

MESA 2024 panels
(in chronological order)

- 1) [Panel I-14] [Gulf Practices of Citizenship and Labor](#)
(Monday, November 11 at 11.30am)

Chair: Lauren Clingan (Princeton U)

- Comrades Estranged: The Struggle for Noncitizen Rights in Postcolonial Kuwait by Alex Boodrookas (Metropolitan State University of Denver)
- "In Dubai, It's Very Difficult:" Neoliberal Foreclosures and Gendered Sacrifices for Work and Family by Lauren Clingan (Princeton U)
- Advocating for Family-Friendly Policies: First-Time Fathers' and Mothers' Recommendations for Parental Leave in Qatar by Mahasin Saleh (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)
- Democratic Refusal: Silent Citizenship in Oman by Keye Tersmette (Harvard U.)
- The Tour Guide Profession: A Likely Career Path for UAE Nationals Majoring in Tourism? By Emilie Rutledge (The Open U.)

- 2) [Panel II-07] [Linking Iraq and the Gulf: New Historical and Literary Perspectives](#)
(Monday, November 11 at 2.30pm)

Organizer: Arbella Bet-Shlimon (U. of Washington)

Chair: Fahad Bishara (U. of Virginia)

Panel Description:

This panel highlights research that links Iraq with the Gulf through intellectual, literary, political, and environmental histories of the modern era from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. It takes advantage of a virtual format to bring together scholars based in multiple countries (Iraq, Kuwait, and the US) in order to better explore these links. On this panel, we begin with research questions such as: what did sovereignty mean to different groups of people in Iraq and the Gulf, and how were those notions affected by imperial interests, foreign interventions, transformations in land tenure, and projects of resource extraction? What impact did war, sanctions, sub-state sovereignties, and independent movements have on the cultural and political life of Iraq and the Gulf? How, specifically, do we see that impact in literary works, such as poetry, and intellectual production? What changes in these trends do we see over a two-century span? The papers examine cultural and political relations between Kuwait, al-Zubayr, and the Najd; the basis of Sabah power in Kuwait (and Basra) via Ottoman and British notions of sovereignty; the environmental dimensions of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis of 1961; and transformations in Iraqi wartime poetry after 1980. The methodological approaches of the papers on this panel include close poetic readings; archival research in both state and private institutions, including government documents, media archives, and family-owned collections; and readings of unpublished

cultural manuscripts and underground photocopied publications. In answering these research questions, we recognize that making links between Iraq Studies and Gulf Studies, especially in subjects concerning the modern era, has long been hampered by methodological (especially historiographical) conventions, contentious politics, and the structures of research funding. This panel introduces new scholarly perspectives to those with an interest in either Iraq or the Gulf that may inform their own work.

- A Sheikdom Lost within Narratives: Exploring the Influence of al-Zubayr in the Tripartite Relationship with Kuwait and Najd by Abdulrahman Alebrahim (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)
- What Was Ottoman Sovereignty? The View from Kuwait by Camille Cole (Illinois State U.)
- Producing a Crisis, c. 1961: Extraction, the Environment, and Iraqi and Kuwaiti Sovereignties by Arbella Bet-Shlimon (U. of Washington)
- Iraqi Poetry after the Gulf wars: The Long Road of Death by Adhraa A. Naser (U. of Baghdad)

3) [Roundtable V-04] [Possibilities and Limits of Researching Yemeni Global Mobility](#)
(Wednesday November 13 at 11.30am)

Organizer & Chair: Waleed Mahdi (U. of Oklahoma)

Sponsored by the American Institute for Yemen Studies (AIYS) & Arab American Studies Association (AASA)

Roundtable Description:

This roundtable offers a space for an insightful discussion about the global mobility of Yemenis since 2014 when the collapse of Yemen resulted in the displacement of an estimated four million people, according to the United Nations. The participants in this roundtable will explore the multifaceted experiences of displaced Yemenis across different diasporic communities and migration contexts, focusing on East Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe. Six scholars from various disciplines will examine the complexities and dynamics of Yemeni migration by focusing on gendered, racialized, and classed dimensions, as well as alternative perspectives on border crossing, refugee experience, and agency. The roundtable will include presentations on a variety of topics, such as the peace-building roles of Yemeni women activists in Western diaspora communities, the activism of black Yemenis, the mobility dynamics of Yemenis from Djibouti's Markazi refugee camp, and Yemeni migrants' experiences in Ethiopia. The roundtable will also include theoretical efforts to redefine Yemeni mobility as life-affirming projects and to make sense of the concept of 'afiya (well-being) as Yemenis experience the dilemma of deciding whether to return to Yemen or maintain residency in inhospitable environments. In addition to sharing their research projects, participants will also address methodological, ethical, and practical challenges encountered in researching and understanding Yemeni mobility. In bringing together this expertise on

Yemeni migration studies, this roundtable is poised to generate new insights, foster interdisciplinary dialogue, and contribute to a nuanced understanding of contemporary Yemeni global mobility.

