

【연구논문】

## American Studies in the Middle East

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As the discipline of American Studies has begun the process of internationalization in earnest, nowhere in the world has been a more significant locus of this shift—as a site and object of study—than the Middle East North Africa, or MENA, region.<sup>1)</sup> One reason for greater attention by American studies scholars to the MENA region is that this region has come under increased scrutiny by both the American government and the more general populace, especially since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC. It has also become the target of American military operations, most notably in Afghanistan beginning in the fall of 2001, and in Iraq, which the U.S. invaded and occupied beginning in the spring of 2003. The two countries continue to be occupied by large contingencies of U.S. military forces and support personnel as of the fall of 2011. A full-scale war involving over 65,000 U.S. soldiers continues in Afghanistan, in spite of U.S.

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1) Amy Kaplan, Address to American Studies Association. Hartford, CT. October 17, 2003.

President Obama's call for a reduction of troop numbers after the so-called "surge" in 2010.<sup>2)</sup> The almost 50,000 U.S. troops still stationed in Iraq have largely been withdrawn to their bases, and in spite of the fact that August 2011 was the first month since the invasion in which there were no U.S. casualties, insurgent military operations directed against the current Iraqi government, Iraqi civilians, the thousands of U.S. contractors who work in the country and the U.S. occupying force continue. Although President Obama has pledged to withdraw all of those troops by the end of 2012, there are already discussions between the U.S. and Iraqi governments about maintaining an American military presence beyond the deadline.<sup>3)</sup>

At least two other factors have helped to accelerate the movement by American Studies scholars toward focusing their attention more closely on the MENA region. First, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the U.S. government dramatically expanded an extensive transnational security operation as part of the so-called "war on terror" that involved kidnapping and interrogation of foreign nationals, extra-legal detentions of suspected "terrorists" (almost all from South Asia or the MENA region), restrictions on financial transactions, and domestic security operations and surveillance that targeted Muslims and those of Arab, Iranian and South Asian descent, many of them U.S. citizens. Second, as a result of the end of the Cold War, the failure of the Oslo peace process in the 1990s, and the September 11 attacks, American Studies scholars and others have undertaken a much

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2) Amir Shah, "August is Deadliest Month for US in Afghanistan," Associated Press, August 30, 2011, <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/08/30-6>.

3) "Iraq Will Ask US Troops to Stay Post-2011, Says Panetta," *BBC Mobile*, June 10, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13722786>.

more intensive interrogation of the longstanding military, diplomatic and cultural links between the U.S. and Israel. Supporters of Israel have frequently pointed to the September 11 attacks as proof of how much the U.S. and Israel have in common in the fight against “terrorism,” whereas other critics have, in the aftermath of the attacks, called for a reassessment of the U.S./Israeli relationship.

A third and much more recent factor that has accelerated the process of American Studies scholars shifting their attention toward the MENA region has, of course, been the so-called “Arab spring”—i.e. the protests, revolutions, uprisings and armed conflicts in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere in the Arab world.

Not surprisingly, then, much of the increase in American Studies courses, programs, centers, conferences and research in the MENA region and Afghanistan in the last ten years can be directly linked both to the events of September 11, 2001 and the U.S. military responses to those events. The most striking example of how September 11<sup>th</sup> changed the presence and vitality of American Studies in the Middle East are the endowments given by the Saudi businessman Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, a major shareholder in Citibank and Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. Soon after the attacks, he offered 10 million dollars to Rudolph Giuliani, the Mayor of New York, to increase understanding between the U.S. and the Arab world. Initially, Giuliani accepted the gift, but when he discovered that Prince Alwaleed had said that he hoped the attacks would provoke a reassessment of U.S. policies toward Israel and Palestine, the Mayor returned the money.<sup>4</sup>) Prince Alwaleed then offered 5.2 million dollars to the American University of Beirut to

start a Center for American Studies that would improve East/West understanding and a gift of 10 million dollars to the American University of Cairo. The Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) at AUB began operations in the fall of 2004 under its new Director, Patrick McGreevy, a geographer who had formerly served as the chair of the Department of History and Anthropology, Geography and Earth Science at Clarion University in Pennsylvania. Glen Johnson, a former U.S. State Department official, career diplomat and Peace Corps administrator, was named the Director of the new center at the American University of Cairo, which opened in 2006.

