

**Seminars in the Humanities**  
**Co-sponsored with MEMEAC**

***Dissections: Body, Space and Time  
in the Middle East and North Africa  
2011-2012***

Attempts to understand the variant paths of modernity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the relationship of the region to Europe and the United States, have produced a new body of scholarship focusing on the history of sexuality, development, the environment, humanitarianism, medicine, and related subjects. Intersecting with studies on religion and secularism, this seminar will discuss new sources of research, innovative readings of older ones, and useful theoretical approaches to body, space, and time in the MENA region.

These seminars aim to provide an opportunity to share empirical research and theoretical framings in order to push forward scholarly debate on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Given the success of the 2010-2011 workshops on Sex, Science, and Medicine in the Middle East and North Africa, we offer a second year of cutting-edge workshops.

All seminar participants are asked to read the paper in advance of the meeting. The presenter will be given five to ten minutes to summarize the main points or problems of the paper and contextualize it, after which a discussant will present a ten to fifteen minute comment to help initiate a full discussion. Participants in the seminar includes a select, interdisciplinary group of junior and senior faculty and graduate students who are engaged or interested in studies on body, space and time in the Middle East and North Africa.

These lunch seminars meet throughout 2011-2012 on Fridays from 12-3 p.m. at The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue at 34<sup>th</sup> Street. [[www.centerforthehumanitiesgc.org/seminars](http://www.centerforthehumanitiesgc.org/seminars)]



**Beth Baron** (Professor of History at City College and The Graduate Center, CUNY) is editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. She authored *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (University of California Press, 2005) and *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (Yale University Press, 1994), and co-edited *Women in*

*Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (Yale University Press) and *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (Mazda, 2000).



**Sarah Pursley** is a doctoral student in Middle Eastern History at The Graduate Center, CUNY and managing editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.



**Seçil Yılmaz** is a doctoral student in History at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

**Friday, September 30, 2011**

**Presenter: Cyrus Schayegh**

**Paper Title: Connecting the Dots: The Regional History of the Mandate Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan, 1918-1948)**

**Discussant: Rashid Khalidi (Columbia University)**

**Description:** Most historians of the Mandate Levant have reflexively chosen its new polities - Syria, Palestine, etc. as frameworks of analysis. However, this approach has empirical and analytical limits. I seek to transcend these by arguing that because the Levant was rather strongly integrated by the 1910s, its subsequent division somewhat counter-intuitively also begot further integration. Thus, because new, now diverging ‘national economies’ had different profiles and needs, the latter were met not the least by regional movements of goods and people. Similarly, cross-border movements encouraged French and British authorities to coordinate legal and bureaucratic mechanisms. In my paper, which is a first draft of my book’s Introduction, I historiographically situate my project and substantiate its argument by outlining its six chapters: Ottoman background, social and mental geographies, Franco-British coordination, socio-commercial networks, labor migration, and geo-economic competition.

**Cyrus Schayegh** (PhD, Columbia University, 2004) was at the American University of Beirut from 2005-2008 and now is an assistant professor at Princeton University, where he teaches

modern Middle Eastern history. His first book, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong. Science, Class, and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900-1950* (California University Press) appeared in 2009; he has published articles in *IJMES*, *CSSH*, and *AHR*, amongst other journals. His current principal book project, which bears the working title “Connecting the dots: a regional history of the Mandate Levant (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, 1918-1948),” re-examines the post-Ottoman Levant as a region formed by the interplay between division and integration, between new countries and cross-border movements of goods and people.

**Friday, November 4, 2011**

**Presenter: Jennifer Johnson Onyedum**

**Paper Title: Humanitarianism and Decolonization: The International Committee of the Red Cross in Algeria, 1955-1962**

**Discussant: Clifford Rosenberg (City College)**

**Description:** When the Algerian war began, international law, human rights, and the Geneva Conventions remained largely untested in a colonial context. Anti-colonial movements in Kenya and Malaya were underway but they had not successfully challenged the boundaries of these doctrines. The ten International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) missions in Algeria between 1955 and 1962 provide a revealing case study of the ways by which postwar notions of human rights legally excluded international intervention in these internal affairs and absolved the French, the Algerians, and the ICRC of their actions. This paper argues that the Algerian war exposed the inadequacies of international law at the apogee of decolonization. The French and the Algerian nationalists tried to manipulate legal deficiencies and ICRC inconsistencies to their own political ends. The ICRC identified internal struggles as a new category of war; yet, it remained constrained by its own mission and the contradictions of colonialism and was unable to adapt its doctrines during the conflict to better meet the needs of those affected.

**Jennifer Onyedum** earned her Ph.D. in History from Princeton University in 2010. Her dissertation examined the politics of medicine and international intervention during the Algerian struggle for national liberation, 1954-1962. Professor Onyedum specializes in contemporary African history, with a particular interest in North Africa, decolonization, and humanitarianism. She has received several fellowships including an Andrew W. Mellon fellowship in Humanistic Studies. She also has received awards from the Social Science Research Council, the American Institute for Maghrib Studies, and the National History Center. Onyedum is Assistant Professor of History at Lehman College where she teaches courses on pre-colonial to present-day African history, the History of medicine and Humanitarianism and Conflict in Africa.