- “In my presentation I would like to share my experiences doing research with and about Muwalladeen in and outside of Yemen...” by Marina de Regt (VU University Amsterdam)
- “Migration has long been a constitutive part of the Yemeni experience. But what does it mean, in the context of the now decade-long war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen, for Yemenis to be recognized and to self-identify as refugees?...” by Nathalie Peutz (NYU Abu Dhabi)
- “In conversation with the roundtable entitled, “Possibilities and Limits of Researching Yemeni Global Mobility,” this scholarly contribution expands on research pertaining to the Ethio-Yemeni migrant and refugee community of Addis Ababa by engaging the Yemeni diaspora in the United States...” by Sara Swetzoff (Eastern Connecticut State University)
- “The most recent wave of Yemeni migration is mostly south to south- with people traveling to neighboring countries in the region and places of Yemeni historical diasporas- but there are also growing numbers of Yemeni refugees across the EU...” by Bogumila Hall (Polish Academy of Sciences)
- “This presentation explores the intricate dynamics of gender, conflict-induced diasporas, transnational activism, and peacebuilding in Yemen...” by Ewa Strzelecka (U. of Wroclaw)
- “The displacement of Yemenis since the 2014/2015 war onto Muslim and non-Muslim lands raised questions of inhospitality, the psychic affects of war, and the resulting fractured social relations. My work with Yemeni interlocutors in Jordan and Saudi Arabia explores what drives Yemeni mobility and stasis given their orientation toward securing their ‘afiya...” by Ashwak Hauter (UC Santa Cruz)

4) [Panel V-07] [Haunted Futurities: Cases from the Arab Gulf States](#)

(Wednesday November 13 at 11.30am)

Organizer: Esraa Al-Muftah (Qatar U.)

Discussant: Talal Al-Rashoud (Kuwait U.)

Panel Description:

This panel explores the notion of “haunted futurity” through the research of four academics writing from within the Arab Gulf States (AGS). Through their graduate research and/or postdoctoral work, these scholars expose the ways in which “the past casts a shadow over (im)possible futures” in the AGS (Ferreday & Kuntsman, 2011). The different research projects are from diverse disciplines— sociology, political economy, and educational studies. Despite this, they all find a fleeting past haunting their research and leading them in search of “impossible memories and unwritten histories” in their fieldwork (Ferreday & Kuntsman, 2011). The papers use various theoretical and conceptual tools, some purposefully, but others emerge from the scholars’ messy fieldwork experience they come across. Hence, the panel contributes to broadening

methodological and analytical ways to understand the AGS from the margins and silence(d), especially amid the current resurgence of state-led oral history/national archiving projects. The panelists address different topics and historical moments of the AGS's past. Topics include the American oil relations during the 1973 crisis to the first Gulf War. They also examine different settings, such as the erasure of the black girl in modern schools in (post)colonial Bahrain, to institutional erasures of Third-Worldist and anticolonial histories at Qatar University. Overall, these presentations bring to light not only marginalized his/herstories, but also the mechanisms by which these narratives have been erased, reappropriated, and physically destroyed in institutional archives and from future generations' imaginaries. This remembering of the forgotten is not a reminiscent activity but rather a political act grounded in the material experience of the scholars in an ever-evolving space. Through the practice of exposing the ghosts, silences, or erasures in the dominant narratives, the authors are driven by a commitment to more inclusive horizons in the region.

- Institutional Erasures: The Case of Internationalization at Qatar University by Esraa Al-Muftah (Qatar U.)
- Searching for Za'farana: The (Im)possibilities of Black Girlhood in (Post)colonial Bahrain by Sara Musaiyer (NYU Abu Dhabi)
- Silencing Processes as a Form of Historical Erasure: Histories of Qatar's Social Movements by Maryam AlHajri (U. of Edinburgh)
- Contested Cultural Representations of the Maritime History of the Gulf by Tareq Alrabei (GUST)

5) [Panel V-15] [Regional Actors' Policies and Perceptions on the War in Palestine](#)
(Wednesday November 13 at 11.30am)

Chair: Mirna Lattouf (Arizona State U.)