Although this large injection of financial support obviously helped to rapidly change the character of American Studies in the MENA region—as did the vocal support for American Studies at educational institutions in the Middle East by Edward Said—the new centers in Beirut and Cairo were and are not the only places in the region where American Studies institutes, programs and courses exist. Other programs in American Studies offered in the region include those at the University of Jordan (Amman), Al Quds University (Jerusalem), the Arab American University (West Bank), the University of Tehran, the University of Bahrain, Georgetown’s new School of Foreign Service in Doha (Qatar), and University of Annaba, in Algeria.<sup>5)</sup> A number of other universities in the region such as Notre Dame University in Lebanon and the Hashemite University in Jordan offer courses on American literature, history and culture, although not necessarily

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4) Patrick McGreevy, “The American Question,” *Journal of American Studies in Turkey* 24 (2006): 15-27.

5) *Ibid*, 20.

under the aegis of American Studies. Moreover, as Patrick McGreevy observes in his article “The American Question,” a large number of universities in the region have intentionally branded themselves as “American,” although they do not necessarily offer courses in American Studies.<sup>6)</sup> As will become obvious in the course of this survey, however, the opening of the two centers in Cairo and Beirut, and especially the latter, created the impetus for a broad exchange of American Studies scholars within the MENA region and among scholars in it and those in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere that dramatically changed American Studies in the Middle East and the nature of the discipline as it is practiced elsewhere in the world.

This paper will first examine the American Studies landscape in the MENA region in various countries in the second half of the twentieth century and then look at the ways that landscape has been altered by the events that have occurred in the first decade of the twenty-first century. As Ussama Makdisi and others have shown, there was a profound American influence on education and cultural life in the Arab world as early as the mid-nineteenth century, and as mentioned above, “American-style” education, implied by the use of the name “American” in the name of many institutions founded in the last 150 years in the region, was valued as a means of modernization and disinterested scholarship.<sup>7)</sup>

Some of the earliest courses and scholars in the MENA region to study the U.S. within the framework of the nascent discipline of

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6) Ibid, 11.

7) Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (London: Cornell UP, 2008).

American Studies—whose beginning is generally traced to Henry Nash Smith at Harvard in the 1940s—were housed at the University of Baskent, in Ankara, and in Algeria.<sup>8)</sup> According to Miloud Barkaoui, a Professor of American Studies in the Department of English at the University of Annaba in Algeria, courses in American civilization, many of which prefigured contemporary concerns in American Studies, were offered in Algerian universities as early as the 1970s, a decade after the end of the Algeria revolution. Significantly, writes Barkaoui, the academic interest in the U.S. “took place away from the influence of Washington’s agenda,” i.e. the preoccupation with the MENA region as an arena of big-power conflicts during the Cold War.<sup>9)</sup> The interest among Algerian scholars in the 1970s tended to focus on American “exceptionalism,” a theme which has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves in American Studies, especially as it relates to the U.S., Israel and the Middle East. Barkaoui, who himself has a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Keele in the U.K. and has written on U.S. governmental attitudes and policies toward Algeria during its anti-colonial war against France, makes several additional points about the evolution of American Studies in Algeria. First, the interest in the exceptionalist model, which paradoxically delimited the focus to the continental U.S. and eschewed an approach that would have included the Caribbean and Latin American. Second, American

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8) For a full discussion of the development of American Studies in the U.S. see Lucy Maddox, ed., *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999).

9) Miloud Barkaoui, “The Obama Effect,” in *Connections and Ruptures: America and the Middle East*, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdul Aziz Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR), American University of Beirut, Beirut, Proceedings of the Third International Conference, 2.

