

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

Hijacked

*The Capture of America's
Middle East Studies Centers*

Neetu Arnold

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East Studies Centers*

A report by the

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

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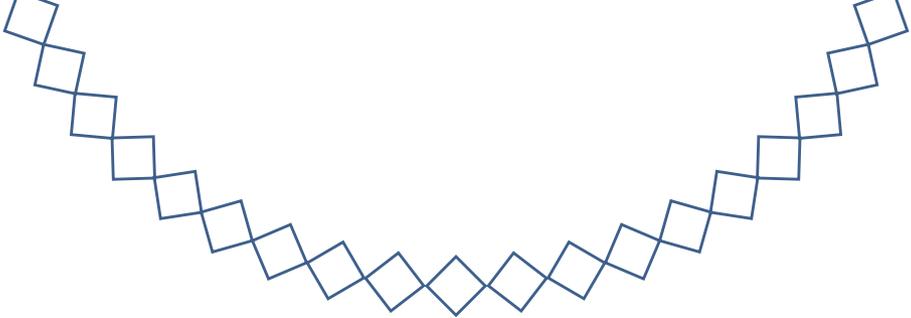
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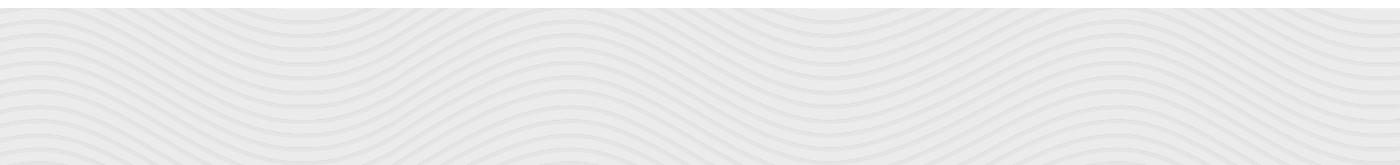
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Introduction

In the 1950s, a constellation of philanthropic foundations, multinational corporations, interested scholars, and the U.S. government established the first Middle East Studies Centers (MESCs) as part of an effort to improve national security during the Cold War. These centers belonged to a class of newly created academic units called “area studies,” which grouped scholars together by a geographic area of focus rather than by discipline. The founders of these centers intended to shift research and instruction away from ancient history and languages and toward the modern Middle East. They encouraged academics to produce policy-relevant information that benefited the American national interest. Centers also trained students in the languages of the region so that their alumni could work for the government as liaisons in this strategically important area.¹

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973), whose outcomes turned significantly upon American diplomatic and military support for Israel, wealthy Arab nations realized these centers could be useful tools to influence American policy in the region.

In 1975, Georgetown University academics and administrators collaborated with government officials from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, and Libya to establish Georgetown’s Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS). Critics quickly accused the center of propagandizing for their foreign sponsors instead of pursuing disinterested academic study and serving the American national interest.

Concerns over Georgetown’s CCAS prompted Congress to include a foreign donation disclosure requirement in the Higher Education Amendments of 1986. Proponents of this provision believed that a transparency mandate would at least increase public awareness of the extent and nature of foreign influence, even if it failed to stop it entirely. The Department of Education (ED) rarely enforced this requirement until the Trump administration initiated investigations into several prominent universities in 2019. These investigations prompted

¹ The scope of Middle East studies expanded over time to include study of Iran (Persia) and Turkey (the Ottoman Empire). Islamic studies also became popular over time and can overlap with study of the Middle East. Some universities simply have departments as opposed to centers, which typically administer public outreach activities. In our study, we include centers that are not strictly focused on just the Middle Eastern region. To keep the terminology simple, we have chosen to refer to the different types of centers under the umbrella term of Middle East Studies Centers (MESCs).

universities to back-report more than \$6.5 billion in foreign donations. Many of the donations came from governments, institutions, and individuals from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Concerns over foreign influence generated the bulk of public interest in MESCs over the last two generations. This report is no exception. We began this project to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive account of the history, character, and structure of the centers and to uncover the degree to which foreign funding has corrupted the study of the Middle East.

Previous investigations of the centers found few smoking guns to link foreign funding to the alteration of academic content, but they revealed a troubling pattern of bias, obfuscation, and opacity in the centers' policies and finances. Our report finds that MESCs still suffer from endemic bias, obfuscation, and opacity to this day. We also discover and explain two far more worrisome developments:

1. Centers with little to no foreign involvement teach and research with the same extensive bias as those with significant foreign involvement.
2. Foreign governments typically do not fund the most harmful materials produced by the centers, such as critical race theory (CRT) workshops for local K-12 educators. Instead, the U.S. government subsidizes these materials through Title VI of the Higher Education Act.

In other words, the same leftist hysteria which has consumed the humanities and social sciences since the 1960s has spread to MESCs—subsidized by American taxpayer dollars. Academics have repurposed critical theory to galvanize activism on Middle East issues. For instance, they have recast the Israel-Palestine debate as a fight for “indigenous rights” against the supposed evils of colonialism.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) became the basis for justifying the application of critical theory to Middle East studies. Said transposed the philosophy of critical theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault onto relations between the Eastern and Western worlds, establishing the neo-Marxist framework that underlies much of the scholarship in the field today. Though Said was not a Middle East studies professor himself, his analysis severely damaged the content and structure of Middle East studies for decades to come.

Said's framework enabled subjectivity to dominate the study of the Middle East. Centers now focus on notions such as “taking back our stories,” propping up select Middle Eastern groups who putatively suffer from “Western oppression,” and dismissing any criticism of these groups as biased. In fact, they explicitly eschew most criticism of the various cultures, religions, and ethnicities in the region—with Israelis as the notable exception. Affiliated faculty agitate for political causes in their instruction and research, as well as in the outreach materials they create for the local community.

Certain Middle Eastern governments and their representatives clearly benefit from the activities conducted at these centers. The centers aim to dismantle all negative perceptions of Muslims, Arabs, and other Middle Eastern groups.

It is no surprise that foreign governments and individuals fund these centers. But foreign sponsors rarely need to exercise active influence, for the faculty and staff willingly do their bidding unasked. Donors can thus take a hands-off approach, leaving almost no paper trail other than a dollar amount and a few signatures. The funding still serves their interests: continued production of biased material that promotes the political interests of the donors.

Some funds from Middle Eastern donors are not political in nature and support benign projects such as scientific research. But without transparency, it is difficult for Americans to understand the nature of foreign funds to universities.

This report aims to clarify the complex interplay between foreign governments, the U.S. government, private foundations, and scholars at these centers. Figure 1 lists all American Middle East Studies Centers. We provide the necessary historical context to explain how homegrown radicalism in American universities led prominent Middle East scholars to willingly promote the interests of foreign, often anti-American, groups. We demonstrate how foreign governments took advantage of these academics' ideological commitment over the decades to propagandize Americans. We also show that the scholars are more loyal to their ideologies than to the foreign governments, which explains the apparent tension between their views and those of their foreign sponsors on certain social and political issues. Finally, we examine how the federal government has subsidized harmful material through the centers in recent years.

The corruption of these centers, however, does not mean that we should eliminate the study of the Arab world. Prior to the establishment of these centers, American scholars accomplished important feats through their study of the Middle East, such as the authentication of the Dead Sea Scrolls and discoveries of Sumerian cuneiform tablets.² American scholars continue to make major contributions in archeology, and American institutional sponsorship (and Bahraini subsidy) makes possible such fine contributions as the New York University Press' Library of Arabic Literature. Even now, the centers still teach some useful knowledge. They shine particularly in their language instruction, where students can learn both modern and ancient languages.

Scholars increasingly preoccupied with social justice activism, however, cheapen the quality of instruction. Serious changes must be made to restore the rigorous study of Islam and the Middle East. When Middle East studies returns to its roots, American students will receive the robust Middle East education that they desire—and that American taxpayers deserve.

2 "Nippur, Iraq," Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.penn.museum/collections/highlights/babylonian/location/nippur.php>.

Figure 1: American Middle East Studies Centers³

School	Name of Center/Institute
Boston University	Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations
Brandeis University	Crown Center for Middle East Studies
Brown University	Center for Middle East Studies
California State University at San Bernardino	Center for the Study of Muslim & Arab Worlds
Columbia University	Center for Palestine Studies
Columbia University	Sakıp Sabancı Center for Turkish Studies
Columbia University	Middle East Institute
Duke University-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies
Florida State University	Middle East Center
George Mason University	AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies
George Washington University	Institute for Middle East Studies
Georgetown University	Center for Contemporary Arab Studies
Georgetown University	Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding
Harvard University	Center for Middle Eastern Studies
Harvard University	Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program
Harvard University	Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture
Indiana University Bloomington	Center for the Study of the Middle East
Lehigh University	Center for Global Islamic Studies

³ See Figures and Tables in Appendix A.

Merrimack College	Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations
New York University	Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies
Northeastern University	Middle East Center
Northwestern University	Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa
The Ohio State University	Middle East Studies Center
Portland State University	Middle East Studies Center
Princeton University	The Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia
Rutgers University	Center for Middle Eastern Studies
San Diego State University	Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies
Shenandoah University	Center for Islam in the Contemporary World
St. Bonaventure University	Center for Arab and Islamic Studies
Tufts University	Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies
University of Arizona	Center for Middle Eastern Studies
University of Arizona	School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies
University of Arizona	American Institute for Maghrib Studies
University of Arkansas	King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies
University of California at Berkeley	Center for Middle Eastern Studies
University of California at Irvine	Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture
University of California at Los Angeles	Center for Near Eastern Studies
University of California at Santa Barbara	Center for Middle Eastern Studies
University of Chicago	Center for Middle Eastern Studies

University of Denver	Center for Middle East Studies
University of Florida	Center for Global Islamic Studies
University of Illinois	Center for South Asian & Middle Eastern Studies
University of Maryland	Roshan Institute for Persian Studies
University of Michigan	Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies
University of Oklahoma	Center for Middle East Studies
University of Pennsylvania	Middle East Center
University of Texas at Austin	Center for Middle Eastern Studies
University of Utah	Middle East Center
University of Washington	Middle East Center
Villanova University	Center for Arab and Islamic Studies
Washington University in St. Louis	Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies
Yale University	Council on Middle East Studies
Yale University	Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization

Methods

More than 50 academic centers in the U.S. focus on some aspect of the Islamic world. We provide in-depth information through case studies of Middle East and/or Islamic studies centers at eight universities: Harvard University, Georgetown University, George Mason University, University of Arkansas, Duke University/University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Consortium, University of Texas at Austin, and Yale University.

Figure 2: Our Case Studies

Institution Name	Units	Year First Unit was Founded
Harvard University	Center for Middle Eastern Studies; Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program; Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture	1954
University of Texas-Austin	Center for Middle Eastern Studies	1960
Yale University	Council on Middle East Studies; Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization	1970
Georgetown University	Center for Contemporary Arab Studies; Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding	1975
University of Arkansas	King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies	1993
Duke University/University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill	North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies	2005
George Mason University	AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies	2009

As of 2022, the centers at UT-Austin and Duke-UNC are National Resource Centers (NRCs), a special designation that allows universities to receive federal funds. The University of Arkansas, Harvard, and George Mason do not have NRCs. Georgetown and Yale have a combination of NRCs and non-NRCs. The mixture of NRCs and non-NRCs enables us to compare whether federal funds make any difference in the activities of the centers.

Each case study in our report will include a general history of the centers and a detailed investigation into the extent of foreign donations. This will be particularly useful for scholars and policymakers who wish to understand the basic facts about these centers. We also address a literature gap by providing in-depth histories aggregated in one place. The histories, especially of the financial support for each center, offer Americans an understanding of each center's fundraising strategy today. Case study lengths will vary, based on the information that was publicly available and information the author gained through interviews.

Our case studies provide an even mix of public and private universities. Harvard, Yale, Duke, and Georgetown are all private and prestigious universities that attract major foreign donations and headlines. In the past decade, Harvard, Georgetown, and Yale have received prominent media attention for their foreign donations. Our analysis goes beyond the headlines to provide an in-depth analysis of outreach and course materials at these elite institutions.

It is equally important to observe how public institutions benefit from foreign funds. These institutions are frequently overlooked, since public attention often focuses on their elite, private counterparts. But, as this report details, public universities also engage in opaque financial practices. More students attend public four-year universities than private ones, and thus bring in more federal funds through student aid. Public institutions which fail to provide transparency in finances and operations fail their students and the states which give them additional funding outside of federal support.

Our investigation intentionally includes centers supported by donations that originated from different countries. Prior studies have focused on Saudi Arabian funds, which account for a majority of foreign donations to American universities. Our research considers two universities which benefited substantially from non-Saudi donations. Georgetown's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies received a hodge-podge of gifts from the UAE, Oman, and Libya during the 1970s, and George Mason's Center for Global Islamic Studies heavily relied on donations from Turkish businessman Ali Vural Ak, in 2009. Regardless of the originating country, it is vital to assess whether foreign funds affect the academic focus of individual centers or university courses.

In addition to the case studies, our study analyzes both the content that MESC's produce and the financial systems that enable them to operate. We base our findings on an examination of financial data, course syllabi, and interviews with administrators, faculty, and students. We also use archived materials to provide insight into the reasons why these centers were established in the first place. We are also the first, to our knowledge, to provide a broader overview of all Middle East NRCs between academic years 2000 and 2019 based on information from the International Resource Information System (IRIS).

We offer five recommendations, subdivided into two categories:

I. Federal Proposals

1. Public university foundations should be subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, while protecting the anonymity of domestic donors.
2. The Department of Education should require universities to report all foreign donations prior to the 2019 guidance.
3. The federal government should consider withdrawing financial support for National Resource Centers.

II. University Proposals

1. Universities should publish details about contracts, memoranda of understanding, and other deals with foreign countries in an easily accessible location on their websites.
2. Advisory boards for MESCs should not include members who represent the interests of a foreign country.

Origins & Purpose

The American discipline of Middle East studies was born out of a Western impulse to understand the region, its culture, and its people. Some were captivated by intellectual curiosity: from Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics to Richard Francis Burton's translation of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. In other instances, the impulse to study the Middle East was driven by the imperial pursuits of English and French scholars.

Any thorough study of Middle East education requires a historical analysis of the academic and external contexts in which the field developed. We must understand how developments inside and outside of academia have shaped the discipline of Middle East studies, especially over the past several decades, to accurately interpret the current behavior of MESCs. The past, more importantly, provides a standard of comparison by which we can assess the current quality and ideological bent of Middle East education.

What's in a Name?

The discipline of Middle East studies typically focuses on the modern development, culture, and people of present-day countries in the Middle East, including but not limited to Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Egypt. But the region was not always called the "Middle East." The most antiquated term is the "Orient," which referred to countries in the Islamic world and Asia. The terms "Near East" and "Far East," however, were later used to denote the difference between the two areas.⁴ In our report, we use the term "Middle East" throughout, as this is the most common way to refer to the region today.

New Beginnings (1600–1880s)

In America, the formal study of the Middle East can be traced as far back as the 1600s. Harvard University was the first higher education institution in the new commonwealth to teach Semitic and Arabic languages, mainly for the purposes of biblical exegesis.⁵ Other colonial colleges followed Harvard's example: Yale University introduced Arabic in 1700, the

4 Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 96–99.

5 "The Curriculum of Study at Harvard in Early Years," *Harvard Crimson*, January 3, 1888, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1888/1/3/the-curriculum-of-study-at-harvard/>.

University of Pennsylvania in 1788, Andover Theological Seminary and Dartmouth College in 1807, and Princeton University in 1822.⁶

Academic and public interest in the region grew significantly after Napoleon discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799.⁷ In the aftermath of the Great Awakenings, many American churches launched efforts to evangelize the Islamic world. The missionaries, who were often graduates of universities such as Yale, Dartmouth, and Princeton, gained a first-hand understanding of the region and its people.⁸ The missionaries' primary purpose was evangelical, but their contributions in education proved to be vital to the development of Middle East studies in America.

In the 1860s, the missionaries established the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, Lebanon (renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920) and Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey.⁹ Decades later, when American political objectives in the Middle East began to expand, scholars at these institutions lent their expertise in the region to both political and academic pursuits.

A Time of Transition (1880–1940)

American universities expanded their curricula to incorporate several new fields at the turn of the 20th century. American industrialists such as Johns Hopkins, Andrew Carnegie, and John Rockefeller spearheaded these endeavors and established well-funded educational institutions. Smaller donors, meanwhile, eagerly looked to sponsor research projects. This era of expansion led to a new approach in Middle East studies and research that extended beyond the earlier emphasis on Semitic languages and religious texts.¹⁰

Donors sought to sponsor attention-grabbing projects that would have practical results, which encouraged researchers to depart from the classical style of scholarship.¹¹ In the early 1880s, the American Oriental Society (AOS) organized the first American archaeological expedition to ancient Babylon and Assyria to collect interesting artifacts to display back home.¹² The AOS's successful mission inspired others in higher education to conduct excavations of their own. The University of Pennsylvania organized a trip to Sumer, from which

6 Ernest N. McCarus, "The Study of Arabic in the United States: A History of its Development," *Al-'Arabiyya* 20, no.1/2 (1987): 13–27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43191685>.

7 Keith Schoville, "The Rosetta Stone in Historical Perspective," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (2001): 1–21, https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/Journal_of_the_Adventist_Theological_Society/2001/2001_01.pdf.

8 Michael P. Zirinsky, "A Panacea for the Ills of the Country: American Presbyterian Education in Inter-War Iran," *Iranian Studies* 26, no.1/2 (Winter/Spring 1993): 119–37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4310827>; *Necrological Reports and Annual Proceedings of the Alumni Association*, vol. 3 (Princeton: C. S. Robinson & Co., 1900), 134.

9 "History," American University of Beirut, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.aub.edu.lb/AboutUs/Pages/history.aspx>; "History of RC," Robert College, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://website.robcol.k12.tr/en/about-rc/history>.

10 McCarus, "Study of Arabic."

11 Daniel A. Wren, "American Business Philanthropy and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century," *Business History Review* 57, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 321–46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3114047>.

12 W. H. Ward, "The Wolfe Expedition," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 5, no. 1/2 (1885): 56–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3268628>.

researchers recovered and translated many cuneiform tablets. The University of California, Berkeley, meanwhile, led digs in the Egyptian town of Qift and established an anthropology department at the turn of the 20th century.

The American public became increasingly interested in studying Middle Eastern languages and cultures in the first half of the 20th century. Social and geopolitical developments, such as Britain's discovery of oil in Persia and the burgeoning Zionist movement among recent Jewish immigrants, likely contributed to the increased public interest.¹³ But America's infrastructure for Middle East education was highly underdeveloped at the time and was not immediately prepared to meet the increased interest.

Two leading figures would change that: archeologist James Henry Breasted and professor Philip Hitti.

The University of Chicago hired Breasted as a lecturer in 1905 after he returned from studying Egyptology in Germany.¹⁴ During Breasted's tenure, the Ottoman Empire's collapse presented archaeologists with an array of new opportunities in lands now under European control. Breasted used his connection to the oil-wealthy Rockefeller family to launch a massive archeological expedition in the Middle East. Breasted's expedition and his subsequent tenure as director of the Oriental Institute established the University of Chicago as one of the foremost hubs for Middle East scholarship prior to World War II. His connection with the Rockefellers also ushered in an era of significant Rockefeller funding for Middle East research.¹⁵

The second mover and shaker in Middle East scholarship in the interwar period was Philip Hitti, a young Lebanese professor who studied at both Columbia and the missionary-founded Syrian Protestant College. In 1926, Princeton recruited Hitti and appointed him as an assistant professor of Semitic philology. Princeton had a glut of untranslated manuscripts from previous archaeological expeditions at the time. Hitti seemed the perfect choice to make use of the findings. Hitti proceeded to assemble a group of scholars at Princeton to study Semitic languages and literature, and through his work, he almost single-handedly established Arabic studies in its modern form.¹⁶

13 Ben Halpern, "The Americanization of Zionism, 1880–1930," *American Jewish History* 69, no.1 (September 1979): 15–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23881966>; Michael A. Rubin, "Stumbling through the 'Open Door': The U.S. in Persia and the Standard-Sinclair Oil Dispute, 1920–1925," *Iranian Studies* 28, nos. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 1995): 203–29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4310943>; Walter A. McDougall, "U.S. Foreign Policy Traditions and the Middle East," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, July 13, 2009, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2009/07/u-s-foreign-policy-traditions-and-the-middle-east/>.

14 Breasted's mentor, Semiticist William Rainey Harper, was tapped by oil magnate John Rockefeller to be the first president of the University of Chicago. Rockefeller was a key donor to the university's founding. "James Henry Breasted," *University of Chicago Library*, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/collex/exhibits/discovery-collection-memory-oriental-institute-100/james-henry-breasted/>.

15 Ludlow Bull, Ephraim A. Speiser, and Albert Ten Eyck Olmstead, "James Henry Breasted 1865–1935," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 56, no. 2 (June 1936): 113–120, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/594659>.

16 Joan Cook, "Philip Hitti, Expert on Arabic Culture," *New York Times*, December 28, 1978, <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/28/archives/philip-hitti-expert-on-arabic-culture-taught-at-princeton-for-28.html>; Zachary Lockman, *Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

Many orientalist continued down the path forged by Breasted and Hitti, studying Semitic philology and applying the knowledge to archeology and anthropology. The motivation for studying the region varied from scholar to scholar. Some scholars undoubtedly desired to catch up with European scholars, who had pioneered the academic study of the Middle East. Others had an academic interest in uncovering the connections that linked the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt with those of Greece and Rome.¹⁷

Whatever the motivations of individual scholars, Semitic studies and archaeology ultimately served as the precursors to modern Middle East area studies. The field's roots significantly influenced its development: the early emphasis on archaeology over anthropology shaped how American scholars studied the Middle East for many years. Archaeologists focused on the region's distant past, whereas anthropologists were more interested in studying contemporary Middle Easterners. With archaeologists at the helm, the field of Middle East studies was thus more concerned with the history of the region and its people than with contemporary political and social issues.

When the region became politically significant during World War II, the entire field of contemporary Middle East studies was reoriented to serve America's political interests. Much of the excitement surrounding Middle East studies during the first quarter of the century had slowed down once the Great Depression began in the 1930s. Funding—even from the wealthy Rockefellers—had dried up, and many scholars had become desperate for work. When the government came knocking during World War II, archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists, and other academics eagerly joined the cause.¹⁸

New Power, New Problems (1940–1990)

The period between World War II and the end of the Cold War witnessed major developments in American Middle East studies—with decidedly mixed effects. On the one hand, scholars' careful work during those years led to many great discoveries and academic contributions, including the translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls; continued archaeological expeditions in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran; and new research on pre-Islamic sites.¹⁹ But the period also introduced significant government entanglement into the study of the Middle East, which has had a lasting effect on the discipline.

17 Meredith Francis, "The Chicago Archaeologist Who Changed the Way We Study Civilization," *WTTW*, October 9, 2019, <https://interactive.wttw.com/playlist/2019/10/09/james-henry-breasted>; John R. Starkey, "A Talk with Philip Hitti," *Aramco World*, 22 no. 4 (1971), <https://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197104/a.talk.with.philip.hitti.htm>.

18 Matthew August Kohlstedt, "From Artifacts to People Facts: Archaeologists, World War II, and the Origins of Middle East Area Studies" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2015), <https://scholarspace.library.gwu.edu/etd/zs25x8631>; Lockman, *Field Notes*.

19 James P. Mandaville, "Thāj: A Pre-Islamic Site in Northeastern Arabia," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 172 (December 19663): 9–20, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1355711>; Valerie J. Nelson, "John C. Trever, 90; His Photos of Dead Sea Scrolls Preserved the Documents for Biblical Research," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-may-04-me-trever4-story.html>; "T. Cuyler Young '56," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, accessed July 21, 2021, <https://paw.princeton.edu/memorial/t-cuyler-young-%E2%80%9956>.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the CIA's precursor, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS recruited scholars to gather information on foreign nations with which the United States was currently involved or anticipated future involvement. The Near East division of the OSS, however, quickly discovered that most researchers were unfamiliar with modern political affairs in the region. As future Middle East studies director for the University of Pennsylvania E.A. Speiser put it, "It was not unusual for an Egyptologist to serve as an Arab affairs specialist or for a cuneiformist to investigate the manifold problems in Afghanistan."²⁰

The federal government and a plethora of external organizations had realized that more Americans needed to receive a robust education in modern world affairs by the end of World War II. The OSS's structure, which had had divisions based on world region, provided the blueprint for modern area studies in academia.²¹

But it was the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and its affiliates who first advocated, in 1947, for a "national program for area studies" that would encompass knowledge about the entire world.²² Two years later, the SSRC's humanities counterpart, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), noted the lack of American academic expertise on the contemporary Middle East.²³

The Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, which had close ties to the SSRC and ACLS, were also interested in funding area studies. The Cold War prompted them to focus initially on sponsoring research on Russia and East Asia. But after Israel secured its independence in 1948, and with an eye to the Middle East as a site of existing and potential Cold War conflict, Rockefeller and Carnegie turned their attention to the lands between Casablanca and Kabul.

Modern Middle East studies faced several challenges in its early days. First, it was not easy to reorient a field that had historically focused on producing more traditional scholarship toward scholarship that supported the American government's strategic political aims. John Wilson tried to push through such a transformation at the University of Chicago in the mid 1940s, but he was forced to scrap the project due to heavy resistance from other scholars.²⁴ Government interference with academic research was also a major concern, especially in the years following the creation of the CIA in 1947. Some academics were quite enthusiastic about the new funding and research opportunities that partnership with the CIA presented.²⁵

20 Lockman, *Field Notes*.

21 It should be noted that it was likely many of the Middle East academics who worked in the OSS were not interested or educated in politics, but were more likely dragged into these positions because of their knowledge or expertise in a language or culture of relevance.

22 Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle East Studies in America* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute of Near East Policy, 2001), 6, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/ivory-towers-sand-failure-middle-east-studies-america>.

23 Lockman, *Field Notes*.

24 Kohlstedt, "From Artifacts."

25 Kohlstedt, "From Artifacts."

Others, however, feared that the agency's involvement in higher education would compromise the integrity of the academic research conducted in American universities.²⁶

Regardless of these concerns, the field of Middle East studies proceeded to develop and expand in the following years. Philip Hitti managed to transform Princeton's Department of Oriental Studies from traditional to modern scholarship, and Princeton provided the blueprint for future Middle East area studies departments.²⁷ Many of the early leaders in Middle East studies secured new opportunities for their departments by maintaining connections with the CIA.

Figure 3: Middle East Scholars' Connections to Intelligence Agencies

Name	Role(s)	OSS?	CIA?
William Langer	Director of Harvard's Center for Middle East Studies	Yes	Yes
Richard Frye	Helped create Harvard's Center for Middle East Studies; Chair of Iranian Studies	Yes	Not confirmed
Nadav Safran	Director of Harvard's Center for Middle East Studies	No	Yes
T. Cuyler Young	Chairman of Princeton's Department of Oriental Studies	Yes	Yes
Morroe Berger	Director of Princeton's program in Near Eastern Studies	Yes	Yes
Ephraim Avigdor Speiser	Chairman of the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Oriental Studies	Yes	Not Confirmed
Carleton Coon	Professor at the University of Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes
Franz Rosenthal	Yale's Louis M. Rabinowitz professor of Semitic languages	Yes	Yes
Walter L. Wright	Turkish Language and History Professor at Princeton	Yes	Not Confirmed
Lewis V. Thomas	Professor of Oriental Studies at Princeton	Yes	Not Confirmed

²⁶ Jerome S. Rausch, "Area Institute Programs and African Studies," *Journal of Negro Education* 24, no. 4 (Autumn 1955): 409–25, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2293290>.

²⁷ Lockman, *Field Notes*.

The first Middle East Studies Centers in America received much of their funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. In the 1950s, the Ford Foundation became one of the primary funders of MESCAs as well. Because these private organizations enjoyed close relationships with the government, it is difficult to say whether MESCAs were privately or publicly funded in those days. The Ford Foundation (technically a private foundation), for example, actively collaborated with the CIA and appointed a three-person board to funnel CIA funds through its organization to desired targets. Between 1959 and 1963, the Ford Foundation gave \$42 million in donations to fifteen universities, with 60% dedicated to area studies and language education.²⁸

Congress soon became interested in these Middle East studies programs. In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense in Education Act (NDEA), an emergency Cold War measure designed to support education initiatives that assisted America's national defense. As President Eisenhower noted:

The American people generally are deficient in foreign languages, particularly those of the emerging nations in Asia, Africa, and the Near East. It is important to our national security that such deficiencies be promptly overcome.²⁹

In its first year, the NDEA established nineteen National Resource Centers (NRCs), three of which were devoted to the Middle East. The NRCs provided education about a region's culture and politics. NRCs also offered instruction in "critical languages," which included Arabic, Hindi-Urdu, Russian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Chinese.³⁰ The government encouraged the NRCs to bring in social scientists, such as anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists, and economists, to aid with the instruction and research conducted at the centers. The inclusion of social scientists reinforced the private foundations' goals of producing practical, policy-relevant information about the region.

MESCAs quickly supplied the deficit of scholars in the field. But they also became hotbeds of political controversy. Not everybody supported Israel's independence, for example, and fierce debates broke out between scholars at centers across the country. Many prominent figures, such as Philip Hitti and William Wright, vocally supported the Arab contenders. Others, such as William Brinner (who later became president of the Middle East Studies Association), firmly supported Israel. The controversy only increased throughout the 1950s, which saw both the CIA-backed Iranian coup and the Suez Crisis. The temperature of these scholarly quarrels at last reached a boiling point in the wake of the Six-Day War in 1967. The

²⁸ Lockman, *Field Notes*.

²⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Special Message to the Congress on Education" (speech, Washington, DC, January 27, 1958), American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/233942>.

³⁰ Donald N. Bigelow and Lyman H. Legters, *NDEA Language and Area Centers: A Report on the First 5 Years* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1964).

Middle East Studies Association (MESA) was formed partially with the goal of resolving the field's political rifts.³¹

It did not, however, prevent continuing radicalization of MESC's in the 1960s and 1970s. Pro-Palestinian pressure emerged from the growing New Left movement in academia, driven by student activist groups such as Students for a Democratic Society. The New Left drew its inspiration from critical theorists of the 1930s and 1940s such as Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer, and later it was greatly influenced by thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault.³² These New Left thinkers not only provided the intellectual foundation for the sexual revolution of the 1960s but also inspired both the decolonization movement and its "postcolonial" successor.³³

At first, New Left students (and, in time, professors) primarily supported African decolonization in states such as Algeria. The decolonization movement, though, adopted a broader stance as the 1960s and 1970s progressed.³⁴ Students began to criticize American interventions in the Third World and launched an extensive campaign against the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. Postcolonial thinkers soon turned their attention to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, in which they compared Israel's expansion in the region to previous European colonial empires around the world.³⁵ Although European and American support in the late 1940s for the establishment of Israel was strongest among the radical left, within a generation the European and American radical left became the most virulent critics of Israel in the Western world. Supporters of the decolonization movement also criticized U.S. economic and military interventions in the Middle East as neocolonialist actions motivated by the desire to secure American access to oil.

MESC's acquiesced in the extension of the new postmodernist thought throughout their discipline. Partly they believed they could not exclude the New Left, which provided such a large proportion of the younger cohort of scholars.

Perhaps more importantly, in 1975, the Church Committee exposed the shocking activities of the CIA and its affiliates such as the Ford Foundation, which included covert funding of academic research.³⁶ The findings created a rift between academics and the CIA, which

31 Benjamin Brinner, Anne Kilmer, and David Stronach, "In Memoriam: William M. 'Ze'ev' Brinner," University of California, accessed July 22, 2021, <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/inmemoriam/html/williambrinner.html>; Howard A. Reed, "MESA's Origins and Early Years and Recollections of a Charter Member," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (June 2006): 13–17, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23062628>.

32 Claudio Corradetti, "The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed July 21, 2021, <https://iep.utm.edu/critical-theory-frankfurt-school/>; Thomas Meaney, "Frantz Fanon and the CIA Man," *American Historical Review* 124, no. 3 (June 2019): 983–95, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhz254>; Gabriel Rockhill, "The CIA Reads French Theory: On the Intellectual Labor of Dismantling the Cultural Left," *Philosophical Salon*, February 28, 2017, <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/the-cia-reads-french-theory-on-the-intellectual-labor-of-dismantling-the-cultural-left/>.

33 Anthony C. Alessandrini, "The Humanism Effect: Fanon, Foucault, and Ethics without Subjects," *Foucault Studies*, no. 7 (September 2009): 64–80, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5ef1/924663d2bec83a572f0fc4c2542d207ff198.pdf>.

34 Ziad Bentahar, "Frantz Fanon: Travelling Psychoanalysis and Colonial Algeria," *Mosaic* 42, no. 3 (September 2009): 127–40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44030671>.

35 M. Muhannad Ayyash, "The Path to Peace in Israel-Palestine Is through Decolonisation," *Al Jazeera*, February 17, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/2/17/the-path-to-peace-in-israel-palestine-is-through-decolonisation>.

36 U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Foreign and Military Intelligence: Book I*, 94th Cong., 2d sess., 1976, S. Rep. 94–755, https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94755_1.pdf.

led the CIA and its affiliates to significantly decrease their support of and involvement with American academic centers.

The New Left soon received major intellectual reinforcements. In 1978, Palestinian-American literature professor Edward Said published his seminal work *Orientalism*, which provided a scathing philosophical critique of Western perceptions of the nations of the Orient.³⁷ Said was strongly influenced by thinkers such as Foucault and Fanon and drew his methodology from the critical theory of Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School.³⁸ His work strove to discredit the Orientalist approach of the early scholars at MESCs, and the resulting controversy caused another major rift in the field. Older scholars such as British historian Bernard Lewis, who later served as doctoral advisor to Middle East studies critic Martin Kramer, strongly critiqued Said's work and his dismissal of the existing scholarship on the Middle East as the biased handmaiden of European imperial power—but Said's school of thought ultimately emerged victorious among American Middle East scholars. Lewis, though well-connected politically and a sought-after advisor during the Bush administration of 2001-2009, became a pariah in the field.³⁹ Said's book continues to influence most Middle East scholars today, and it has inspired many similar critiques of Western perceptions of other parts of the world.

Amid this broader philosophical shift, many scholars within the field of Middle East studies began to engage in more explicit political activism on behalf of Palestine. As immigration from Middle Eastern nations increased, MESCs welcomed a growing number of Arabic scholars and students, many of whom brought local political ambitions and grievances with them to the field. The new scholars' penchant for activism only increased the existing enmity between the political establishment and the academics, which had begun to set in after the Church Committee's revelation of the extent of CIA involvement in the field.

It became highly unpopular for academics to work with the CIA. For example, Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies director Nadav Safran failed to report CIA funds for an academic conference in 1985 on Islamic fundamentalism. Harvard's CMES received significant criticism, and Safran eventually resigned from the center, though he remained a professor at the university.⁴⁰

Ironically, a major American Middle Eastern foreign policy triumph occurred just as academics began to disengage themselves from the CIA. The Reagan administration partnered with Saudi and Pakistani intelligence to arm Islamist Afghan rebels in the fight against the Soviets, and the consequent Soviet-Afghan War served as the final proxy battle of the

37 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

38 Amy Allen, "Adorno, Foucault, and the End of Progress: Critical Theory in Postcolonial Times," in *Critical Theory in Critical Times*, eds. Penelope Deutscher and Cristina Lafont (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

39 Hamid Dabashi, "Alas, Poor Bernard Lewis, a Fellow of Infinite Jest," *Al Jazeera*, May 28, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/5/28/alas-poor-bernard-lewis-a-fellow-of-infinite-jest>.

40 See Harvard's case study for more information.

Cold War. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) went so far as to publish and disseminate jihadist textbooks to the Afghan rebels, which remained in use for years to come.⁴¹ America's adroit support for the Afghan rebels played a central role in bringing about a victory beyond the dreams of most American policymakers: the collapse of the Soviet Union.

