

**MESA 2021 panels on the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula**  
**(in chronological order – pending further changes as MESA converts to fully online program)**

Note that panels exclusively on Iraq or Iran are not included here– however there is a brief list of these panels at the end of this list with hyperlinks for those who are interested.

**1) [P6593] [Small States, Big Influence? Foreign Policy in the Persian Gulf](#)**

(Monday Nov 29, 2pm)

Organizer: MESA

Chair: Kristin Smith Diwan (AGSIW)

- Omani regional neutrality during Iran-Iraq war 1980-1988: What was behind it? by Al-Abri, Omran
- Deconstruction of Hegemony: A Discourse Theory approach to the GCC Crisis by Dogan Akkas, Betul
- SOS? (States on Sand): the Survival and Foreign Policy of Small States in the Arabian Gulf—A View from Kuwait by Wheeler, Deborah L.

**2) [P6612] [Youth Socialization and Education](#)**

(Monday Nov 29, 2pm)

Organizer: MESA

Chair: Uri Horesh (Achva Academic College)

- The Physical Barriers of Public Education in Jordan by Ahmad, Lameese
- Kuwaiti Youth and the Evolution of the “Democratic Diwaniya” by Al-Nakib, Rania; al-Khonaini, Abdullah
- Acquiescence through Youth Empowerment? Social Entrepreneurialism and Authoritarian Renewal in Jordan by Almqvist, Adam
- Touran Mirhadi, a Prominent Pioneer in Iranian Education by Hosseini, Sajedeh
- Between National Pride and Critical Inquiry: Citizenship Education and Youth Perspectives in Kuwait by Mejias, Sam; Khazbak, Rana

**3) [P6599] [The Political Economy of Gulf States: Beyond Oil](#)**

(Tuesday, Nov 30, 11.30am)

Panel organizer: MESA

Panel chair: Mehran Kamrava (Georgetown U Qatar)

- More than Money: Rentier Politics in Qatar by Mitchell, Jocelyn Sage
- A Political Economy of Energy Transition: Privatizing Natural Gas Assets in Gulf Arab States by Mogielnicki, Robert

- Labor Market Reform, Labor Nationalization, and Regional Economic Challenges in Qatar by Sayre, Edward A.

4) [P6647] [Labor, Migration and Experience in the Gulf](#)

(Tuesday Nov 30, 2pm)

Organizer: MESA

Chair: Edward A. Sayre (U of Southern Mississippi)

- Narratives of work in Saudi Arabia: A map of experiences, ambitions and opportunities by Almoaibed, Hanaa
- Kafala, hierarchy and bargaining power: Varieties of migration experience in the Gulf by Ewers, Michael; Gengler, Justin
- A Processual Model of Culture Change: Hiring First Females in All-Male Organizations by Gonzalez, Alessandra
- The Cramped and Crowded Room: The Search for a Sense of Belonging Among Temporary Low-Wage Migrant Workers in Dubai by Reber, Lisa

5) [P6404] [Forgotten War's Tragedies in Yemen](#)

(Tuesday Nov 30, 2pm)

Panel organizer: Khalid al-Hammadi (Rights Radar for Human Rights in Yemen)

Panel chair: none

**SUMMARY:**

*When it comes to the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world, it goes to Yemen according to the UN agencies. This poorest country in the Arab world, located in the south-west corner of the Arabian Peninsula, fallen into a horrific armed conflict six years ago, between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and Iran-backed Ansar Allah (also known as Houthi group), who takes over the capital Sana'a on September 21, 2014. The war between the two parties resulted in serious grave tragedies in most parts of the country, in major aspects of life including collapsing the economic situation, education system, rule of law, health care, security, and stability. All warring parties committed various violations for the law-of-war that amount to war crimes, in which the fear is at the top for continuing the series of war crimes with the possibility of impunity for the perpetrators.*

*Within the ruins and ashes of these battles, there are a lot of forgotten tragedies and untold stories, targeted a big amount of Yemeni people, that not getting enough consideration or care by mass media or by humanitarian agencies or not having access to covering it.*