Studies “was placed in an aggregate of English language modules that disengaged it from ideological overtones and protected it from the suspicion and derision it had encountered in other parts of the world”.<sup>10)</sup> As will be seen in other examples below, the proximity of American Studies programs in the region to U.S. government entities and their host governments, coupled with their positions within the curricular structures of the institutions in which they reside, have often been determining features in the reception to the programs. Third, since Algerians, and more particularly Algerian scholars of American Studies, were postcolonial subjects, Barkaoui asserts that they conceived of American history as marked by what Malini Schuller has called an “endless entanglement of imperial and colonial experiences, and native resistances.”<sup>11)</sup> In this respect, Algerian Americanists anticipated another of the principal contemporary concerns of American studies scholars, especially those based in the MENA region, i.e. conceiving of the U.S. as both a country founded by settler colonists and as itself a colony of Great Britain that fought and won one of the earliest wars of liberation. This kind of dual consciousness concerning the U.S. has frequently been identified by contemporary American Studies scholars as an indispensable tool in the study of U.S./Middle East relations. Fourth, the desire of Americans in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to throw off the yoke of European colonialism was one that resonated with a number of Algerian scholars in the 1970s, who were searching for local and indigenous expressions of nationalism that did not define their country

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10) *Ibid.*, 2.

11) Malini Schuller, “The Borders and Limits of American Studies: A Picture from Beirut,” cited in Barkaoui, “The Obama Effect,” 462.

in contraposition to a European power, in this case France. Thus, Algerian Americanists in the 1970s were at least ambivalent toward the U.S., and certainly not openly hostile. As Ussama Makdisi has written, the U.S. was seen very positively in the region until the late 1950s, in part because of Eisenhower's strong stand against Britain, France and Israel during the Suez crisis of 1956.<sup>12)</sup> As Waleed Hazbun notes, John F. Kennedy as a senator in the 1950s was also a vocal supporter of the Algerian revolution.<sup>13)</sup> Fifth, Barkaoui points to the broad interests and interdisciplinary character of American Studies as features of the discipline that Algerians, who had been educated in a system that followed the rigid strictures of academic departments used by the French system, found especially attractive. "The spaciousness of the field and its rejection of methodological dogma," writes Barkaoui, allowed for "fresh syntheses and connections."<sup>14)</sup> In this sense, the Algerian approach to American Studies again anticipated another central contemporary concern of the discipline—its ability to disrupt received dogma and undermine established geographies, both national and curricular. Barkaoui, for example, cites Paul Giles, who writes that:

America is valuable not for what it might be in itself, but for the interference it creates in others... American Studies might work as a virtual discipline, a means of disrupting the self-enclosing boundaries of other areas, whether academic disciplines or geographic territories, by its projections of dislocation and difference.<sup>15)</sup>

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12) Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced* (Philadelphia: Public Affairs, 2010)

13) Waleed Hazbun, "Fragments of a Retrospective History: Senator Kennedy's Geopolitical Vision," in *Connections and Ruptures*, 343.

14) Barkaoui, "The Obama Effect," 3.

15) Paul Giles, "Virtual Americas: The Internationalization of American Studies and

The development of American Studies in Bahrain offers a stark contrast to the evolution of the discipline in Algeria. The American Studies Center at the University of Bahrain, was inaugurated in May 1998 at a ceremony with the former president of the University, Mohamed Al-Ghatam, who had promoted the creation of the Center, and the then-Ambassador of the U.S. to Bahrain, Johnny Young.<sup>16)</sup> As is clear from the Center's own description on its website, it was founded with solid institutional links to the U.S. government, which is perhaps not surprising considering the close ties between Bahrain and the U.S., which has a naval base in the island country.<sup>17)</sup> Not only does the Center augment its small teaching staff with visiting Fulbright scholars from the U.S., it frequently invites U.S. government and military representatives to give lectures as part of a series sponsored by the Center—sometimes on seemingly non-ideological and innocuous topics such as the cultural significance of the television program “Law and Order” and the meaning of American holidays. Nevertheless, the Center, which is directed by John Hillis, obviously does not shy away from controversy nor offers a uniformly pro-U.S. government or depoliticized vision of the U.S., as evidenced by a 2010 video conference with Norman Finkelstein about the Goldstone Report, a scheduled visit by Mustafa Bayoumi to discuss “Islamophobia in the U.S.” and the website's description of Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit*

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the Ideology of Exchange,” *American Quarterly*, 50. 3 (1998): 523-547.

16) “ASC Mission Statement.” American Studies Center at the University of Bahrain. [http://userspages.uob.edu.bh/asc/mission\\_statement.htm](http://userspages.uob.edu.bh/asc/mission_statement.htm).