That victory created a new range of facts on the ground in the Middle East, which would set the agenda for the next generation of MESC's—above all, how to address anti-Western Islamic sentiment and Islamist terrorism, both within the Middle East itself and among the Middle Eastern diasporas of Europe and America.⁴²

Reinvention (1990–Present)

Americans generally greeted the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War with joy and relief. Yet the end of the Cold War also ended the primary rationale for government funding of MESC's, which now faced a financial crisis. Directors worried that the centers might be headed toward dissolution if they could not find a new purpose.⁴³

To make matters worse, many Americans began to look upon the Arab world with suspicion. The 1973 oil crisis was still an unpleasant memory, while the 1979 Iranian Revolution, along with the resulting hostage crisis, evoked further concerns about the anti-Americanism of Middle Eastern nations. American citizens, in addition, were growing aware of the specific dangers posed by Islamic fundamentalism. The Islamic militants who committed the 1993 World Trade Center bombing were revealed to be disciples of a sheikh who had been brought to the U.S. by the CIA due to his assistance in the Soviet–Afghan War.⁴⁴ Fears of Islamic radicalism multiplied following the attack, and Middle East scholars grew concerned about the possible repercussions for the discipline and for the Arab world.

Concern about backlash against Arab peoples dominated most Middle East scholars' responses to pre-9/11 Islamic terrorism. The field's understanding of contemporary history came to be shaped by its grievances against American foreign policy, whether Palestinian, Iranian, or otherwise. Other critics of MESC's, such as Martin Kramer, have noted the same patterns and wrote critiques of the grievance-oriented approach to studying the region. As a result of their obsession with criticizing American foreign policy, Middle East scholars have

41 Ishaan Tharoor, "The Taliban Indoctrinates Kids with Jihadist Textbooks Paid for by the U.S.," *Washington Post*, December 8, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/12/08/the-taliban-indoctrinates-kids-with-jihadist-textbooks-paid-for-by-the-u-s/>.

42 Charles G. Cogan, "Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979," *World Policy Journal* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 73–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209308>; Mark Hosenball, "War on Terror: The Road to September 11," *Newsweek*, September 30, 2001, <https://www.newsweek.com/war-terror-road-september-11-151771>.

43 Dale F. Eickelman, "The Re-Imagination of the Middle East: Political and Academic Frontiers (1991 Presidential Address)," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 26, no. 1 (July 1992): 3–12, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23060861>; Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Presidential Address 1990: Middle East Area Studies: Current Concerns and Future Directions," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 25, no. 1 (July 1991): 1–13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23060979>.

44 Hosenball, "War on Terror."

consistently downplayed the influence of Islamist leaders such as Osama bin Laden, an approach which Kramer argues has left the U.S. vulnerable to terrorist attacks.⁴⁵

On the other hand, Middle East scholars did warn with some accuracy of the possibility of a large-scale war in the Middle East, and of untoward consequences that might follow from such a conflict. Middle East scholars tended to believe that America (perhaps prompted by Israel) simply sought a pretext for neo-colonial adventurism in the Middle East to revitalize the American military-industrial complex, though they discounted the possibility of an event such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks.⁴⁶ Yet the Middle East academics did anticipate that large-scale American military involvement, whether justified or not,⁴⁷ might bring about a host of unanticipated consequences—an anticipation that was sufficiently justified by events such as the rise of ISIS, the Middle Eastern refugee crisis, the Israeli-Iranian proxy war in Syria, and the American retreat from Afghanistan.⁴⁸ If the MESCAs were blind to the dangers posed to America by Islamic fundamentalism, they should receive credit for realizing that any substantial American intervention would have unforeseen negative consequences.

Over the past thirty years, MESCAs have attempted to resurrect themselves by taking an oppositional approach to American foreign policy in the Middle East. In the 1990s, Arab states again began to offer significant foreign funding to American MESCAs, even establishing entire centers in some cases (e.g., the Saudi-funded King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Arkansas). This foreign funding continued to flow in abundance throughout the 2000s.⁴⁹ It is, thus, unsurprising that the scholars at MESCAs continued to oppose American intervention in the region, as such a stance aligns with the interests of the countries that fund them.

In the years following 9/11, the federal government once again became interested in supporting MESCAs, this time as part of its broader effort to combat terrorism. But many of the scholars at the centers were less interested in military development than they were in increasing Americans' understanding of Muslims—or perhaps more accurately, *sympathy* for Muslims and Muslim-majority nations.

By the 2010s, the discipline of Middle East studies substantially broadened its range of topics. As this report will show, MESCAs now offer a plethora of courses and content about North African countries, which previously were not considered within the scope of Middle East studies. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the discipline additionally turned its

45 Kramer, *Ivory Towers*, 56–57.

46 "Making the Arab World Collapse," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11/12 (Summer/Autumn 1982): 209–14, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538350>; *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* (Washington, DC: Project for a New American Century, 2000); Study Group on a New Israeli Strategy Toward 2000, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, 1996.

47 J.D. Maddox, "The Day I Realized I Would Never Find Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq," *New York Times Magazine*, January 29, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/29/magazine/iraq-weapons-mass-destruction.html>.

48 Sarhang Hamasaeed and Garrett Nada, "Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 War," United States Institute of Peace, May 29, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/iraq-timeline-2003-war>.

49 Charles Kurzman and Carl W. Ernst, "Islamic Studies in U.S. Universities," *Review of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 24–46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41762480>.

attention to immigration and refugee issues, which have remained part of the standard curriculum at MESCs ever since.

Overall, the expanded scope of Middle East studies allowed centers to move away from “Euro-centric” perspectives and to highlight the experiences of those in other regions. Melinda McClimans, assistant director of the MESC at The Ohio State University, perfectly captures this new emphasis:

When I talk to classes, I say, “Before we start talking about the Middle East, let’s just ask Middle of where? East of where?” And just, you know, recognize the Euro-centric nature of that term. But I think the other problem with that term is [that], whenever you are studying an area, you’re kind of objectifying it ... I don’t know if we should still be called Middle East Studies Centers. I don’t know if we should still call it area studies or maybe just chuck that out the window and talk about something like diverse global perspectives or contexts.⁵⁰

The discipline of Middle East studies has abandoned its early focus on American national security and has, instead, turned its attention to propagating “diverse” views on American foreign policy.

What Makes a Good MESC?

The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) intended Middle East National Resource Centers to produce policy-relevant research and train students to work in the American government. Specifically, research would align with and strengthen American foreign policy initiatives. These centers would also address staffing gaps for the government by training students for key areas where America possessed few trained professionals.

These two goals, however, are more properly the work of think tanks or job training programs. Neither is really a component of the true purpose of higher education—the pursuit of truth.

National resource centers were created as an emergency measure during a time when America possessed little intellectual infrastructure to support its Middle Eastern policies. But emergencies should be temporary. Americans have more foreign language knowledge today than in 1958, when the NDEA was enacted into law. Technological advances such as the internet also have made a great deal of information that was previously known only to trained scholars easily accessible for the public—and for government officials who can receive sufficient information to make policy from dedicated professional training rather than a degree in Middle East Studies.

Americans can debate what the government most needs from national resource centers—but they also should debate whether we still need them at all. The Cold War is long over. Higher education’s values are fundamentally different from those of MESCs, and we no longer have a compelling reason to deform America’s system of higher education to facilitate the production of government briefing papers.

50 “What Do We Mean by Middle East Studies,” April 7, 2021, in *Keys to Understanding the Middle East*, produced by Ohio State University, podcast, <https://www.speaker.com/user/mesc/2021-04-07-what-do-we-mean-by-middle-eas>.

Trends in Middle East and Islamic Studies

In our case studies, we provide a detailed analysis of seven American universities with Middle East or Islamic studies centers. But many more such centers exist throughout the United States. We have identified almost 50 of them, some established as recently as 2015. In this section, we use data collected from a large portion of these programs to analyze their operations and areas of focus.

Most of the programs analyzed in this section receive financial support from the Department of Education under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, which makes them National Resource Centers (NRCs). We have focused on NRCs for two primary reasons: first, because it is difficult to obtain reliable data on non-Title VI funded programs, as we can only analyze the data that is made publicly available on their websites; and second, because NRCs disproportionately influence the trajectory of MESCs throughout the United States.

Current and former NRCs include Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), Georgetown's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS), and the University of Chicago's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES). Other non-NRC centers typically imitate the actions of these prominent programs, albeit on a smaller scale. By studying the behavior of NRCs, we can thus increase our understanding of non-NRCs.

Practical reasons aside, we have also chosen to focus on NRCs because we believe that the standard of accountability should be higher for NRCs than non-NRCs due to the federal funding they receive. Taxpayers should be made aware of the types of research, course materials, and outreach activities that these centers produce so that they may judge whether NRCs use the funds appropriately. Privately funded or foreign-funded centers still remain a concern, as these centers must consider the interests of countries whose goals sometimes conflict with those of the United States. Nevertheless, it is startling to realize the degree to which government-funded centers engage in the types of activism and propagandization that would be expected of a center funded by a hostile foreign government.

Our analysis of the data available from academic years 2000 to 2019 reveals several major trends in MESCs:

- Centers shifted their focus from terrorism to immigration and Islamophobia
- Centers shifted their focus from national security issues to cultural issues and the promotion of tolerance
- Centers vastly increased their production of instructional materials for K–12 educators, from 50% to over 70% of instructional materials

Analysis of Title VI–Funded Programs

Title VI of the Higher Education Act authorizes funding for the ten international education and foreign language studies grant programs that currently exist. The Department of Education’s International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) division administers these programs. They include Language Resource Centers, Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships, National Resource Centers, and several other grant programs both for institutions of higher education and for individuals interested in topics related to international education and foreign languages.

Recipient institutions must provide the Department of Education with reports on their operations and their use of federal funding. IFLE grants are contingent on compliance with regulations set forth in Title VI, and the reports are intended to ensure that these provisions are met. The Department makes the reported information publicly available through the International Resource Information System (IRIS) website to provide a measure of transparency and accountability. We used this database to obtain most of our information on Title VI–funded MESCs.⁵¹

IRIS provides information on grant titles, amounts, and recipients for each Title VI grant. The database also includes a rough breakdown of the use of Title VI funds at each NRC, such as how much was allocated to personnel expenditures or to supplies. IRIS additionally provides program-level data on outreach programs, including titles, descriptions, and intended audiences, along with similar data on funded instructional materials and course offerings.

IRIS’s data has some limitations. NRCs have existed since the 1960s, but IRIS only provides detailed data as far back as the 2000–2001 academic year. Thus, we can only draw conclusions about the behavior of these centers in the past two decades. Comparisons with the early days of the centers can only be made using limited supplemental information provided by the schools themselves. IRIS also relies on self-reported data, which subjects it to the usual caveats of reporting bias and human error. Centers may report data in slightly different formats or use different data collection methods, so comparisons between centers must take

⁵¹ Documents we used for our analysis can be found here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220528063116/https://iris.ed.gov/iris/ieps/search.cfm?type=DLD&Tab=DLD>.

a loose rather than a precise interpretation. We believe, nevertheless, that the overall patterns and trends are accurate, and that they reflect important changes over time and differences across centers.

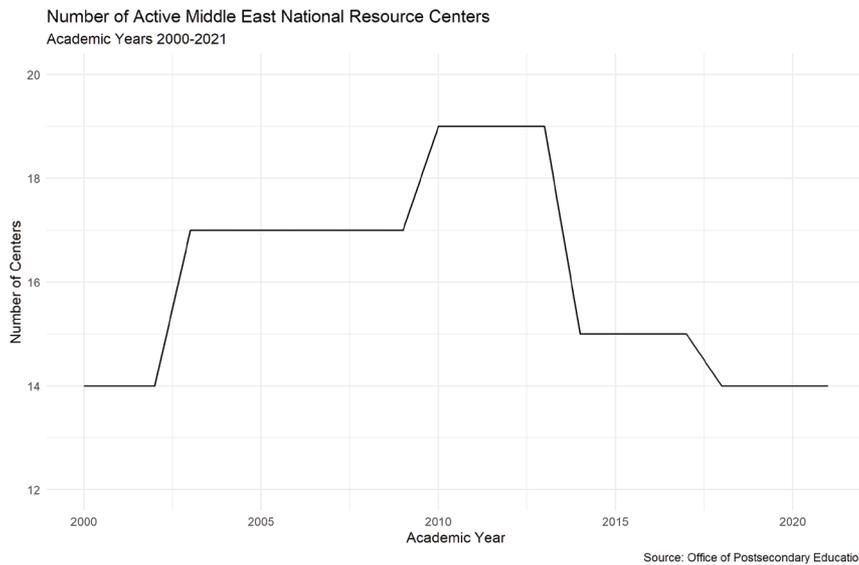
Figure 4: All Middle East National Resource Centers Academic Years 2000-2019

Columbia University
Duke University
Emory University
Georgetown University
George Washington University (GWU)
Georgia State University
Harvard University
Indiana University Bloomington (IU-Bloomington)
New York University (NYU)
The Ohio State University
Portland State University
Princeton University
University of Arizona
University of California, Berkeley (UC-Berkeley)
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB)
University of Chicago
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (UM-Ann Arbor)
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill)
University of Pennsylvania
University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin)
University of Utah
Yale University

Middle East National Resource Centers: Basic Facts

As of December 2021, fourteen National Resource Centers focus on the Middle East. The makeup of the list has changed over the years, even though the same number of Middle East NRCs existed in 2000. Several new NRCs have joined, such as the North Carolina Consortium in 2010, while others ceased to receive Title VI funding, such as Harvard's CMES. The number of NRCs peaked at 19 and remained at that level between 2010 and 2013 before dropping again in 2014, as demonstrated by Figure 5.⁵²

Figure 5

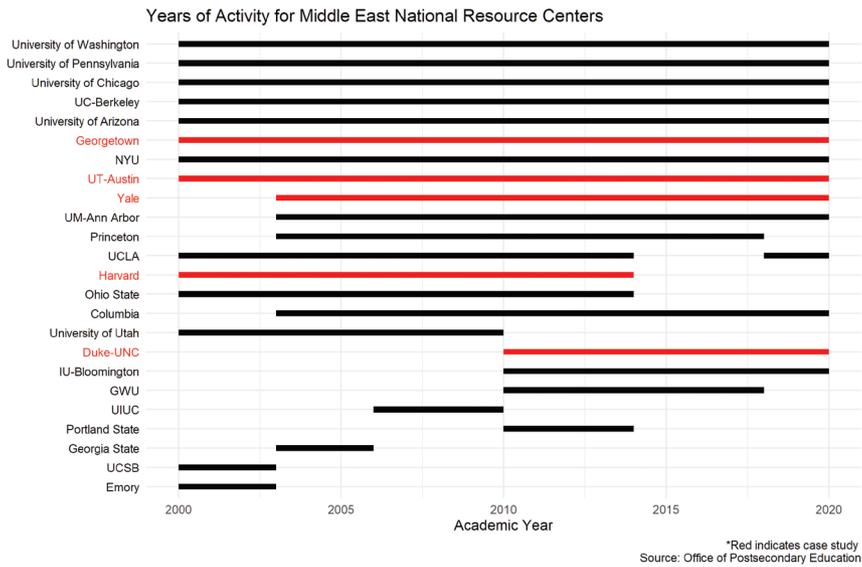


Our case studies include five of the more active NRCs during the 2000–2019 period. The selected NRCs were all active and well-established prior to 2000, apart from the North Carolina Consortium. Figure 6 shows the years of activity for all Middle East NRCs, with the ones included in our case studies highlighted in red.

Title VI–funded Middle East NRCs receive an average grant amount of approximately \$260,000 annually. Across the fourteen funded centers, this comes to a total of \$3.6 million in Department of Education funding. This number, however, only accounts for the direct funding of program operations. The centers also receive government funding through research grants and fellowships for students.

Another source of funding for these centers is direct funding from the university coffers, which may include private donations and foreign funds. This is known as “Other sources.”

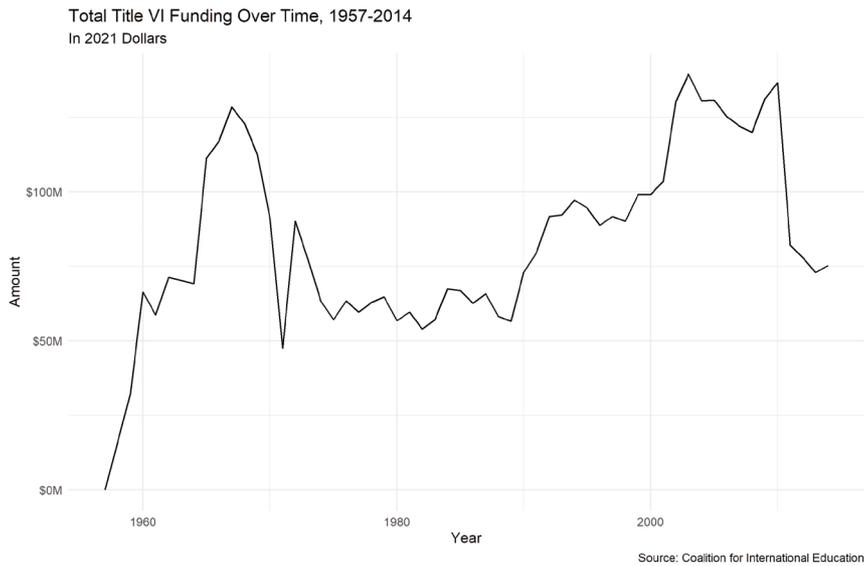
⁵² “National Resource Centers Program: Awards,” U.S. Department of Education, accessed December 16, 2021, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/iegpsnrc/awards.html>.

Figure 6

In our case studies, Harvard and Georgetown used some combination of foreign and private domestic funds to establish their centers. The Middle East studies departments at Duke and UNC have also accepted foreign funds in the past, but no information is available about whether the Consortium currently receives foreign funding. Thus, the distinction between American government-funded NRCs like UT-Austin's Center for Middle Eastern Studies and foreign-funded centers such as the University of Arkansas' King Fahd Center is not as stark as it may seem.

Figure 7 demonstrates that funding for all Title VI NRCs (not just those focused on the Middle East) has varied significantly since it began under the National Defense Education Act in 1958. The funding increased quickly after the program's launch to a peak of \$129 million (in 2021 dollars) in 1967, followed by a steep decline between 1968 and 1971. The funding level stabilized in the late 1970s and hovered around \$58–70 million (2021 dollars) until the 1990s. The decrease in overall funding corresponded with a decreased interest in the NRC program, as its initial goal of training foreign language speakers had been realized and the Cold War era politics surrounding its inception had wound down. The post-9/11 Bush era, however, saw a revived interest in national security, leading the program to reach its all-time high in funding at \$140 million in 2003 (2021 dollars).

The high level of funding persisted throughout the 2000s, but both overall NRC funding and Middle East-specific NRC funding dropped off steeply in 2011. Our analysis shows an almost 50% drop in Middle East-specific NRC funding between 2010 and 2011, from \$6.1 million in 2010 to \$3.2 million in 2011. The pattern remains the same when we account for the number of centers: in 2010, each Middle East center received an average of \$320,000, while in 2011, each Middle East center received an average of \$170,000.

Figure 7

The significant decline in funding for international education in the early 2010s can likely be attributed, at least in part, to a delayed response to the 2008 financial crash. The resulting recession led to funding decreases across the board for higher education and many other government programs, and the NRC program was no exception.

According to North Carolina Consortium director Charles Kurzman, the Obama administration's focus on K-12 education also contributed to the decline in funding for international education, as the administration deemed the university-level programs a lower priority.⁵³

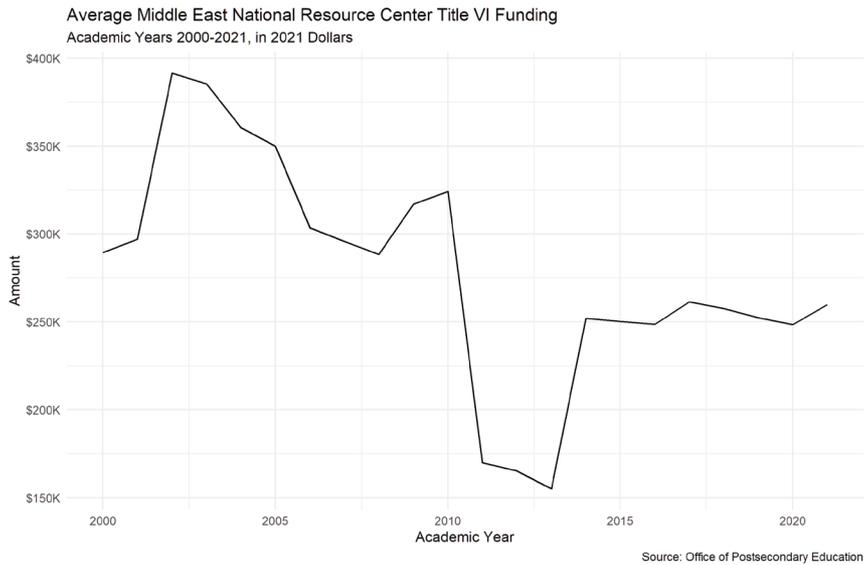
International education leaders and proponents began to advocate for an increase in Title VI funds in the next congressional budget to reverse these trends.⁵⁴ Thanks to their lobbying, support for Middle East NRCs increased from \$3 million to around \$3.8 million between 2013 and 2014. The increase was more pronounced at the center level, as some institutions had dropped out of the program: the average funding per center during those years increased from about \$150,000 to about \$250,000. Figure 8 shows that funding remained fairly stable at these levels since 2014, resting just below its level in 2000.

Title VI funding for NRCs has varied greatly based on the political circumstances at hand. Nearly every time the funding decreases, NRC advocates respond with apocalyptic predictions about irreversible educational deficiencies that can only be avoided by the immediate restoration of funds.

Taxpayers should be skeptical of these apocalyptic claims. The Coalition for International Education listed the many ways in which its constituents, mainly NRCs and

53 Charles Kurzman, "Crippling International Education," April 26, 2013, <https://kurzman.unc.edu/international-education/cripling-international-education/>.

54 Coalition for International Education to Arne Duncan and Jeffrey Zients, September 14, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20150323213612/https://www.cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/International_Ed_FY14_Letter.pdf.

Figure 8

other Title VI-funded programs, purportedly contributed to America's national security and economic capabilities in a 2012 letter to Obama administration officials.⁵⁵ The letter emphasized NRC language training capabilities and highlighted the work that NRC graduates have done in business and government.

The websites of many Middle East NRCs, however, reveal a different vision—one that attempts to separate itself from the security-oriented education that first earned these centers federal funding.

Rather than focusing on national security or economic issues, most Middle East NRCs now see themselves as builders of “cultural bridges of understanding” between the East and West who have been appointed to tear down negative stereotypes of Muslims. The stark difference between the way NRCs portray themselves to their peers and the way they portray themselves to the government reveals a fundamental disconnect between the purpose of NRC funding and the intentions of current NRC leaders.

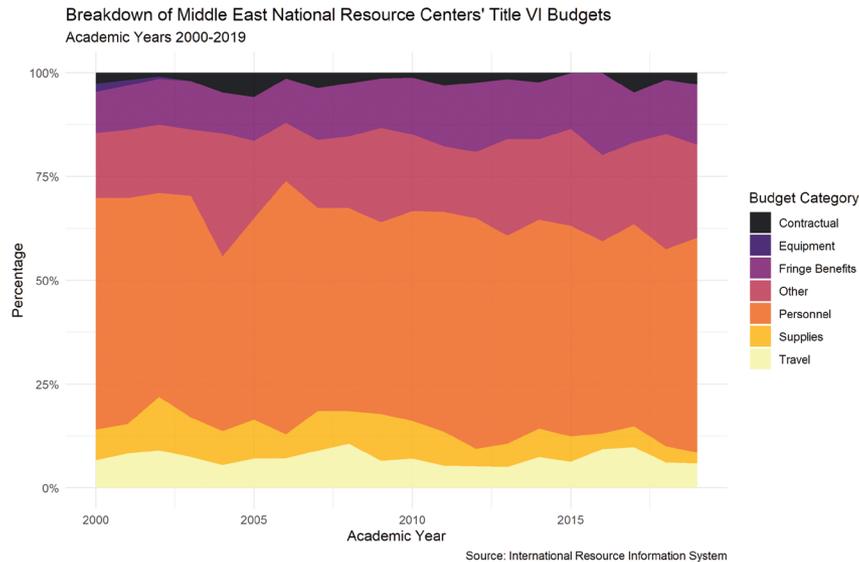
NRC Budgets

Each NRC reports its budget to the Department of Education annually and provides a breakdown of its usage of the Title VI funds that year. The NRCs, however, are not required to submit the budgets for the centers or departments that house them, even though those budgets are often far larger than their own. The reported budgets, therefore, only show how the centers use their Title VI funding and not how they allocate their overall expenditures.

⁵⁵ Coalition for International Education to Arne Duncan and Jeffrey Zients, September 14, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20150323213612/https://www.cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/International_Ed_FY14_letter.pdf.

Figure 9 shows that, across all Middle East NRCs, most Title VI funding is used to pay for personnel, including both salaries and fringe benefits. These categories together amount to around 60% of the total budget each year. Personnel expenditures at NRCs mainly go toward the administrative staff who support the center's operations, as most NRC-affiliated faculty receive their salary and benefits from appointments in other departments or named professorships.

Figure 9



Other than personnel, Title VI funds mainly go toward supplies and travel, with some small expenditures on contracts and equipment appearing intermittently. Centers also report a large, but vague, category of expenditures labeled “Other,” which typically accounts for around 20% of their budget. We can presume that expenditures labeled “Other,” along with “Supplies,” are often related to the organization of events and other programs, since centers are required to use Title VI funds to produce outreach programs and instructional material.

We can infer from the reported budgets that most NRCs use the majority of their Title VI funding to maintain a small administrative staff, with perhaps one or two employees. After this, small amounts of funding, in the low thousands, go toward the supplies for outreach materials and travel for students and faculty. Absent institutional and donor funding, the expenditure budgets paint a picture of small-scale operations in which most of the crucial employees (faculty) receive support through non-Title VI funds. The NRCs do, however, produce a substantial number of instructional materials, and they each facilitate numerous outreach programs. Both categories deserve analyses of their own.

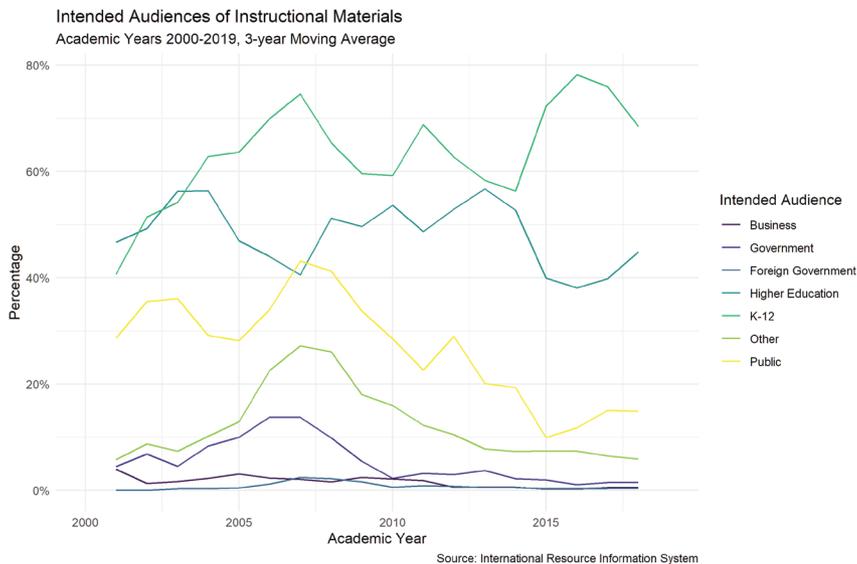
NRC Instructional Materials

National Resource Centers produce a wide variety of instructional materials each year, both for use in their own classrooms and for the use of other educators, particularly K–12 teachers. The centers are intended to serve as resources on the Middle East for the surrounding community, and their work is supposed to increase knowledge about the region among both younger students and college-aged students. Thus, by analyzing these instructional materials, we can determine whether centers are using their Title VI funding in a way that fulfills the statutory purpose of the program.

Since 2000, Middle East NRCs have produced over 2,500 instructional materials, with an average of around 130 new materials across all NRCs per year. These materials range from curricula for undergraduate courses to podcasts and videos for the public.

Figure 10 captures the distribution of intended audiences for these materials over time. The instructional materials produced by Middle East NRCs generally cater to K–12 audiences, a focus that has only increased over the past two decades. In recent years, over 70% of the instructional materials have targeted K–12 educators, while the percentage of materials intended for use in higher education settings has dipped below 40%.

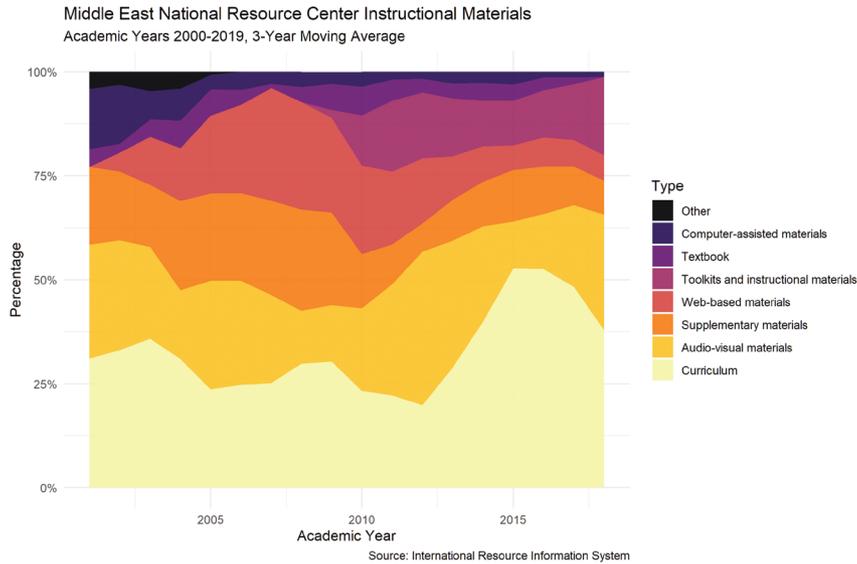
Figure 10



The type of materials produced by Middle East NRCs has also changed over time, as demonstrated by Figure 11. Curricula have consistently accounted for a plurality of the instructional materials produced, but in recent years, they have almost reached a majority. A new category, “Toolkits and instructional materials,” emerged around 2008 and has constituted a large portion of the instructional materials produced since then. Toolkits generally

consist of physical or digital resources used for lesson plans, and they often overlap significantly with the resources in the curricula category.

Figure 11



The curricula and toolkits produced by Middle East NRCs mostly target K–12 education, with over 60% of curricula and 70% of toolkits designed for use in elementary and secondary education settings. Many of these materials aim to increase cultural literacy and “globalize the classroom” by exposing children to different cultures and “decentering” the European, Western, and American cultural experiences.

The instructional materials produced by Middle East NRCs often aggressively push a very specific political agenda to accomplish these aims. Consider, for example, a 2017 toolkit produced by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill titled, “‘Women and Gender in the Middle East’ Reading Guide.” The toolkit consists of a set of readings and questions that directs students to resources such as a video on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* posted by the YouTube channel “Invictapalestina,” speeches from a conference on “pan-Arab feminism,” and an anthology of Arab feminist writing. This list of resources hardly provides a balanced perspective on women’s social issues in the region.⁵⁶

Other materials encourage the use of controversial educational approaches, such as critical pedagogy, and push harmful ideologies in the classroom, including critical race theory. For example, UT-Austin’s CMES has participated for at least three years in a workshop for K–12 teachers called the “Critical Literacy for Global Citizens Summer Institute.” The university’s Hemispheres Consortium sponsored the event, which is made up of the various

56 IRIS, Instructional Materials, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220528063116/https://iris.ed.gov/iris/ieps/search.cfm?type=DLD&Tab=DLD>.

Title VI–funded area studies centers at the university. On its website, Hemispheres states that it provides educational resources about “diverse world regions” to educators “under the aegis of [its] Title VI mission.”⁵⁷

UT-Austin claimed in its 2018 report to the Department of Education that the critical literacy workshop supported “instructional goals for literacy standards for the State of Texas” by “explor[ing] the use of critical literacies and international children’s literature.” Yet so-called “critical literacy” has very little to do with actual literacy. Critical literacy, an approach that falls under the broader umbrella of critical pedagogy, encourages children to find embedded power structures within the texts they read. Children are then taught to relate these power structures to ideas of equity and social justice. Rather than teaching students the basic skills required for reading comprehension, critical literacy trains students to espouse the tenets of critical theory.⁵⁸

A perusal of the Summer Institute at UT-Austin reveals further evidence of the political agenda behind the program. The webpage for the June 2021 event included the following session topics:⁵⁹

- (Un)learning patterns of whiteness in literacy teaching
- Culturally relevant antiracist teaching
- Developing critical understandings of the diversity of Asian Americans in Texas
- Critical book clubs as spaces for transformative, global literacy
- Literacy practices in immigration/migration related civil rights movements

Although the Hemispheres Consortium claims to have a “Title VI mission,” the material presented at its annual Summer Institute clearly does not promote language acquisition or national security. In 2019, UT-Austin’s CMES contributed ten instructional materials to the Summer Institute, including materials on “Kindergarten Global Citizenship,” “Understanding & Enacting Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy,” and “Starting and Sustaining Critical Race Literacy in the Classroom.”

The ideological bias in Title VI–funded events and materials highlights the need for greater oversight of recipients of government funding, as well as a broader re-evaluation of the state and federal programs that provide support to these centers.

57 “About Hemispheres,” Hemispheres: The International Outreach Consortium, University of Texas at Austin, accessed December 16, 2021, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/hemispheres/about/index.php>.

58 Justine Bruyère, “Critical Literacy in Early Elementary Grades,” *Edutopia*, June 7, 2019, <https://www.edutopia.org/article/critical-literacy-early-elementary-grades>; Katherine Norris, Lisa Lucas, and Catherine Prudhoe, “Examining Critical Literacy: Preparing Preservice Teachers to Use Critical Literacy in the Early Childhood Classroom,” *Promising Practices* (Winter 2012): 59–62, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1001528.pdf>.

59 “Critical Literacy for Global Citizens Summer Institute,” Department of Slavic & Eurasian Studies, University of Texas at Austin, accessed December 16, 2021, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/slavic/events/critical-literacy-for-global-citizens-summer-institute-5>.

NRC Outreach

In addition to creating instructional materials, NRCs also organize outreach programs for their local communities, which primarily consist of events that engage scholars and the public on topics related to a specific region. All NRCs must report a list of their outreach programs annually to the Department of Education, along with the intended audience for each program and a brief description of its content. Middle East NRCs must justify the utility of their outreach efforts in their annual report and explain how their programs further the public's education about the region to continue to receive outreach funds.

From 2000 to 2019, NRCs at twenty-five colleges conducted over 22,000 outreach programs. While the average is around 1,100 outreach programs per year, the actual number of programs conducted each year varied significantly, with an early peak in 2005 at just over 1,600. The peak came during a year in which funding for NRCs was quite high, and the number of programs was greater than in previous (and subsequent) years.

Outreach activity also varies significantly across NRCs. Yale's CMES tops the list with almost 120 outreach programs per year, whereas Georgetown's CCAS holds fewer than thirty. The variation cannot be attributed to differences in funding: a simple correlation test between the yearly funding levels and the number of outreach programs across NRCs does not yield a statistically significant correlation. The lack of a correlation suggests that the centers decide for themselves how many outreach programs to hold per year rather than deciding based on funding constraints or a mandate from the Department of Education.