*The majority of Yemenis lost hope of restoring the central government as a protective umbrella for the country as they believe that Yemen became a failure state with dividing forces between various armed groups.*

*This panel is aiming to shade over major of these tragic issues by experts, professional researchers, or journalists. The key issues planned to be discussed some of the impacts of the armed conflict on human rights, such as freedom of speech and the situation of detention centers, the rule of law and justice institutions, gender equality and women's rule during the conflict, youth and education, international humanitarian aid and local initiatives, food security, health and the COVID-19 pandemic, and the economy and Yemeni currency.*

- Yemen's Conflict: Cascading Economic Crises by Abdulla, Ammar
- Tragedies of The Political Arrests over the wartime in Yemen by Al-Hammadi, Khaled
- Rule of Law in Yemen it the Time of War and Post-Conflict by Alshuwaiter, Mohammed
- Unresponsiveness of Foreign Aid to Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis by Nasser, Summer

6) [P6379] [Interrogating Race in Arabian Peninsula Studies](#)

(Wednesday Dec 1, 11.30am)

Organizer: Neha Vora (Lafayette College) & Amelie Le Renard (CNRS, Paris)

Chair: none

**SUMMARY:**

*Within area studies of the Arabian Peninsula, "ethnocracy" has become a common term used to describe the way that state, employment, and social structures create hierarchies of privilege based on ideas of essentialized national groups. Ethnocracy allows scholars to move past normative analyses of residents as "nationals" or "migrants" and instead consider how these statuses are co-produced and interacting within relationships of power. However, difference and inequality in the Gulf region remains primarily passport-based even in critical contemporary studies, collapsing nationality with ethnicity, and unable to address how a privileged passport is not equivalent to a privileged ethnicity. This panel aims to gather scholars that analyze social hierarchies and dynamics in the Arabian Peninsula in terms of race and racialization, a much needed analytic for the study of the region both historically and ethnographically. A racial analysis has several motives and implications, as presenters in this panel will discuss. Rather than conceptualizing the Arabian Peninsula as exceptional, we consider the region's role in histories of imperialism and slavery, whose legacies have contemporary dimensions. As hubs of transnational exchange, Arabian Peninsula societies are important contexts in which to study the interchange between globally circulating ideas about race and its local iterations, such as the ways that nationalities get tethered to racialized stereotypes within labor markets, citizenship regimes, migration circuits, state security apparatuses, and various social interactions. Papers on this panel will elaborate on questions of race and racialization in the Arabian Peninsula: to which extent, and how, has national citizenship been racialized, and what are the shifting parameters of Arabness? How can we conceptualize Blackness in the region and its relationship to Arabness and Indigeneity? Given that many inhabitants of*

*Arabian cities are immigrants, how do racial categories circulate between their “home” societies and Gulf societies? What is the role of whiteness in the Gulf, and how is it tethered to the circulation of “expert” knowledges? How are racial hierarchies interlocked with nationality, but also class, gender, and sexuality? What are the shortcomings of scholarship that does not interrogate racial hierarchies in Arabian Peninsula studies, and how might scholars be reproducing stereotypes and hierarchies in their research practices?*

- Shifting boundaries of Arabness in Dubai: Young Emirati narratives on citizenship and national belonging by Akinci, Idil
- U.S. Universities and the Production of Engineering Labor and Expertise from Nation to Empire by Al-Saleh, Danya
- Leaving the Margins: The Muhamasheen of Yemen and the Lessons They Hold by Alshaif, Gokh Amin
- Who counts as “People of the Gulf”? Disputes over the Arab status of Zanzibaris in the UAE by Lori, Noora
- Racial Formations in/of the Arabian Peninsula by Vora, Neha; Le Renard, Amelie

7) [P6625] [New Perspectives on the History of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>c</sup>](#)

(Wednesday Dec 1, 2pm)

Organizer: MESA

Chair: Fred H. Lawson (Emirates Diplomatic Academy)