17) Thom Shanker, and J. David Goodman, “Pentagon Watching Unrest in Bahrain,” *New York Times*, February 7, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/world/middleeast/18fleet.html>.

911 as a “masterpiece.” Moreover, in a 2007 visit to the American Studies Center at the American University of Cairo, American Studies students from the University of Bahrain attended the film *Capitol Crimes*, an exposé on corruption in Washington D.C. by Bill Moyers, which was screened by AUC Center director Jerry Leach; students also participated in a video-link discussion with Illinois State University students and faculty entitled “Is Hezbollah a Terrorist Organization?”

In addition to the lecture series, which presents several dozen talks per year, the Center in Bahrain offers a Diploma in American Studies (the equivalent of an Associate degree), an M.A. in American Studies, a Minor in American Studies and a wide array of courses, including courses in “Introduction to American Studies I & II,” “American Fiction,” and “American Poetry and Drama,” and over a dozen electives in history, government, popular culture and “minority” cultures that are required for the Minor. Although the Center’s website does not give updated statistics on enrollment and Minors and Masters awarded, in its description of the 2007 visit to Cairo it does distinguish itself from the AUC Center in a crucial sense:

As an essentially American institution (all English language instruction following a typical American university curriculum and taught by a fairly even division of American and non-American—predominantly Egyptian—professors), all AUC students are engaged to some extent in American studies. A core course taught by Dr. Leach covering American history, government, religion, economy, culture, etc., is required of all students who are thus all exposed to an introduction to American Studies. Consequently, there is less motivation for students to enroll in the American Studies minor which, in any case, consists of a minimum of five courses, in contrast to the ten required at UOB. As a result, the American Studies program at AUC

concentrates largely on public lectures, documentary screenings, conferences, and the like.<sup>18)</sup>

In his article “On Teaching American Studies in Jordan and the UNC/UJ Partnership Program,” Tawfiq Yousef, who teaches in the American Studies program at the University of Jordan, provides an overview of American Studies programs in the region and specific information about the creation and development of the program at the University of Jordan.<sup>19)</sup> Yousef asserts that the first American Studies program in the region was outside the Arab-speaking world, in Turkey, at Baskent University, in Ankara, in the 1950s. He also examines where the American Studies programs are housed in various institutions in the region and whether the programs have designated faculty or draw faculty from other programs or are staffed largely by Fulbright scholars, which appears to be the case at both the American University of Jordan and at the University of Bahrain. For example, Christopher Wise, who was a Fulbright scholar in the program from 2000 to 2002, claims in a Wikipedia entry about him—which appears to have been authored by Wise—to have been instrumental in creating the graduate program in American Studies at the University of Jordan.<sup>20)</sup> He is also the co-editor, with Mounira

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18) “Report on American Studies Field Trip to the American University of Cairo, Egypt, April 21-25, 2007.” American Studies Center at the University of Bahrain. [http://userspages.uob.edu.bh/asc/auc\\_field%20trip\\_april\\_07.htm](http://userspages.uob.edu.bh/asc/auc_field%20trip_april_07.htm).

19) Tawfiq Yousef, “On Teaching American Studies in Jordan,” *American Studies*, 47.3/4 (2006): 151-166, <https://journals.ku.edu/index.php/amerstud/article/viewFile/2925/2884>.

20) “Christopher Wise.” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. October 25, 2011 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher\\_Wise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Wise).

Soliman, of Cairo University, of a report entitled *Developing American studies at Arab universities: resources, research and outreach*, which reports the proceedings of a conference held in Cairo in 2004 and co-sponsored by the Bi-National Fulbright Commission and the American Embassy. Yousef, it should be noted, does not mention Wise's contribution to the creation of the program.