Figure 12

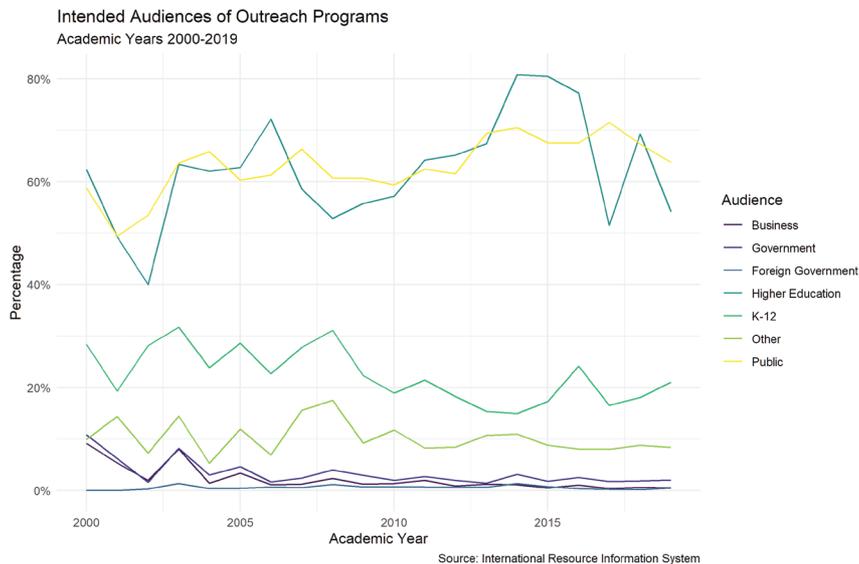
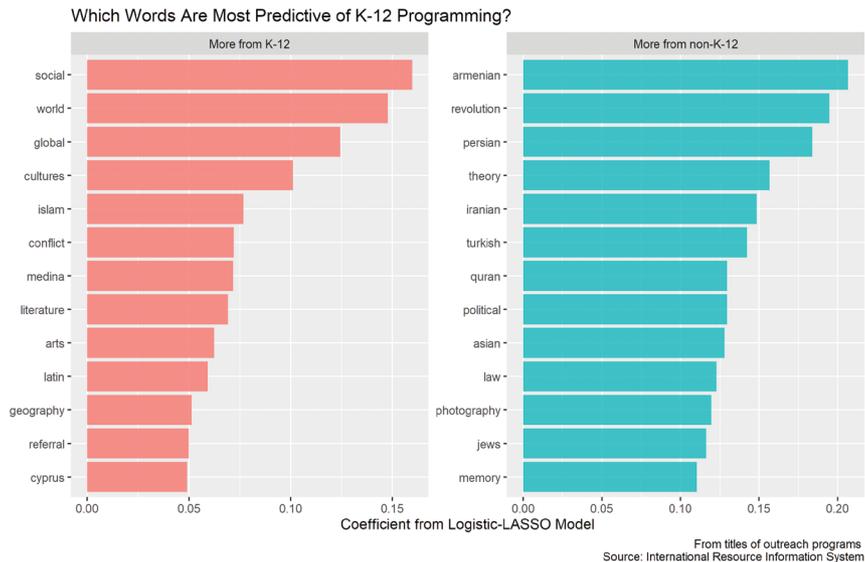


Figure 12 shows that many outreach programs at Middle East NRCs, around 60%, target higher education or the public; this holds true for all years studied. Outreach programs for these audiences primarily consist of lectures from resident or visiting scholars, discussions of books and films, and faculty workshops.

Elementary and secondary school educators are the next most common audience. The scholars at Middle East NRCs typically do not interact with K-12 students directly; instead, the centers hold K-12 teacher workshops in which they discuss curricula and lesson plans that the teachers can implement in their classrooms. These programs help to expose younger students to different cultures and encourage them to study foreign languages. But they also promote certain political and social agendas, as observed in our case studies.

Figure 13 shows the words that most distinguish K-12 programming from non-K-12 programming.⁶⁰ Non-K-12 programming, which focuses primarily on academia, fixates on more specific topics and regions of the Middle East, as demonstrated by words such as “Persian” and “Turkish.” K-12 programming, on the other hand, focuses more on cultural literacy and understanding while placing less of an emphasis on learning specific facts about the region. The left-hand side of Figure 13 demonstrates the prominence of broad terms like “global” and “cultures” in the titles of K-12 outreach programs

Figure 13



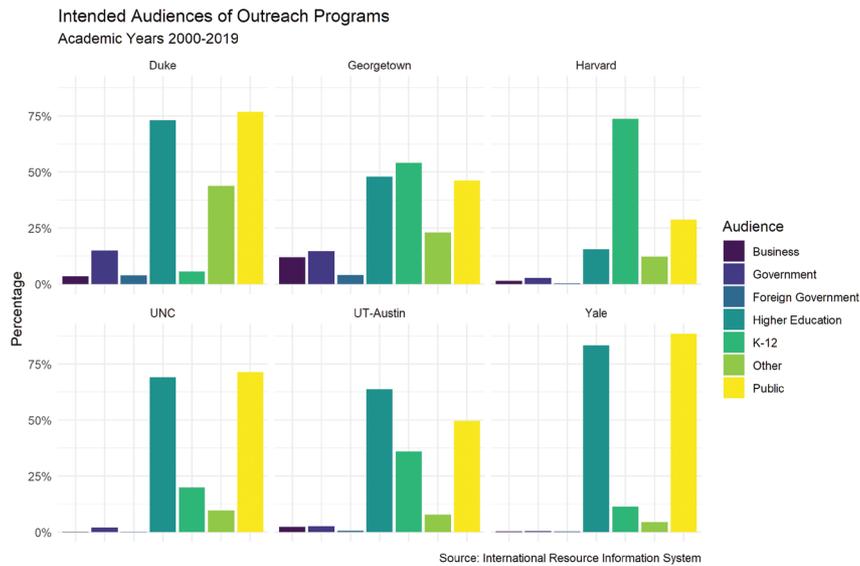
NRCs sometimes partner with local organizations to conduct outreach activities, and they often tailor these programs to a specific audience that is of interest to the local partner. Duke Divinity School’s Muslim Chaplain, for example, organized a program in 2004 that

⁶⁰ We would like to thank Jonathan Arnold for his contributions to the Lasso Models in this section. For more information on the methods, please see the Trends Section Methodology in Appendix A.

“provided training to 80+ health care providers on culturally sensitive health care delivery to Muslims.”

Figure 14 shows the distribution of outreach programs by audience type at each of the Middle East NRCs from our case studies. Our analysis includes seven types of audiences: business, government, foreign government, higher education, K-12, the public, and “other,” which consists of miscellaneous groups such as health or policy professionals, ethnic communities, and libraries.

Figure 14



Harvard, which has conducted outreach programs since the 1970s, focuses primarily on K-12 outreach. Yale, meanwhile, offers more academically oriented outreach programs that cater to higher education audiences. Georgetown, given its location in Washington, D.C., organizes significantly more programs intended for government officials than other NRCs.

Across all our case studies, only a small number of outreach programs cater to the interests of business leaders and government officials. Programs designed for these audiences tend to focus more on practical issues. For example, an outreach program for businessmen could discuss how American businesses can better understand and work with the Islamic financial and monetary systems. The practical bent of the business world may explain why Middle East NRCs focus more of their outreach on other audiences. In general, K-12 educators and academics seem to be more receptive to the bread-and-butter of MESCs: cultural literacy workshops and other diversity-oriented training.

Outreach Topics

NRC outreach programs tend to be very responsive to contemporaneous political events. An analysis of the coverage of specific topics by NRC outreach programs over time shows that their content rapidly changes to “keep up with the times.” NRCs dramatically shift their coverage of politically charged topics as public interest in the issues waxes and wanes.

Figure 15

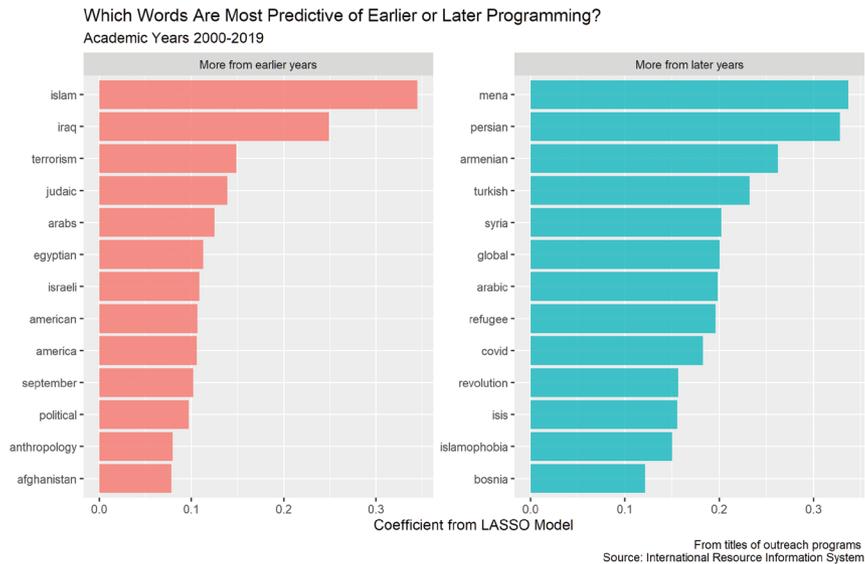


Figure 15 shows the results of a LASSO regression model in which the presence of a word in an outreach program title is used to predict the year in which that program took place. The words with the largest negative coefficients, which predict an earlier year, and the largest positive coefficients, which predict a later year, are shown on the left- and right-hand sides of the chart, respectively. The model excludes words with no topical content, such as “speaker,” “program,” or “Saturday,” to improve the interpretability of the results.

An analysis of the earlier years shows a distinct focus on terrorism, Iraq and Afghanistan, and other topics related to the conflicts and events of the early 2000s. Frustrated by an aggressive American foreign policy agenda in the Middle East, many academics focused significant time and attention on the deconstruction of Muslim stereotypes. They also advocated against the War on Terror. The interests of academics during that time were reflected in the outreach programs sponsored by MESC, which focused more on American foreign policy and the aftermath of 9/11.

In later years, centers responded to the events of the 2010s and 2020s and shifted their programming accordingly. For example, “Covid” was one of the most predictive words for later programming. The term “mena,” or more properly “MENA,” also appears as an

important predictive word of newer programs. The prevalence of the term, a neologism for “Middle East and North Africa,” reflects a growing interest among academics to expand the geographic scope of MESCs to include North African countries such as Algeria and Morocco. These countries do have religious and cultural ties to the Middle East, but they have not historically been considered within the formal scope of Middle East studies.

We also see the introduction of political and social issues such as refugees and Islamophobia in later programs. The shift in focus corresponds with the massive increase in Muslim migration, particularly in Europe, during the 2010s. MESCs generally responded to the waves of refugees and migrants by promoting the integration of Muslims into Western countries. Many academics characterized concerns about this migration from more conservative political figures as “Islamophobic.”

The remainder of this section analyzes the prevalence of specific topics across all of the outreach programs studied. These topics were chosen based on their connection to important social issues related to the Middle East or to America. We created a “dictionary” of terms related to each topic to capture the full scope of the topic’s prevalence across the outreach programs. Each dictionary contains a list of words that are associated with the topic at hand.⁶¹

We provide the dictionary for “terrorism” as an example below:

terrorism
terror
terrorist
terrorists
counterterrorism
jihad
jihadism
jihadi
jihadis
jihadist
bomb
bombing

⁶¹ Dictionaries covered the following topics: terrorism, Israel & Palestine, immigration, climate change, feminism, and pluralism. Dictionaries do include misspelled words. This section includes analyses of a few illustrative topics; however, readers interested in more findings related to our dictionaries should see the Trends Section Methodology in Appendix A.

bombings
hijack
hijacking
hijackings
hijacker
qaeda
osama

Next, we matched the dictionary terms with the words found in outreach program titles. This process was not an exact science, and the results should be taken as approximate rather than precise. The overall trends and patterns that emerge from this process, however, reflect the differences in coverage of these topics across schools and over time.

First, let us consider the topic of terrorism. This topic became closely associated with the Middle East, and more specifically with Islam, in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks, which sparked the so-called “War on Terror” and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Middle East scholars devoted significant time and resources to the subject, as the association of terrorism with Islam caused great controversy in the years following 9/11.

Figure 16

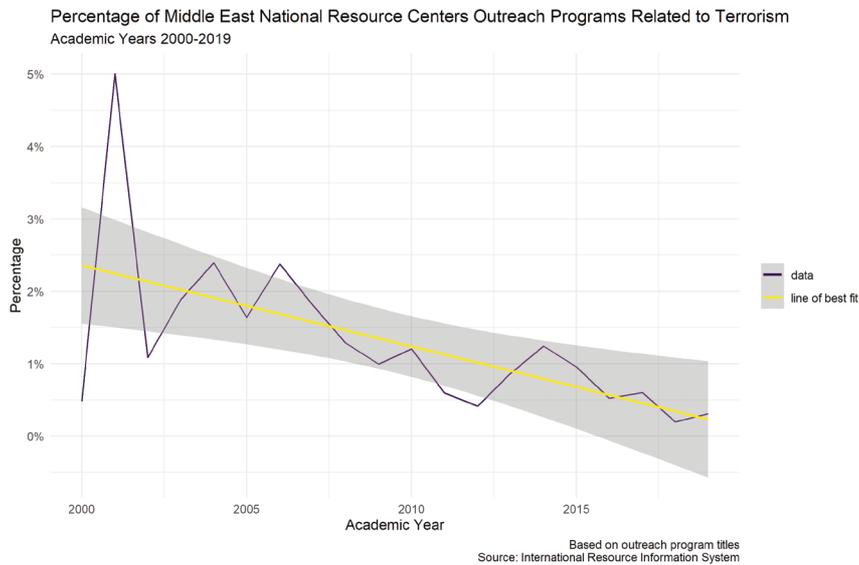
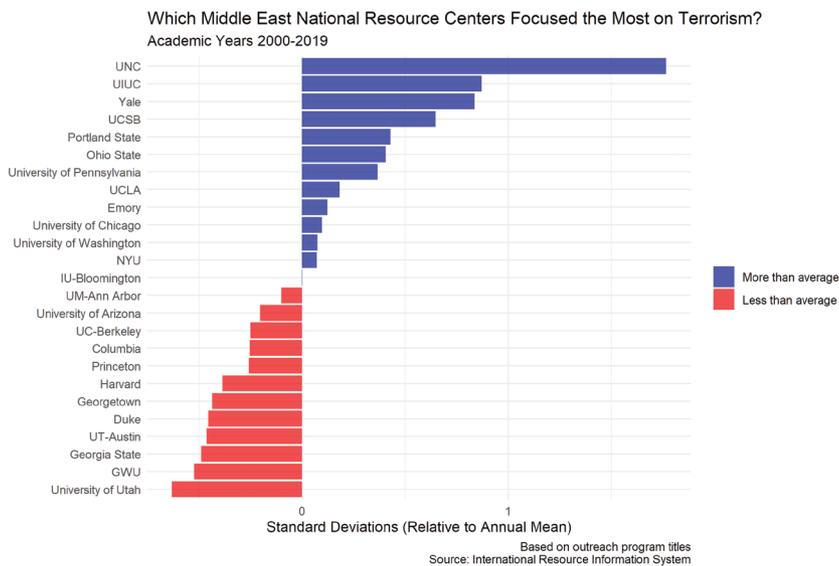


Figure 16 shows the prevalence of terrorism-related terms in outreach program titles from 2000 to 2019. We see a significant downward trend, with less than 0.5% of outreach programs mentioning terrorism or related terms by 2019. Unsurprisingly, coverage spiked in 2001, when 5% of outreach programs discussed terrorism, but it dropped rapidly in later years. The steep decline likely reflects a general desire among the centers to avoid the topic of terrorism, despite its importance for national security and its relevance to the Middle East. Programs and courses at MESC's often mention 9/11, but they tend to consider the attacks in the context of their effects on Muslims rather than the context of terrorism more broadly.

Some programs, nevertheless, discuss terrorism more than others. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill addressed terrorism far more often than other NRCs, as shown by Figure 17. The focus likely reflects the priorities of the center's leadership: North Carolina Consortium director Charles Kurzman insisted in an interview that the issue of Islamic terrorism is overblown.⁶² UNC takes a different approach than centers such as Georgetown's CCAS, which avoids the terrorism issue almost altogether, but its coverage of terrorism is not motivated by concern for American national security.

Figure 17



The trend in Middle East NRCs' coverage of the Israel–Palestine debate is also revealing. This debate began in the early 20th century and remains a highly contentious issue in the Middle East today. The discipline of Middle East studies has received significant scrutiny for

⁶² Greg Toppo, "Expert: Terrorism Frightens Us 'Far out of Proportion' to Actual Risk," *USA Today*, September 21, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/09/21/expert-terrorism-frightens-us-far-out-proportion-actual-risk/90799184/>.

its pro-Palestinian partisanship, especially in recent years. Many of the faculty at MESC support or are affiliated with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS), which advocates for an aggressive economic embargo against Israel due to perceived injustices against Palestinians.

Figure 18

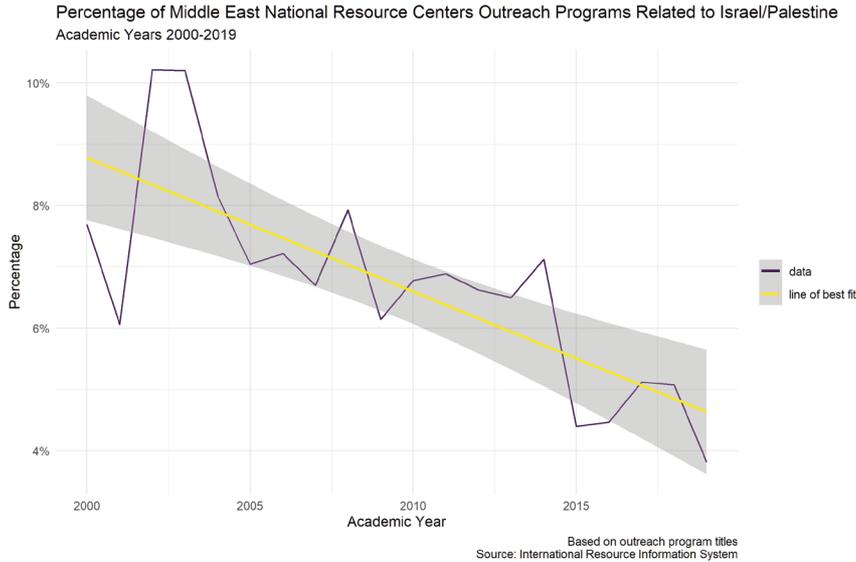
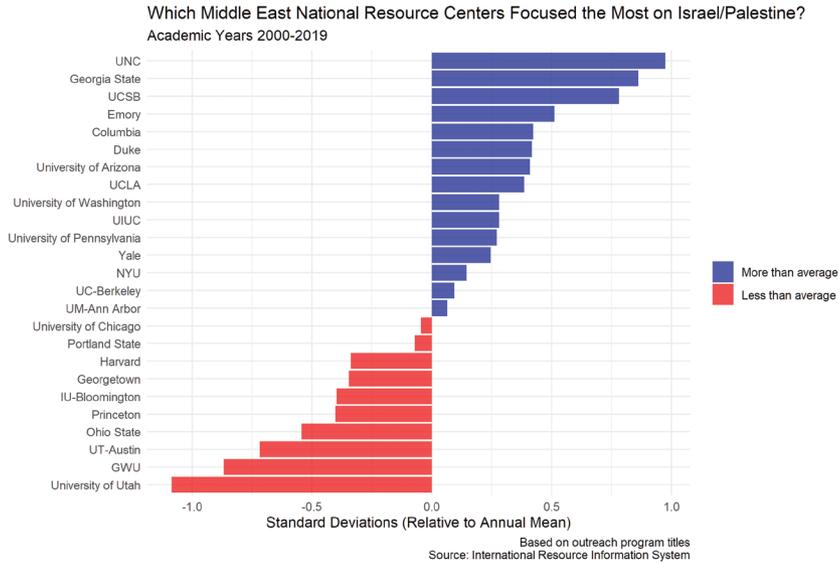


Figure 18 shows how coverage of the Israel–Palestine topic has evolved over time at NRCs. Somewhat surprisingly, coverage of the topic dropped from over 10% of outreach programs in the early 2000s to below 4% in 2019. One possible explanation is that public interest in the Israel–Palestine conflict has declined in favor of other issues, perhaps because the degree of conflict in the region has diminished over time. Some scholars have suggested that this could explain the broader pattern of declining coverage of Israel in American newspapers during the 2000s.⁶³ Whatever the reasons for the decline, the decrease in web and newspaper coverage during the same time frame provides credence to the trend we see in the outreach program data. It also supports the hypothesis that MESC adjust their programming according to the degree of news coverage of a topic.

Figure 19 shows which programs focused more or less than average on Israel and Palestine. Again, UNC comes out on top, which provides further evidence of its willingness to address politically charged topics directly. Yale also falls on the “more than average” side, although significantly lower in the distribution than UNC, while the remainder of the NRCs in our case studies discuss Israel and Palestine significantly less often than the average NRC.

63 Amnon Cavari, Moran Yarchi, and Shira Pindyck. “Foreign News on US Media: A Longitudinal Analysis of News Coverage of Israel,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 24–49, <https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.22.1.02>.

Figure 19



Finally, we consider NRCs' coverage of the topic of immigration. Events such as the Syrian refugee crisis have brought the immigration issue to the forefront of political discussions about the Middle East over the past decade. Politicians from Western countries debate passionately about how to handle the influx of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries and whether to impose additional immigration restrictions. Former President Donald Trump's so-called "Muslim ban" provoked serious backlash from pro-immigration and pro-Muslim advocates during the 2016 election.

Figure 20

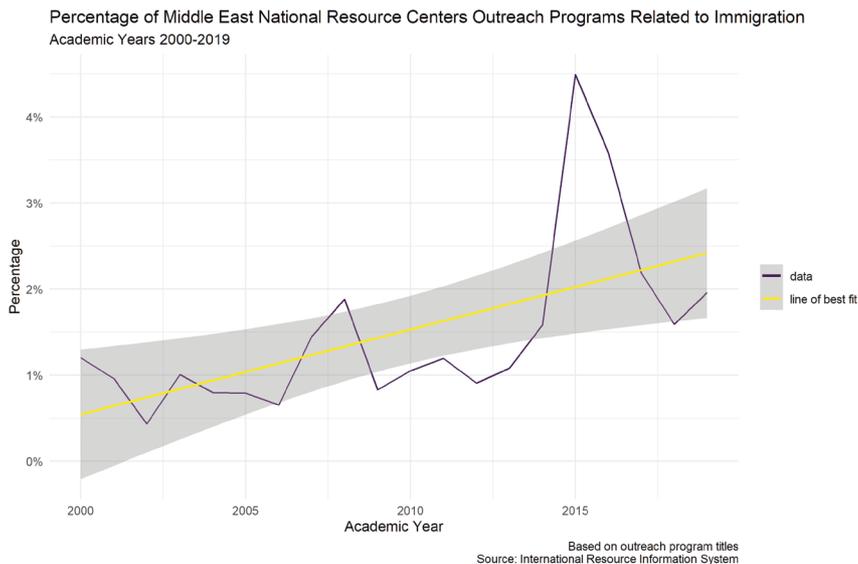
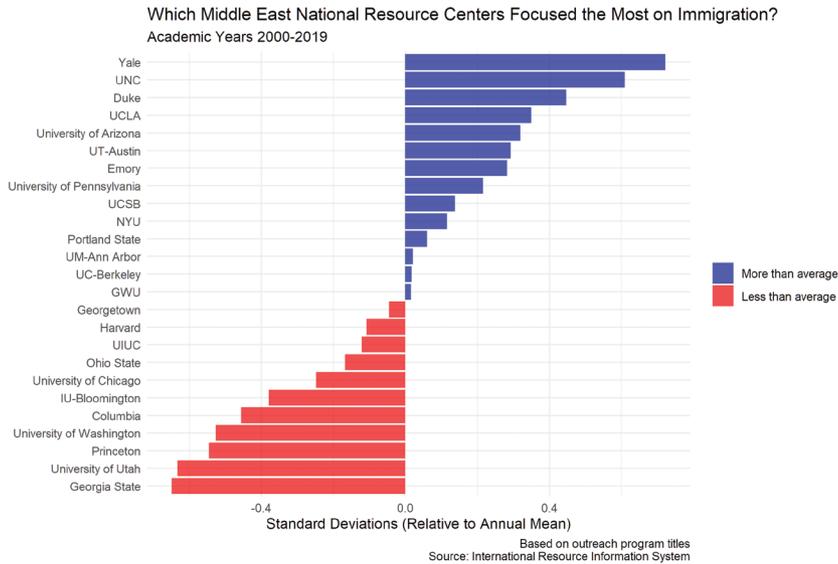


Figure 20 shows the trend in the coverage of immigration-related issues over time. The data reveals a significant rise in coverage between 2000 and 2019, with a peak in 2015, which corresponds with public concern about the refugee crisis that year. While coverage of immigration issues at NRCs has mostly decreased since 2015, it remains almost double what it was two decades ago.

Figure 21 shows which centers focused the most on immigration between 2000 and 2019. Yale and UNC are once again close to the top, as was the case in the analysis of terrorism coverage. This suggests that the centers at Yale and UNC tend to closely follow current events and use their programs to weigh in on controversial issues. UT-Austin is also near the top of the chart, with a significantly greater focus on immigration than other NRCs. This is likely because immigration is a major issue in Texas, and UT-Austin works closely with refugees in the local community.

Figure 21



Our analysis of the trends in topic coverage at MESCs shows that the centers have replaced issues that have historically been associated with the region with new, politically relevant topics. The shift to topics such as immigration and climate change is not unique to the field of Middle East studies—academics and policymakers now emphasize these topics in discussions about any and all regions of the world. This finding highlights yet another feature of globalism and globalization: the consolidation of the political conversation around a small set of one-size-fits-all issues. The globalist framework dissolves many particularities of the world and its cultures.

Who Donates to NRCs?

Middle East NRCs receive funding from a variety of sources, some of which may be foreign. Universities often support these centers out of their own budgets, but the centers also seek external donations to increase their revenue. While federal and state programs provide a reliable source of funding, donations from private companies, individuals, or foreign countries can often exceed the amount of federal funding available through Title VI.

It is difficult to track down donor information for MESCs, even though many are housed within public universities. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) laws that typically allow us to obtain this kind of information fall flat due to clever workarounds created by universities to avoid disclosure. Public universities now deposit most private donations into an affiliated 501(c)(3) foundation, which manages the money and allocates it to the corresponding departments as necessary. These foundations generally enable universities to bypass FOIA rules because they exist as separate, private entities. Almost all major public universities have affiliated private foundations, which they use to hide donor information that would otherwise be available to the public.

Despite the difficulties, we still obtained donor information for one NRC at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the Center for Near Eastern Studies. California's public

Figure 22

Donations to UCLA's Middle East Studies Center
2001-2020, in 2021 Dollars



Source: UCLA

information laws are more robust than those in other states, and the university's public information officers willingly provided us with the donor information for their center.⁶⁴

Figure 22 provides a breakdown of the donations to the UCLA center by source. Private individuals gave the most donations, for a total of \$808,000. But this is somewhat misleading. One individual accounted for much of the total: a donor named Ann Zwicker Kerr contributed over \$500,000 to the center in 2017. Most of the other individual donors gave around \$100, though some gave as little as \$20.

Foreign governments gave the second largest amount to UCLA's Near Eastern studies center over the past 20 years. These donations came entirely from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (though the university misleadingly categorized this country as a "Non-Profit Organization" in their donor information file). The two donations, which both occurred in 2002 and totaled \$300,000 (in 2002 dollars), supported programming and research.⁶⁵

Donor Spotlight: Ann Zwicker Kerr

Ann Zwicker Kerr led the Fulbright Scholar Enrichment Program at UCLA. Through her work, she aspired to clear misconceptions between foreigners and Americans, especially after 9/11.

Prior to leading the UCLA program, Kerr spent an extensive amount of time in the Middle East. She studied and later taught at the American University of Beirut and the American University of Cairo, and she met her husband, Malcolm H. Kerr, in one of her classes in Beirut. Malcolm and Ann were married in 1956.

In 1982, Malcolm became president of the American University of Beirut. The environment in Lebanon was highly dangerous at the time due to the ongoing Lebanese Civil War, and Malcolm was assassinated by the Islamic Jihad in 1984, just seventeen months after becoming university president.⁶⁶

The Kerr family received settlement money from a wrongful death suit against Iran in the 2010s. Ann Kerr used the funds to establish a scholarship at UCLA for Middle Eastern students who study the humanities or liberal arts.⁶⁷

The "Other" category contained a couple of significant recent donations from anonymous donors, earmarked for faculty and student support. Non-profit organizations trailed closely behind in dollar amount, with a large recent donation from the Mellon Foundation, a prominent supporter of MESC's. The category also included a \$50,000 donation from the Social Science Research Council and several moderately sized donations from the Farhang Foundation, an Iranian cultural organization based in Southern California.⁶⁸

The corporate category was the smallest category of donations by dollar amount. The number included donations from Aramco, a historically common donor to Middle East centers. The oil giant was among the first donors to support centers such as Harvard's CMES in

64 UCLA's center is actually called the Center for Near Eastern Studies, but the categories of Middle Eastern and Near Eastern studies both fall under the Middle East category in Title VI funding administration.

65 Figure 22 shows \$443K as the amount received from the UAE because the donation amounts have been adjusted for inflation.

66 Ann Z. Kerr, "Malcolm H. Kerr Biography," Middle East Studies Association, June 2000, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100622004317/http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/excellence/kerrbio.htm>.

67 Patt Morrison, "Column: How We Can Open the World, in Spite of Bans and Walls," *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-ol-patt-morrison-ann-kerr-mong-20180704-htmstory.html>.

68 Farhang Foundation, <https://farhang.org/about/>.

the 1950s, though it has not been as large of a supporter in recent years. Aramco only gave UCLA two small donations: a gift of \$5,000 in 2001, and another of \$15,000 in 2010.

Figure 23

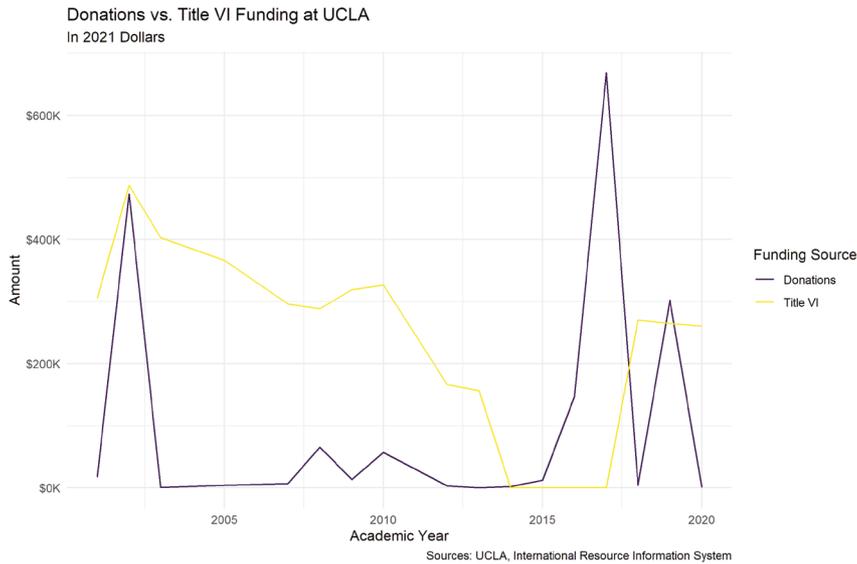


Figure 23 shows how non-Title VI funding compares across time with Title VI funding at UCLA's Center for Near Eastern Studies. The graph illustrates the volatility of private donations: while some years saw large increases in donations, many years brought zero or near zero private donations to the center. The precipitous rise in donations post-2015 coincides with the period in which UCLA briefly stopped receiving Title VI funding, which began in 2014. Private donations to the center serendipitously increased shortly after the loss of Title VI funding, in no small part due to the large anonymous donations dedicated to "Faculty Support" and "Student Support."

Because the donors were anonymous, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions about the motivation for the donations. However, the increase in donations post-2015 indicates that UCLA's center quickly raised the funds needed to support its operations without Title VI assistance. In fact, the donations the center received during those years far exceeded the annual amount it had previously received in Title VI funding. It is difficult to say how long this fundraising success would have lasted, however, had the center not begun to receive Title VI funding again. Government funding provides a level of stability that private donations cannot offer, which is why centers prefer to rely primarily on Title VI support.

Country Profiles

In this section, we provide background information about the countries that came up most often in our analysis: Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Gulf states. While not exhaustive, these profiles describe the features that are most important for understanding each country's motivations and interests.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's main priorities are energy and religion. Donors, therefore, reflect these goals. Some donors, such as Alwaleed bin Talal and Faisal Fahd, obtained their wealth through direct connections with Saudi's Royal Family. Others built their wealth through companies. Saudi businessman and philanthropist Nasser Al-Rashid, for example, earned his fortune by founding the engineering firm Rashid Engineering, which handles many construction projects for the Saudi Arabian government.⁶⁹

Another consistent Saudi donor to American universities is oil company Saudi Aramco. The oil company, whose predecessors were the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) and Standard Oil of California, was partly owned by the United States during the first few decades after its founding in the 1930s. The Saudi Arabian government, however, initiated a gradual buyout of the company in the 1950s, which was completed in 1980.⁷⁰ Aramco was an early supporter of MESCs and invested in Harvard's CMES during the 1950s, but Saudi Aramco's donations to Middle East studies have been more limited in recent decades. Nonetheless, the company does continue to donate semi-regularly to American universities. In addition to the 2001 and 2010 donations to UCLA, Saudi Aramco donated to several universities between 2014 and 2020, including the Georgia Institute of Technology, Texas A&M, and the University of Colorado Boulder.⁷¹

Donors affiliated with the Saudi government likely give to American universities for three reasons. First, and perhaps most fundamentally, they are interested in preserving

69 "Academy of Distinguished Alumni: Nasser Ibrahim Al-Rashid," Cockrell School of Engineering, University of Texas at Austin, <https://www.cae.utexas.edu/alumni/academy-of-distinguished-alumni/122-ralrashid>.

70 "Our History," Aramco Americas, <https://americas.aramco.com/en/who-we-are/about/our-history>.

71 Section 117 of the Higher Education Act - Public Records, Foreign Funding Disclosure Reports, All public records (through 06/01/2021), <https://sites.ed.gov/foreigngifts/>.

and spreading Islam. Saudi Arabia is a theocracy and practices Wahhabism, a strict interpretation of Islam that is closely intertwined with the government. It should, therefore, be expected that government officials who donate to American universities intend for their gifts to further the spread of Islam abroad. Talal's gifts to Harvard and Georgetown, for example, established Islamic studies centers. Second, members of the Royal Family may donate to American universities for diplomatic purposes, such as with King Fahd's gift to the University of Arkansas, which notably followed Bill Clinton's rise to presidency. Finally, the Saudi government has an interest in funding scholarships for Saudi Arabian students through entities such as the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission.

Turkey

The underlying motivations behind Turkish donations to American universities vary significantly based on whether the donor comes from "old" or "new" money. Old-money donors include the Koç and Sabancı families, who helped build modern Turkey out of the rubble of the Ottoman Empire post-1923.⁷² After the Islamic world's collapse, Turkish leaders instituted various reforms aimed at secularization and industrialization to align the nation more closely with Western norms. The Koç and Sabancı families accordingly established secular business groups and focused their energy and resources on aiding Turkey's development. Both families also founded prestigious namesake universities, which some academics consider to be the Turkish equivalents to Stanford and Carnegie Mellon given the analogous relationships with their wealthy founding families.⁷³

New-money donors, on the other hand, wish to preserve Islam as a part of Turkey's national identity. This mission represents a departure from the ongoing secularization of Turkey and is motivated by a desire to return to the nation's Islamic roots. Most new-money donors, including businessman Ali Vural Ak, attained their wealth through entrepreneurial activities and did not come from established backgrounds.

The differences between the two types of donors are reflected in their decisions about which American universities to support. The Koç family funded a chair in Turkish Studies at Harvard, and the Sabancı family supported Columbia's Sakıp Sabancı Center for Turkish Studies. Ak, meanwhile, funded the Center for Global Islamic Studies at a less established institution, George Mason University.

72 Sean Silverthorne, "Lifting the Lid on Turkey's Hidden Business History," *Working Knowledge*, Harvard Business School, November 14, 2019, <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/lifting-the-lid-on-turkey-s-hidden-business-history>.

73 Sarah Lynch, "Turkey's Foundation Universities: Model for the Region?," *Al-Fanar Media*, January 13, 2015, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2015/01/turkeys-foundation-universities-model-region/>.