**Friday, December 9, 2011**

**Presenter: Zeynep Çelik**

**Paper Title: Archaeologists and their Others: the Landscape of Labor on Excavation Sites in the Middle East, c1900**

**Discussant: Zainab Bahrani (Columbia University)**

**Description:** Celik's paper, "Defining Empire's Patrimony: Late Ottoman Perceptions of Antiquities" marks the completion of a project and the beginning of another. The first is a co-edited book with Zainab Bahrani and Edhem Eldem, titled *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753-1814*; the second concerns her new research, which expands further on some of the themes opened up in the *Scramble* and deals with commonly ignored aspects of archaeology (such as the labor landscape).

**Zeynep Çelik** is Distinguished Professor of Architecture at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Her publications include *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (1986—winner of the Institute of Turkish Studies Book Award, 1987), *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth Century World's Fairs* (1992), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (1993—co-editor), *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (1997), *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914* (2008—winner of the Society of Architectural Historians Spiro Kostof Book Award, 2010), and *Walls of Algiers: Narratives of the City through Text and Image* (2009—co-editor), as well as articles on cross-cultural topics. She served as the editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (2000-2003). More recently, she curated an exhibition, "Walls of Algiers" at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (May-October 2009). A co-edited volume, *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in Ottoman Empire, 1753-1914*, is forthcoming (fall 2011). She is currently preparing two exhibitions for SALT in Istanbul and working on a new book project, titled *Empires and Antiquities: Appropriating the Past*. Professor Çelik has been the recipient of numerous fellowships, including John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2004) and American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship (1992, 2004, and 2011).

**Friday, March 9, 2012**

**Presenter: The Arabic Freud: The Unconscious and the Modern Subject**

**Paper Title: Omnia El Shakry**

**Discussants: Robert Tignor (Princeton) and Patricia Clough (Queens/Graduate Center, CUNY)**

**Description:** This paper concerns itself with how Freud travelled in postwar Egypt. Rather than focus solely on the linguistic matters involved in the translation of Freudian or psychoanalytic terminology, I invoke Freud as a touchstone or metonym for broader Arabic debates surrounding the status of consciousness and the unconscious in psychic life. Freud is thus simply a place one returns to or moves beyond. I offer, then, not a literal history of Freud in Egypt, but rather, a history of ideas and debates spawned by Freudianism as a multivalent tradition. As such, rather than ask the perennial question of whether and to what extent psychoanalysis or Freud's analytical understanding of the unconscious was delimited by a national or colonial world-view, I explore the points of condensation, divergence, and the epistemological resonances which psychoanalytic writings had in postwar Egypt. In stark contrast to Fethi Benslama's "tale of mutual ignorance" (between Islam and psychoanalysis), I trace a tale of densely interconnected webs of knowledge production surrounding consciousness and the status of the unconscious in postwar Egypt, tracing historical interactions and hybridizations, between and within multiple traditions of psychological inquiry.

**Omnia El Shakry** is an Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Davis, where she teaches Modern Middle East and World History. Her paper concerns itself with how Freud's work travelled in postwar Egypt. Rather than focus solely on the linguistic matters involved in the translation of Freudian or psychoanalytic terminology, she invokes Freud as a touchstone or metonym for broader Arabic debates surrounding the status of consciousness and the unconscious in psychic life.

**Friday, March 30, 2012**

**Presenter: Cengiz Kirli**

**Paper Title: Tyranny Illustrated: From Petition to Rebellion in Ottoman Vranje**

**Discussant: Leslie Peirce (History, NYU)**

**Cengiz Kirli** is Associate Professor in the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. He examines the struggle of the people of Vranje in the Ottoman Balkans to unseat their governor Huseyin Pasha, a grandee of Albanian descent, in the early 1840s. Following the footsteps of a petition, Kirli aims to put this struggle within the context of the politically volatile atmosphere across the Ottoman Empire after the *Tanzimat* edit promulgated in 1839, one of the primary aims of which was to reorganize the provincial administration and to reshuffle the power structure in the provinces through financial and legal means.

**Friday, April 20, 2012**

**Presenter: Edhem Eldem**

**Paper Title: The Bank, the Photographer, and the Employee: 6,000 Illustrated Files of Imperial Ottoman Bank Employees, 1890-1930**

**Description:** As part of a larger project, Prof. Eldem has been processing over 6,000 personnel files of the Ottoman Bank (1890-1930). Each file includes name of the employee, his address, date of birth, place of birth, school(s) attended, languages spoken/written and religion/ethnicity. Additionally, practically every file comes with a full-body, standing photograph, generally taken in a studio. The challenge for Prof. Eldem has been to develop a methodology that analyzes systematically these "composed" photographs.

**Edhem Eldem** is the chair of the History Department at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, where he teaches Ottoman social and economic and intellectual history. He examines some 6,000 files of Ottoman Bank employees between 1890 and 1930. He addresses the handling of the individual photographs included in these files. Practically every file comes with a full-body, standing photograph of the employee, generally taken in a studio. This paper deals with the multilayered context in which the photographs were "composed"—body, pose, space, studio, individual, photographer, bank, etc.