- The Arabian Peninsula through the eyes of the Nahḍa by Battalia, Michael
- “The Empire ends in Yemen: Ottoman imperial sovereignty in southwest Arabia from the October 1918 Armistice to the proclamation of the Turkish Republic” by Kuehn, Thomas
- From Ienj Boats to Nuclear Reactors: the Rise of Bushehr, 1850-1989 by Pashmforoosh, Golaleh
- Smuggling Under Sovereignties: Illicit Trade in Transitioning Iraq by Windhauser, Bret

8) [P6585] [Political Socialization and Value Change](#)

(Wednesday Dec 1, 2pm)

Organizer: MESA

Chair: none

- Cultural Influences on Opinion Expression in an Online and Offline Kuwaiti Context by Al-Sumait, Fahed
- Comic Critics: Investigating How Comedy in Authoritarian Regimes Influences International Opinion by Jones, Calvert
- Trend in Values in Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey: Findings from Three Waves of A Panel Survey by Moaddel, Mansoor

- Politicization through Dialogue? Sympathy, Attitude Change, and Mobilization in Conflict Resolution Programs by Schneider, Emily

9) [P6498] [A Climate of Change in the Gulf?](#)

(Thursday Dec 2, 2pm)

Organizer: Deen Sharp (LSE)

Chair: Deen Sharp (LSE)

SUMMARY:

*Protests in the streets and political crises in the halls of power across the Middle East have clearly articulated many of the pressing, and long standing, social concerns in the region: from the absence of social justice, to fiscal and monetary pressures to outright violence and conflict. In recent years, ecological questions have gradually begun to move to the forefront of political debate and social concern. While the extent to which climate change is currently driving contemporary social relations in the region is contested; few scholars dispute the profound implications that climate change has for the region and in the Gulf in particular. The Arabian Gulf is proportionally both among the highest producers and consumers of hydrocarbons, at the same time it is highly vulnerable to many of the climate extremes that climate change will produce, ranging from: extreme heat, rising sea levels, and ever more severe dust storms. This panel considers the political and economic implications of climate change of the Arabian Gulf and engages how inhabitants of the Arabian Gulf experience and think about climate change, how it is discussed and engaged, or not. In addition to the scale of the region and the state, this panel will focus on the impact of climate change on the everyday lives of both citizens and non-citizens in the Gulf, and the differentiated impact of it across gender, race and class. Panelists consider how concepts, like environmental citizenship, have travelled from Western contexts and been deployed in the Gulf and why businesses in the region have been so keen to engage “green” issues but politicians have not.*

*Discussant: Deen Sharp (LSE)*

- Aligning climate policies with Saudi Arabia's economic diversification: politics, challenges and opportunities by Al-Sarihi, Aisha
- Environmental Citizenship in Kuwait by Alawadhi, Reem
- Politicians, Green Entrepreneurs, and Environmentally and Socially Responsible Discourses in Kuwait by Alshammari, Abrar
- Cooling vests & racial capitalism: thinking about climate change in the carbon economy. by Tareq Hameed, Kanwal

10) [P6631] [Indian Ocean and Pan-Asian Connections: Dress, Print, Poetry, and Politics](#)

(Thursday Dec 2, 2pm)

Organizer: MESA

Chair: none

- Master Narratives in Omani history: Between Glorification and Erasure by Alsharji, Alshaatha
- Indians in Turkish Dress: Consumption, Image and Ottoman Influence in late 19th century South Asia by Bamber, William

The Importance of Being Translated: Naqshbandī immigrants, translators and print networks in the nineteenth century by Elashmawy, Mariam

11) [Rasulid Tribal Law, Sufism, Ottoman-era Yemenite Jews and Geography of the Tihāma: Studies in the History of Yemen](#)

(Thursday Dec 2, 2pm)