The Gulf States

The Arab League identifies seven countries as members of the Persian Gulf: Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Since the first section already addressed Saudi Arabia, we will now focus on the other Persian Gulf states. Most of the Persian Gulf states (except for Iraq) accumulated their wealth through energy production. Oman also receives a substantial amount of revenue through its role as a trading hub.

Besides Saudi Arabia, the most active Gulf state donors to American universities come from Oman and Qatar. Oman's relationship with the United States goes back 200 years, and most donations from Oman are likely motivated by a desire to maintain the nation's friendship with the United States.⁷⁴

Qatar, on the other hand, is simultaneously an adversary of the United States and the largest foreign donor to American universities in recent years. Qatar maintains a highly centralized donor structure. Every organization—be it the Qatar Foundation, the Doha Film Institute, or the Qatar National Research Fund—is an arm of the Qatari government. Like Saudi Arabia, Qatar observes Wahhabism; the religion, however, does not dominate the government to the same extent as in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁵ Qatar has struggled to maintain its Islamic religious customs and traditions due to its large population of immigrant workers, and it has also struggled to retain its citizens, who often study abroad and never come back. Qatar's massive gifts, therefore, focus primarily on strengthening the country internally to make it a key player in the region. The largest Qatari donations established branch campuses in Doha, which were designed to offer Qataris a world-class American education without compromising on Islamic mores (for example, American free-speech norms do not apply).⁷⁶ Qatar's connections with American universities have also expanded beyond the branch campuses in recent years, as evidenced by the Qatar Foundation's support of events at UT-Austin's Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

74 Luke Coffey, "Washington Should Not Forget Oman," Heritage Foundation, July 31, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/washington-should-not-forget-oman>.

75 James M. Dorsey, "Qatari Wahhabism vs. Saudi Wahhabism and the Perils of Top-Down Change," *Huffington Post*, December 4, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/qatari-wahhabism-vs-saudi-wahhabism-and-the-perils_b_5a257240e4b05072e8b56b29.

76 Sarah McLaughlin, "Georgetown University Doubles Down on Censorship of Religious Debate at Qatar Campus," Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, February 20, 2019, <https://www.thefire.org/georgetown-university-doubles-down-on-censorship-of-religious-debate-at-qatar-campus/>.

Harvard University

Harvard University houses an extensive apparatus for the study of the Middle East and the Islamic world. The university boasts a Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), an Islamic Studies program, an Islamic Architecture program, and an Islamic Legal Studies program.

Harvard established CMES in 1954. CMES, along with peer institutions at Princeton and the University of Chicago, was one of the first area studies centers dedicated to the Middle East. CMES originally focused on practical research and instruction about the modern Middle East, with an emphasis on the social sciences. Its initial goal was to “train selected men for service in the private industry and in government and at the same time to encourage scholarly research on the modern Middle East in the fields of economics, political science, anthropology, history, and social relations including social psychology.”⁷⁷

Many of CMES’s early leaders held connections with intelligence agencies, which shaped the research priorities of the Center. CMES’s first director, history professor William Langer, had previously directed the research and analysis portion of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) predecessor. Historian and linguist Richard Frye, who helped launch CMES, served in the OSS as well. The connection between CMES’s early leaders and the intelligence community reflects an interest in knowledge production that was practically applicable for American policy makers. Early doctoral dissertations at CMES focused on modern aspects of the region, with titles such as “Islamic Constitutional Theory and Politics in Pakistan (1956)” and “Modern Egypt in Search of Ideology (1959).”⁷⁸

Concern about the Soviet Union’s growing influence in the Middle East undoubtedly played a role in the creation of Harvard’s CMES. But there were other American national interests at stake as well. Middle Eastern oil became a vital economic interest for the United States upon the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in 1938.⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly, prominent

⁷⁷ Don Babai, ed., *Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University: Reflections on the Past, Visions for the Future* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 3.

⁷⁸ Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 72.

⁷⁹ “Mar 3, 1938 CE: Oil Discovered in Saudi Arabia,” *National Geographic*, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/oil-discovered-saudi-arabia>.

early donors to Harvard's CMES included American and international oil companies such as Aramco, Near East Development Corporation, and Gulf Oil Corporation.⁸⁰

The 1950s and 1960s were CMES's "golden years." The Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Ford Foundation gave major donations to CMES, which funded its first great institutional expansion. CMES was also one of the few Middle East centers to receive Title VI funds through the National Defense Education Act in 1958. Title VI funds developed language and area studies centers.⁸¹ In 1955, Harvard recruited renowned historian Sir Hamilton Gibb to serve as CMES's director. Gibb, who previously taught at Oxford, already had a prominent reputation in the field as "the leading Arabist in the West"; his many publications included *Mohammedanism* (1949) and *Islamic Society and the West* (1950). Gibb's presence at CMES attracted significant funding from external donors, and his close relationship with Harvard President Nathan Pusey secured Harvard's support for increasing the number of professorships. Gibb conceived of CMES as an interdisciplinary center with "history and language as the core." He hoped to strengthen CMES's History and Near East Languages and Literatures departments. Gibb's work greatly increased CMES's reputation among faculty, students, administrators, and donors.⁸²

CMES faced setbacks between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Gibb's health deteriorated, and he began to take a less active role at CMES. Gibb's absence gravely weakened CMES's ties with Harvard's Department of History: the Center temporarily suspended its joint doctoral program with the department in the late 1960s.⁸³ The Ford and Rockefeller foundations also reduced their support to CMES as part of a general reduction in their funding of American Middle East centers. In the 1970s, American policymakers began to wonder whether National Resource Centers (NRC) such as CMES had outlived their usefulness.⁸⁴ The Center faced a number of challenges to its fiscal health—and even to its survival.

The Center initiated major changes in its structure to compensate for the losses and gain new sources of support. In 1974, CMES began to offer outreach programs for the public. It initially offered workshops for Boston-area K–12 teachers that provided introductory surveys of Middle East studies. These workshops, in line with the general radicalization of American K–12 instruction, eventually incorporated special emphases on "inclusive teaching" and "deconstructing stereotypes of Middle Eastern peoples."⁸⁵

80 Financial report for 1953–1954 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1954), 87, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:30013195?n=87>.

81 The Higher Education Act's Title VI initially funded area studies and language centers. Later iterations now include overseas research centers, international business education, and grants for students. See Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1121 et seq. (2022).

82 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 7–9.

83 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 11–12.

84 "The History of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays: An Impressive International Timeline," U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/history.html>.

85 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 73–76.

More importantly, at least in terms of financial support, CMES began to establish new relationships with Middle Eastern individuals, countries, and corporations—now much wealthier in the aftermath of the oil price hikes of the 1960s and 1970s. Harvard economics lecturer A. J. Meyer, who directed CMES for several years, pioneered this transformation. He leveraged his own economic consulting services to various Middle Eastern countries, primarily Saudi Arabia, to cultivate interest in and donations to CMES. Meyer helped increase CMES's corporate donor list from five firms to more than thirty.⁸⁶

CMES simultaneously expanded its intellectual scope. The Center partnered with the Harvard Law School to offer a year-long colloquium on Islamic Law in the 1978–79 academic year.⁸⁷ In 1979, Shia (Nizari Ismaili) religious leader Aga Khan IV endowed the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which focused on increasing the visibility of the Islamic cultural heritage of art and architecture.⁸⁸ Khan founded the program as one of several initiatives intended to help the Nizari Ismailis who fled East Africa for Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States during the 1970s. The imam hoped to improve the refugees' security by investing in their new homes.⁸⁹

Donor Spotlight: Aga Khan Development Network

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a family of institutions founded by Aga Khan IV. The network's mission includes promoting pluralism, embracing gender equality, searching for sustainable environmental solutions, and preserving Islamic art and architecture. The AKDN primarily works in developing countries. The American branch of the Aga Khan Foundation was founded in 1981. Agencies within the network include the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Aga Khan Academies, and the Aga Khan University in Pakistan. Besides Harvard and MIT, the AKDN has partnered with the states of California, Illinois, and Texas.⁹⁰ These Agreements of Cooperation with the states typically deal with faculty exchange programs and research collaborations in areas such as "culture," "environmental stewardship and management," and "health sciences."⁹¹

CMES also expanded its curriculum in the 1980s to cover non-Arab Middle Eastern countries—a departure from the institutional focus bequeathed by the Arabist Gibb. In 1981, CMES launched the Iranian Oral History Project in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. The project featured a collection of interviews with eyewitnesses to the most important political events in Iran between the 1920s and the 1980s. The Center also secured a grant from

⁸⁶ Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 14–15.

⁸⁷ Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 13.

⁸⁸ "The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture," Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, accessed October 26, 2021, <http://web.mit.edu/akpia/www/akpiabrochure.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Akiva Weisinger, "Religious Dictatorship: A Solution for Modernity? The Case of the Aga Khan," accessed October 26, 2021, <https://www.academia.edu/6200305>.

⁹⁰ AKDN agreements are with the states and may include university partnerships. But they can also include other entities. The Agreement of Cooperation with Illinois, for example, allows AKDN to partner with Chicago Public Schools.

⁹¹ "Partnerships," Aga Khan Development Network, accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.akdn.org/where-we-work/north-america/united-states-america/partnerships-usa>.

the Moroccan government and instituted a Moroccan Studies Program—the first American program dedicated exclusively to North African studies.⁹²

Government professor Nadav Safran took over as CMES director in 1983—the first non-historian to hold the position. Safran, who received his own doctorate from CMES, sought to refocus the Center on contemporary Middle Eastern issues of interest to American policymakers. He hoped CMES would regain cachet with policymakers in Boston and Washington, D.C. During Safran's tenure as director, CMES bolstered ties with Harvard's government and economics departments and instituted a joint program with the Kennedy School of Government.⁹³ Safran also accepted, and failed to properly report, a \$50,000 grant from the CIA to support a 1985 conference on Islamic fundamentalism.⁹⁴ The ensuing scandal led Safran to resign as CMES director in 1986, although he remained a professor at Harvard.⁹⁵ OSS veterans had founded CMES, but changing academic mores now rendered covert ties with the CIA disgraceful—and overt ones an embarrassment.

The changing academic environment prompted a larger shift in CMES's self-conception. In the 1990s, Harvard concentrated its efforts to address the “most pressing” societal problems in an “increasingly globalized society.” These issues included “global climatic change,” “the changing roles of women in different societies,” and “the persistence of ethnic and racial conflicts.” In other words, Harvard attempted to participate in the policy initiatives of the new global elite, which melded the protection of wealth with progressive social policies.⁹⁶ Harvard's larger priorities trickled down to CMES.

Aware that the end of the Cold War rendered its previous mission less relevant, CMES welcomed the new emphasis on social issues. According to Roy Mottahedeh, the medieval Islamic history specialist who succeeded Safran as CMES director, Harvard Dean Michael Spence warned that, “if the Center seemed to serve no purpose, he [Spence] would disband it.” CMES now struggled to obtain the level of funding it had received in its golden years. Even a \$750,000, five-year grant from the Mellon Foundation was insufficient to maintain the Center. Many of CMES's former donors shifted their benefactions to the Harvard Kennedy School's Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East, which focused on the Arab–Israeli conflict.⁹⁷

CMES needed to expand if it hoped to survive past the 1990s. The Center soon ventured into Turkish studies, which enabled CMES to take advantage of a \$2.5 million gift the

92 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 15–16.

93 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 15.

94 Safran clarified that he tried to acquire funds from other sources before accepting the CIA funds, in consideration of the public's “peace of mind.” See Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 47.

95 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 17–18; Michelle M. Hu and Radhika Jain, “Controversy Erupts Over Professors' Ties to the CIA,” *Harvard Crimson*, May 25, 2011, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/5/25/research-cia-harvard-betts/>; “Nadav Safran: A Case Study,” *Harvard Crimson*, November 19, 1986, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1986/11/19/nadav-safran-a-case-study-pbidisclosures/>.

96 “Trends and Realities,” in *The President's Report 1991–1993* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1993), 6, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:30013163?n=10>.

97 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 19–22.

university received from the Republic of Turkey and Koç Holding to establish the Vehbi Koç Chair of Turkish Studies. During that same period, Harvard began to expand its study of Middle Eastern issues through other endeavors. The university created a formal program on Islamic Law in 1991, funded by various Middle Eastern countries and American companies such as Boeing.⁹⁸ The government of Saudi Arabia contributed \$5 million to Harvard's Islamic law program soon after in 1993, with some funds dedicated to an endowed professorship in Islamic law.⁹⁹ Harvard also established an Islamic Studies Committee to expand the university's modern study of Islam.¹⁰⁰

Harvard's new focus on Islamic studies bore its greatest fruit in 2005, when Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal donated \$20 million to Harvard—one of six gifts Talal made to universities around the world to strengthen Islamic studies.¹⁰¹ Another identical gift was given to Georgetown University. Mottahedeh, who became the inaugural director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Islamic Studies Program, made clear that Talal had a specific vision in mind for Harvard, as opposed to Georgetown:

Prince Alwaleed wanted to strengthen Islamic studies in American universities. He gave some money to Georgetown, without any kind of [direction]; he more or less left them to shape it. But in our case, he wanted to say, “we should teach the Islamic world,” which has always been an ambition of mine.¹⁰²

Directors at each of the six Talal-funded centers convene annually to report on the work conducted at their respective institutions and to receive strategic direction from Talal. As of the 2016 annual meeting, which provided the latest available records, Talal's centers at American universities led research on the theoretical “implications of Islamophobia in their regions.” The president of the Alwaleed Center at the American University in Cairo noted that Talal was especially interested in “US Foreign [*sic*] policy issues and their repercussions on Egypt and the MENA region.”¹⁰³

98 Intisar Rabb, “Methods and Meaning in Islamic Law,” *Journal of Islamic Law* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 166–170, <https://doi.org/10.53484/jil.v2.rabb2>.

99 *Harvard University History of Named Chairs: Sketches of Donors and Donations 1991 – 2004* (Cambridge: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2004), 412, https://alumni.neurosurgery.mgh.harvard.edu/docs/Harvard_Professorsips_Book_1991-2004.pdf; “King Donates \$5-Million to Harvard Law,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 11, 1993, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/1993/06/11/king-donates-5-million-to-harvard-law/>.

100 Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies*, 28.

101 “Harvard Receives \$20M Gift for Islamic Studies Program,” *Harvard Gazette*, December 15, 2005, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2005/12/harvard-receives-20m-gift-for-islamic-studies-program/>.

102 Meryum Kazmi and Harry Bastermajian, “Looking Back on Islamic Studies at Harvard: Roy Mottahedeh, William Graham, and Ali Asani,” in *Harvard Islamica*, podcast, https://islamicstudies.harvard.edu/ep-2-professors-roy-mottahedeh-william-graham-and-ali-asani?admin_panel=1.

103 Magda Shahin, “HRH Prince Alwaleed Annual Meeting 2016 Report,” obtained September 29, 2021, https://documents.aucegypt.edu/Docs/GAPP/After%20event%20-%20FINAL%20EDIT.%20Report_annual%20meeting%202016%5B5%5D.docx.

Donor Spotlight: Alwaleed bin Talal

Alwaleed bin Talal is a businessman and member of the Saudi Royal Family whose net worth was \$19 billion in 2017. Talal established a philanthropic organization called the Kingdom Foundation in 1995. At the time, the foundation listed five areas of concern: "interfaith dialogue," "leadership development," "Saudi Arabia development," "poverty alleviation," and "natural disaster relief." Through its focus on interfaith dialogue in particular, the Kingdom Foundation sought to reframe "perceptions of Islam and the West through dialogue, programs, forums, and educational centres around the world."

Talal established six centers to increase understanding between the East and the West at:

- Harvard University (U.S.)
- Georgetown University (U.S.)
- Cambridge University (U.K.)
- University of Edinburgh (U.K.)
- American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
- American University in Cairo (Egypt)

Talal eventually consolidated many of his organizations under the name Alwaleed Philanthropies. Alwaleed Philanthropies works to advance a single mission: "contributing to a world of tolerance, equality, and opportunity for all."

In 2017, the Saudi government arrested Talal as part of an anti-corruption crackdown.

The Alwaleed Centers provide an illustration of how foreign governments can influence the research and academic materials at American universities. But the establishment of the Alwaleed Center at Harvard did not occur in a vacuum. Harvard's long-standing relationship with Middle Eastern individuals and institutions made it easier to attract a major gift from Talal. The university's apparent sympathy with Arab causes undoubtedly helped as well. CMES, for example, chose to disseminate Saudi materials on Islam to K-12 teachers and students in the aftermath of 9/11, even though the materials tendentiously attributed most of the problems in the Middle East to Western colonization.¹⁰⁴ Harvard faculty members' ideological predisposition to embrace Islamic propaganda made the university an obvious focus for Middle Eastern donors.

CMES displays a continued, if increasingly vestigial, commitment to teach the history and languages of the Middle East, but CMES's founders intended it to focus on policy-related research and to further America's national interests. CMES has retained its policy focus even after it abandoned its support of the national interest. CMES's intellectual shift, in part, reflects the larger transformation of the American intellectual and policymaking elite into a globalist regime that melds an embrace of massive wealth with radical social commitments. Some part of the shift also reflects the self-interest of an institution that lost much of its domestic financial support and saw an opportunity to replenish its coffers by attracting foreign donors.

¹⁰⁴ Sandra Stotsky, *The Stealth Curriculum: Manipulating America's History Teachers* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2004), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED485533.pdf>.

CMES, in consequence, increasingly realigned its studies toward an all-embracing globalist perspective that benefitted donors and the American elite.

Figure 24: Foreign-Funded Chairs at Harvard

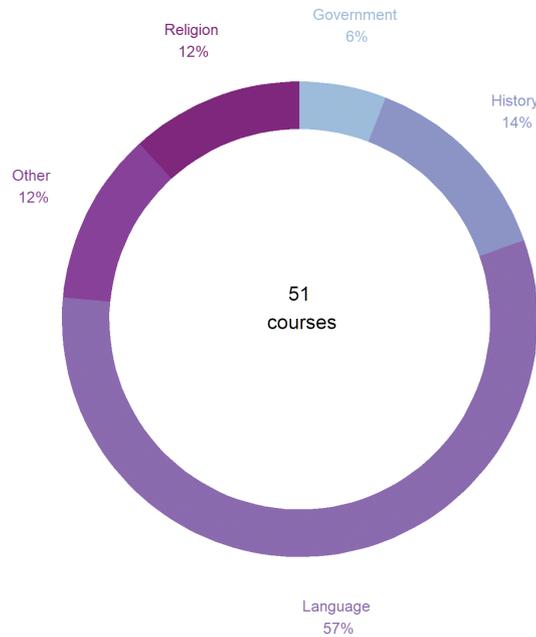
Title	Year Established	Donors	Funding Amount
Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art	1979	Likely part of an Aga Khan Development Network gift	Unclear
Rafiq Hariri Professorship of International Political Economy	1991	Hariri Foundation	Unclear
Mohamed Kamal Senior Lecturer in Negotiation and Public Policy	1992	Joint funds created by Kennedy School of Government & Farouk Kamal, son of former Jordan ambassador Mohamed Kamal	Unclear
Shawwaf Visiting Professorship	1992	Saudi Ambassador Ziad Mohammed Ali Shawwaf's family	Unclear
Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Islamic Legal Studies Professor	1993	Government of Saudi Arabia	\$5 million
Hasib Sabbagh Professorship of Cell Biology	1997	Sabbagh Foundation	Unclear
Vehbi Koç Chair of Turkish Studies	1997	Republic of Turkey and Koç Holding	\$2.5 million
Sultan of Oman Chair in International Relations	2003	Oman	Unclear
Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Religion & Society	2005	Alwaleed bin Talal	Part of \$20 million gift
Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought & Life	2005	Alwaleed bin Talal	Part of \$20 million gift
Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor of Islamic Art History	2005	Alwaleed bin Talal	Part of \$20 million gift
Khalid Bin Abdullah Bin Abdulrahman Al Saud Professor of Contemporary Arab Studies	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear
King Hussein Bin Talal Senior Lecturer in Public Leadership	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear

Courses

Harvard's coverage of the Middle East and Islam spans multiple departments. In the Fall 2021 semester, the Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations (NELC) department provided more than 50% of courses on the subject. NELC, which works closely with CMES, offers many Middle Eastern languages, including Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Persian, and Akkadian. Students can also learn dialects of Arabic, such as the Egyptian and the Sudanese, in courses offered by the African & African American Studies department. History courses supplied the second most coverage on the Middle East or Islam, which included classes such as "Jews in the Modern World," "Ottoman State and Society II (1550-1920)," and "Introduction to Islamic History: From the Rise of Islam to the Mongol Conquests, 620-1258."

Figure 25

Harvard Course Distribution
Fall 2021



The disciplinary distribution of Fall 2021 courses reflects Gibb's vision of "history and language as the core." The actual content of the courses, however, is far less academically salubrious. The course "Islam in Early America," for example, teaches students a revisionist version of American history that fabricates a martyrology of the first Muslims who came to America:

Some Muslims came from Spain to escape persecution at the hands of the Inquisition for continuing to practice their religion, while others were taken captive and forcibly crammed into the hulls of ships on the West African coast and transported across the Atlantic.¹⁰⁵

The sources cited in the course description are all fictional, written in the 21st century, or based on tendentious claims. Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account* (2014), for instance, relies on the "invented memoirs" of a fictional Spanish slave. The course also highlights Thomas Jefferson's copy of the Quran, a typical attempt to suggest that Christianity was not the primary influence in early American society. (The fact that Jefferson strategically owned a copy for diplomatic purposes is usually ignored.) Taken together, the content of "Islam in Early America" demonstrates how so-called history courses can conveniently ignore the actual history of Islam, whether in America or elsewhere. Certain facts presented in the course may not be entirely untrue, but their importance is surely exaggerated, and their interpretation is heavily agenda-driven.

The courses often use progressive ideology to camouflage how they pander to the interests of Middle Eastern donors and go out of their way to present a caricature of Middle Eastern culture to American students. "The Arab American Experience in Fiction, Film, and Popular Culture," for example, depicts contemporary Arab-American culture in ways that combine identity politics with a soft-focus lens. The course includes sections such as "The Arab-American on TV" and "Growing Up Queer in Arab America," which dismiss any criticisms of Arab culture or politics as "negative stereotypes." The course material almost exclusively presents Arab-American culture from Arab-American perspectives, exemplified by books such as Moustafa Bayoumi's *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?* (2009) and Zaina Arafat's *You Exist Too Much* (2020). These books, and others like them, spend pages bemoaning jokes about Islamic terrorists while completely ignoring the fact that Islamic terrorists do, in fact, exist. Sidestepping the primary issues related to Islam in America, the course instead spends its time advocating for an "intersectional" approach that concentrates on LGBT perspectives. (Arafat's book in particular highlights her experience as a bisexual Arab.)

What is Intersectionality?

Columbia Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in a 1989 paper in which she used the term to describe the "oppression of Black women." According to Crenshaw, intersectionality identifies the areas "where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" based on a person's characteristics. The concept is typically used to argue that different groups face different levels of oppression and to justify an identity-based hierarchy in which the most oppressed receive the most benefits.

¹⁰⁵ "HIST-LIT 90EI: Islam in Early America," Harvard University, Fall 2021, <https://histlit.fas.harvard.edu/classes/hist-lit-90-ei-islam-early-america>.

The architecture course “Landscape Fieldwork: People, Politics, and Practice,” which has affiliations with CMES and the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, incorporates *critical theory*, a social philosophy meant to deconstruct and challenge power structures. “Landscape Fieldwork” scants actual inquiry into landscape architecture and instead explores architecture’s “ethical and political power to shape the world.” The course also teaches students that “social and cultural conflicts can only begin to be resolved through a critical understanding of our experiences, values, dreams, ambitions, and practices.” Students experiment with the “lived experiences of spaces” and read books sponsored by the Graduate School of Design’s Racial Equity and Anti-Racism Fund. “Landscape Fieldwork” provides yet another example of how critical theory and social justice ideology now permeate Middle East studies and associated disciplines.

“France-North Africa, Encounters in Literature and Film: Cultures of Protest and Violence” focuses on conflicts between France, Algeria, and Morocco. The course takes a postmodernist approach and builds upon required readings from the oeuvre of Jacques Derrida. It also nonchalantly emphasizes artistic material intended to justify terrorism, such as Nabil Ayouch’s film *Les chevaux de Dieu* (Horses of God). Ayouch provides justifications rather than moral accountability for Muslim terrorists:

Young Muslims have the same aspirations as young Westerners, we must stop believing that they come from a planet with distant customs...But the environment around them makes everything fall apart. There is a feeling of abandonment: These young people have the impression of being second-class citizens. This is what can lead, in the Arab world and in Morocco in particular, to a drift for those who live in these lawless areas where only religious mafias are able to meet needs that no one else takes.¹⁰⁶

Both Ayouch and “France-North Africa” embrace the neo-Marxist extenuation of Islamic terrorism so popular among modern scholars of the Middle East: *society is to blame*, and Islamic terrorism has little to do with Islamic belief.

Many Harvard courses that deal with the Arab world appear to educate students about the history of the Middle East. Students may indeed leave classes with more knowledge of Islamic traditions and customs or with awareness of events such as the Arab Spring. Their knowledge, however, is skewed by the postmodernist, Marxist, and post-colonial ideologies deeply embedded in many of the courses. Professors routinely denigrate the great tradition of Western scholarship—the foundation of rigorous academic study of the Islamic world—as

106 Frédéric Strauss, “‘Les Chevaux de Dieu’ aide à comprendre le processus de radicalisation religieuse, Nabil Ayouch, réalisateur [‘The Horses of God’ Helps to Understand the Process of Religious Radicalization, Nabil Ayouch, Director],” *Télérama*, January 23, 2015, <https://www.telerama.fr/cinema/les-chevaux-de-dieu-aide-a-comprendre-le-processus-de-radicalisation-religieuse-nabil-ayouch-realisateur,122012.php>.

outmoded “Orientalism.” The courses so intermingle ideology with their fact-based content that students must struggle to separate the two. The courses work to pass on these Middle East experts’ radical views to the next generation.

Outreach and Events

Harvard’s four Middle East and Islamic studies centers sponsored a combined 60 events in the Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 semesters. Their penchant for joint sponsorship makes it difficult to analyze trends in the type of event sponsored by each department. That said, the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center tends to sponsor events with a religious focus, including topics such as Islamic philosophy, history, and modern thought; the Aga Khan program sponsors seminars that explore Islamic art; the Program in Islamic Law sponsors events on legal history and interpretation; and the CMES cosponsors almost every event sponsored by the four departments.

The events tend to follow the political fashions and controversies of the moment. For instance, in 2021, following extensive media coverage of the United States’ relationship with Turkey, the departments sponsored numerous events on the country, including “The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province,” “The European Court of Human Rights and Turkey’s Kurdish Conflict,” and “Rethinking the Relationship between Neoliberalism, Corporate Welfare and Cronyism: Lessons from Turkey.” Most of the events presented a negative view of Turkey unless the discussion concerned higher education development such as in “Academic Autonomy and Freedom in Turkey: The Case of Boğaziçi University.” These events corresponded with the public discussion of Turkey-related issues such as Biden’s acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide and the ongoing debate over America’s relationship with the Kurds.

Many of the sponsored events also focused on issues related to Palestine. Featured topics included “Continuous Trauma: The State of Children’s Health in the Palestinian Territory,” “The Latest Chapter in the Hundred Years War on Palestine,” and “Foreign Donor Assistance and the Political Economy of Marginalization and Inclusion in Palestine, Iraq and El Salvador.” As with most MESC’s, Harvard’s coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is decidedly sympathetic toward Palestine.

The perspective on Turkey and Palestine that is advanced in these events generally conforms with the neo-Marxist dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed. The (Marxist-led) Kurds and the Palestinians are declared to be helplessly oppressed, while the Turks and Israelis are painted as oppressive villains. The presenters seem more intent to offer an ideological critique of the very concept of Turkish and Israeli nationalism than to provide students with a lucid exposition of Kurdish and Palestinian misfortunes.

Taken together, the events sponsored by Harvard's Middle East and Islamic studies departments highlight the extent to which academics' ideologies override the interests of foreign funders. Even though the university has received large gifts from Turkey in the past, the departments regularly sponsor ideologically driven events that portray the country in a negative light.

Observations

Harvard's case study demonstrates how the unique interplay between domestic and foreign organizations has created modern Middle East studies. CMES was primarily founded by American corporations and multinational companies that worked closely with the American government. These organizations helped CMES become a leader in the discipline. CMES eventually attracted foreign funds and developed an enduring relationship with the Saudi government.

Our study reveals that such foreign donations do not guarantee promotion of a foreign country's interests. Harvard academics only advocate for the issues that Middle Eastern donors support to the extent that the donors' interests coincide with the academics' own ideologies. Even after Harvard received massive donations from Turkey, the university's Middle East studies departments continued to sponsor events that portrayed the country in a negative light.

But the academics' ideologies and foreign interests coincide quite often, especially in recent years. When Harvard's CMES was caught distributing Saudi propaganda in 2003, the offending message was that Islamic radicalism was the fault of Western colonialism. Back then, Americans were shocked by this anti-American claim. Today, it is par for the course in American universities: a donor probably would have to pay Harvard academics *not* to promote this type of message. Removing foreign funding would not stop Harvard academics from spreading their harmful ideologies.

The guiding principles behind Harvard's CMES today derive from social justice and critical theory, which build upon anti-Western polemics drawn from the Middle East's public debates. These principles conflict with the search for truth and are antithetical to the American national interest.

Harvard academics actively spread their ideologies to other institutions and similar centers. Graduates of CMES frequently assume leadership roles at other Middle East centers. In the past, Nadav Safran and Leonard Binder both earned their doctorates at Harvard's CMES. Safran returned to lead CMES while Binder led a MESC at the University of California, Los Angeles. More recent Harvard graduates Roy Mottahedeh and Cemil Aydin played important roles to lead Middle East and Islamic centers at Harvard and George Mason University.

Through the work of its graduates, CMES exerts a strong indirect influence on the discipline of Middle East studies.

As an institution, Harvard affects Middle East studies far more strongly than does any individual donor—and very much for the worse.

Georgetown University

Georgetown University, located in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., attracts ambitious students who hope to use Georgetown's proximity to the federal government's political and administrative hub to land prestigious internships and launch their political careers. The university boasts many successful alumni, including Lyndon B. Johnson, Bill Clinton, and Ivanka Trump.

Georgetown specializes in policy-related studies and houses several departments and centers focused on the Middle East. The D.C. campus houses the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS), and the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU). From 1982 to 2020, the university also hosted the Institute of Turkish Studies. Georgetown additionally possesses an international branch campus in Qatar and a center on Turkish language and culture in Turkey.

Georgetown developed much of its Middle East studies programming as a strategic response to challenges the university faced in the 1970s. The CCAS was created in response to staffing and curricular problems in the Walsh School of Foreign Services (SFS) throughout the 1960s. The SFS was in such rough shape in 1969 that the university's accreditor nearly denied accreditation to the program. In 1970, Georgetown appointed Peter Krogh as dean of the SFS to fix the school and its academic reputation. Krogh hoped to "reestablish the school with a strong curriculum, strong faculty, its own financial means and its own self-confidence." During his tenure, Krogh oversaw the creation of several region-specific programs, such as Asian Studies and African Studies.¹⁰⁷

Shortly after Krogh arrived at Georgetown, the university considered opening a center devoted to Arab studies. In the wake of surging oil prices in the 1970s, donors and policymakers alike began to turn their eyes to the Arab world, and student interest in the region grew significantly. During the 1972–1973 academic year, the university initiated discussions with key players in the Arab and American academic communities about the creation of an Arab studies center at Georgetown. Not long after, the university established the CCAS.

¹⁰⁷ Lorraine Spradley, "Dr. Peter F. Krogh: The Architect of the SFS," *The Hoya*, October 10, 2003, <https://thehoya.com/dr-peter-f-krogh-the-architect-of-the-sfs/>.



Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding wing in Georgetown's School of Foreign Service.

In a 1975 letter to Senator William Fulbright, Peter Krogh enclosed an outline of CCAS's goals. Those goals included:

1. Increase student knowledge about the modern Arab world
2. Address modern issues with a focus on Arab/American ties
3. Conduct activities which improve Arab/American relations and perspectives at both the government and public levels¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Peter Krogh to William Fulbright, August 5, 1975, in *J. William Fulbright Post-Senatorial Papers*, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

CCAS pursued these goals through two sub-divisions: the Institute of Arab Development and International Relations and the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. The Institute aimed to “increase and disseminate knowledge” about the Arab world and focused its efforts on public affairs, research, and publications. The Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, on the other hand, focused primarily on instruction, with the goal of placing graduates in influential positions in government, business, and education. In its early years, CCAS’s programming covered topics such as U.S.–Palestinian policy, Arab economic systems, Arab foreign policy perspectives, and petroleum studies.

Krogh hoped to secure funds that would give CCAS a “lease on life.” He solicited donations both from American companies with interests in the Arab world and from foreign states, organizations, and individuals. In fact, Krogh formally inquired with representatives from every single Arab country to see if they would support CCAS.¹⁰⁹ CCAS’s early directors and faculty were heavily involved in the internal politics of the countries they studied. Economics professor Ibrahim Oweiss served as CCAS’s first program chairman; in 1977, he took a leave of absence to serve in the Egyptian cabinet. That same year, Hisham Sharabi, a co-founder of CCAS, started the Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development to give Palestinians access to social and educational assistance.¹¹⁰

Despite Krogh’s efforts, it was no easy task to secure funds for CCAS. Krogh eventually enlisted Senator Fulbright to assist with fundraising efforts. Fulbright was a fierce advocate of international education, and his efforts were crucial to the success of the operation. He facilitated communications with an international donor network and connected Georgetown with many powerful individuals, including Saudi Ambassador Ali Alireza and Saudi Prince Saud Al-Faisal.

Krogh eventually established an Advisory Board composed of high-profile individuals from countries such as Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt to attract substantial donations to the center. CCAS advisory board members—selected based on their prominence, ability to fundraise, and knowledge of the Middle East—reviewed programs and activities annually to “improve their quality and effect.”¹¹¹ Krogh invited Senator Fulbright to serve on CCAS’s first advisory board. Fulbright initially accepted the invitation, but, in the wake of controversy over his work as legal counsel for the UAE, later withdrew his acceptance to protect CCAS from adverse media attention.¹¹²

109 Peter Krogh to William Fulbright, January 26, 1976, in *J. William Fulbright Post-Senatorial Papers*, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

110 Liz Howard, “Arab Studies Center Founder Dies,” *The Hoya*, January 21, 2005, <https://thehoya.com/arab-studies-center-founder-dies/>.

111 Peter Krogh to William Fulbright, December 8, 1975, in *J. William Fulbright Post-Senatorial Papers*, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

112 In 1976, Fulbright was a member of Washington law firm Hogan and Hartson, where he provided legal counsel to the UAE. While Hogan and Hartson was already registered as a foreign agent, Fulbright himself was not registered until January 26, 1976. See “Fulbright Arranged for Law Firm to Which He Is Affiliated to Give Advice to United Arab Emirates,” *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, January 23, 1976, <https://www.jta.org/archive/fulbright-arranged-for-law-firm-to-which-he-is-affiliated-to-give-advice-to-united-arab-emirates>; “Fulbright to Represent Arab Sheikdoms in U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1976,

Krogh to Fulbright

I mentioned to you the difficulty I have been having raising money from the private sector. Part of the problem is while we have a good idea we have not had, to date, well known individuals identified with the Center. The establishment of our Advisory Board corrects this deficiency and gives us greater visibility and credibility in funding circles.