- Turkey's Evolving Position on Palestine and Soft Power in the Arab Region by Khalid Al Bostanji (Australian National U.)
- The Legacy of the Abraham Accords in the Wake of Gaza by Elham Fakhro (Harvard U.)
- Omnibalancing and Virtual Enlargement - The Gulf States' Approach towards Gaza by Maté Szalai (Corvinus University of Budapest)
- From Reformer To Peacemaker: The Rhetorical Evolution of Mohammad bin Salman's Persona post-October 7 by Randall Fowler (Abilene Christian University)

6) [Panel VII-10] [Evolving Expressions of Belonging in the UAE](#)
(Thursday 14 November at 11.30am)

Organizer/Chair: Bethany Shockley (American U. of Sharjah)
[Organized under the auspices of American University of Sharjah]

Panel Description:

Society in the United Arab Emirates has undergone profound changes in recent decades, and its transformation continues in response to the global energy transition and national-building processes. It is home to a super-diverse population of non-national residents who coexist alongside nationals from a variety of backgrounds and geographies. Although both groups are shaped by government policies of inclusion, such as the recent introduction of the Golden Visa, they also actively adapt and transform the boundaries of belonging. In the context of this ongoing social transformation, this panel examines what it means for an individual to belong in the UAE. Belonging in the UAE, as in other Gulf states, is a multidimensional continuum that past research has not yet captured theoretically or empirically (Ewers, Gengler, and Shockley, 2021, Ellermann 2020, Vora 2015). Rather than seeking to explain state-level strategies, the project emphasizes the experiences and opinions of individuals and families in light of state policies, providing a bottom-up perspective to the literature on national identity construction (Anderson 1991, Szelenyi 2019; Walsh 2007). We move beyond national divides to offer alternative conceptualizations that capture cross-cutting forms of belonging. The papers on the panel have a shared concern for telling the diverse stories of belonging and change in the UAE. They all use in depth participant interviews or ethnographic approaches to understanding migrant and citizen experiences. Yet, each paper makes a unique contribution. A first paper reflects on how social networks are related to migrant experiences of bargaining and thus wellbeing, with connection to the literature on *wasta*. Meanwhile, a second paper examines how both nationals and non-national residents construct their attachment to the UAE state across geographic and generational boundaries. A third paper addresses the relationship between belonging and mobility of the Southeast Asian community in the UAE. Finally, a fourth paper problematizes the concept of home by examining UAE residents with complex ethnic and national backgrounds. Taken together the papers provide novel theoretical claims and nuanced empirical evidence that map the changing landscape of UAE society.

- Deconstructing Dichotomies: Understanding South Asian Immigration to the UAE Beyond Economics by Mohammad Siddiqui (American U. of Sharjah)
- Migrant Bargaining via Social Networks in the UAE: The Role of *Wasta* by Michael Ewers (U. of North Carolina)
- Belonging Across Generations and Geographies: Evolving Attachment to the UAE by Bethany Shockley (American U. of Sharjah)
- Third, Fourth, or Fifth Culture Individuals?: Defining Belonging as a Complex-Culture Individual in the UAE by Sarah Zahaf (American U. of Sharjah)

7) [Roundtable VIII-02] [Oceanic Arabia: Promises and Pitfalls in a New Paradigm](#)
(Thursday November 14 at 2.30pm)

Organizer: Fahad Bishara (U. of Virginia) and Ahmed Almaazmi (Princeton U.)

Roundtable Description:

There has been a sea change in the scholarship on the Gulf, Red Sea, and Arabian Peninsula. Over the last decade or so, the literature has witnessed a growing body of books and articles, all of which seek to map out the movements of people, goods, ideas, and institutions that bound the Arabian Peninsula to the Indian Ocean World. This literature has wrested the region from its long-standing place at the margins of a historiography that has overwhelmingly focused on the Ottoman Empire and post-

Ottoman societies, and has transformed it into the center of an exciting conversation on the oceanic frontiers of the Middle East. Together, these scholars have reshaped the debate on the histories of empire, diaspora, capitalism, slavery, social and intellectual movements, and environmental history (to name just a few debates), and have threaded together the histories of Arabia, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. This roundtable aims to take stock of the oceanic turn in the literature on the Gulf, Red Sea, and Arabian Peninsula – what we are calling “Oceanic Arabia” – while also looking ahead to its promises, possibilities, and pitfalls. It brings together scholars of different stripes into a single conversation – an anthropologist, an Ottomanist, a South Asianist, a historian of capitalism, a historian of the occult sciences, and an art historian – all of whom have engaged with this geography. Rather than involve individual presentations, the roundtable invites them to engage with a single centerpiece, from the standpoint of their areas of interest and subdisciplines. In doing so, it seeks to highlight an ongoing conversation around scholarly trends, possible archives and collections, and generative approaches to the study of the region from the standpoint of the Indian Ocean. All told, the roundtable participants will chart out the coastlines around and pathways through one of the more promising developments in the study of the Arabian Peninsula in recent years.