Organizer: Daniel Martin Varisco

Chair: none

**SUMMARY:**

*Yemen's diverse history throughout the Islamic era can easily be overshadowed by the attention that is understandably paid to the current humanitarian crisis, regarded as one of the worst in the world. During the war of the last five years much valuable heritage of Yemen has been damaged or destroyed. As a result it is all the more important that scholars continue to contribute to Yemen's history in every period. This panel provides a panorama extending from the Mahdid era of Zabīd, the 13th-15th century Rasulid realm, the role of Sufism over the years and Yemenite Jews in the late Ottoman era. One of the most intriguing Yemeni historians is 'Umara b. al-Ḥasan, author of a major history of Yemen. Some of the places mentioned by 'Umara on the pilgrimage route through the Tihama have not been identified. One paper looks at recent satellite data to identify previously unknown sites. A second paper moves forward into the 14th century realm of the Rasulid sultan al-Malik al-Afḍal, one of the dynasty's most prolific authors. In a mixed manuscript of various texts and excerpts, including items written by al-Afḍal, there is a brief text on tribal customary law at the time. This is the earliest known text providing details on Yemen's long tradition of customary law. Two papers focus on Yemeni Sufism. One deals with a polemical exchange between the Zaydi Imam al-Mansur al-Qasim b. Muhammad (d. 1029/1620) and an opponent around the topic of Sufism. The manuscript analyzed sheds light on later Zaydi theology, the sect's attitude toward Sufism and the Ottomans, and offers insights into the political and intellectual history of 11th/17th-century Yemen. The second study on Sufism examines the claims for authenticity for both Yemeni religiosity and nationhood surrounding Sufi shrines in the Salafi-Sunni polemic influenced by the rise of the Wahhabi state and its influence in Yemen to this day. The final paper analyses Yemenite Jewish migration, a trend, which began in late 19th century, a few years following the Ottoman occupation in 1872. This led to the gradual diminishing of this local community, which had existed in Yemen since before the Islamic era. Jewish migration from Yemen resulted from*

*various social disruptions, which increased during the Ottoman era, and was affected by global powers in the Red Sea basin.*

- Yemeni Jewish Migration to East Africa and to Palestine during the Ottoman era (1880s-1918) by Eraqi-Klorman, Bat-Zion
- Zaydi Polemics against Sufism and the Ottomans in the 11th/17th Century: The Qasimi Imams and their Opponents by Haykel, Bernard A.
- Sufism in Yemen: A Struggle for Purity and Authenticity by Knysh, Alexander
- Identifying Previously Undocumented City Sites on the Yemen Tihamah by Stone, Francine
- A Mid-14th Century Tribal Customary Law Document, *Aḥkām al-man‘*, from Rasulid Yemen by Varisco, Daniel Martin

12) [P6421] [Societal Resistance in the Arab Gulf States](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 11.30am)

Panel organizer: Dana El Kurd (University of Richmond)

Chair: Dana El Kurd (University of Richmond)

**SUMMARY:**

*Arab Gulf states have engaged in more aggressive foreign policy as well as tightened their grip on domestic opposition, in an attempt to ensure their durability in the aftermath of the region's uprisings. Moreover, authoritarian diffusion and transnational repression have become all the more prevalent, as regimes coordinate across the region to crack down on dissent. But, what of resistance to these dynamics? Specifically, what is the impact of this rising authoritarianism on citizens, opposition groups, and social movements within the states that serve as a source of authoritarianism in the region? How have repertoires of contention shifted in response to coordinated transnational repression?*

*This panel would address the changing nature of political mobilization, protest, and resistance to authoritarianism within the Arab Gulf states. This is an understudied dynamic; researchers have a tendency to flatten or reduce the intricacies of the Gulf region, and often only study Gulf societies through the lens of oil and foreign policy. The papers on this panel go beyond this narrow focus, highlighting societal resistance in the Gulf from a number of disciplinary perspectives. The papers are wide-ranging in method and scope, covering 5 out of 6 GCC countries. These include a historical assessment of labor movements at the founding of the Arab Gulf states; analysis of the efficacy of state propaganda today using original survey data; an ethnographic study of pro-Palestine activism in the Gulf and its impact on demands for democracy, in light of increased transnational repression; and finally, research on the strategies opposition groups use to adapt to repression and hide their activities, particularly after the failed uprisings. All the contributions to this panel focus specifically on societies of the Arab Gulf states and their agency – rather than on institutions or elites as is often the case. We address the various ways in which even seemingly acquiescent groups challenge state narratives and pressure leadership. The panel*