—Peter Krogh in a letter to William Fulbright, January 26, 1976

Krogh's diligent fundraising efforts helped CCAS stay afloat during the center's early years. The center had an initial operating budget of \$500,000 per year (excluding grants and contracts), and it claimed to need an additional \$6.1 million in capital to achieve longevity.¹¹³ Although the goal was lofty, Krogh's ambitious fundraising plan proved successful. His outreach to foreign entities was particularly fruitful, and Arab countries contributed two-thirds of the funding needed to start the center. (American businesses provided the remainder.) The Libyan government gave \$750,000 to establish the al-Mukhtar Chair of Arab Culture, the UAE gave \$250,000 to support a visiting professorship of Arab civilization, and Sultan Qaboos of Oman gave \$100,000 directly to CCAS.¹¹⁴

Foreign support shrank sharply during the 1980s, when the price of oil collapsed and many Middle Eastern countries therefore suffered severe economic downturns. By 1989, Georgetown was concerned about the long-term solvency of CCAS and warned that it would not bail out the center if it ran out of funds.¹¹⁵ According to internal documents, CCAS considered three possible strategies for survival during this period:

1. Consolidate resources around the academic mission and reduce expenditures related to outreach and public affairs
2. Solicit \$1.5 million in new donor funds to support a modest expansion of existing programs
3. Secure a massive donation to fund major expansion across all programs

In the end, the timing of the crisis worked in CCAS's favor. A massive donation to support Georgetown's Middle East studies programming helped the center recover from its financial troubles.

Palestinian businessman Hasib Sabbagh and Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi wished to establish a new MESC at Georgetown around the same time that CCAS sought a path forward. Sabbagh and Khalidi feared that, with the fall of the Soviet Union, American policymakers would turn their attention to the Middle East and paint the region as the new enemy. Americans already held a dim view of the Middle East due to Islamic terrorism, the

<https://www.nytimes.com/1976/01/27/archives/falbright-to-represent-arab-sheikdoms-in-us.html>; William Fulbright to Peter Krogh, January 28, 1976, in *J. William Fulbright Post-Senatorial Papers*, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

¹¹³ Peter Krogh to William Fulbright, August 5, 1975.

¹¹⁴ Katrina Thomas, "America as Alma Mater," *Aramco World* 30, no. 3 (May/June 1979): 2–11, <https://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197903/america.as.alma.mater.htm>.

¹¹⁵ CCAS Advisory Council Meeting, May 3, 1989, in *J. William Fulbright Post-Senatorial Papers*, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

Iranian Revolution, Wahabi radicalism throughout the Sunni world, and corrupt Arab regimes. Sabbagh, Khalidi, and their colleagues hoped that an academic center would ward off negative sentiment toward the Middle East and promote positive engagement with the region. Georgetown quickly became the obvious choice as Sabbagh and Khalidi searched for a home for their new center. The university's support of CCAS over the years demonstrated its willingness and capacity to study the Islamic world. As a Catholic, Sabbagh also appreciated the university's Jesuit roots.¹¹⁶



Gold plaque which honors Hasib Sabbagh, one of the co-founders of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

In 1993, Georgetown University partnered with Sabbagh's *Fondation pour l'Entente entre Chrétiens et Musulmans* (located in Geneva, Switzerland) to establish the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (CMCU).¹¹⁷ The Switzerland foundation's board members included Lebanon's then-prime minister, Rafik Hariri, and Saudi businessman Shaykh Suliman Olayan.¹¹⁸ Thanks to a \$2.9 million donation from the Swiss foundation and a \$1 million gift from Sabbagh himself, CMCU was born with nearly \$4 million to its name.¹¹⁹

This generosity allowed CCAS to accomplish its third fiscal strategy: a massive donation that allowed major expansion. While CMCU was not formally connected to CCAS, its establishment brought a renewed energy to Middle East studies at Georgetown and, in turn, expanded the reach and visibility of CCAS. By 1997, CCAS was formally designated as a National

116 Walid Khalidi, "Remembering Hasib Sabbagh (1920–2010)," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 52–65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jps.2010.xxxix.3.52>.

117 John L. Esposito, "The Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding," *Islamic Studies* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 121–28, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20839004>.

118 Khalidi, "Remembering Hasib Sabbagh."

119 Goldie Blumenstyk, "Unlisted Foreign Donations," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 16, 1994, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/unlisted-foreign-donations/>.

Resource Center, which substantially increased its revenue and alleviated many of its budgetary woes.

Georgetown recruited John Esposito, a professor of religious studies and a prominent Middle East scholar, to serve as CMCU's first director. Esposito had stellar credentials and brought an abundance of experience to the role: he previously served as president of the Middle East Studies Association and as a consultant for the State Department, and he boasted an extensive list of publications.¹²⁰

CMCU's influence grew substantially in the early 2000s, in large part due to America's increased interest in the study of Islam following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Between the 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 academic years, CMCU's media interviews and consultations more than tripled, from 91 to 300.¹²¹ In 2005, CMCU received a \$20 million gift from Alwaleed bin Talal, which enabled the center to expand its programming even further (Talal gave an identical gift to Harvard that same year). Talal's generous donation prompted Georgetown to rename CMCU the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU).

ACMCU continues to focus on the September 11 attacks to this day—but coverage emphasizes how 9/11 and the War on Terror hurt Muslim-Americans. The center's 2021 programming also reflects an increased interest in the legacies of slavery and colonialism in the Middle East and in the “racialization” of ethnic minorities in the Islamic world.¹²²

Georgetown's extensive connections to Arab donors paid off substantially over time, and many of the donors continued to fund other Georgetown programs outside of Middle East studies. (For instance, Saad Hariri, Rafik's son, gave \$20 million to support the construction of the university's business school in 2009.) Generous support from Arab donors also enabled the university to add several chairs and professorships to the Center over the years, as detailed in Figure 26.

Figure 26: Foreign-Funded Chairs at Georgetown

Title	Year Established	Honoree	Donors	Funding Amount
al-Mukhtar Chair of Arab Culture	1977	Umar Al-Mukhtar, fought for Libyan independence from Italy	Libya	\$750,000
Seif Ghobash Chair in Arab Studies	1980	Seif Ghobash, UAE deputy foreign minister	UAE	\$750,000

120 “John L. Esposito,” Georgetown University, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, accessed November 2, 2021, <https://acmcu.georgetown.edu/profile/john-esposito/>.

121 Esposito, “Prince Alwaleed Center.”

122 Tamara Sonn, “ACMCU Announces Global Anti-Racism Initiatives,” Georgetown University, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim Christian Understanding, May 16, 2021, <https://acmcu.georgetown.edu/2021/05/16/acmcu-announces-global-anti-racism-initiatives/>.

Sheikh Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah Chair*	1980	H.R.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait Emir	Kuwait	\$3 million
Sultan Qaboos bin Said Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies	1980	Architect Sultan Qaboos bin Said	Oman	\$1 million
Sultanate of Oman Chair	1993	Architect Sultan Qaboos bin Said	Oman	Unclear
Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal Chair of Islamic Civilization	2006	Businessman Alwaleed bin Talal	Saudi Arabia	Part of \$20 million donation to create ACMCU
Clovis and Hala Salaam Maksoud Chair in Arab Studies	2007	Clovis Maksoud, served as Ambassador of the League of Arab States and Special Representative to the United Nations; Hala Salaam, president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee	Unclear	\$2 million
Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor in the History of Islam	Unclear	Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Qatar Emir	Qatar	Unclear
Hamad bin Khalifa Professor of Indian Politics**	Unclear	Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Qatar Emir	Qatar	Unclear

Courses

Because Georgetown prepares students for policy careers, the university offers an unusually large number of courses on topics related to the Middle East compared to other universities.¹²³ For the Fall 2021 semester, CCAS offered more than 70 courses, and Georgetown's regular course catalog listed more than 300 additional courses related to the Middle East. (See Course Distribution in Appendix A.)¹²⁴

ACMCU advertised six courses that semester, five associated with the International Affairs department and one with the History department. In this section, we analyze the content of the courses from each of the three subdivisions, starting with ACMCU.

ACMCU focuses more on public outreach than education, though it offers a minor which putatively promotes its goal of increasing "Muslim-Christian understanding."¹²⁵ Students must take one course focused on the Islamic world and another course that studies Christianity and its relations with other religions. While the center advertises courses

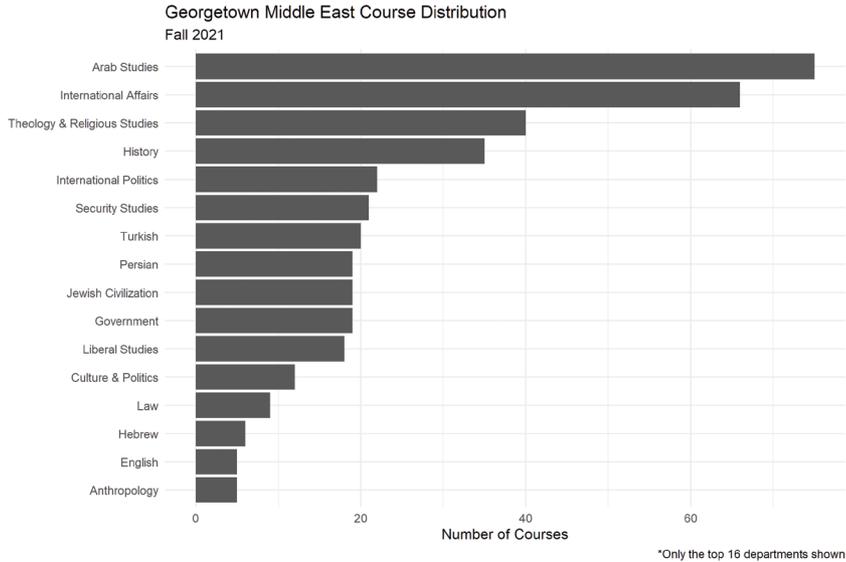
¹²³ Course information was retrieved from the university website: https://myaccess.georgetown.edu/pls/bninbp/bwskfcls.p_disp_dyn_ctlg#_ga=2.88828187.1669942204.1645996648-551376761.1639185516.

¹²⁴ We considered courses offered by the Arab Studies department as CCAS courses due to the department's close affiliation with the center. In addition, many Arab Studies courses fulfill core requirements for the Master of Arts in Arab Studies (MAAS), which is supported by CCAS.

¹²⁵ "Minor in Muslim-Christian Understanding," Georgetown University, Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, <https://acmcu.georgetown.edu/academics/minor-in-muslim-christian-understanding/>.

focused solely on Islam, it only discusses Christianity in the context of its relationship to Islam (or other religions) and does not separately analyze Christian theology and ecclesiology for its own sake. As a result, ACMCU's courses help Christians to "understand" Muslims, but they do little to help Muslims understand Christians.

Figure 27



ACMCU focuses on changing negative perceptions of Islam into positive ones. The course "Islamic World," taught by ACMCU's director Jonathan Brown, explores how Islam became known to the West historically through "caricatures of terrorists and despots"—which makes it seem as if these views are unfounded or unreasonable to hold. "Sharia Law & Its Discontents," also taught by Brown, aims to correct Americans' "poorly understood" perceptions of Islamic legal tradition and to teach the "actual nature and history" of Sharia law.¹²⁶

CCAS offers a much broader range of courses than ACMCU. Many CCAS courses complement standard Arabic courses and give students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of the Arabic language to the study of Arabic culture. While language instruction takes the forefront, these courses sometimes incorporate political topics. "Arab Politics Through Literature," for instance, introduces students to literary works with political messages and has students analyze their political content. Other CCAS courses address politics directly and cover topics such as foreign policy, revolutions, and Islamic political thought. The department also offers several highly specialized courses focused on specific regions,

¹²⁶ "ACMCU Courses," Georgetown University, Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, obtained via Wayback Machine on September 3, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210903131251/https://acmcu.georgetown.edu/academics/courses>.

including courses on Syrian politics, Palestinian politics, Egyptian politics, and Chinese–Arab relations.

Interspersed with its courses on Arabic culture and politics, CCAS lists a number of courses that advance the ideological agenda of contemporary American progressives. These courses focus on topics such as migration, minority rights, and youth movements, and possess course descriptions riddled with progressive jargon. The course “Refugees: Middle East & North Africa,” for example, refers to refugees and migrants as “displaced people”—a term reminiscent of “undocumented immigrants,” which removes agency from migrants and emphasizes their passivity in the face of uncontrollable forces. The course teaches students to “advocate” for “displaced people” however they can. This blend of academic study with political advocacy, far too frequent at Georgetown and its peers, betrays the basic academic mission to pursue truth dispassionately.

Despite its extensive catalog of courses related to the Arabic world, the center offers few courses on terrorism. Georgetown students notice this omission. An undergraduate student in the department noted in an interview that CCAS tried to focus more on culture and deliberately avoided terms such as “terrorist.”¹²⁷ Indeed, CCAS’s Fall 2021 course titles and descriptions included only a single reference to “counterterrorism” and no mentions of “terrorism” or “terrorist.” Only one course in Fall 2021, “Advanced Arabic Topics: Syrian Revolution” explicitly mentions that students will learn about the rise of ISIS. This is an astonishing absence for a center that receives Title VI funds.

Georgetown does offer some courses on terrorism through the Walsh School of Foreign Service and other departments, though the treatment of the subject varies greatly from course to course. Some courses focus on security and do not shy away from discussion about the threat of terrorism. The course description of “Terrorism and Counterterrorism,” offered by the International Affairs department, states bluntly that 9/11 demonstrated that “terrorists can and will kill thousands to pursue their ends.” The course highlights Islamic terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Al-Qaeda and teaches students methods of how to combat terrorism. Other courses, however, attempt to erase any negative perceptions students may have of Islam or Muslims, regardless of how well-founded the perceptions are in reality. “Islam and Terrorism,” for example, attempts to demonstrate the “profound differences” between terrorists and mainstream Muslims to ensure that students understand that “terrorism is not an Islamic phenomenon.” Such an approach attempts to diminish the unique danger Islamic terrorism poses to Europe and America.

Other courses—even within the same department—bizarrely avoid any mention of terrorism in their discussion of the legal and cultural effects of the September 11 attacks and suggest that the worst effect of 9/11 was discrimination against innocent Muslim-Americans

¹²⁷ Confidential interview with author at Georgetown University, September 14, 2021.

in its aftermath. “Muslims, Civil Rights & The War on Terror” advances the notion that the American government uses its power to “marginalize, disenfranchise, and erase Muslims and Arabs both in the U.S. and abroad.” The course emphasizes the perspective of Muslims to inculcate an unquestioning sympathy for the “plight” of Muslim-Americans: it elevates claims of discriminatory treatment after the 9/11 attacks, condemns the “unlawful invasion and war,” and decries the Trump-era “Muslim ban.” The course also shoehorns unrelated issues such as climate change and Black Lives Matter protests into class discussions.

It is worth repeating that Georgetown graduates frequently enter federal service or join non-governmental organizations that inform the American public and influence government policy. America's national security depends on these graduates. Islamic studies courses should not downplay terrorism and counterterrorism, yet the university commits a disservice to its country when it teaches students radical political agendas instead of a comprehensive instruction in the nature of the Islamic world. When it leaves its students ignorant of the nature and the sources of Islamic terrorism, it endangers the lives of Americans, who depend on properly educated experts to serve in American government and civil society. We need public officials who can assess threats and advise on strategy, not those who regurgitate the latest progressive talking points. If students spend enough time in Georgetown's more radical courses, they may not even enter public service at all, for the classes teach students to despise the very country they should seek to protect.

Outreach and Programs

Both CCAS and ACMCU offer workshops for K-12 teachers, often in collaboration with one another. These workshops supposedly equip teachers to educate children about the history and culture of the Middle East in an age-appropriate manner. However, given the clear ideological focus of both centers' Middle East-related courses, it should come as no surprise that their K-12 workshops mainly function as yet another propaganda outlet.

CCAS and ACMCU professors use K-12 workshops to promote simplemindedly positive perceptions of Islam and to deconstruct and correct “ignorant misconceptions” about the Islamic world. The workshops cover topics such as Muslim representation in the media, cultural interactions between the East and the West, and children's literature in the classroom. Georgetown's centers sometimes collaborate on these workshops with organizations like Islamic Networks Group, which aims to dispel negative stereotypes of Muslims.¹²⁸ In addition to their K-12 workshops, CCAS and ACMCU occasionally offer programs for non-educators, such as a workshop on “cultural competency” for healthcare professionals.

¹²⁸ Islamic Networks Group, <https://ing.org/>.

ACMCU also funds a “research” project known as the Bridge Initiative (BI). BI seeks to “inform the general public about Islamophobia” through the dissemination of “reports, articles, and other media.” One of its projects is quite similar to the Southern Poverty Law Center’s blog *Hatewatch* and features profiles of prominent individuals whom BI claims are anti-Muslim. (Profiled individuals include talk show host Tucker Carlson, congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, and former Trump administration official Mike Pompeo).¹²⁹ BI also writes reports critical of U.S. policies such as the Trump administration’s 2017 travel ban or the continued use of Guantanamo Bay detention facilities.¹³⁰ This type of political advocacy is more appropriate behavior for a think tank or an advocacy organization than for a university—but it is typical of ACMCU, which regularly trades on Georgetown’s academic reputation to promote its own ideological agenda.

Observations

Georgetown’s prominent role in the education of future government employees means the university should be held to a particularly high standard. The stakes are higher than those at other institutions: the miseducation of future political leaders endangers America’s national security.

CCAS, as part of the Walsh School of Foreign Service, should aim to produce effective diplomats and politicians who will serve the United States as public servants, not activists who sympathize intensely with foreign countries and peoples and disdain their own. Yet CCAS pursues the latter course, even as they receive hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars annually from the federal government as a result of their NRC designation—and millions more from federal student grants and loans.

The professors themselves sometimes have particularly questionable overseas ties. Take professor and ACMCU director Jonathan Brown as an example. He has several personal ties to the Middle East. Brown’s wife is a well-known journalist for Qatari media outlet *Al Jazeera*,¹³¹ while his father-in-law was investigated in the 2000s for alleged links to Islamic terrorist organizations.¹³² Compromising family ties aside, Brown himself came under fire in 2017 for minimizing the moral gravity of Islamic slavery in a lecture.¹³³ In 2019, he responded

129 “Factsheets,” Bridge Initiative, Georgetown University, <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research-publications/factsheets/>.

130 In 2017, the Trump administration banned travel from seven Muslim-majority countries over terrorism concerns. Critics of this policy called it a “Muslim ban,” accusing the Trump administration for primarily instituting such a ban due to hatred of Muslims. Guantanamo Bay detention facilities detain terrorists. The facilities have been accused of abuse and mistreatment of detainees, and most detainees are Muslim men. See William Roberts, “Why is Guantanamo Bay Prison Still Open 20 Years after 9/11?,” *Al Jazeera*, September 11, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/11/why-is-guantanamo-bay-prison-still-open-20-years-after-9/>.

131 “Laila Al-Arian,” *Al Jazeera America*, <http://america.aljazeera.com/profiles/a/laila-al-arian.html>.

132 “Sami Al-Arian Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy to Provide Services to Palestinian Islamic Jihad,” U.S. Department of Justice, April 17, 2006, https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2006/April/06_crm_221.html.

133 Valerie Strauss, “Georgetown Professor under Fire for Lecture about Slavery and Islam,” *Washington Post*, February 17, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/02/17/georgetown-professor-under-fire-by-conser->

to his critics by writing a book that elaborated on his lecture's exercise in minimization. *Literary Review* contributor Barnaby Crowcroft noted, however, that Brown attempted to redefine slavery to make it easier to compare Eastern and Western culture:

He [Brown] dismisses the most broadly accepted definition of slavery as the legal status of owning a human being as property, common to both Western practice and the sharia, by offering quite ludicrously trivial remarks on how divorce proceedings in US courts reveal that people in the West 'own' each other, sort of.¹³⁴

Such politically motivated redefinition of language exemplifies the underlying biases of academics in the field. Brown's deep-rooted reluctance to criticize Islam and Middle Easterners is entirely understandable—however he arrived at his views, he must also feel professional gratitude toward Alwaleed bin Talal and honor his family's deep ties with the region. Brown's biased reluctance may be understandable, but it has no place in an institution of higher education or in the instruction of future public officials.

Georgetown's foreign ties extend beyond the professoriate. As of 2022, government officials from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman still hold positions on the advisory board of CCAS.¹³⁵ Georgetown clearly profits from such an arrangement, and it once again demonstrates how MESCs survive and thrive. They teach Americans to act entirely congenially toward the interests of foreign nations. Georgetown's centers have the greatest effect among MESCs when they do so, for they inculcate this deep-seated indifference toward American interests among student elites in the nation's own capital.

[vatives-for-lecture-about-slavery-and-islam/](#).

134 Barnaby Crowcroft, "Sanctioned by Sharia?" *Literary Review*, December 2019, <https://literaryreview.co.uk/sanctioned-by-sharia>.

135 "Board of Advisors," Georgetown University, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, accessed November 3, 2021, <https://ccas.georgetown.edu/people/board/>.

George Mason University

The AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University (GMU) is one of the newer Islamic studies centers in the country. It was originally founded as the Ali Vural Ak Center in 2009, and its name was changed to the AbuSulayman Center sometime during Summer 2022.¹³⁶ George Mason, like many universities close to Washington, D.C., touts its proximity to the federal government as an advantage for students, donors, and faculty. For the AbuSulayman Center in particular, the ties to government go beyond its location: Peter Mandaville, the current director, held several positions in the State Department during the Obama administration.¹³⁷

GMU was an obvious candidate for an Islamic Studies center due to the large Muslim population in the surrounding area, which would provide a pool of potential students for the center.¹³⁸ Indeed, the university already had an Islamic studies program prior to the creation of the Center. That program has been a source of controversy for GMU. In 2008, the program came under scrutiny after GMU accepted a \$1.5 million grant from the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), which was the subject of a federal investigation for alleged ties to terrorism, to create an IIIT Chair in Islamic Studies.¹³⁹

The AbuSulayman Center also owes its existence to an unusual source of funding. Gulf States, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are the primary foreign donors to American universities in general and to MESC's in particular. These donors often have ties to foreign governments that have a vested interest in furthering the study of their culture abroad—with an appreciative slant. By contrast, Turkish businessman Ali Vural Ak founded the Center through a \$3.1 million gift—but Ak is an entrepreneur with no formal connections to the Turkish government.¹⁴⁰

136 Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220812201016/https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/>.

137 "Peter Mandaville," AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/people/pmandavi>.

138 "Muslim Estimate Counties (2010)," Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed November 15, 2021, https://www.thearda.com/qj2010/QL_C_2010_1_28p.asp.

139 Though the FBI did not find sufficient evidence for direct ties to terrorists, it had been reported that the IIIT had previously donated to the SAAR Foundation, which had ties to terrorists. See Josh Gerstein, "Judge Dismisses Suit Questioning Federal Tactics," *New York Sun*, November 8, 2007, <https://www.nysun.com/article/national-judge-dismisses-suit-questioning-federal-tactics>; Steven Merley, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2009), https://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1163/20090411_merley.usbrotherhood.pdf.

140 Neetu Arnold, "How Did a Virginia University Hide a Multimillion Dollar Donation from Turkey?," *RealClearEducation*, November 1, 2021, https://www.realcleareducation.com/articles/2021/11/01/how_did_a_virginia_university_hide_a_multimillion_dollar_donation_from_turkey_110663.html.

Ali Vural Ak's gift was not at random. Dr. Cemil Aydin, a prominent professor at the Center at the time of its founding, was Ak's classmate and friend when they attended Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey.¹⁴¹ The GMU Center might never have been created without Aydin's connection to Ak.

The Center's original funding source is unusual, but George Mason's lack of transparency about that funding is all too typical. The university's administrators simultaneously bragged to their colleagues about their success at foreign fundraising and hid the records of the foreign gifts from the public. GMU's website retains the university's original press release announcing Ak's \$4 million commitment (Ak only donated \$3.1 million out of his \$4 million commitment due to an economic downturn in Turkey, though the university never corrected the discrepancy).¹⁴² It also proudly reports that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, then-prime minister of Turkey, gave the inaugural address for the Center.¹⁴³ Yet the gift was conspicuously absent from the U.S. Department of Education's Section 117 foreign funds reporting portal, where foreign donations to American higher education institutions must be reported. The Center attempted to justify the omission by saying that the gift was received by the university's private foundation, a type of pass-through institution that many universities use to legally transform foreign money into domestic money.¹⁴⁴

Since its founding, the Center has retained a close connection with its Turkish roots and has hired several Turkish professors and visiting scholars. In 2017, the university also began a partnership with Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul, which enabled the two universities to exchange students, share resources, and conduct joint studies.¹⁴⁵

Courses

In the Fall 2021 semester, George Mason offered more than 30 courses related to Islam and the Middle East.¹⁴⁶ More than a third of the courses focused on language education, with Arabic as the most common subject matter. The Religion department offered the second largest number of courses on Islam and the Middle East, while the Government department offered the third largest number. The Middle East and Islamic Studies department itself only offered two classes.

141 "Başbakan ABD'de Intercity'nin patronunun 'İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi'ni açacak [Prime Minister to Open 'Islamic Studies Center' of Intercity's Boss in the USA]," *Milliyet*, December 4, 2010, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/ekonomi/basbakan-abd-de-intercity-nin-patronunun-islam-arastirmalari-merkezi-ni-acacak-1223750>.

142 B.J. Koubaroulis, "Mason Receives \$4 Million Commitment to Islamic Studies Center," AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University, November 10, 2009, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/articles/2321>.

143 James Greif, "On Trip to Nuclear Security Summit, Turkish Prime Minister Speaks at Mason," AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University, April 15, 2010, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/articles/2322>.

144 Robin Parker, email to author, October 8, 2021.

145 "George Mason Üniversitesi ile işbirliği [Collaboration with George Mason University]," İbn Haldun Üniversitesi, July 13, 2017, <https://www.ihu.edu.tr/george-mason-universitesi-ile-isbirligi-2/>.

146 See <https://catalog.gmu.edu/course-search/>.

Figure 28

George Mason University Course Distribution
Fall 2021



As with most instruction and research on Middle East and Islamic studies, GMU's Middle Eastern language and religion courses do not shy from current events and political issues. One Arabic course discusses "Black and minority cultural productions," "diaspora studies," and "post-colonialism." Hatim El-Hibri, a media studies professor affiliated with the Center, noted that research at GMU closely tracked current events; in recent years, for example, GMU professors focused on the Arab Spring and related political movements.¹⁴⁷

The university's course catalog does not provide many details about the content of the courses. The author, however, received some context from talking to a global affairs student at GMU who took multiple Middle East and Islamic studies courses. The student mentioned that his Palestinian heritage shapes his beliefs, and he explained that he had long known that many American beliefs about the Middle East were "lies." GMU courses simply provided him with more "depth" with which to confirm his certainty that they were falsehoods. He specifically mentioned how he had learned that Western involvement destabilized the Middle East, capitalism is generally harmful, and social democracy and socialism are superior systems.¹⁴⁸

One student's personal political journey is admittedly an imperfect signal for the content of the courses at the AbuSulayman Center. But given the subject matter and perspectives at

¹⁴⁷ Hatim El-Hibri, interview with author at George Mason University, September 13, 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Confidential, interview with author at George Mason University, September 13, 2021.

GMU and other schools, it hardly appears out of place. A university funded by American taxpayers should not confirm disaffected students in their prejudices about America.

Programs & Outreach

The AbuSulayman Center, like many Middle East and Islamic studies centers, offers several programs that foreground identity-group theory, especially regarding race. Identity politics hijacked academia long ago, but the promotion of “anti-racism” in higher education has reached new heights since the riots triggered by George Floyd’s death in 2020. In 2021, for example, the Center sponsored a conference titled “Race and Islam” that called for academic papers on topics such as “Media racialization of protest movements,” “Race and Islamophobia in Europe and the West,” and “Wars on terror and racism against Muslims.”¹⁴⁹ The Center also hosted a lecture, “Making the US: Muslims, Race, and Class,” which described America as a country opposed to “groups and ideas” and discussed “how the country [the United States] defined itself at its founding, against Muslims and against Blackness.”¹⁵⁰

Other events sponsored by the Center respond more generally to current affairs. “Ramadan in Lockdown: Personal Reflection and Communal Activities” focused on how Muslims celebrated Ramadan during the coronavirus pandemic, while “American Muslim Voters: Also not a Monolith” attempted to explain why some Muslims voted for Joe Biden while others voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election.

A glaring omission in the Center’s programming relative to other Middle East and Islamic studies centers can be seen in its coverage (or lack thereof) of recent political controversies surrounding Turkey. Harvard, by contrast, offered several events that addressed the ongoing Turkish–Kurdish conflict, while GMU’s center did not advertise a single event that discussed the issue. The Center also consistently fails even to mention the Turks’ genocide of the Armenians—a lacuna that has become even more peculiar since 2021, when Biden provided official American acknowledgment that it was indeed a genocide.

One possible explanation for the lack of coverage is that the Center focuses on Islam rather than on geopolitical issues, a focus that reflects the goals of the newer generations of Turkish donors.¹⁵¹

Regardless of the Center’s purported focus, its continued connection with Turkey undoubtedly contributes to its hesitancy to address the Armenian genocide. Turkey still does not acknowledge the genocide, and citizens of Turkey can be and have been legally punished

149 “Race and Islam: Global Histories, Contemporary Legacies,” AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/events/12490>.

150 “Making the US: Muslims, Race, and Class,” AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University, November 10, 2020, <https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/events/11587>.

151 Established Turkish families, such as the Kocs and the Sabancis, focused on advancing the country of Turkey, whereas newer generations of donors, which tend to get their riches from entrepreneurial activities, focus on promoting Islam and Islamic nations.

for mentioning it. The nation has justified this punishment by declaring that references to the genocide “insult Turkishness.”¹⁵²

When questioned about the Center’s minimal coverage of the Armenian genocide, Director Peter Mandaville stated that he had “no hesitation in recognizing the horrors” of the genocide in his capacity as an individual scholar. But the Center “does not take institutional positions on such issues.”¹⁵³

To the extent that the Center does discuss Turkish–Armenian relations, it appeared rather dismissive of well-known facts. The Center’s “Turks in America” initiative, a digital project that documents “Turkish-American experiences,” published a piece by visiting scholar Isil Acehan that portrays post–World War I agitation by Armenian-Americans and Greek-Americans to prevent the re-establishment of American–Turkish diplomatic ties as the result of “extremist Armenian and Greek propaganda.”¹⁵⁴ Acehan’s analysis primarily relies on the autobiography of American ambassador to Turkey Joseph Grew, in which he complains about the threats he received while meeting with Turkish ambassador Ahmet Muhtar. Her description, however, entirely ignores the context for the negative response from the Greeks and Armenians: Turkish persecution.

Due to Turkish laws, we cannot reasonably expect Turks to fully acknowledge the Armenian genocide. But we can expect American centers to speak fully and fearlessly of all matters of historical truth—and not to trade their intellectual freedom for Turkish lucre.

Observations

George Mason’s AbuSulayman Center is different from other Middle East and Islamic studies centers because it was funded by an atypical foreign donor: an entrepreneur from Turkey. As a result of its unique funder and focus, the center attracts a larger proportion of people affiliated with Turkey, and it appears hesitant to address the Armenian genocide. Overall, however, the tone of the center is similar to centers funded by Saudi Arabia or the U.S. government.

Like most centers of its kind, the AbuSulayman Center focuses primarily on Islamophobia, anti-racism, and immigration issues. While the work of these newer centers supports the interests of Middle East donors, the push to combat negative views of Islam and Muslims is driven primarily by academics rather than by their foreign sponsors. Middle East donors have no need to interfere in the operations of the centers they support, as the academics promote foreign interests without any prompting. As long as American academics

152 Madeline Roache, “What Biden’s Recognition of Armenian Genocide Means to Armenian-Americans,” *TIME*, April 27, 2021, <https://time.com/5959135/biden-armenia-genocide/>.

153 Peter Mandaville, email to author, November 9, 2021.

154 Isil Acehan, “Ambassador Ahmet Muhtar, Henry Ford, and Detroit’s Turks,” *Turks in America*, February 5, 2019, <https://turksinamerica.com/ambassador-ahmet-muhtar-henry-ford-and-detroits-turks/>.

continue to produce the typical, left-wing research to support their xenophilia, the donors are satisfied. Wealthy Middle Easterners such as Ali Vural Ak are the main ones who benefit from these arrangements, in which the centers promote Islam and support globalization by discouraging the articulation and pursuit of the American national interest.

The University of Arkansas

The University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, nestled in the northwest corner of the Natural State, seems like an unlikely recipient of eight-figure donations from Saudi royalty. Fayetteville is a typical southern city with a college town flair—there's plenty of sweet tea and cardinal red to cheer on the Arkansas Razorbacks, as well as a church steeple or two. Yet housed in the picturesque Old Main, the oldest building on campus, is the Saudi-funded King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies.

In the 1990s, Middle Eastern nations paid significant attention—and money—to the University of Arkansas. First, the university received a \$21.5 million endowment from Saudi Arabia to establish the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies in the early 1990s. Several years later, in 1999, the university used funds from Middle Eastern donors to build the J. William Fulbright Memorial Peace Fountain to honor Fulbright's legacy of international education. The memorial fountain attracted donations from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (\$300,000), the Sultanate of Oman (\$100,000), and the Republic of Turkey (\$10,000).¹⁵⁵

Although it may seem peculiar at first glance, the lavish attention the University of Arkansas received from Middle Eastern nations is no mystery to those familiar with American politics in the 1990s. Former Arkansas governor Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States in 1992 and held this position for the remainder of the decade. Clinton's influence and connections played a large role in the Fahd Center's establishment.

The Fahd Center's beginnings date back to 1989, when then-Fulbright College dean Bernard Madison and then-Arkansas governor Clinton first discussed the idea for the Center. The exact reasons for Dean Madison and the university's interest to establish a Middle Eastern studies center remain unclear. However, the surrounding documentation provides a couple of clues as to the underlying motivations.¹⁵⁶

First, Dean Madison expressed interest in fulfilling William Fulbright's legacy of international education (The College of Arts and Sciences was renamed after Fulbright in 1981

155 "Alan Alda, Others Contribute to UA Fountain," *Talk Business & Politics*, November 2, 1998, <https://talkbusiness.net/1998/11/alan-alda-others-contribute-to-ua-fountain/>.

156 We discussed the theories with former Fulbright College Dean Todd Shields, who served as the interim director of the Fahd Center up until 2022. (As of August 2022, Shields works at Arkansas State University as its chancellor.) Of the theories proposed, he provided definite confirmation for the first. Regarding the other theories, he cautioned that he could not speak with full assurance of the ideas since he had just graduated in 1994, but said the theories seemed reasonable.

and is now called the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, or Fulbright College for short).¹⁵⁷ William Fulbright, then an Arkansas senator, helped establish the Fulbright Program, a prestigious educational exchange program intended to improve the intercultural relations between the U.S. and other countries. Given Fulbright's extensive work in international affairs, particularly with the Arab world, establishing an international education program focused on the Middle East would be a good way for Fulbright College to honor the legacy of its namesake.

Second, the University of Arkansas desired greater academic prominence, both regionally and nationally. Fulbright College faculty were frustrated that the university was primarily known for its Greek life and sports, rather than its research and teaching, and they believed that the surrounding community did not understand or care about their academic work.¹⁵⁸ University leadership hoped that a multimillion-dollar Saudi-funded center would boost the college's reputation among their academic peers and within the community.

Third, according to an internal 1992 draft, Fulbright College faced financial struggles, partially due to an alleged misallocation of funds toward "unnecessary administrative positions," which made the prospect of a sudden and substantial influx of funding especially attractive. Dean Madison believed that Arkansas could obtain a financial windfall by pursuing a Middle East center, since the Saudis had already provided financial support to centers at other universities.¹⁵⁹

After Dean Madison came up with the idea to establish a MESC, Bill Clinton helped put the plan in motion. His motivations went beyond mere gubernatorial benevolence: the Clintons had expressed a personal interest in the success of the university since they both worked as professors at the university during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶⁰ Fulbright had also served as Bill Clinton's mentor while the future president was still an undergraduate at Georgetown, and Fulbright inspired Clinton's approach to foreign policy and diplomacy.¹⁶¹ Clinton's personal connection to Fulbright likely contributed to his desire to help establish the Center.

While Bill Clinton himself possessed limited connections in the Middle East at the time, he used connections within his network to gain an introduction to Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia. Clinton drew particularly upon his relationships with David Edwards, an international currency trader, and Stephens Inc., a large investing firm responsible for Walmart and Tyson Food's meteoric rise (Edwards and Stephens Inc. both had extensive contacts in the

157 Michael Tilley, "Madison Forges Fulbright College," *Talk Business & Politics*, May 17, 1999, <https://talkbusiness.net/1999/05/madison-forges-fulbright-college/>.

