abroad: An Ethnographic Approach
March 11, 2019
Mehmet Kurt

Saving the Armenians: Humanitarianism's Entanglement with Colonial and Orientalist Imaginaries
May 6, 2019
Meyda Yegenoglu

Islam in America



Perceptions and Realities of Muslim Americans

October 4, 2018

Rachel Gillum

Gender and Inclusive Muslim Spaces

December 3, 2018

Rabi'a Keeble, Ahoon Najafian, Sughra Ahmed

Being Muslim: Women of Color in American Islam

January 29, 2019

Sylvia Chan-Malik

Black Power and Palestine

April 4, 2019

Michael Fischbach

Race and its Religious Identities: Islamic Provenance and Caribbean Hosay

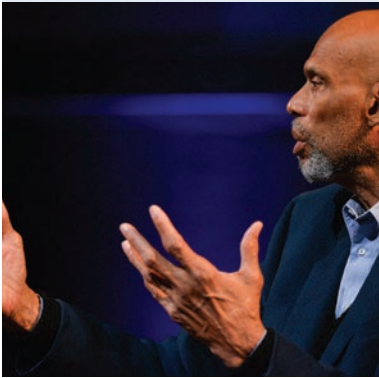
April 15, 2019

Aisha Khan

A Conversation on Race, Religion, Sports, and Politics

May 1, 2019

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar



“Western culture owes a great deal to Islamic culture”

Stanford

The Abbasi Program
in Islamic Studies

The Abbasi Program hosted a conversation on race, religion, sports, and politics with six-time NBA champion **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** at Stanford's Memorial Hall on May 1, 2019.

Above: Professor Hakeem Jefferson, Dr. Alaina Morgan, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Photo by Rod Searcey.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming event

Contemporary Uyghur Society in a Time of 'Reeducation'

Panel discussion with Rushan Abbas, Sean Roberts, and Darren Byler

Tuesday, October 1, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Encina Commons, Room 123
615 Crothers Way, Stanford, CA



Photo by Sergio Tittarini, Xinjiang, 2014.

Faculty search

Stanford University is conducting a search in the social sciences for a tenure-track Assistant Professor faculty position focused on the culture, economics or politics of Muslim societies. The successful candidate is expected to contribute to the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies' curricular and outreach efforts. More details available on AcademicJobs Online (#14164).

Find us at our new location!

Encina Commons
615 Crothers Way
Stanford, CA, 94305



Featured Courses for the 2019-2020 Autumn Quarter



The Birth of Islam
(GLOBAL 134)



Exploring Islam
(RELIGST 61)



Contemporary Muslim Political Thought
(HISTORY 284E)

Minor in Global Studies with a Specialization in Islamic Studies

- Explore the world's fastest growing religion in diverse cultural, social, and political settings.
- Prepare for a global career in policy, arts, and research.
- Enhance your BOSP overseas experience in Paris, Berlin, Cape Town, and more...

For more information, please visit:
islamicstudies.stanford.edu.

GIFTS & SUPPORT

We at the Abbasi program express our gratitude to our alumni, parents, students, and friends for their support of our activities at Stanford.

Your gift enhances genuine understanding of the histories, cultures, and languages of Islam and Muslim societies by:

- Equipping the next generation of leaders with rigorous knowledge through courses, seminars, and research or internship opportunities.
- Supporting innovative faculty research and scholarship.
- Deepening our public and K-12 outreach efforts.

Your generosity ensures that knowledge of Islam and Muslim societies is an integral part of the future of America and the globe. For more information, please review **islamicstudies.stanford.edu/give/giving** or contact Scott Sugiura, Senior Associate Director of Development, at ssugiura@stanford.edu or (650) 723 1208.



*Badshahi Mosque, Lahore, Pakistan.
Photo by Hussain Ibrahim on Unsplash*

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