- “In this roundtable, I would like to highlight the geographic, material, and environmental implications of the oceanic turn for Arabian Peninsula studies...” by Nancy Ajung Um (Getty Research Institute)
- “My approach to the oceanic histories of the Gulf (and to a lesser extent, the Arabian Peninsula) begins from a very basic question: where does the history of the Gulf play out?...” by Fahad Bishara (U. of Virginia)
- “In my first book, I tried to articulate how the Ottoman Hijaz, Yemen, and the wider Red Sea were, perhaps, not as solidly located in either the Middle East or the Ottoman Empire as most might assume...” by Michael Christopher Low (U. of Utah)
- “In intellectual histories, the Arabian Peninsula has often been viewed through narrow, landlocked perspectives, focusing on localities and emphasizing sectarianism within the confines of the nation-state...” by Ahmed Almaazmi (Princeton U.)
- “The economic reliance on long-distance trade or pearling to coastal communities is, by now, well-established. And yet, there is much more that we can explore as historians about what this oceanic inflection meant in material, intellectual, and environmental terms.” by Tamara Fernando (Stony Brook U., SUNY)
- “Despite Engseng Ho’s seminal 2006 *Graves of Tarim*, ethnographic scholarship on the Indian Ocean – and Oceanic Arabic in particular – has lagged historical research...” by Mandana E. Limbert (Queens College, CUNY)

8) [Panel IX-04] [Dynamics of Islamic Governance and Statehood in Zaydi Yemen: Legal Theory and Political Practice](#)

(Friday 15 November at 11.30am)

Chair/Discussant: Najam Haider (Barnard College)

[Sponsored by the American Institute for Yemeni Studies (AIYS)]

Panel Description:

This panel examines the intersection between political theory and practice in Zaydi, Yemen, from medieval to modern times. The speakers will analyze different, at times conflicting, Zaydi views on core concepts of the political order, including the principles

and methods of legitimizing an imam (i.e., election versus ‘uprising’) and challenging his legitimacy, approaches to dynastic succession and policies regarding Others, such as Sunnis, Sufis, Ismailis, and “protected people” (dhimmis), living within the imamate, or interacting with it, such as imperial powers. The panel focuses on the understudied but transformative period of Yemeni Zaydi history spanning from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. In this period, under the pressure of regional geopolitics and internal change, Zaydi imams and their supporters repeatedly, but often informally, reformed the imamate, updating the legal and political theories that underpinned it. These transformations continued to influence the development of the Zaydi political system up to the twentieth century. The five contributions analyze/study/rely on handwritten and printed primary sources from archives and libraries in Yemen, Europe, and the US. They include previously understudied Zaydi jurisprudential texts preserved in legal compendia and fatwas, biographies of Zaydi imams (sing. *sīra*), biographical lexica (*tarājim*), and documents. Through multi-disciplinary approaches from legal, political, and social history to this spectrum of sources, the panelists will offer insights into how Zaydi legal and political thinking influenced political practice and vice versa. In conclusion, through a conversation between the participants, the panel will seek to contribute to the discussion of the phenomenon of the Sunnification of Zaydism.

- Between Tradition and Transition: Imām Sharaf al-Dīn’s Athmār al-Azhār and the Temporary Shift in 10th/16th Century Zaydi Fiqh by Ebrahim Mansoor (U. of Bergen)
- Innovating the Zaydi Political Order: The Will of Imam Yaḥyā Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 965/1557) by Ekaterina Pukhovaia (Utrecht U.)
- Who Can Appoint the Zaydi Imam? Changing the Rules ca. 1400-1550 CE by Eirik Hovden (U. of Bergen)
- Zaydi Fiqh and Its Political Dimension: The Forced Conversion of Jewish Orphans as a Symptom of Insurgency against the Qāsimid State? by Kerstin Hünefeld (Hebrew U. of Jerusalem)

9) [Panel X-18] [International Relations in the Gulf](#)
(Friday November 15 at 2.30pm)

Chair: Satoru Nakamura (Kobe U.)

- Reevaluating Immigrant Integration in “Exclusionary” Regimes: Diaspora and Mobility in the State of Qatar by Amanda Garrett (Georgetown U. in Qatar)
- The United Arab Emirates’ Quest for Strategic Autonomy: Role Orientation, Foreign Policy and Tools by Ruofeng Zhang (Peking U.)
- Saudi Arabia’s Policy toward the Rohingya Crisis (2012–19): Omnibalancing Diplomacy for Interregional Crisis by Satoru Nakamura (Kobe U.)
- Egypt, the Gulf Monarchies and the IMF by Farid Boussaid (U. of Amsterdam)