158 Report of the Fulbright College Task Force on Directions, June 1992, in *DeDe Long International Education Papers*, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

159 Report of the Fulbright College Task Force on Directions; Tilley, "Madison Forges."

160 Jack Willems, "Professor to President: The Story of Bill Clinton and the UA," *Arkansas Traveler*, October 6, 2006, https://www.uatrav.com/news/article_ef5b3a21-427f-5607-abc5-abbb15f5f70e.html.

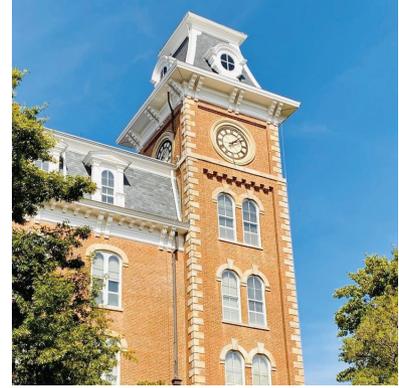
161 John M. Broder, "President Eulogizes Former Mentor--William Fulbright : Memorial: Clinton Calls the Late Arkansan a Lifelong Student and Teacher and Credits Him with Making the World a Better Place," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1995, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-02-18-mn-33379-story.html>.

Middle East). Clinton also contacted Saudi intelligence officer Turki Al Faisal, who had attended Georgetown at the same time as him. Clinton capitalized on all these connections to send a proposal for a Middle East Studies Center, drafted by Dean Madison, to Prince Bandar in 1990.¹⁶²

Bandar, however, did not take the proposal seriously until 1992, when Clinton became a presidential front-runner. Bandar had a history of donating to the causes of U.S. presidents. He agreed to provide the seed money for a MESC at the University of Arkansas only after it became clear that Clinton would likely win the election.¹⁶³

The Saudis gave an initial gift of \$3.5 million in bonds and stocks to the University of Arkansas's flagship campus in Fayetteville in 1992. Edwards secured another \$20 million from Saudi Arabia following Clinton's inauguration. Arkansas State University's and the University of Arkansas's campuses in Little Rock and Pine Bluff, respectively, received approximately \$2 million of the funds. The rest of the \$18 million went toward the creation of a robust Middle East studies program at the flagship campus. The King Fahd Center for Middle Eastern Studies was born from the \$21.5 million it received in two installments, in 1992 and 1994.¹⁶⁴

Very little documentation exists from the King Fahd Center's early years. The College of Arts and Sciences provided only a meager update on the King Fahd Center in its 1995–1996 annual report and included no mention of the Center's funding sources or status.¹⁶⁵ For the first seven years, the Center itself barely kept any records of its financial activity. In the meantime, professors and students from the Center traveled back and forth between Arkansas and the Middle East extensively.¹⁶⁶



Old Main is a state-designated historic site and the oldest building at the University of Arkansas. It houses many departments for the Fulbright College, including the King Fahd Center.



Pictured is the Fulbright Peace Fountain, which attracted donations from several countries.

162 Tilley, "Madison Forges."

163 David B. Ottaway, "Been There, Done That," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1996, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1996/07/21/been-there-done-that/922cbbd4-9805-4d4e-a6ca-128723ab9f4a/>.

164 Tim Weiner, "Clinton and His Ties to the Influential Saudis," *New York Times*, August 23, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/23/world/clinton-and-his-ties-to-the-influential-saudis.html>; Letter from Fulbright Dean Bernard Madison to Georgia Elrod, President of Arkansas Board of Higher Education, August 31, 1995, FOIA request received October 28, 2021.

165 Annual Report, fiscal year 1995–1996 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1996).

166 Middle East Studies Program Annual Report Fiscal Year 2000–2001 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2001), Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

While the lack of records makes it difficult to determine the extent of the disarray, it evidently became clear to university officials that the King Fahd Center would need to organize itself better if it hoped to survive. It took a professional accountant seven months to balance the books for the “most serious budgetary problems.” The chaos of the Center’s early years had mostly been cleaned up by 2001.

Fulbright College released an annual report in 2001 that detailed the King Fahd Center’s activity in the 2000–2001 fiscal year as part of its effort to bring some order to the Middle East Studies program. The college notably attempted to use the report to minimize its apparent dependence on Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the report claimed that the wording of the initial proposal confused onlookers about the actual nature of the university’s relationship with Saudi Arabia. The partnership with Saudi Arabia was only informal, according to the college, and the funds in the endowment should not be considered to be Saudi funds:

The endowment principal presently resides in an account established and maintained by the University of Arkansas Foundation. Despite certain terminological usage in the 1993 proposal, neither these funds, nor the income generated from them can properly be understood as “Saudi.” The endowment principal belongs entirely to the state of Arkansas and cannot be transferred or reallocated by any outside party.¹⁶⁷

This reclassification of funding sources is reminiscent of George Mason University’s excuse for why it chose not to report its donation from Turkey: the money had entered the university-affiliated foundation, so when it reached the university, it was no longer “foreign.”

Contrary to Fulbright College’s claims in the 2000–2001 annual report, the college had maintained several formal partnerships with the Saudis throughout the late 1990s. Saud Shawwaf, Saudi legal counsel to the United Nations, had served on the King Fahd Center’s advisory board during its early years, and a group of Saudi educators visited the campus in 1996 to check on the Center’s development.¹⁶⁸ In 1999, the university initiated partnerships with the Saudi Ministry of Education and four Saudi universities: King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, King Faisal University, and King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals.¹⁶⁹

In the 2000s, the Center sought to achieve long-term financial security by expanding its partnerships to include universities in Yemen, Morocco, Syria, and other Middle Eastern

167 Middle East Studies Program Annual Report Fiscal Year 2000–2001.

168 Committee of the Fulbright College Cabinet, “An Examination of the Middle East Studies Program Steering Committee,” February 26, 1997, FOIA request obtained December 8, 2021.

169 “Saudi Minister of Education and Delegation Sign Cooperative Agreements with University of Arkansas,” University of Arkansas, May 28, 1999, <https://news.uark.edu/articles/11279/saudi-minister-of-education-and-delegation-sign-cooperative-agreements-with-university-of-arkansas>.

nations. The first half of the decade was marked by financial uncertainty following the 2001 stock market crash, and the Center was forced to cut study abroad programs, conferences, and scholarships. University officials quickly realized that the Center needed to find new sources of funding to remain solvent, and they began to solicit donations from wealthy individuals and institutions across the Middle East. In addition to contacting foreign universities, staff from the Center also pursued connections with Middle Eastern business officials. Their relationship with Qatar proved particularly fruitful: representatives from the nation went on to sponsor 60 scholarships for up to two years of Arabic study for students at the Center.¹⁷⁰

In more recent years, the university has established partnerships with institutions of higher education in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Russia, and it works closely with the Aga Khan Humanities Project in Central Asia, the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., and the Elijah School for the Study of Wisdom in World Religions in Jerusalem.¹⁷¹ Former Fulbright College Dean Todd Shields had also stated that he would like to see the King Fahd Center develop intra-institutional partnerships with colleges such as the Walton College of Business.¹⁷²

The university experienced controversy in 2017 when the King Fahd Center canceled feminist scholar Phyllis Chesler's appearance at a conference on honor killings. Professors Mohja Kahf, Joel Gordon, and Ted Swedenburg penned a joint letter to center director Tom Paradise that demanded the Fahd Center pull funds from the conference due to Chesler's presence. These professors believed Chesler's criticism of some Islamic practices "promote[d] bigotry."¹⁷³ Paradise revoked Chesler's invitation to speak altogether. He initially did not want to cancel the event and disagreed with "stifling free speech." But Paradise described the environment in Fayetteville as "heated and crazy complicated."¹⁷⁴ Police, for example, investigated a shattered window at Paradise's house.¹⁷⁵ Paradise mentioned in the same email regarding the shattered window that a "Muslim RSO [Registered Student

170 King Fahd Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies Academic Year 2002-2003 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2003), Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

171 "King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies," University of Arkansas, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://catalog.uark.edu/generalinfo/universitycentersandresearchunits/kingfahdcenterformiddleeaststudies/>.

172 Todd Shields, phone interview with author, October 18, 2021.

173 Joel Gordon to Nani Verzon, April 7, 2017.

174 Thomas Paradise to Lisa Avalos, April 7, 2017.

175 Thomas Paradise to Lisa Avalos, April 7, 2017.



Fliers on Professor Joel Gordon's door

Organization] might be involved too.”¹⁷⁶ The university suspended Paradise from his director role for mishandling the controversy. Paradise later resigned from the position.¹⁷⁷

Courses

The King Fahd Center oversees the University of Arkansas's Middle East studies major. Students can obtain a Middle East studies major only if they pair it with another major at the university.¹⁷⁸ In Fall 2021, the course catalog listed only about 20 courses that touched on the Middle East or related subjects. The Middle East studies department offered two of the courses, “Introduction to Middle East Studies” and “Arab Culture and Civilization.” The rest were spread across other departments, such as Arabic Language and Literature, Political Science, and History. The courses do not vary much from year to year, except for “Topics of the Middle East,” which covers a different topic each semester. In 2021, the “Topics” courses focused on “War, Migration and Refugees in the Middle East” and “Arab Culture and Civilization.”¹⁷⁹

Students who take these courses typically have a relevant cultural or vocational interest in the region. An Arabic lecturer at the university said that many of the students who enrolled in the university's Arabic courses had a cultural connection, wanted to study abroad, or wished to work in business or immigration services. The lecturer also emphasized that by promoting Arabic instruction, the university could help make immigrants in the surrounding community feel welcome.¹⁸⁰

176 Swedenburg postulated that a “rock flying from a lawn mower” could have broken Paradise's window and did not understand why “this [broken window] non-fact got circulated.” Winfield Myers of Middle East Forum and Chesler herself reported on the broken window. We can confirm the shattered window at Paradise's private residence along with its relation to the surrounding controversy. Perpetrators remain unknown. The shattered window, along with the overall panicked tone of Paradise's communications, demonstrates that fear and intimidation pushed Paradise to disinvite Chesler. Threats may have come from more than one source. Chesler wrote in an article that Paradise was warned by “an administrator that funding to the Center would be cut and/or the entire conference cancelled if I [Chesler] were not dis-invited.” See Winfield Myers, “Academic Malfeasance: U. of Arkansas Disinvites Phyllis Chesler,” *Daily Caller*, April 27, 2017, <https://dailycaller.com/2017/04/27/academic-malfeasance-u-of-arkansas-disinvites-phyllis-chesler/>; Phyllis Chesler, “Being a Zionist Is Even Worse Than Being an Islamophobe,” *Israel National News*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/20439>; “Note from Ted Swedenburg,” *Arkansas Times*, obtained April 26, 2021, <https://arktimes.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/pdf-note-from-ted-swedenburg.pdf>.

177 Jaime Adame, “UA Professor Quits Post After Talk Flap,” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, June 17, 2017, <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2017/jun/17/ua-professor-quits-post-after-talk-flap/>.

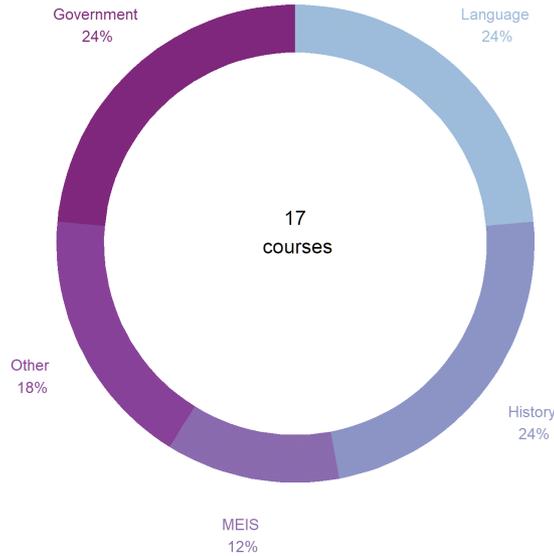
178 “About the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies,” University of Arkansas, <https://fulbright.uark.edu/area-studies/middle-east-studies/about.php>.

179 Course information obtained from the university's course roster and the Fahd Center's website: <https://classes.uark.edu/https://fulbright.uark.edu/area-studies/middle-east-studies/courses/index.php>.

180 Confidential interview with author at University of Arkansas, October 12, 2021.

Figure 29

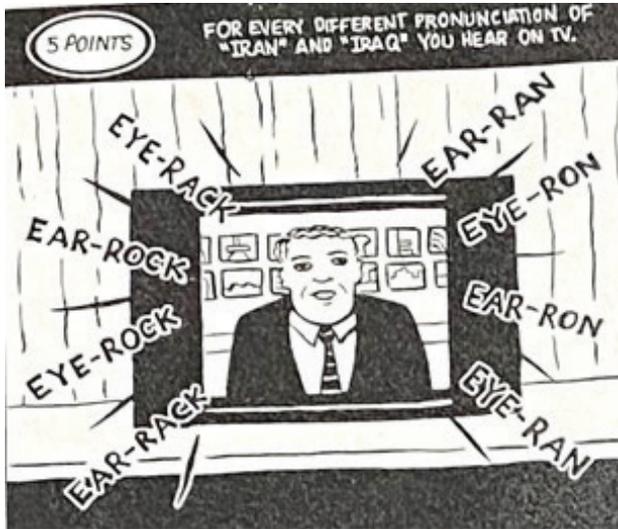
University of Arkansas Course Distribution
Fall 2021



Dean Shields expressed similar sentiments about the value of the courses. Many companies, such as Procter & Gamble, seek out applicants who speak Arabic to fill positions in their overseas offices. For these companies, it is much easier to teach business principles to a new employee than it is to teach a foreign language. Thus, in addition to whatever personal motivations they may have, many students choose to study foreign languages for the sake of the financial benefit they will receive throughout their careers.¹⁸¹

It was difficult to obtain information about the content of the courses offered through the King Fahd Center; however, the author gained a sense of the Center's overall approach to Middle East studies by visiting the campus. Some professors hung political posters on doors, which revealed a strong political bias that likely influences the course content. On Professor Joel Gordon's door, the author noticed movie posters, a sign opposing the so-called Muslim ban under the Trump administration, and a Spanish-language poster that expressed support for Palestine. In the Spring 2021 semester, Gordon taught "New Women in the Middle East," a course that examines the social and cultural role of women in the region since the 19th century.

¹⁸¹ Shields, phone interview with author, October 18, 2021.



"I'm not a terrorist (But if you mess with me, I will hurt you)" on Professor Mohja Kahf's door

Professor Mohja Kahf's door displayed comic strips about Muslim stereotypes. Some of the comics were light-hearted, such as a joke about the various pronunciations of Iran and Iraq. But others were more serious and revealed a strong political bias—the worst offender was a joke likening Israel to the Ku Klux Klan. Given her sense of humor, it should come as no surprise that Kahf supports the BDS movement against Israeli universities.¹⁸² She also was one of the professors (along with Gordon) who penned the letter opposing Chesler's lecture in 2017. In the spring of 2021, Kahf taught "Introduction to Islam."

To be sure, professors in the United States are free to express their political views on their doors and in their personal lives. However, the posters scattered by these professors suggest a bias toward one group of people or cause over others, which is likely reflected in its courses and activities.

182 "The List of US University Professors Endorsing Israel Boycott," Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, February 24, 2009, <https://spme.org/campus-news-climate/the-list-of-us-university-professors-endorsing-israel-boycott/6439/>.

Programs and Outreach

For the past couple of years, the King Fahd Center has significantly cut back its programming due to the coronavirus pandemic. Under normal circumstances, however, the Center facilitates several programs each year focused on building appreciation for Middle Eastern culture. Prior to the pandemic, the Center had a multi-year agreement with the university's performing arts center to host regular events showcasing Middle Eastern artists.¹⁸³

The King Fahd Center also supports the Etel Adnan Poetry Series, created in 2015 in honor of Lebanese poet Etel Adnan.¹⁸⁴ The University of Arkansas Press and the Radius of Arab American Writers work together to solicit submissions, while the King Fahd Center supports the “prize and publication of the winning book through promotion, event hosting, and financial contributions.” The winner, who must be of Arab heritage, is awarded a \$1,000 prize.¹⁸⁵ While private organizations may distribute awards in whatever way they please, it is unbecoming—and unlawful for a public university under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—to officially advertise or support a contest that restricts eligibility based on ethnicity.¹⁸⁶

“Discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin includes discrimination based on a person’s actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, or ancestry. This includes discrimination based on the country, world region, or place where a person or his or her ancestors come from; a person’s limited English proficiency or English learner status; or a person’s actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, including membership in a religion that may be perceived to exhibit such characteristics (such as Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh individuals)” – Office for Civil Rights

The Center’s programs clearly focus their attention on students with an Arab background. Indeed, the professors and administrators the author spoke with unanimously praised the Center for its contributions to cultural exchange. Communications professor Frank Scheide stated that the Center served as a cultural bridge through which foreign students and American students could learn about each other’s cultures and values.¹⁸⁷ Dean Shields concurred, adding that the Center attracted a community of people from other parts of the world who otherwise would not have considered Arkansas home. The mosque built close to the university serves as a testament to the persisting influence of the Arabic community formed by the Center.¹⁸⁸

Dean Shields further noted that the Center’s fellowships and programs have made it easier to recruit students from Middle Eastern countries.¹⁸⁹ Recruiting these students

183 *Peace through Education: Fulbright College Annual Report 2018–2019* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2019), <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=arsc-annual>.

184 “Etel Adnan Poetry Series,” University of Arkansas Press, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://www.uapress.com/eteladnanpoetryseries/>.

185 *Peace through Education*.

186 “Race and National Origin Discrimination: Frequently Asked Questions,” U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/race-origin.html>.

187 Frank Scheide, interview with author at University of Arkansas, October 13, 2021.

188 Shields, phone interview with author, October 18, 2021.

189 Shields, phone interview with author, October 18, 2021.

substantially increases the university's revenue, as foreign students (or the countries sponsoring them) typically pay the full price of out-of-state tuition to attend. For instance, as a result (in large part) of the university's efforts to recruit Iraqi students,¹⁹⁰ the University of Arkansas received \$42 million from Iraq between 2013 and 2018, making it the largest recipient of Iraqi funds of all American universities.¹⁹¹ The university has clearly benefited financially from tailoring the King Fahd Center's programming toward the interests of Arab students, so it is no surprise that it continues to do so.

Observations

The University of Arkansas case study illustrates the great lengths to which a university with an appetite for prominence and wealth will go to achieve its goals. The King Fahd Center clearly uses the University of Arkansas's name and Arab funds to benefit Arabs materially. The Center's support of an ethnocentric poetry contest that only gives awards to those of Arab heritage underscores its adopted purpose.

The University of Arkansas used suspicious practices to establish the King Fahd Center. The disarray of the Center's records from the early years makes it difficult to determine how far these practices extended. While it appears that the university made some improvements to its reporting procedures since then, more reforms must be made to address the deeply rooted transparency issues.

The university's treatment of the start-up donation from Saudi Arabia highlights the extent of its transparency issues. To this day, the university argues that it was not required to report the initial \$3.5 million gift:

The College Foreign Contract and Gift Report only includes gifts from foreign countries. If a gift was from a private individual, foundation or organization, it would not be recorded there. Also keep in mind it's been 30-plus years, and in looking into this it appears those bonds may have been given anonymously by individuals.¹⁹²

A 1995 document, however, clearly denotes that the gifts came from Saudi Arabia.¹⁹³

190 Confidential interview with author at University of Arkansas, October 12, 2021. See also "U of A Inks Agreement with University of Basrah," University of Arkansas, May 27, 2015, <https://news.uark.edu/articles/27636/u-of-a-inks-agreement-with-university-of-basrah>.

191 "College Foreign Gift and Contract Report," U.S. Department of Education, <https://sites.ed.gov/foreigngifts/>.

192 Andra Liwag, email to author, December 2, 2021.

193 "As you recall, the Kind Fahd Program is supported by an endowment established by two gifts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The first gift, in 1992, consisted of bonds with face value of approximately \$3.5 million and was presented to the University of Arkansas Foundation. The second gift, in 1994, amounted to approximately \$18 million and was awarded to the University of Arkansas Foundation by the State Board of Higher Education Foundation from the \$20 million gift from the Kingdom to the State of Arkansas." Letter from Fulbright Dean Bernard Madison to Georgia Elrod, President of Arkansas Board of Higher Education, August 31, 1995, FOIA request received October 28, 2021.

The flagship Fayetteville campus is not the only campus in the university system that failed to report its Saudi funds. Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock still have not reported the combined \$850,000 (plus accrued interest) that they received as part of the Saudi gift.¹⁹⁴

The King Fahd Center continued to obscure the actual nature of the Saudi gifts until the author probed the university to clarify the discrepancies. In December 2021, the university quietly made changes to its website to reflect that the Center had received \$21 million from the Saudi government, not \$20 million. Fulbright College Communications Director Andra Liwag said the discrepancy was a “typo.” But Joel Gordon, also a prior center director, reiterated this “typo” in a 2014 report.¹⁹⁵

Before:

About the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies

The King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies is an academic and research unit in the [Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences](#) at the University of Arkansas, dedicated to the study of the modern Middle East and the geo-cultural area in which Islamic civilization prospered and continues to shape world history. An interdisciplinary and interdepartmental area studies center that offers diverse cultural, intellectual, and educational opportunities for the University of Arkansas community, it promotes research and teaching in interdisciplinary Middle East studies.

The Middle East Studies Program (MEST) falls under the purview of the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies, a unique area studies center at the U of A founded with a \$20 million endowment from the Saudi government in the mid-1990s. An initial endowment of \$2 million, dedicated toward language, literary translation and publication was followed by a much larger \$18 million gift designed to spark the foundation of a comprehensive Middle East Studies program at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

After:

About the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies

The King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies is an academic and research unit in the [Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences](#) at the University of Arkansas, dedicated to the study of the modern Middle East and the geo-cultural area in which Islamic civilization prospered and continues to shape world history. An interdisciplinary and interdepartmental area studies center that offers diverse cultural, intellectual, and educational opportunities for the University of Arkansas community, it promotes research and teaching in interdisciplinary Middle East studies.

The Middle East Studies Program (MEST) falls under the purview of the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies, a unique area studies center at the U of A founded with a nearly \$21.2 million endowment from the Saudi government in the mid-1990s. An initial endowment of approximately \$3.5 million, dedicated toward language, literary translation and publication was followed by another approximately \$18 million gift designed to spark the foundation of a comprehensive Middle East Studies program at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Some professors directly associated with the Center also repudiated interviews around the same time that FOIA requests were made on behalf of the author. During her visit in mid-October 2021, the author spoke with both an Arabic-language lecturer and the Center’s

194 Bernard Madison, *The King Fahd Middle East Studies Program Progress Report*, September 1995, FOIA request received October 28, 2021.

195 Joel Gordon, *King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Arkansas: Middle East Studies Program Review* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 2014), 1, https://fulbright.uark.edu/area-studies/middle-east-studies/_resources/pdfs/reporting/program-review-2014.pdf.

first director, Adnan Haydar. While the lecturer initially agreed to an on-the-record interview, she sent a frantic email several weeks later demanding that her name and statements not be used in the report (the information discussed during the interview was mostly benign). The author only spoke with Haydar for a few minutes while she was on campus; however, he enthusiastically invited her to reach out to continue the conversation at a later date. When the author attempted to schedule a call with Haydar following her visit, he turned the conversation over to Liwag due to a “conflict.”¹⁹⁶ The “conflict” appeared only a day after Liwag requested to speak to Haydar over the phone about a FOIA request that directly cited his name.¹⁹⁷

It remains unclear whether these public information requests were completely fulfilled. The university's FOIA office relied on the individuals cited in the requests to search and transfer internal communications (i.e., emails) themselves. This practice easily lends itself to errors and evasion. Professors and administrators can accidentally miss documents when they sift through troves of emails. They can also purposefully “miss” or delete emails to avoid scrutiny. Other universities have more efficient systems in place, where either the FOIA office or the IT department directly acquire and disseminate the requested documents. It is vital for the University of Arkansas to institute a more comprehensive and efficient system, especially given that the King Fahd Center has a history of failing to track expenses properly that spans nearly a decade.

Sidewalks etched with the names of University of Arkansas graduates clearly show that the university prizes its history and traditions. Arkansas's conservative and Christian culture still influences much of the atmosphere on campus. Nonetheless, the decision to house the King Fahd Center in a state-designated historic site sends a clear message that the university aspires to displace the state's current cultural mores. The King Fahd Center reflects the modern shift in Middle East studies in that it focuses on self-study and advocacy of Arab students rather than benefit to American citizens.

196 Adnan Haydar, email to author, October 26, 2021.

197 Andra Liwag to Adnan Haydar, voicemail, October 25, 2021.

The University of Texas at Austin

The University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) established its Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) as a National Resource Center in 1960. Since its founding, CMES focused heavily on foreign language instruction. Faculty who taught Arabic and Hebrew founded CMES, and its first leader was linguistics professor W.P. Lehmann.¹⁹⁸ The Center still focuses its courses and programming primarily on advanced language instruction and the nature and history of the contemporary Middle East.

UT-Austin's CMES engaged in regular activity in the decades after its founding, but it was especially active during the 1970s. Like many other National Resource Centers, CMES established an outreach program in the mid-1970s that continues to this day. Beginning in 1975, the university also took part in an archaeological excavation led by Middle Eastern Studies professor Harold Liebowitz in Tel Yin'am (located in northern Israel). The excavation was a great success: Liebowitz and his team discovered remnants of Bronze Age buildings and an iron smelter, both of which were considered highly significant archaeological findings.¹⁹⁹

As is often the case, CMES began to attract political attention and controversy as it grew in prominence. Unlike other MESC, however, the CMES at UT-Austin made a concerted effort to avoid politicization during the 1980s. In 1980, for example, the Center invited Arab League representative Clovis Maksoud to speak at an event. An Israeli organization in the area, in response, requested that CMES invite a speaker with pro-Israel views to present the university community with balanced perspectives. CMES proceeded to ask a local rabbi for speaker recommendations. But university officials soured on the idea and expressed fears that the CMES would become embroiled in sterile arguments over Arab-Israeli foreign policy. They stated that they were "not here for Arabs or Israelis" and that "anyone who has an

198 The university received Title VI funds for most of its existence, except for a brief period during the 1970s when funding was cut. See "Middle Eastern Studies Newsletter 2008–2009," University of Texas at Austin, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/24592/No_32.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.

199 Harold Liebowitz, "Excavations at Tel Yin'am: The 1976 and 1977 Seasons: Preliminary Report," *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 243 (1981): 79–94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1356660>.

official position should not be invited,” adding that “a representative of the Arab League will represent the Arab League.”²⁰⁰

Taken together, CMES's focus on archaeology and languages and its aversion to politics made the Center somewhat of an anachronism in the 1980s, whose intellectual tone was reminiscent of the pre-World War II Middle East studies of Hitti and Breasted. The Center's more traditional academic approach, while noteworthy, did not endure. In 2022, UT-Austin's courses and programs related to the Middle East appear much the same as those at other MESCs in that they are riddled with activist goals. The insatiable desire for funds and the perceived need for conformity within the discipline has eliminated CMES's individuality.

Like many other leaders of area studies centers founded under the National Defense Education Act, CMES administrators were concerned about the Center's financial longevity during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1980, word spread that the federal government might only fund four National Resource Centers for the Middle East.²⁰¹ CMES decided to pursue alternate sources of funding. The university initially planned to contact Saudi businessman Nasser Al-Rashid, a wealthy UT-Austin alumnus and frequent donor to the university's engineering school, to propose the idea of a permanent endowment for the Middle East studies program.²⁰² CMES, however, ultimately decided to pursue more traditional funding options. Since 2000, the Center has secured over \$7 million in external grant funding, which has enabled it to maintain one of the largest Middle East studies programs in America.²⁰³

Courses

UT-Austin offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees related to Middle East studies. Since 1997, the university has also been one of the few institutions in the country to offer a stand-alone undergraduate major in Islamic Studies. During the Fall 2021 semester, the university offered more than 40 courses related to the Middle East.²⁰⁴

Language instruction remains a core part of Middle East studies curriculum, and the university still provides extensive instruction in Arabic and Hebrew to this day. The university also offers courses on Persian, Turkish, and older languages such as Akkadian and Aramaic. Courses typically limit enrollment in its modern language courses to non-native speakers. Other courses, which are open to foreign students and American students alike,

200 CMES decided that in the future they only would sponsor scholars. See “Minutes of CMES Executive Committee,” Center for Middle Eastern Studies, March 4, 1980, University of Texas Archives.

201 Ian Manners to James Bill, “Critical Issues Discussed at the Conference of NDEA Center Directors, Washington, March 23-24, 1980,” March 27, 1980, University of Texas Archives.

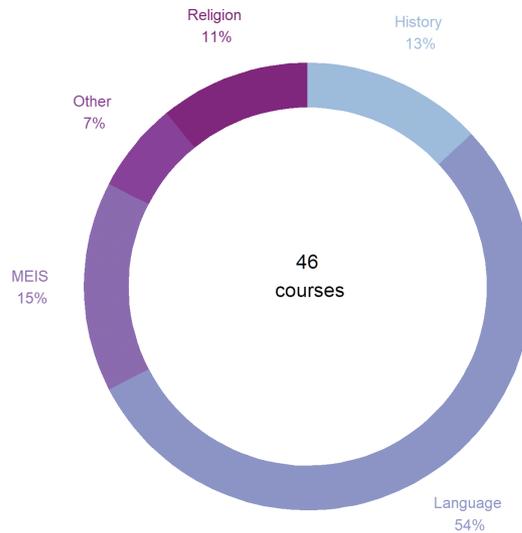
202 According to Karen Ginsburg, the current CMES director, it does not appear that Al-Rashid ended up donating to the center. See Karen Ginsburg, email to author, November 22, 2021; “Nasser Ibrahim Al-Rashid,” University of Texas at Austin, Cockrell School of Engineering, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.caee.utexas.edu/alumni/academy/49-alumni/academy/122-alarashid>.

203 Center for Middle East Studies, pamphlet, retrieved October 15, 2021.

204 Course information was obtained through the following websites: <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/student/coursedocs/login/> and <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/courses-in-mes/>.

Figure 30

UT-Austin Course Distribution
Fall 2021



*Some courses were manually categorized using course titles and cross-listing information.

focus on contemporary issues. Coverage includes cultural, historical, and political topics, from the Arab Spring to Israeli pop culture.

Some of the courses teach students important information about the history and nature of the Middle East, such as “Dead Sea Scrolls,” “Islam in the Early Modern World: Religion and Culture,” and “Introduction to the Old Testament.” But others blend their instruction with the political indoctrination that has become typical of the modern American academy. Scholars design its courses to counter or “deconstruct” what they see as Eurocentric or pro-Western narratives about the Middle East, such as Samuel Huntington’s famous “clash of civilizations” theory.

The course “French Empire: The West and Islam” attempts to debunk the notion that Muslim societies are incompatible with secular European society (a “clash of civilizations” view of the world).²⁰⁵ Students read books such as *Europe and the Islamic World*, a sizable text that outlines the purported historical links and common roots between European and Islamic societies. Students also spend a considerable amount of time reading Said’s *Orientalism* and evaluating his critiques of Western views of the Middle East. The course “Arabs and Modernity,” meanwhile, focuses primarily on positive contributions from Arabs

205 Benjamin C. Bower, “French Empire: The ‘West’ and ‘Islam,’” Fall 2021 syllabus, retrieved from <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/student/coursedocs/nlogon/>.

in an attempt to combat “negative stereotypes about Arabs” that have been reinforced by “the [W]estern media on issues of war and injustice.” The class discussions eschew fact-based instruction and instead focus on winning converts to the professor’s ideological agenda.

Even courses with a historical focus bring in modern post-colonial theory as an interpretive filter. “Africa and Rome” is supposed to provide a historical analysis of Africa during the Roman Empire.²⁰⁶ Instead of considering both Roman and African perspectives, however, the course dismisses the Roman accounts as “colonial mythologies” that “cast Africa as barbaric” and focuses its attention on the African accounts. The course “Ideas of East,” similarly, elevates the perspective of those from Asia and dismisses European or Western perspectives on Asian history and ideas as Orientalist.²⁰⁷

Other courses reveal that CMES has moved away from its previous desire to avoid political disputes. Linguistics professor Mohammad Mohammad, for example, teaches “Palestine and the Palestinians: A Journey through Time,” which gives students an overview of Palestinian history and culture with an emphasis on the “Palestinian experience.”²⁰⁸ Mohammad is Palestinian himself and grew up in Iksal, Jordan, which he describes as an “insignificant ancestral village in historical Palestine.” The course heavily relies on a newer concept in academia known as *lived experiences*. Mohammad’s “lived experience” presumably lies behind his use of the Arabic term *nakba* (catastrophe) in reference to the First and Second Arab–Israeli wars. The term is emotive and partisan—the equivalent of using *The War for Southern Independence* or *The Great Rebellion* to refer to the Civil War. It illustrates precisely why “lived experience” should not be the basis of scholarship.

CMES’s curriculum maintains a strong language core, as intended by the Center’s founders. But just as at other university centers, the professors at UT-Austin’s CMES routinely intertwine their personal political agendas with their instruction in the classroom. In leaving this politicization unchecked, the Center has rejected its academic roots and has instead entered the business of political indoctrination.

Outreach and Events

Most of the external programming at UT-Austin’s CMES focuses on K–12 education, with a special emphasis on the intersection between K–12 education and immigration and refugee issues. CMES frequently provides input on Texas public school curricula. CMES representatives regularly attend the annual meetings of organizations such as the Texas Council for the

206 James F. Patterson, “Africa and Rome,” Spring 2021 syllabus, retrieved from <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/student/coursedocs/nlogon/>.

207 Course description for “Ideas of East,” retrieved from <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/courses-in-mes/>.

208 Mohammad Mohammad, “Palestine and the Palestinians: A Journey through Time,” Fall 2020 syllabus, retrieved from <https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/student/coursedocs/nlogon/>.

Social Studies, the Texas Alliance for Geographic Education, and the National Council for the Social Studies.²⁰⁹

One program unique to UT-Austin's CMES is the Refugee Student Mentor Program, which provides mentorship and remedial language instruction for Texas's swiftly increasing refugee population (Texas accepted more refugees than any other state between 2010 and 2019).²¹⁰ The program helps refugee children acclimate to American schools. The program began in 2015 as a joint project between the university's Arabic Flagship program and the Austin Independent School District. While many public schools offer English as a Second Language programs, UT-Austin claims that these programs often do not cater to students who speak Arabic. The university claims that the mentorship program helps to fill the gap for refugee students. Mentors come from the pool of undergraduate and graduate students at UT-Austin and typically spend 2–5 hours each week with their mentees.²¹¹

CMES has also worked closely with the Qatar Foundation, an educational donor organization controlled by the Qatari government, to develop several of its external initiatives. In 2013, UT-Austin received around \$165,000 from the Qatar Foundation to promote Arab language instruction in a local school district.²¹² The university also created the Teacher Leadership Program in partnership with the Qatar Foundation to prepare K–12 teachers to address topics related to the Middle East in their classrooms. Teachers in the social sciences, humanities, and arts may partake in the two-year training program. Topic coverage ranges from religion to geography.²¹³

CMES also organizes travel abroad trips for K–12 teachers to locations such as Morocco, Turkey, and Moorish Spain.²¹⁴ An academic representative from the university accompanies teachers on the trip and offers insights on how they can incorporate what they have learned on the trip into their classroom instruction. Teachers pay for expenses such as airfare and travel health insurance, while the university arranges the itinerary and subsidizes activities such as guided tours and hotels.

209 "Curriculum," Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/center-for-middle-eastern-studies/outreach/curriculum.html>.

210 Sarah McConnell, "Data Shows Texas Resettled More Refugees Than Any Other State in the Last Decade," *The Texan*, January 13, 2020, <https://thetexan.news/data-shows-texas-received-more-refugees-than-any-other-state-in-the-last-decade/>.

211 "Refugee Student Mentor Program," Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/center-for-middle-eastern-studies/refugee-mentor-program/>.