*seeks to highlight how, as Amitav Acharya (2014) notes, agency is not just “the prerogative of the strong,” but can also “manifest as the weapon of the weak.”*

*Discussant: Dana El Kurd (University of Richmond)*

- Social movements and technocrats: The origins of the welfare state in the Gulf Arab States by AlShehabi, Omar
- Pro-Palestine Groups as Incubators of Democracy by El Kurd, Dana
- Framing and Fundamentals in Authoritarian Policy Evaluation: Evidence from Saudi Arabia by Leber, Andrew
- Repression and Pathways of Resistance in the Arabian Peninsula by Moritz, Jessie

### 13) [P6465] [New Approaches to Islamic Law across the Indian Ocean](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 11.30am)

Organizer: Alexandre Caeiro (Hamad bin Khalifa U)

Chair: Amal Ghazal (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)

#### **SUMMARY:**

*The field of Indian Ocean studies has grown exponentially over the last two decades due to the development of new methodologies and the emergence of novel archives. Islamic law has featured in this reconfiguration of the field in two main ways.*

*An important number of studies examined the transregional travels of Islamic legal texts and their implications for everyday practices of law within and beyond the state apparatus. Some scholars argued that Islamic Law provided a structure that made commercial life in the absence of sovereign courts possible. In minority contexts, the elaborations of local Muslim jurists provided a mechanism for the articulation of specific forms of Islam attuned to customary practices and commercial imperatives.*

*A different body of work brought to light how qadis applied Islamic law, in particular for periods when court records were systematically developed in the shadow of European empires. This scholarship has highlighted how colonial reforms drew on the Islamic legal tradition and the expertise of Muslim scholars. Particular attention was devoted to the tribulations of Muslim family life in rapidly changing political contexts.*

*Despite this interest in Islamic law, fatwa collections have remained relatively under-explored in the literature on the Indian Ocean. It is nevertheless clear that fatwas have been an important part of the social, economic and political life of Muslim communities throughout the Indian Ocean. Fatwa-seekers routinely sent requests for legal advice to a variety of religious authorities. These fatwas circulated alongside other texts, commodities, and actors, shaping an Islamic legal cosmopolis whose contours scholars have just begun to delineate.*

*This panel takes seriously the historical, sociological, and legal content of the fatwa requests and responses. We treat fatwas not only as evidence of the ethnic, linguistic, and ideological divides that reverberated across the Indian Ocean, but also as robust sources for social, legal, and intellectual history across juridical traditions and historical contexts.*



*Each paper engages with the fatwa genre in order to examine the alternative legal imaginaries, structures of religious authority, moral geographies, and senses of belonging that they convey. The presentations focus on fatwas in diverse languages, times and places, including Arabic texts produced in the Gulf and in Malabar and mobile Urdu texts originating in Delhi. The papers bring to the conversation a shared interest in the social life of Islamic legal texts, and a commitment to studying those trans-regionally in the Indian Ocean world.*

*Discussant: Amal Ghazal (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)*

- Islamic Law in the Indian Ocean World: A Study of Zayn al-Dīn al-Makhdūm's al-Ajwibat al-'ajībat 'an al-as'ilat al-gharībat by Pattasseri, Noorudeen
- Questions from the Ocean, Answers from the Mountain: Law, Love, and Lust by Kooria, Mahmood
- Local Muftis and Long-Distance Legalities: Fatwas as texts of migration and belonging in the Indian Ocean by Lhost, Elizabeth
- The Islamic Law of Pearling: Ritual Obligation and Economic Practice in the Arabian Gulf (1910s-1940s) by Caeiro, Alexandre

#### **14) [R6292] Challenges and Possibilities of Researching Yemeni Americans**

(Friday Dec 3, 2pm)

Organizer: Waleed Mahdi (U of Oklahoma)

Chair: Sunaina Maira (UC Davis)

SPONSOR: American Institute for Yemeni Studies (AIYS)