212 "Arabic Faculty Receive Grants from Qatar Foundation International," Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, June 5, 2013, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/news/arabic-faculty-receive-grants-from-qatar-foundation-international>.

213 "Teacher Leadership Program," Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, February 15, 2018, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/hemispheres/news/teacher-leadership-program>.

214 "Teacher Travel Abroad," Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin, December 14, 2021, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/center/outreach/travel.php>.

Observations

UT-Austin's CMES offers a wide selection of courses and a unique mixture of outreach programs. Like many other MESCs today, CMES has adopted an activist approach to education: its scholars get involved in the community and attempt to influence policy and change perspectives. Many CMES courses, in addition, rely on subjective personal experiences rather than fact-based instruction.

The Center's involvement in refugee issues, in particular, has no clear connection to its public mission. UT-Austin is an institution supported by taxpayer funds, yet CMES spends a significant amount of time and resources to improve the welfare of non-citizens. The devotion of resources to humanitarian causes may be appropriate for charities, but CMES is not a charity. The university's obsession with refugee issues results in the diversion of taxpayer funds away from their intended purpose: the education of citizens.

UT-Austin's case study demonstrates the shift in the mission and focus of Middle Eastern National Resource Centers. Many of these institutions dedicated themselves to strong language instruction and the advancement of American national security interests in the early years. Centers have since shifted from fact-based instruction to outright political advocacy. They now seek to peddle their influence in as many places as possible—from the ivory towers to elementary school classrooms. It is disappointing to see UT-Austin's CMES stray from its earlier commitment to nonpartisanship. But it is unfortunately expected given the remarkably homogeneous landscape of Middle East studies today.

Duke University/ University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies is a unique collaboration between Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). Both universities have departments that study the Middle East and Islam, but the Consortium enables them to pool their resources. The Consortium was founded in 2005, but collaboration between the two universities on Middle East studies programming dates back to at least 1994.²¹⁵

In 1997, Duke, UNC, and Emory University in Georgia created the Carolina-Duke-Emory Institute for the Study of Islam, which claims to be the first institute dedicated to the study of Islam in the United States. Graduate students from the three universities could receive in-depth training on the history and culture of Islam through the Institute. The universities eventually dissolved their collaboration, and Duke took over the ownership of the Institute, renaming it first the Center for the Study of Muslim Networks and later the Duke Islamic Studies Center.²¹⁶

In 2005, the Duke Islamic Studies Center received a \$1.5 million gift from James P. and Audrey Gorter for an endowed professorship in Islamic studies. The Gorters were connected to Duke through their children, two of whom had attended the university.²¹⁷

UNC, meanwhile, established a formal MESC of its own in 2002. The university funded the Center's operations by reaching out to private foundations, applying for Title VI funding, and taking advantage of fundraisers held by cultural groups such as the Turkish Women's Cultural Association (based in Turkey).²¹⁸ In 2009, UNC's College of Arts & Sciences received

215 "About," North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://ncmideast.org/about/>.

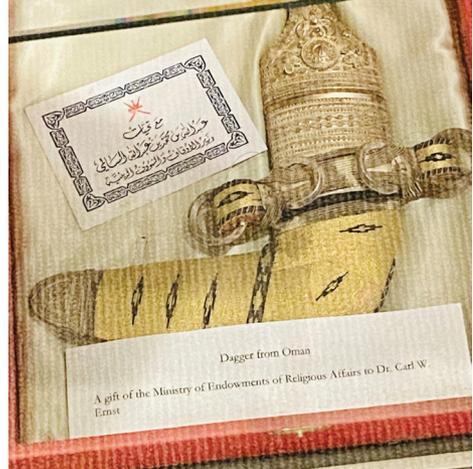
216 Susan Lapinski, "Profile: Bruce Lawrence," in *Carnegie Scholars Program: A Five-Year Review of Scholarship on Islam 2005–2009* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2010), https://media.carnegie.org/filer_public/ea/64/ea64af24-0804-43ce-8b3c-48607c6fb640/ccny_report_2010_scholars_lawrence.pdf.

217 Blake Dickinson, "Duke to Establish Islamic Studies Center, Create \$1.5 Million Endowed Professorship," *Duke Today*, November 9, 2005, <https://today.duke.edu/2005/11/islamstudies.html>.

218 "Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations: Strategic Plan," Spring 2009, https://mideast.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1480/2011/07/doc_strategicplan2009.pdf; Charles Kurzman, "Summary Proposal," March 3, 2002, https://mideast.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1480/2011/07/doc_summaryproposal2002.pdf.



The Center for Middle East & Islamic Studies in the FedEx Global Education Center at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.



a \$666,000 gift from the Turkish Women's Cultural Association to establish the Kenan Rifai Chair, which focuses on Sufism and Islamic spirituality.²¹⁹ This donation was not reported to the Department of Education.

Donor Spotlight: Turkish Women's Cultural Association

The Turkish Women's Cultural Association (TURKKAD) was established in 1966 by Turkish writer and Sufi mystic Samiha Ayverdi. TURKKAD promotes education and research of Sufism and has established several chairs and centers in honor of the prominent Sufi thinker Kenan Rifai. In addition to the UNC chair, TURKKAD has established a Kenan Rifai Islamic Studies Chair at Peking University in China and a Kenan Rifai Center for Sufi Studies at Kyoto University in Japan.²²⁰

The two institutions decided to pool their resources in 2005 and created the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies. It later became a National Resource Center in 2010. In 2022, the Consortium changed its name to the North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies, and it now serves all Middle East studies departments in North Carolina.

The Consortium received significant attention after an ED probe in 2019 accused it of misusing federal funds to teach materials outside of the intended national security purpose. ED questioned whether courses within the Consortium, such as those on Iranian film and art, related to the dissemination of language instruction and whether the Consortium's curriculum sufficiently covered topics related to national security.²²¹ Some believe ED's letter was sparked after a 2019 UNC event, "Conflict Over Gaza: People, Politics and Possibilities," which featured an anti-Semitic song by a Palestinian rapper.²²²

219 "Proposal for the Establishment of the Kenan-Rifai Distinguished Professorship of Islamic Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences," July 2, 2010, FOIA request received January 13, 2021.

220 "Tasavvuf Eğitime ve Araştırmalarına Destek [Support for Sufi Education and Research]," TÜRKKAD, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://turkkad.org/dernegin-calismalari/tasavvuf-egitimine-ve-arastirmalarina-destek/>.

221 Robert King to Terry Magnuson, August 29, 2019, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/17/2019-20067/notice-of-a-letter-regarding-the-duke-unc-consortium-for-middle-east-studies>.

222 "Video Shows Rapper's Performance of Anti-Semitic Song at UNC Event," ABC 11, April 12, 2019, <https://abc11.com/anti-semitic-unc-rapper-tamer-nafar/5243623/>.

The probe stirred considerable debate over ED's public approach. Some believed ED's letter threatened academic freedom because it placed external pressures on the university.²²³ Another worry was that ED's criticisms, such as those that claimed the Centers should offer a "balance" of perspectives, was difficult to enforce. As the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), then called the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, wrote:

To what extent is "balance" required to "fully understand" an area? The contours of what constitutes a "full understanding" of a subject of study are properly determined by an academic institution, not the federal government.²²⁴

Whether or not the law created an unconstitutional condition on federal funding, the probe did not cause the Consortium to lose its NRC status. UNC did, however, amend its anti-bias training to include anti-Semitic behavior.²²⁵

Courses

In Fall 2021, Duke University and UNC offered more than 75 courses that covered topics related to the Middle East.²²⁶ Language courses account for close to 40% of the total, with a focus on Arabic and Hindi-Urdu instruction. The two schools' Asian and Middle Eastern Studies departments offered a fifth of the courses, which covered topics such as "Transnational Feminisms of the Middle East and South Asia," "Special Topics in Critical Asian Humanities Methodologies," and "Introduction to Islamic Civilizations." The third-most represented discipline was religion: students could take classes such as "Muslim Ethics and Islamic Law: Issues and Debates," "Religion and Culture in Iran," and "Gender and Sexuality in Islam."

As at other institutions, many of the courses offered through both universities avowedly aim to minimize the differences between the East and the West. This motivation likely drives the Consortium's disproportionate focus on Sufism—Islamic mysticism. Sufism's emphasis on the inarticulately mystical makes it a more attractive subject for those looking to bridge cultural divides between the East and the West than, for example, Wahhabism.²²⁷

223 Allison Donahue, "Members of Congress Press DeVos over Duke-UNC Islamic Curriculum Investigation," *NC Policy Watch*, November 7, 2019, <https://ncpolicywatch.com/2019/11/07/members-of-congress-press-devos-over-duke-unc-islamic-curriculum-investigation/>.

224 "FIRE Statement on Department of Education Letter to Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies," Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, September 20, 2019, <https://www.thefire.org/fire-statement-on-department-of-education-letter-to-duke-unc-consortium-for-middle-east-studies/>.

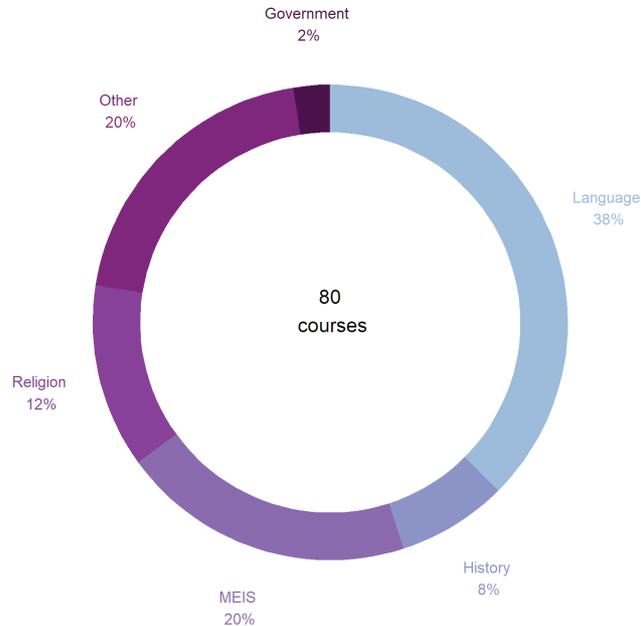
225 Collin Binkley, "UNC to Update Policies Following Complaint of Anti-Semitism," *Associated Press*, November 26, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/fce7ef171084459e99afb0bc52bbe5c6>.

226 Course information was retrieved from the following website: <https://mideast.unc.edu/students/courses/>. We also relied on syllabi obtained through a FOIA request for UNC courses offered between Spring 2020 and Fall 2021.

227 Marcia Hermansen, "The Academic Study of Sufism at American Universities," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 24, no. 3 (2007): 24–45, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v24i3.423>.

Figure 31

Duke-UNC Course Distribution
Fall 2021



Duke and UNC place a significantly stronger emphasis on instruction about Sufism than many of its peer programs. The former co-director for UNC's Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, Carl Ernst, specialized in contemporary Sufism and published extensively on the subject, with books such as *Refractions of Islam in India: Situating Sufism and Yoga* (2016), *Teachings of Sufism* (1999), and *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (1985).²²⁸ A 2019 job posting for the Kenan Rifai Fellow in Islamic Studies at UNC, additionally, specified that the applicant should have a focus in Sufism or other specializations such as critical race theory, gender and sexuality, and ethnography of religion.²²⁹

Duke and UNC also offer a number of courses that discuss Sufism, including "Sufism," "Islam and Islamic Art in South Asia," and "Modern Muslim Societies." Even some of the language courses at the universities engage with Sufism; "Advanced Hindi-Urdu II," for example, has students read and translate medieval Sufi poetry.

Sufism deserves its scholars. It should be noted, however, that a study of Christianity would be somewhat distorted if it focused on mystics George Fox and Teresa of Ávila more

²²⁸ "Carl W. Ernst," Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://religion.unc.edu/people/full-time-faculty/ernst/>.

²²⁹ "Job Posting: Assistant Professor and Kenan Rifai Fellow in Islamic Studies," Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, September 27, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200811225259/https://religion.unc.edu/job-posting-assistant-professor-and-kenan-rifai-fellow-in-islamic-studies/>.

Job Posting: Assistant Professor and Kenan Rifai Fellow in Islamic Studies

The Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill invites applications for a tenure-track faculty position as Assistant Professor and Kenan Rifai Fellow in Islamic Studies. Research interests should include a focus on Sufism and/or Islamic spiritual traditions, but the area of specialization is open and could include gender and sexuality, **critical race theory**, social history, ethnography of religion, Islamic philosophy and science, foundational Islamic texts, or other specializations. We seek to complement the existing regional expertise of our current faculty, and we seek applicants who will help engender a climate that values diversity in all its forms. Candidates should demonstrate broad training in their field of expertise, the relevant linguistic competencies, a commitment to interdisciplinary work, and engagement with significant theoretical issues in the study of religion. The successful candidate will be expected to teach a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses (including introductory and upper-level courses in Islamic studies) and to contribute to the Islamic studies concentration in the Department. The successful candidate is expected to have a Ph.D. in hand by the time the appointment begins on July 1, 2020.

The application deadline is **December 2, 2019**. For more information, including details on how to apply, see <https://unc.peopleadmin.com/postings/169864>.

Posted in [News & Events](#) on September 27, 2019. Bookmark the [permalink](#).

than theologians such as St. Augustine and Martin Luther. Mysticism is an essential component of most religions—but even more so are the expositors of doctrine.

Besides Sufism, the two universities specialize in courses that reiterate social justice talking points. These courses fall into two main categories: those that challenge borders and those that focus on identity issues such as sexuality or race. One unnamed course at UNC had students examine “bordering practices” in the Arab world through film, literature, and art. Students addressed the following question throughout the class: “What can imaginative works do to process, mitigate or undermine bordering practices?” The course overview polemized against borders, portraying them as inherently evil and brutal. A more sophisticated approach might note that a border has no intrinsic moral valence, and that walls usually become attractive when enemies approach and communities require self-definition.

An example of a course that focused on identity issues was a first-year seminar, “Pop Culture in the Arab World.” The course looks at the positive aspects of Arab culture and intentionally shies away from depictions of “dictators,” “the land of ISIS,” and oppressed women in veils. That’s because the class is particularly concerned with what it deems to be *negative* and *dated* portrayal of Arabs and hopes to provide a more *contemporary* and *positive* outlook. By the end of the course, students are supposed to understand terms such as “popular culture,” “subculture,” and “mainstream culture,” and to possess the skills to make “an informed opinion about current representations of the region.” The class seeks to shape students’ opinions according to the professor’s biases rather than equipping students to form their own opinions based on factual material.

Outreach and Events

Like many other MESC's, the North Carolina Consortium's programming focuses on "cultural exposure" to make Islam palatable to the average American and to deconstruct stereotypes of Muslims. The Consortium achieves this goal primarily through K-12 materials and teacher training workshops. The Teacher Fellows Programs provides 10-15 teachers from various school districts in North Carolina with "intensive, professional development opportunities [intended] to expand their expertise in Middle East studies." As part of the programs, teachers create lesson plans for their classrooms that are then posted online for other teachers to reference. Previous lesson plans posted on the Consortium's website include "Lesson for K-5: The Smelling Spice Test," "Refugee Survival and Success," and "Power of Poetry-Sufi Poets, Past to Present."²³⁰

Through the Teacher Fellows Programs, teachers design lessons that acclimate students to different cultures. "Using Food to Unite and Understand Cultures," a curriculum designed for Grade 3 students, teaches children about Middle Eastern cuisine. Students read Queen Consort of Jordan Rania Al-Abdullah's *The Sandwich Swap*, a story of two friends who share many similarities but who get into a food fight because they eat very different types of food.²³¹ The book, while it may teach some important lessons about curiosity and friendship, may also teach students to conflate respect with agreement.

The Sandwich Swap's lesson plan outlines several discussion questions for the book, including the following:

- Why is diversity important?
- Imagine if everyone in our world ate the same exact things. Can you think of some foods that we eat that did not originate in America?
- How would you feel if someone called your lunch gross or yucky?

The first question is particularly loaded: The phrasing assumes that diversity is important and discourages students to ask whether diversity is good in and of itself. A better prompt would pose questions such as "Is diversity important?" or "What are the advantages and disadvantages of diversity?" These questions do not assume a correct answer and allow different perspectives in the classroom. But our recommendations are more appropriate for older students. It's likely that third graders do not know what diversity means. The subject, therefore, gives teachers the opportunity to push diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) propaganda on impressionable children.

The lesson plan also includes an optional activity that teaches students how to show respect for others' food choices. Teachers discourage students from labeling foods they dislike with impolite words such as "yucky" or "gross." But what happens when a child tries a

²³⁰ "Teacher Fellows Program," North Carolina Consortium for Middle East Studies, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://ncmidwest.org/outreach/teacher-fellows-programs/>.

²³¹ Rania Al Abdullah, *The Sandwich Swap* (New York: Hyperion Books, 2010).

new food and legitimately dislikes it? Students could either remain silent or respond along the lines of, “My food looks different than yours. How does my food look to you?” The activity rewards students who are open to new experiences and discourages those who express negative reactions—but it never teaches students how to handle actual disagreement. The week-long lesson plan does, however, carve out time for students to try hummus and pita sandwiches and learn a Lebanese dance called *dabke*.

Lessons of this nature expose students to a superficial form of diversity that avoids more vital questions related to faith, politics, and national identity. In any case, teachers should not waste precious classroom hours on diverse eating habits when more than 50% of North Carolina elementary and middle school students struggle with reading and math on state-wide exams.²³²

Other lesson plans, such as “Deconstructing Stereotypes of Islam and Muslims,” “Stories in Poetry-Filling in the Gaps,” and “Humanizing the ‘Other’ in Shakespeare’s Plays: *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice*,” focus on breaking stereotypes and combating Islamophobia.²³³ In their effort to “break down stereotypes,” the lesson plans minimize the elements of truth that underlie many common perceptions about Muslims.²³⁴ A presenter note for “Deconstructing Stereotypes,” for instance, acknowledges that Muslim women face oppression; however, it instructs the presenter to highlight the oppression of women that occurs in other religious contexts to demonstrate that the phenomenon is not unique to Islam. The lesson plans use these sorts of tactics to distract from the more dangerous aspects of Islam. As a result of this biased coverage, students may never learn about atrocities such as Muslim honor-killings of women, acid attacks, or female genital mutilation.²³⁵ The Teacher Fellows Programs’ “lesson plans” actually instruct teachers *not* to teach about vitally important elements of Islamic history and culture.

The lesson plans distort instruction about the Middle East and Islam even further by importing concepts from modern American identity politics. The lesson plan “Humanizing the Other,” for instance, has students study Shakespeare’s *Othello* to “define the concept of ‘other’ during Elizabethan times and connect to contemporary, modern examples of

232 Liz Schlemmer, “Fewer Than Half of NC Students Passed Statewide Exams for Reading or Math This Spring,” *WUNC North Carolina Public Radio*, September 1, 2021, <https://www.wunc.org/education/2021-09-01/fewer-than-half-of-nc-students-passed-statewide-exams-for-reading-or-math-this-spring>.

233 Tomika Altman-Lewis, “Using Food to Unite and Understand Cultures,” accessed December 7, 2021, https://ncmid-east.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/1065/2019/06/Using-Food-to-Unite-and-Understand-Cultures_Altman.pdf. Valerie A. Person, “Unit: Humanizing the ‘Other’ in Shakespeare’s Plays: *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice*,” accessed December 7, 2021, https://ncmideast.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/1065/2016/02/Humanizing-the-%E2%80%98Other%E2%80%99-in-Shakespeare%E2%80%99s-Plays_Person.pdf.

234 Lee Jussim et al., “Stereotype Accuracy: One of the Largest and Most Replicable Effects in All of Social Psychology,” in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, ed. Todd D. Nelson (New York: Psychology Press, 2016).

235 Syed M. Hassan, “Early and Forced Marriages Remain an Obstacle to Women’s Progress,” *TribTalk*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.tribtalk.org/2018/05/03/early-and-forced-marriages-remain-an-obstacle-to-womens-progress/>; “Cleric Reopens Scars of Acid Attacks after Threatening Iranian Women,” *Al-Monitor*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/10/iran-cleric-scars-acid-attacks-threat-iran-women-tabatabaee.html>; Ibn Warruq, “Honor Killing and Islam,” *City Journal*, June 20, 2018, <https://www.city-journal.org/html/honor-killing-and-islam-15979.html>;



Posters on past conferences held by the Consortium.

Google search. Yet there are telling absences. A video titled “The Aftermath of 9/11,” for example, describes the September 11 attacks and outlines the national security initiatives that followed, such as the establishment of the Transportation Security Administration and the Global War on Terror. The video includes discussion prompts about topics such as al-Qaeda’s role in the attacks, the passage of the Patriot Act, and the effect on American Muslims post-9/11. But the video and the prompts ignore the effect that 9/11 had on the families of the victims and never mentions their lawsuits against Saudi Arabia for its culpability in the attacks.²³⁷

‘other-ing.’²³⁶ Students only receive “an initial overview and quick read of *Othello* for plot and character familiarity.” Students spend much more time on pseudo-science such as “implicit biases.” Not only does the lesson plan misapply Shakespeare, but it teaches students to view the Islamic world through a distorted lens of social justice.

The Consortium also produces “Middle East Explained” videos in which university professors provide brief introductions to Middle East-related topics that teachers can use in the classroom. Most of the information in these videos is relatively straightforward and factual—albeit with no added value beyond what can be found through a casual

236 Heather Mac Donald, “The False ‘Science’ of Implicit Bias,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 9, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-false-science-of-implicit-bias-1507590908>.

237 David Schanzer, “The Aftermath of 9/11,” John Hope Franklin Center at Duke University, September 6, 2017, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l85H-4KKDLI>.

Taken together, the North Carolina Consortium's resources and materials for K-12 teachers inculcate selective blindness about the reality of Islam and discourage curiosity about politically inconvenient subjects.

Observations

Given the ubiquitous bias in the Consortium's coverage of subjects related to the Middle East, it is no surprise that ED chose to investigate UNC's activities. ED's probe identified several problems with Duke-UNC's MESC:

- The center lacked the required focus, as set by Title VI, on language education, both in its course offerings and in its outreach programs.
- The center lacked balance in its coverage of the various religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East, both in tone and in content.
- The center lacked support for graduates who wanted to pursue careers in government or business, instead producing far more graduates who went on to work in academia.

Our analysis of the Consortium's materials confirms many of ED's concerns. ED, however, understated the deeply rooted and broader nature of these problems. Political and religious bias permeate the course materials, even those that ostensibly focus on required subjects such as language and culture. Moreover, the bias extends beyond Duke and UNC's curriculum—the Consortium's outreach programs for K-12 educators fail to offer useful knowledge about the Middle East. Outreach materials, instead, push radical social agendas onto children.

This deviation from the national security mission of Title VI National Resource Centers is likely purposeful. The current director of the consortium, Charles Kurzman, wanted the Obama administration to increase funding for National Resource Centers and view them as necessities in society. In a 2013 blog post, he wrote:

This need goes beyond the logic of national security, which was the original rationale for the National Resource Centers (the Higher Education Act was originally called the National Defense Education Act). This need goes beyond the logic of economic globalization, the other major rationale, which views international education in terms of workforce preparation. The greatest need for international education is to promote global understanding in an era when radical movements on all sides are encouraging us to shrink our horizons of empathy.²³⁸

²³⁸ Kurzman, "Crippling International Education."

Used in this context, “global understanding” typically refers to being positive and non-judgmental—not possessing the deeper knowledge that prepares students to engage with complex ideas. Such hollow “understanding” betrays higher education, which should be aimed at the pursuit of truth and informed judgment, not the inculcation of positive perceptions. The desire to use education to promote or suppress social movements distracts from higher education’s purpose.

ED’s suggestions to develop a more balanced approach may have been well-intended, but they failed to address the deeper issues within biased programs. A surface-level solution would likely worsen the underlying problems, as NRCs could simply replace pro-Islam pabulum with ecumenical pabulum to avoid future probes. Universities should seek truth, wisdom, and understanding. But enforcing political “balance” is not a rigorous way to do so, even if the law nominally requires it. Instead, we should expect universities to follow the spirit of the law: to investigate and present facts and to pose questions that make it possible to subject emotional responses to rational evaluation. Such objectivity requires a change in the professional standards in the field (not to mention larger sectors of academia) rather than a change in regulations.

Also, ED’s concern about students lacking vocational support appears to be correct, yet this complaint, too, is not unique to Middle East studies departments. It is intrinsic to the American model of higher education. Higher education traditionally did not concern itself with vocational training. Even today, the skills students (especially graduate students) learn in higher education tend to prepare them better for an academic career than for other jobs.

Nevertheless, the examples of curricular bias brought to light by the ED probe and confirmed in our analysis of Duke-UNC’s materials are troubling. They are not just the work of a few rogue scholars. These examples reflect a deeply ingrained institutional agenda, created and enforced by our own scholars—not by foreign interests. When UNC received Turkish money for an Islamic Chair, the university—not the Turkish donors—took the initiative to add critical race theory as a job requirement. The social and cultural priorities of today’s academics have rerouted Title VI funding away from serving the American national interest and toward political and ideological activism. Only a thorough replacement of personnel at these centers, together with genuine institutional support for objective teaching and research, could turn the tide.

Yale University

Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, established its first Arabic and Islamic Studies Program in 1841.²³⁹ Given this long history, it should come as no surprise that Yale continues to provide a robust study of the Middle East and related subjects to this day. The university still offers an Arabic program, in addition to programs in Iranian studies and Near East studies, courses in Modern Hebrew, and a Council on Middle East Studies.

The Council on Middle East Studies (CMES) is part of the larger MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, which focuses on education and research for international affairs. The MacMillan Center, which was founded in 1960 to provide an interdisciplinary approach to area studies, established the CMES in 1970.²⁴⁰

During the early 2010s, the MacMillan Center began to consider external donors after the federal government made major cuts to Title VI funds. The CMES, along with councils in African and Latin American studies, relied particularly heavily on these federal funds.²⁴¹

Beginning in 2013, Saudi businessman Abdallah S. Kamel gave Yale Law School regular donations to offer lectures on Islamic law and civilization.²⁴² In 2015, Kamel gave the school a \$10 million gift to create a center for Islamic law.²⁴³

239 "Arabic at Yale," Yale University, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://arabic.yale.edu/>.

240 "History of International and Area Studies at Yale," Bulletin of Yale University, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://bulletin.yale.edu/bulletins/macmillan/history-international-and-area-studies-yale>.

241 Gavin Gideon, "Facing Cuts, MacMillan Center Set to Fundraise," *Yale Daily News*, December 7, 2011, http://www.kamari-clarke.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/YDN_MacMillan-Budget-Cuts.pdf.

242 "Professor Bernard Haykel to Deliver the Inaugural Dallah Albaraka Lecture on Islamic Law & Civilization on Sept. 24," Yale Law School, September 19, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140428000258/http://www.law.yale.edu/news/17479.htm>.

243 In the DOE's Section 117 reports, it is unclear whether Yale reported the full gift for its Islamic law center. Between 2015 and 2020, Yale reported that it received \$2 million each year, which totals \$10 million. Donations for 2020 clearly denote that the funds were earmarked for the center, but the purpose of the funds for the other years was not stated. The exact amount given for the Kamel lecture series is also unclear. In 2013, Yale only reported \$100,000 from Saudi Arabia. No donations from Saudi Arabia were reported for 2014.

Donor Spotlight: The Kamel Family

Saleh Kamel (1941-2020) was a Saudi businessman whose net worth was \$2.3 billion in 2017. Kamel established the Dallah Al-Baraka Holding Company (DBHC) in 1969. In just one decade, his banking and real estate enterprise became one of the largest contractors for the Saudi government.

He previously worked for the Saudi government's Ministry of Finance.

Kamel was named in a lawsuit filed by the families of 9/11 victims, but the lawsuit was eventually dismissed.

In 2017, Kamel was arrested as part of an anti-corruption crackdown by the Saudi government. He died in 2020. The DBHC is currently run by his son Abdallah S. Kamel.

Some have speculated that Saleh Kamel was the real donor behind Yale's Islamic law program, acting via his son Abdallah. Yale removed the announcement of Kamel's 2015 gift from its website after various groups criticized the university's decision to accept funds from Kamel, whose company DBHC allegedly funded Al-Qaeda.²⁴⁴

Courses

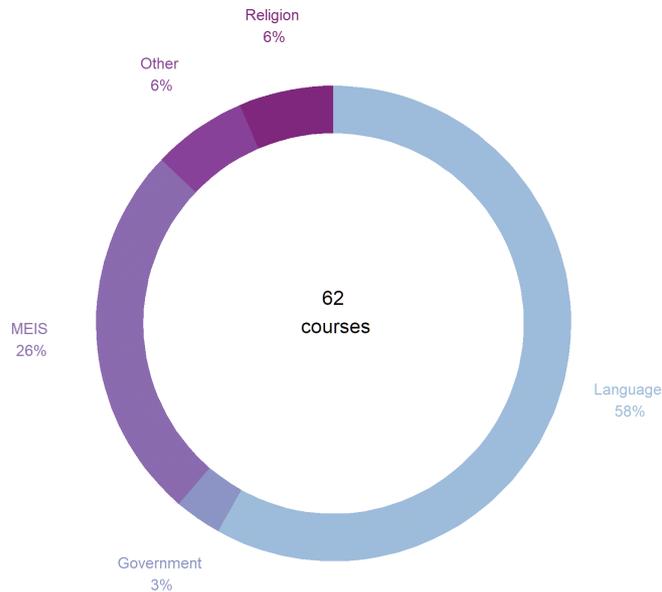
Yale offered more than 60 courses related to Islam, the Middle East, and associated topics during the Fall 2021 semester. The Modern Middle East Studies (MMES) and Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations (NELC) departments offered most of the courses. While the content covered by the two departments overlaps, MMES courses focus on teaching information that students can apply directly in government and policy fields, while NELC courses focus on the ancient study of the region. In Fall 2021, MMES courses included "Making of Modern Iran," "Advanced Modern Hebrew: Daily Life in Israel," and "Social Change in Middle East Cinemas." NELC courses emphasize language instruction, and students can learn anything from a Levantine dialect of Arabic to the endangered language of Aramaic. The NELC department also offers graduate degrees in Assyriology and Egyptology. Examples of NELC courses in Fall 2021 included "The Ancient Egyptian Empire of the New Kingdom," "From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures," and "Reading, Editing, and Copying Cuneiform Tablets."

As is typical of courses that tackle contemporary issues, MMES courses are often riddled with progressive dogmas. Students in "Introduction to Maghrebi Literature and Culture" study concepts such as "social justice," "anticolonialism," and "feminism" through the lens of Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian media. "Middle East Uprisings" teaches students how the 2011 uprisings in Middle Eastern and North African countries were "classed, sexed, and gendered." The course is cross-listed with the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

²⁴⁴ "Yale University Announces Gift to Establish Center for Islamic Law and Civilization at Yale Law School," Yale Law School, September 8, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20151011223201/http://www.law.yale.edu:80/19876.htm>; Paul Sutliff, "Yale University Omits \$10 Million 'Gift' for Islamic Center Came from Saudi with Terror Ties," *People's Pundit Daily*, December 4, 2015, <https://www.peoplespunditdaily.com/news/us/2015/12/04/yale-university-omits-10-million-gift-islamic-center-came-saudi-terror-ties/>.

Figure 32

Yale Course Distribution
Fall 2021



department and incorporates feminist theory and jargon—to wit, the use of “class,” “sex,” and “gender” as verbs.

Other MMES courses clearly demonstrate an anti-Western bias. “Islam Today: Jihad and Fundamentalism” introduces students to the Muslim religion and addresses topics such as the “ideals of Shari’a and jihad” and the political ideology of Islam. The course does not shy away from negative perceptions of Islam, but it attempts to reframe the most dangerous aspects of Islam as a “reactive force to Western colonialism.” Critical theory–inspired pedagogy even attributes negative aspects of Islam to the West.

Some MMES courses feign historical salience while abandoning historical rigor. The literature course “Decolonizing Memory: Africa & the Politics of Testimony,”²⁴⁵ which is cross-listed with several departments including MMES, teaches students to take personal testimonies of Western “colonial violence” as historical evidence rather than as exercises in literary polemic. They justify this approach by claiming that they are correcting so-called “archival silences”—a progressive euphemism for lack of evidence. Yet authors covered in the course such as Antjie Krog should hardly be taken at face value:

245 “Decolonizing Memory: Africa & the Politics of Testimony,” Yale University, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://courses.yale.edu/?keyword=Decolonizing%20Memory:%20Africa%20&%20the%20Politics%20of%20Testimony&srcdb=202103>.

The uncertainty as to whether one is reading a transcription of actual utterances [before South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Committee], a reconstruction of what Krog remembers, or testimony she has simply invented, increases when Antjie in one instance comments on the understanding of truth that lies behind the form of *Country of My Skull*. She stresses that she has taken creative licen[s]e in many respects, including inventing an entire character.²⁴⁶

MMES imports into Middle Eastern studies the progressive academic fashion that blurs the distinction between fact and fiction and teaches radical polemic as history.

Events & Outreach Programs

Between 2000 and 2019, Yale's Council on Middle East Studies hosted more outreach activities than any other National Resource Center. The CMES uses its prolific outreach program to promote the pet issues of progressive ideologues.

The CMES engages in extensive K-12 outreach and hosts an annual Summer Institute for Teachers as part of its outreach efforts. The theme for the 2021 Summer Institute was "Expect the Unexpected." The four-day event featured a keynote address on "BLM in the MENA: The Global Impact of an American Movement," a musical retelling of the Palestinian and Syrian diasporas, and a presentation on the Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewish experiences.²⁴⁷

The 2021 Summer Institute aimed to "flip the script" on how educators talk about Middle Easterners. Teachers from New Haven Public Schools who attended the conference received a "special set of book resources" for their classrooms. The list of 37 recommended resources included books such as Moustafa Bayoumi's *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America* (2009), Sara Saedi's *Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card* (2018), and Thomas Borstelmann's *Just Like Us: The American Struggle to Understand Foreigners* (2020).²⁴⁸ Many of these stories purport to help Americans understand the immigrant experience and appreciate non-Western cultures and customs, but they present immigrants as plaster saints and advocate for loose immigration policies and/or immigration amnesties. Saedi's *Americanized*, for instance, details the author's path to American citizenship after she discovered her parents had overstayed their visas. Saedi explicitly stated that she wrote the book to "challenge [existing] narratives" and to counteract "negative descriptions of immigrants and undocumented immigrants" that had come up during the 2016 presidential election.²⁴⁹

246 Alexandra Effe, "Postcolonial Criticism and Cognitive Literary Studies: A New Formalist Approach to Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 56, no. 1 (2020): 97-109, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2019.1702084>.

247 "Summer Institute 2021 Schedule," Council on Middle East Studies, Yale University, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://cmes.macmillan.yale.edu/k-12-outreach/summer-institute-2021-schedule>.

248 Ulla Kasten, "Books/Publications by Summer Institute Faculty," June 2021, https://cmes.macmillan.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/2021/Bibliography-Teaching-Resources_CMES-Summer-Institute-2021.pdf.

249 Terry Gross, "'Americanized' Recounts What It's Like to Grow Up Undocumented," *NPR*, March 28, 2018, <https://www.npr>.

By only presenting students with books that advance a pro-immigration agenda, educators sidestep meaningful debate on the issue and bias students toward their own progressive views. Books such as *Americanized* try to elicit sympathy for immigrants by evoking irrelevancies such as the shared adolescent experiences of acne and preparing for the SATs and simply ignoring the complexities and the substance of the immigration debate. By exclusively recommending these types of books, without any consideration of opposing arguments, educators shape the way their students view the United States and sway them to support progressive policies.

The university also hosts a number of events through the Kamel Center. The Center opens its lectures to the public, and many of its presentations are available to view online. Past presentations covered topics such as “Islamic Family Law in American Courts,” “Internationalism or Revolt against the West? Pan-Islamism and the Crisis of World Order,” and “The Normalization of Saudi Law.”

Observations

The financial history of Yale's CMES provides another illustration of universities' active pursuit of foreign support. As we noted earlier, Yale officials promptly sought external donors after the federal government reduced Title VI funding for the 2010–2013 cycle. MacMillan Center director Ian Shapiro said many thought that federal support of NRCs would end. But an unexpected \$2.5 million gift from a Broadway producer to Yale's Council on African Studies more than made up for losses in federal funds. Shapiro, thus, pursued private donations from foundations and individual donors because, “It's a model of what we're going to have to be doing going forward.”²⁵⁰

Soon after, Kamel gave sizable donations to Yale's Law School to establish the Islamic law program, an affiliated program of CMES. There were no apparent connections between the Kamel family and Yale prior to 2013. As with Georgetown and the University of Arkansas, the university actively sought out foreign donors.

Yale's center also further illustrates that MESC's have become highly politicized and intensively promote progressive ideologies. The scholars at Yale's CMES explicitly incorporate social justice ideology and support for progressive social movements into their teaching. So too do Yale's outreach programs, which thrust this aggressive political agenda into local community institutions, particularly public schools. Legislators did not have this outcome in mind when they made it possible for Yale to receive federal funding to promote national security and economic progress.

[org/2018/03/28/597600898/americanized-recounts-what-its-like-to-grow-up-undocumented.](https://www.yale.edu/news/2018/03/28/597600898/americanized-recounts-what-its-like-to-grow-up-undocumented)
250 Gideon, “Facing Cuts.”

Yale's Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations (NELC) department, in contrast, provides a more promising example of what a Middle East studies department can and should be. Students receive a robust education in subjects they may not encounter elsewhere. For instance, students may take courses on ancient languages such as Akkadian, training them in the translation of important historical documents. Therefore, it is possible for Yale to provide a rigorous curriculum on the Middle East and related subjects. The best way for Yale to do this would be to eliminate the overly political CMES and focus resources instead on the more academically rigorous NELC.

Themes

Several themes emerge from our analysis of the data and case studies of Middle East centers. These themes reflect the self-conception of Middle East scholars as educator-activists rather than just educators and researchers. Middle East scholars, in other words, view their occupation as a calling to enact social and political change by altering beliefs about the Middle East, rather than the disinterested pursuit of truth.

Because of their activist tendency, modern MESC's fail to uphold their academic and security missions. Centers not only fail to fulfill these missions, but they also actively do the opposite and deceive taxpayers about their intentions.

Middle East scholars attempt to accomplish their activist goals through carefully crafted, seemingly anodyne messages of "understanding." These messages avoid anything remotely negative toward Islam or Muslims, making academic study more concerned about perceptions than truth. Academics at American universities also diminish Western and American concerns by fixating on pro-Muslim perspectives. These platitudes and PR campaigns, created in the academy, are then disseminated through the K-12 system to impressionable young minds. Much of this operation is supported by American taxpayer dollars. Still, centers displeased with their level of public funding look to wealthy foreign donors to provide immense financial support. Foreign donors do not constantly push centers to support policies that favor Middle Eastern priorities; the academics already serve as their advocates.

Americans lose from this entire arrangement. Students do not receive an essential understanding of the cultures, politics, and social realities of the Middle East—a grave misfortune for the academy and American national security.

False Understanding & Bridges to Nowhere

One of the major themes that emerged from our case studies was the intense focus on "bridging" cultural divides between the East and the West. Centers diminish cultural differences to "break barriers." By doing so, Middle East scholars hope that people will shed negative perceptions of Arabs, Muslims, and other groups part of the Middle East. This

outlook represents a shift away from the older Orientalist approach, which did not concern itself with countering negative public perceptions when learning about a religion, culture, and region. The more traditional approach to studying the Arab world, instead, attempted to provide objective, factual information about the region's cultures, religions, and peoples, and to encourage students to come to their own conclusions. Scholars did not always achieve perfect objectivity, but objectivity was the aim nonetheless—married to liberty of judgment.

Several centers in our case studies use the language of “bridging” or “understanding” in their mission statements or titles. Georgetown's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding states in the “History” section of its website that it “promote[s] improved understanding between Muslim and Christian communities worldwide.” The word “promote” or “promotion” is crucial to the activities of these centers: scholars do not exist to simply research and teach; scholars want to elevate a particular worldview.

Discussions about the hijab use similar techniques of cultural bridging and understanding. Lessons on the Muslim headgear for women at UNC-Chapel Hill and UT-Austin attempt to establish an equivalency between its use by Muslims and similar headgears in other religions. A speaker's note for a North Carolina K-12 lesson plan advised teachers to tell students that oppression of women is not a unique phenomenon to the Arab world. In the UT-Austin course, “French Empire: The West and Islam,” students must read Joan Scott's *The Politics of the Veil*, which discusses the “hijab ban” in France during the early 2000s. Based on the course syllabus, there appeared to be no discussion of the fact that countries such as Saudi Arabia require women to wear veils, regardless of whether they observe Islam. This exclusion makes it seem as if the West uniquely imposes dress-code laws when they are far more prevalent and intrusive in non-Western countries.

These approaches mislead Westerners: the extent to which a headgear is required in other world religions is not nearly as significant as it is in Islamic societies, and many Muslim women welcome freedom from the hijab.²⁵¹ Yet academics, with feminist American audiences in mind, frame wearing the hijab as a women's empowerment issue—even though discarding the hijab would seem to be a more intuitively feminist policy. That Middle East scholars present wearing the hijab rather than discarding the hijab as a “feminist” policy is a measure of how badly their ideological commitments distort a straightforward understanding of the Middle East.

Another important way Middle East studies scholars promote cultural bridging is through their disproportionate emphasis on Islam's mystical tradition of Sufism. Sufism became popular among American graduate students (and eventually academics) during the

251 We can infer this based on the choices of Muslim women in Western countries that do not restrict clothing such as the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, the majority of Muslim women in the U.S. did not wear or only sometimes wore the hijab. See “Religious Beliefs and Practices,” Pew Research Center, July 26, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/religious-beliefs-and-practices/>.

counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵² This Islamic school of thought is generally perceived by Westerners as more moderate and peaceful, and thus a useful tool to counter perceptions of Islam as rigid, violent, and repressive. However, Sufism is not within the mainstream of Islamic thought, and its adherents are not typical Muslims. Indeed, Sufis themselves have been the subject of persecution by other Muslims.²⁵³ But Sufism is taught in almost all universities with MESCAs we examined. Many of the most prominent scholars of Islam at the centers, such as Carl Ernst at UNC, specialize in Sufism. On the other hand, a much smaller number of classes are devoted to discussing the more fundamentalist forms of Islam like Wahhabism and Salafism, even though these schools of thought are more representative of Islam in the Middle East today. Also, since these schools of thought animate the more violent forms of anti-American sentiment, it is far more urgent for American policymakers to know their tenets and sociocultural dynamics. This disproportionate emphasis on Sufism gives students a false impression about the nature of Islamic societies—and illustrates how the educator-activist agenda cuts against the traditional academic ethic to know and speak the truth.

Much of the academic focus on cultural bridging is driven by a social agenda to decrease what academics perceive as hostility to and fear of Muslims in the West—sentiments that they reduce to “discrimination,” even when a more accurate rendition might be *prudential caution inspired by consideration of the relevant facts*. In doing so, academics must work against the often-negative reactions by Westerners to events such as 9/11, the refugee crisis in Europe, and continued Islamic terror attacks. Scholars at these centers work from the assumption that these negative reactions and prudential cautions are unwarranted, should be eliminated, and should have no effect upon public policy.²⁵⁴ These presumptions are those of ideological activists rather than of scholars. Such activism and true scholarly research cannot coexist.

Pro-Muslim Subjectivism

Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which critiqued previous Middle East scholarship because of its perceived Eurocentrism, has heavily influenced study of the region. Said and his followers argued that this Eurocentrism had produced systemically biased scholarship of the Middle East, where negative interpretations of Middle Easterners served both Western interests and Western self-regard. But the response in the Middle East studies field was not to seek a more objective perspective. Instead, scholars adopted a postmodern view that

252 Robert Irwin, *Memoirs of a Dervish: Sufis, Mystics and the Sixties* (London: Profile Books, 2011).

253 Declan Walsh and Nour Youssef, “Militants Kill 305 at Sufi Mosque in Egypt’s Deadliest Terrorist Attack,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/mosque-attack-egypt.html>.

254 John L. Esposito, “9/11 Attacks: A Two-Decade Assault on US Civil Liberties,” *Middle East Eye*, September 9, 2021, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/911-attacks-two-decade-assault-us-civil-liberties>.

no scholarship could possibly be objective; therefore, they must lean into subjectivity and counter what they saw as negative views of the Middle East and Muslims by attempting to teach and study the region from an exclusively Middle Eastern perspective.

The consequence has been that their portrayal of current events involving America and the Middle East is quite unusual, sometimes in a way which reveals a pathological anti-American bias. 9/11 is a powerful example: instead of focusing on the horrific suffering of Americans, Middle East scholars have presented the attacks as tragic mainly because they resulted in increased discrimination against Muslims. They could just as easily present the Iraq War as tragic because it created negative perceptions of Americans among Middle Easterners—yet they do not. Their interest in Middle Eastern perspectives is clearly selective and tendentious.

This process of assuming the perspective of the “other” is referred to as “de-centering” the curriculum away from a Western lens. The centers are quite proud of this approach and mention it in many of their activities and lessons. Yet the de-centering and cultural bridging goals can conflict with one another. Many Middle Eastern countries are quite conservative and traditional, and treat homosexuals, women, and other disfavored groups in sometimes brutal ways. Adopting the Muslim perspective on these issues would require a defense of this treatment, which American Middle East scholars conspicuously fail to do. Most of the time, academics instead try to avoid discussion of these subjects. When they do discuss LGBT issues or feminism, they cherry-pick their sources to find opinions by Muslims who agree with these primarily Western movements—the native collaborators of the new woke imperial order.

Middle East centers deprive students of a proper education about the region by using a progressive policy agenda to deliberately pick and choose which facts to present to students. Students should learn and understand the Arab world accurately, regardless of what reactions proceed from that knowledge. The academics’ fear of allowing students to form negative reactions prevents them from providing proper scholarship and instruction.

K-12 Propaganda

The original purpose of Middle East NRC outreach programs, introduced in the 1970s, was to help K-12 educators encourage young students to pursue foreign language education and improve knowledge of the Middle East. NRCs provided K-12 educators with professionally assembled resources that contained accurate information about the region, along with foreign language expertise that was unlikely to be found elsewhere.

Yet since that time, educator-activists have transformed Middle East NRCs’ K-12 outreach programs into another venue for propaganda, in this case targeted at young children.

The materials they provide to K-12 educators focus on the propaganda themes of *cultural bridging* and *Muslim perspective* rather than providing actual knowledge about the Middle East. Children are taught to anathematize free debate and differing views, and to believe that *understanding* is synonymous with *approbation*.

Even worse, Middle East NRCs provide instructional materials that actively promote pernicious ideologies such as critical race theory. As mentioned earlier, UT-Austin's Middle East center participates in an annual conference, for which its doctoral students produced instructional materials geared toward "sustaining critical race literacy." Outreach program after outreach program pushes DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) ideology, which "challenge stereotypes" and "break down misconceptions."

MESCs are not the only parts of the university that promote these ideologies. But their influence is more potent than most of their peers because they conduct outreach to K-12 educators, who then pass along such teachings to minor children, who are even less prepared than college students to recognize propaganda. There is no reason such programs should be introduced into K-12 schools, and the government certainly should not reward centers engaged in these activities with federal funds.

Foreign Influence

Many Americans already have raised concerns about the considerable degree of foreign funding of MESCs. They were right to do so—not least because they only knew about the tip of the iceberg. We still do not know the full extent of this foreign funding, but current evidence suggests that it is far more widespread than previously realized. Significant amounts of funds have gone unreported to the Department of Education, including the University of Arkansas King Fahd Center's initial \$3 million donation and the entirety of the George Mason University Islamic Center's founding donation.

Many of these gifts come directly from foreign governments and government officials, particularly the Saudi Royal Family. Even when donations come from private individuals, the high degree of government control over the economy in many Middle Eastern countries makes the distinction between public and private quite fuzzy. In any case, these individuals and governments must receive something of value by donating to these centers. We may be skeptical that the benefit consists entirely of a reputation for philanthropy.

It is this undefined *quid pro quo* that creates most of the concern about foreign funding of MESCs. What precisely do the centers provide in return? Do they create and promote government propaganda for the Saudi Royal Family? Do they produce biased research which omits important facts to benefit the donors? Do they create American foreign policy elites

incapable of conducting Middle East policy with a realistic sense of the region and a prudential desire to forward the American national interest?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to compare these centers to another set of centers funded by a foreign government: Confucius Institutes (CIs).²⁵⁵ The Chinese government set up and funded CIs at American universities to promote Chinese government propaganda. CIs have created issues with academic freedom at the host universities. While some MESCs broadly resemble CIs, they convey foreign influence in a subtle and distinctive manner.

They do so not least because the relationship between the U.S. and China is different from the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. and China view each other as geopolitical rivals and potential adversaries, while Saudi Arabia's relationship to America is economic partnership, military dependence, and a thread of underlying popular hostility expressed by endemic nongovernmental Saudi support for anti-American terror groups such as Al-Qaeda. The Saudi extension of influence upon America registers the complexities of Saudi power, dependence, and rancor.

These complexities, as well as the more loose-jointed political structure of the Arab states, have led Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States to create foreign funding agreements that usually differ substantially from those that China makes with American universities. Middle Eastern funding agreements are looser, with fewer concrete stipulations, and often take the form of partnerships. Major gifts to American universities establish positive ties with American politicians, such as the Saudi gift to the King Fahd Center at the University of Arkansas after Bill Clinton was elected president. The Saudis are not very concerned about how precisely the universities use the gifts. They focus rather on the political capital they accrue in Washington by establishing these friendly relationships.

MESCs also differ from CIs because Islamic countries in the Middle East are committed to their state religion rather than to Communist ideology and Chinese national culture. They therefore aim to promote Islam more generally, rather than a state ideology, national interests, and national culture. Syrian or Iraqi Ba'athists in their heyday might have supported MESCs with a commitment to a secular ideology and a national culture, and Turkish support for MESCs includes some support for Turkish nationalist policy—but the Ba'athist moment has passed, and Turkish nationalism now also has an Islamic cast. MESCs, less tightly directed than Confucius Institutes, instead loosely promote positive perceptions of Islam and Muslims to a Western audience, not least to facilitate the spread of Islam in Western countries. This soft-focus publicity campaign complements rather than replaces direct lobbying of politicians and close relationships with Western leaders, which is the main means Middle Eastern countries use to secure specific national interests.

255 Rachele Peterson, *Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*, National Association of Scholars, April 5, 2017, <https://www.nas.org/reports/outsourced-to-china/full-report>.

American Middle East studies scholars are in any case strangely eager, of their own volition and even without the benefit of foreign cash, to promote the interests of Middle Eastern countries and peoples, even at the expense of American interests. All MESC forward the same type of activist propaganda, whether or not they receive foreign funds. That is not to say, however, that these foreign funds are not a problem. If they do not create the anti-American animus of Middle East scholars, they give it a megaphone and a lifeline. Foreign support creates new MESC, strengthens existing ones, and prevents the dissolution of MESC that have fallen on hard times. Foreign support makes MESC anti-Americanism a permanent influence upon American public opinion and elite education.

The best way to disrupt foreign-funded MESC, and to weaken or eliminate their influence, is to end their federal funding.

Recommendations

MESC's three main contributions to Middle East studies have been to fund archaeological expeditions and analysis, to subsidize the study of rare languages for translation purposes, and to increase the number of Americans proficient in a modern foreign language. Universities that study the Middle East should continue these achievements. In contrast, MESC's have failed to prepare graduates to serve American interests by providing a genuine understanding of Middle East societies and cultures. The MESC's dissemination of political ideology by means of course materials and classroom instruction have compromised their ability to contribute to the rigorous study of the Middle East, or to assist in the formation of American foreign policy to secure the national interest. Furthermore, their lack of financial transparency, and that of their host universities, raises further questions about whose national interests they actually promote. American policymakers should not allow the MESC status quo to continue any longer.

We provide the following recommendations for policy reform:

Federal Policy

- 1. Public university foundations should be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests, while respecting the anonymity of domestic donors.**

Foreign funds to public universities often are funneled through university foundations, institutions which manage university assets. However, these foundations are legally separated from their affiliated institutions and thus escape public scrutiny. There is no reason that foundations created for the sole purpose of managing assets of a public university should be treated differently. Congress should require, as a condition for federal funding, any "funnel" institution for a public university to be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests, so as to strengthen public university's accountability to the American public. Domestic donors who wish to remain anonymous should continue to enjoy that privilege, but because of national security interests, foreign donors (whether governments, organizations, or individuals) should not.

2. The federal government should tighten gift disclosure requirements for colleges and universities.

The U.S. Department of Education reiterated in a 2019 letter that higher education institutions must declare transparently all foreign gifts of more than \$250,000 in a calendar year.²⁵⁶ Federal lawmakers should build on this first step. The law should require all colleges and universities participating in federal programs (that is, nearly all of them) and their associated foundations to report all foreign donations above \$50,000 received since 2000; to report all foreign gifts and grants more than \$50,000 in a calendar year; and to include in their report all gifts and grants received via “funnel” institutions, including but not limited to their associated foundations. Universities should also be required to report the purpose of the funding and the donor’s name.

3. End federal support for National Resource Centers.

The Cold War ended a generation ago with the collapse of the Soviet Union; we no longer face the kind of security threat that requires federal support for National Resource Centers. America in any case now possesses an extensive and well-financed academic infrastructure for study of the Middle East and of its languages. Much of it, alas, has degenerated into activism for progressive and anti-American ideologies. Federal funding is not well suited to impose reform on Middle East studies, but neither should the American public be required to fund a system of education antithetical to the national interest. Federal lawmakers should end federal funding for Middle East studies. The end of the NRC system will keep faculty focused on their individual departments—which at worst will do no harm, and at best will reintroduce academic rigor to a field softened by “interdisciplinarity.”

If America still needs specific investment in modern study of foreign languages, that should be supported by means of federal funding for Language Resource Centers.

Since lawmakers may not act for several years, the Department of Education should use its existing compliance tools to strip funding from resource centers that are failing to serve the letter and spirit of Title VI.

University Policy

1. All universities should place contracts, memoranda of understanding, and other deals with foreign countries on an easily accessible location on their websites.

²⁵⁶ Mitchell M. Zais to Terry Hartle, July 3, 2019, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/ED-Section-117-Letter-to-ACE.pdf>.

Regardless of whether a university is publicly or privately operated, dealings with other countries should be easily accessible, without cost, to the public. No college or university should have secret deals with foreign governments.

2. Advisory boards for Middle East Studies Centers should only include American citizens.

American universities funded by American taxpayers should serve American interests—proudly and voluntarily. This reform will provide a signal to the American public that universities, and particularly Middle East Studies Centers, have reaffirmed their civic mission.

Appendix A

Trends Section Methodology

Most of the data in this report, particularly in the “Trends in Middle East and Islamic Studies” section, comes from the International Resource Information System (IRIS). The Department of Education’s International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) division provides this online database. IFLE oversees Middle East National Resource Centers, among other Title VI–funded programs. IRIS is a compilation of the information that IFLE receives through the various mandatory reports made by these centers.

We supplemented the IRIS database with NRC funding information from the Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE). OPE provides annual summaries of total awards made to NRCs under the International Education program. However, the current version of the website (as of May 2022) only provides this information from 2014 onward. We, therefore, used archived versions of the website from the Wayback Machine to obtain the funding data between 2000 and 2014.

Finally, unless indicated, all dollar values are inflation-adjusted using the monthly Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) series from the Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) database provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. We average the values by year to create an annual series.

We used the current and archived OPE data to infer years of activity for Middle East NRCs. We define a center as “active” if it received a Title VI grant during that academic year. We also tried other definitions of activity, such as whether a center conducted any outreach programs or reported expenditures during the academic year. However, missing data for those items led us to conclude that the funding-based definition was the most accurate. Figures 5 and 6 use this definition of activity. Figure 8 uses the funding amounts from the OPE data.

Data for the budget section comes from the IRIS database. The categories shown in Figure 9 are exactly as reported in the data. Data for the instructional materials comes from the corresponding section of the IRIS database and is organized according to the categories provided. Finally, data for the outreach section also comes from the corresponding section of the IRIS database.

Area studies centers report intended audiences for each instructional material and outreach program. While many types of audiences are reported, we group them into seven categories: business, government, foreign government, higher education, K–12, other, and public. For most events or materials, there were slight alterations of one of the category names we

used. In some instances, it was clear under which event the category fell (i.e., “military” was placed in the “government” category). The “other” category includes many uncommon audience types such as healthcare or legal professionals.

We used these categories to create Figures 10 and 11, which show the intended audiences of instructional materials and outreach programs over time. An important note for interpreting these charts is that many materials and programs have multiple audiences reported in the data. Thus, the percentages for each year sum to greater than 100. This does not present a problem for interpreting the percentages over time. But it could cause issues for cross-sectional comparisons if some types of audiences are systematically overreported. To check if this was the case, we examined the written descriptions of a sample of materials and programs, which often contain more specific information about the types of audience members in attendance. We did not find any systematic bias in the audience reporting for the sample we examined.²⁵⁷

We used the outreach programs database from IRIS to analyze topic coverage trends across time. We could have also used IRIS data on language or area studies courses. But many courses are repeated over several years and use the exact same wording. Thus, course data does not provide useful variation. In addition, the titles and descriptions of outreach programs are significantly more detailed than those of courses.

Ideally, we would use outreach program titles and descriptions to form estimates of topic prevalence. However, many outreach programs lacked event descriptions. Some schools were more likely to include descriptions than others. Therefore, relying on this data would bias our results toward the handful of schools which did report descriptions. It would also reduce our effective sample size. Thus, we use only the program titles for our statistical analyses.

We use simple dictionary methods to construct estimates of the prevalence of certain topics among NRC outreach programs. Specifically, for any topic of interest, we construct a list of words (a “dictionary”) that reasonably pertain to that topic. We then match these words with each outreach program title, assigning a “1” if the title contains one or more words in the dictionary and a “0” if not. The proportion of programs assigned a value of “1” in any given year is our measure for how much that topic was covered that year.

There are several potential pitfalls to these methods. One issue is that the same word may have different meanings in different contexts. This is a typical objection to the use of dictionary-based methods for sentiment analysis—words perceived as positive in some contexts may carry negative connotations in others. However, we think that this objection carries relatively little weight in this setting. Our dictionaries are designed specifically for

²⁵⁷ We did correct for some reporting errors. For example, between academic years 2006 and 2012, and in academic year 2018, UC-Berkeley reported all types of audiences for every single outreach program. In addition, the specific audiences reported were identical for all programs, leading us to believe that this anomaly was due to reporting error. Thus, we excluded all audience data from UC-Berkeley in those years.

this dataset, and the words in our dictionaries tend to have specific meanings. Terms such as “terrorism” or “feminism,” for example, have relatively unambiguous meanings.

Another potential issue is underestimation—human error could lead to the neglect of important words for a given topic. That’s because the dictionaries were constructed in a somewhat ad hoc fashion. We worked to mitigate this possibility by constructing the dictionaries in an iterative fashion. We created a starting list of words and examined the titles selected by those words. Many titles contained other words that were not in our original list. But these words were clearly relevant to the topic of interest. We added these words to the list and repeated the process until no new words were found. Finally, we searched the entire dataset for portions of words to find any typing errors. As a result, our dictionaries contain misspelled words.

We created dictionaries for the following topics: climate change, feminism, Israel & Palestine, immigration, LGBT, pluralism, and terrorism. We provide the full set of dictionaries below:

Climate Change	Feminism	Israel/palestine	Immigration	LGBT	Pluralism	Terrorism
Climate	Feminine	israel	immigrant	lesbian	pluralism	terrorism
sustainable	femininity	israeli	immigrant	lesbians	pluralist	terrorist
sustainability	femininities	israelis	immigration	lesbianism	multiculturalism	terrorists
environment	female	israelite	immigrations	lesbianisms	multicultural	terror
environmental	females	israelism	transmigration	homosexuality	multiethnic	counterterrorism
environmentalist	femaleness	israelites	migratory	homosexual	diversity	jihadi
environmentalism	feminism	iisrael	migrant	homosexuals	diverse	ihadism
environments	feminism	israelenis	migrants	homoerotic	tolerance	jihadi
carbon	femme	israelfest	migration	sexualities	intolerance	ihadis
green	femmes	yisrael	migrations	sexuality	islamophobic	ihadist
recycle	feminist	zionism	refugee	gay	islamophobia	bomb
	feminists	zionist	refugees	gayness	xenophobia	bombing
	woman	jerusalem	emigrant	gays	intercultural	bombings
	women	knesset	emigrants	bisexual	transcultural	hijack
	womxn	netanyahu	emigration	bisexuals	transculturation	hijacking

	gender	golan	emigrations	bisexuality	interculture	hijackings
	genders	1967	immigres	transgender	interfaith	hijacker
	sex	bds	immigre	transgenders	antisemitism	osama
	sexual	balfour	immigrate	transgendered	antisemite	qaeda
	sexuality	oslo	immigrates	transgenderism	hate	
	sexes	settlements	imigrating	transsexual	coexistence	
	sexism	divestment	migrating	transsexuals	coexistence	
	misogyny	palestine	migrate	transsexuality	togetherness	
	misogynist	palestinianian	emigrate	lgbt		
	misogynists	palestininians		lgbtq		
	girl	gaza				
	girls	palestininans				
	feminity	palestina				
	femnists	hamas				
	womanhood	plo				
	wombs	nakba				
	womb	nakbas				
	eurowomen	settler				
	womenomics	settlers				
	heroine	israel's				
	sister	israel's				
	sisters	jerusalem's				
	sisterhood					
	bride					
	brides					
	hijab					
	hijabi					
	headscarf					
	headscarves					
	burkinis					
	veil					

	veiling					
	veiled					
	veils					
	gendered					
	gendering					
	women's					
	women's					
	women's					
*Misspelled words are intentional						

We calculated the average and standard deviation of coverage for each topic by year to compare topic coverage across schools. Then, we used these estimates to calculate a z-score for each school in each year and averaged the z-scores across years. We used this method to control for the fact that some NRCs only existed for a portion of the period analyzed, and topic coverage varies systematically by year. For example, the topic “terrorism” reached its peak coverage in 2001 and declined steadily afterwards. Emory University’s NRC was only active from 2000 to 2003. If we compare Emory’s total coverage of terrorism to that of an NRC which was active from academic years 2000 to 2019, we would likely overestimate Emory’s coverage of terrorism. Instead, our method compares Emory’s coverage of terrorism during its years of activity only to other active NRCs in those years.

Figures 13 and 15 are based on the output of two LASSO-based models trained on a random sample of outreach program titles. In this section, we describe the procedure used for these models.²⁵⁸

LASSO is an acronym for Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator. It was originally proposed by statistician Robert Tibshirani in a 1996 paper.²⁵⁹ It is a prediction model, which means given input variables X_i , it returns a prediction $f(X_j)$ of some output variable Y . The original LASSO model is a regression model, so Y must be continuous. Newer variations such as the LASSO-logistic model used to produce Figure 13 (K-12) extend the technique to allow for discrete Y .

The LASSO procedure was developed to deal with high-dimensional data, where the number of predictors (k) is large compared to the number of observations (n). A typical linear regression model estimated using Ordinary Least Squares suffers from over fitting once k approaches n , and is not feasible once $k > n$. The LASSO model introduces a penalty term to the least squares loss function that shrinks the fitted coefficients to control

²⁵⁸ Jonathan Arnold helped write the portion of the appendix concerning the LASSO models.

²⁵⁹ Robert Tibshirani, “Regression Shrinkage and Selection via the Lasso,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series B (Methodological)* 58, no. 1 (1996): 267–88, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2346178#metadata_info_tab_contents.

for overfitting. The specific penalty LASSO imposes has the added benefit of shrinking many coefficients to zero, meaning that it adaptively performs variable selection.

These properties are particularly useful for text data. We use a bag-of-words approach to process the outreach program titles, meaning that each unique word in the corpus of text receives its own column of data. Thus, there are many predictors relative to the number of observations, and LASSO-style regularization is necessary to avoid overfitting.²⁶⁰

Before fitting the model, we preprocess the data. The titles are tokenized at the individual word level. That is, each outreach program corresponds to a row of data, each unique word corresponds to a column, and each cell is “1” if the word is present at least once in the title of the outreach program and “0” otherwise. We then drop all tokens corresponding to a customized list of “stop words,” which include typical uninformative words like “the” and “of.” We also include topic-irrelevant words such as “Friday” and “lecture.” We, additionally, restrict the number of tokens to the 1,000 most common words, after removing stop words.

Next, we replace the 1s and 0s in the data with TF-IDF statistics, which are often used in text modeling to measure the relative “importance” of words in a corpus of text.²⁶¹ TF-IDF stands for term frequency-inverse document frequency and is the product of the two measures with those names. Term frequency is calculated by dividing the total number of occurrences of a particular word by the total number of words in the document. Inverse document frequency is the logarithm of the inverse ratio of the number of documents containing a given term to the total number of documents. In our case, a document corresponds to a single outreach program, and the set of all outreach programs constitutes the corpus of text. The formula is written below:

$$TFIDF(t, d, D) = \frac{f_{t,d}}{\sum_{t' \in d} f_{t',d}} \times \ln \frac{|D|}{|\{d \in D: t \in d\}|}$$

Here t is a word, d is a document (outreach program title), and D is the corpus (the set of all outreach program titles).

After calculating TF-IDF statistics, we normalize all the columns of data so that the shrinkage and selection operation is not biased due to the different scales of the predictors. In the K-12 model, we finish the preprocessing by using the Synthetic Minority Oversampling Technique (SMOTE) to oversample K-12 titles, since these titles only represent a minority of all program titles.²⁶² For both models, we randomly split the data 75–25 into a training set and a test set.

260 Emil Hvitfeldt and Julia Silge, *Supervised Machine Learning for Text Analysis in R* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2022), <https://smltar.com/>.

261 Julia Silge and David Robinson, *Text Mining with R: A Tidy Approach* (Sebastopol: O’Reilly, 2017), <https://www.tidytext-mining.com/index.html>.

262 N. V. Chawla et al., “SMOTE: Synthetic Minority Over-sampling Technique,” *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research* 16 (2002): 321–57, <https://doi.org/10.1613/jair.953>.

After preprocessing, we tune and fit the model to the training set. The model is fit by minimizing the LASSO loss function for the year-of-program model:

$$L(Y, X; \beta) = (Y - X\beta)'(Y - X\beta) + \lambda \sum_{j=1}^k |\beta_j|$$

Or the LASSO-logistic loss function for the K-12 model:

$$L(Y, X; \beta) = -\ln \left(\prod_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{e^{X_i' \beta}}{1 + e^{X_i' \beta}} \right)^{Y_i} \left(\frac{1}{1 + e^{X_i' \beta}} \right)^{1 - Y_i} \right) + \lambda \sum_{j=1}^k |\beta_j|$$

Here Y is the vector of output values, either a dummy variable for K-12 in the K-12 model or the year in the year-of-program model. X is the matrix of predictors, β is the vector of coefficients to be estimated, and λ is the hyperparameter to be tuned. The i subscript refers to the vector or scalar value of the corresponding variable for individual outreach program i . A larger λ means a harsher penalty and will result in more shrinkage and fewer variables with non-zero coefficients. We fit the model using the `glmnet` package in the programming language R, which uses highly efficient optimization routines to compute the optimal β vector.²⁶³

Tuning is performed using 25 bootstrap resamples and a grid of 50 values for λ . The bootstrap resamples are stratified by K-12 in the K-12 model and by the year of the program in the year-of-program model. All of these procedures are performed using the `tidymodels` family of packages in R, using the built-in defaults.²⁶⁴ After fitting the model to the resampled data, the optimal value for λ is chosen according to the receiver operating curve-area under the ROC curve (ROC-AUC) score for the K-12 model and the root-mean-square error (RMSE) for the year-of-program model.

We fit the model one final time to the training data using the optimal λ . The charts in the report show the largest (in absolute value) positive and negative coefficients that result from this final fit.

Course Distribution

For each of our case studies, apart from Georgetown, we consider subject matter coverage of courses. We used university websites and course rosters to collect information for the Fall 2021 semester. For comparability purposes, we classified courses into the following

²⁶³ Noah Simon et al., "Regularization Paths for Cox's Proportional Hazards Model via Coordinate Descent," *Journal of Statistical Software* 39, no. 5 (2011): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v039.i05>.

²⁶⁴ "Tidymodels," R Studio, <https://www.tidymodels.org/>.

groups: Middle East and Islamic Studies (MEIS), Language, History, Government, Religion, and Other. “Other” consists of relatively uncommon categories (among Middle East courses) such as Women’s Studies and Music. Below is a crosswalk between the university departments which offer the courses and our categorizations:

University Department	Our Categorization
African and African American Studies	Other
African, African American, and Diaspora Studies	Other
American Studies	Other
Anthropology	Other
Arabic	Language
Architecture	Other
Art History	Other
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies	MEIS
Asian Studies	MEIS
Classical Archeology	Other
Comparative Literature	Other
Cultural Anthropology	Other
Divinity School	Religion
Economics	Other
Freshman Seminar	Other
Gender and Sexuality Studies	Other
General Education	Other
Geography and Geoinformation Science	Other
Global Affairs	Other
Government	Government
Hebrew	Language
Hindi	Language
Hindi-Urdu	Language
History	History
Humanities	Other
Islamic Studies	MEIS
Medieval Studies	Other
Middle East and Islamic Studies	MEIS

Middle East Studies	MEIS
Middle Eastern Languages	Language
Middle Eastern Studies	MEIS
Modern Middle East Studies	MEIS
Music	Other
NELC	Language
Persian	Language
Policy and Government	Government
Political Science	Government
Public Policy	Government
Religion	Religion
Sociology	Other
Turkish	Language
Women's Studies	Other

At UT-Austin, many courses were listed under the Middle Eastern Studies department instead of the department that most closely corresponded to the course's subject matter. We used course titles and descriptions when available to further categorize UT-Austin's Middle Eastern studies courses in a comparable way to other centers. We provide our categorization below:

University Categorization	Course Title	Our Classification
Middle Eastern Studies	Gateway To The Middle East	MEIS
Middle Eastern Studies	Mid East: Rel/Cul/Hist Fnd-Wb	History
Middle Eastern Studies	Intro Mus In World Cultures	MEIS
Middle Eastern Studies	Intro To Jewish Studies	Religion
Middle Eastern Studies	Jewish Civ: Begin To 1492	History
Middle Eastern Studies	Revltm/Decoloniztn N Africa	History
Middle Eastern Studies	Intro To The Old Testament	Religion
Middle Eastern Studies	History Of Israel	History
Middle Eastern Studies	US Foreign Policy/Mid East	MEIS
Middle Eastern Studies	Art/Archeo Ancient Near East	Other
Middle Eastern Studies	Divn Persasn Bibl Time/Plce	Religion
Middle Eastern Studies	Soundtrack Of Revolutions	Other

Middle Eastern Studies	The Arabian Nights-Wb	MEIS
Middle Eastern Studies	Youth/Violence Mid East/Eur	MEIS
Middle Eastern Studies	Arabs/Vikings Art/Culture	Other
Middle Eastern Studies	Islm Early Mod Rlg/Cul-Wb	Religion
Middle Eastern Studies	Modern Iran	History
Middle Eastern Studies	Global Iran	MEIS
Middle Eastern Studies	Modern Arabic Poetry	Language
Middle Eastern Studies	Reading Arabic Literature-Wb	Language
Middle Eastern Studies	Shii Islam: History & Resis	Religion
Middle Eastern Studies	The Islamic City	MEIS

Georgetown offers an abundance of Middle East–focused courses across many different departments. Because of the richness of the information, we decided to report the more granular department distribution for Georgetown’s Middle East courses instead of categorizing it like we did for our other case studies. We consolidated very close departments into one, but this was a relatively uncommon occurrence (e.g., Law consists of “Law (Graduate)” and “Law (JD).”

Figures and Tables

This section provides sources for figures and tables in our report that were not already cited.

Figure 1: American Middle East and Islamic Centers

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Figure 3: Middle East Scholars Connections to Intelligence Agencies

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Figure 24: Foreign-Funded Chairs at Harvard

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Figure 26: Foreign-Funded Chairs at Georgetown

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