##### **SUMMARY:**

*This roundtable explores the current limitations in the study of Yemeni Americans and foregrounds emerging research efforts to examine the complexity of researching Yemeni American past and present experiences. That Yemeni Americans are understudied in both area studies (Middle East studies) and ethnic studies (Arab American studies) should not be understated. Much of what has been published around Arab Americans advance understandings of identity based on the experiences of those who originate from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. Despite their vibrant presence in and diasporic contributions to the Arab American community, Yemeni Americans have been the least theorized. This roundtable bridges this scholarly gap by forging a space for a conversation on the methodological challenges and research possibilities surrounding Yemeni Americans.*

*The roundtable features six contributors from various academic institutions that offer insights into their areas of research expertise. The first contributor examines the importance of histories of Yemeni American labor and migration, highlighting the connections between local challenges in the diaspora with global politics of empire. The second contributor contextualizes the history of Yemeni labor migration to the Great Lakes, its repercussions for family and community life, and the openings it creates in the present for new forms of*

*social and transnational mobility. These two contributions lay a historical foundation for the other contributions that will focus on the contemporary heterogeneity of Yemeni American voices and experiences. This heterogeneity includes a reflection on the generational transformation among Yemeni Americans in Michigan, an examination of advocacy among Yemeni Americans in New York, an exposition of the resilience of Yemeni American females in California in seeking higher education, and a presentation of Yemeni American visual art in relation to questions of identity and agency.*

*The roundtable's significance lies in its timely engagement with emerging scholarship on Yemeni Americans and its advancement of a multi-layered conversation of temporal, spatial, and multi-disciplinary nature.*

- While Detroit's Yemeni community is rightly associated with the auto industry, the labor niche which... by Sally Howell
- This presentation will shed light on the importance of studying Yemeni American cultural production as... by Waleed Mahdi
- The shifting configurations of Yemeni-American civic engagement in New York City demonstrate an atypical... by Ammar Naji
- Little research has been conducted on the experience of Yemeni Americans and fewer still have centered... by Gokh Amin Alshaif
- While the Yemeni American immigration experience seems to fit the typical immigration to the United States,... by Abdulkakem Alsadah
- The little scholarship on Yemenis in the United States has overwhelmingly been informed by the sojourner/settler... by Neama Alamri

### **Panels on Iraq and Iran**

These panels fall outside the direct scope of AGAPS, however may be of interest to our members.

[P6318] [Art and Revolution in Iraq](#)

(Monday Nov 29, 2pm)

[P6344] [Iranian Cineture: Local Narratives, Global Receptions](#)

(Tuesday Nov 30, 11.30am)

[P6633] [Crises of Representation, Reform, and Recovery in 18th-21st c France, Iran, & Turkey](#)

(Tuesday Nov 30, 11.30am)

[P6335] [Iraq at the Center of the New World Order](#)

(Tuesday Nov 30, 2pm)

[P6414] [Conceptual Histories of Reform \(Islāhāt\) in Contemporary Iran: Critical Lineages of a Familiar Idea](#)

(Wednesday Dec 1, 11.30am)

[R6468] [Iranian Studies Unbound: Emerging Global Approaches to the Field \(Part I\)](#)

(Wednesday Dec 1, 11.30am)

[R6525] [Iranian Studies Unbound: Emerging Global Approaches to the Field \(Pt.II\)](#)

(Wednesday Dec 1, 2pm)

[P6471] [Immobility in Iraq: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives](#)

(Thursday Dec 2, 2pm)

[R6566] [The Future of Academic Studies on the Iran-Iraq War](#)

(Thursday Dec 2, 2pm)

[P6298] [Spatial and Environmental Histories of Iraq](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 11.30am)

[R6366] [The Forgotten Mundane: Contemporary Iran Beneath and Beyond Politics](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 11.30am)

[P6441] [Iranian Women Poets: Diversity at the Margins of Modernity](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 11.30am)

[P6527] [Environmental Histories of 20th Century Iran through Local, National, Colonial, and Trans-National Perspectives](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 11.30am)

[R6294] [Mapping Art Histories in the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 2pm)

[P6401] [Iran's New Century and the Formation of National Identity](#)

(Friday Dec 3, 2pm)