Both the source of staffing and the location in which the American Studies programs in the region are housed were also two of the significant issues that were discussed at a workshop entitled "American Studies in the Middle East" at the 2005 conference "American in the Middle East/The Middle East in America," sponsored by the Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) at the American University of Beirut. The follow-up report to the workshop, which Yousef cites and which included American Studies scholars from the MENA region, North America and Europe, also included discussions of the following issues:

1. What are the most pressing impediments facing American studies scholars and programs in the Middle East? ...
2. What are the main pressures affecting the academic freedom of American studies scholars and programs in the Middle East? ...
3. Are there unique advantages—with regard to research and teaching—of viewing America from our unique vantage points? ...
4. How might Middle Eastern scholars of American studies maintain contact with each other and with colleagues outside the region?<sup>21)</sup>

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21) "Follow-Up Report on the Workshop: American Studies in the Middle East. Held on Tuesday, 20 December 2005 in Conjunction with the conference "America in the Middle East/The Middle East in America." The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Alsaud Center for American Studies and

The report offers a series of suggestions for addressing these problems including eventual multilingual instruction, a move away from a Manichean/dialectic approach (i.e. “us” versus “them”) in the study of U.S./Middle East relations, and more concentrated collaboration among Middle Eastern institutions.

The University of Jordan, working closely with the Fulbright Bureau in Amman, as noted above, has offered an M.A. in American Studies since 2000, and as of 2006, more than fifty students had graduated from the program.<sup>22)</sup> The program offers obligatory courses in American history, culture, politics and economics, as well as one on research methods and another on Arabs; the U.S. electives include courses on ethnicity in the U.S., the American educational system, the American legal system and religions in the U.S. A non-thesis track component of the course includes courses in American literature and American foreign policy. According to Yousef, the program also addresses globalization as a particularly American phenomenon and its manifestations in popular culture; courses are also comparative in approach.<sup>23)</sup> The program at the University of Jordan has had a multi-year partnership with the University of North Carolina, which has been the source of some of its Fulbright scholars, in a program funded by USAID. The collaboration has entailed extensive video conferencing on issues such as “Islam and Muslims in the U.S. and “Women’s status in Jordan and in the U.S.”<sup>24)</sup>

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Research (CASAR) Faculty of Arts and Sciences, American University of Beirut.  
<http://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/casar/Conferences/I/Pages/AMSTreport.aspx>. Updated September 3, 2009.

22) Yousef, “On Teaching American Studies in Jordan,” 154.

23) *Ibid.*, 155-156.

The programs at the University of Jordan and the University of Bahrain clearly maintain close ties to the U.S. government, especially through the Fulbright program, but the latter at least offers substantial and complex critiques of U.S. policies and alliances in tandem with collaborative projects. The American Studies Institute at Al Quds, in Jerusalem, which also has a strong connection with the Fulbright program, appears, however, to maintain a fairly consistent pro-U.S. stance. In this aspect it coincides with The School of Foreign Service of Georgetown based in Qatar, which offers a Minor in American Studies and, like its counterpart in Washington, D.C., maintains extremely close links with the U.S. diplomatic community and government, where many of the graduates of the D.C. program eventually work. The Institute at Al Quds, which was created in 2002 and which also offers a Masters degree, is directed by Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi. In addition to founding the American Studies Institute at Al Quds, in Jerusalem, he is the founder of the *Wasatia* movement, “which promotes moderation in Islam,” according to his biography accompanying a 2011 editorial he co-authored for *The New York Times* with Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute, entitled “Why Palestinians Should Learn About the Holocaust.”<sup>25)</sup> On its website the ASI at Al Quds describes itself as “[e]ducating students in the values of freedom, democracy and

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24) Ibid., 159-160.

25) Robert Satloff. “Why Palestinians Should Learn About the Holocaust.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/30/opinion/30iht-edsatloff30.html>. It should be noted that Susanne Wiedemann, Visiting Professor at the Center for American Studies and Research at AUB, offered a course on the Holocaust in the spring of 2006, which provoked a spirited discussion but which ultimately was highly successful and attracted a largely appreciative group of students.

free-market economy,” prominently features Palestinian and American flags on the masthead of its homepage and includes a laudatory letter of support for the program from former U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee.<sup>26)</sup> The courses offered in the M.A. program include “American Democracy and Pluralism,” “American Literature,” “American Government and Politics,” and “American Foreign Policy.” The Institute is housed in a university with very limited resources in an extremely volatile region, and it is thus perhaps unfair to compare it to other programs in the region, especially those with substantially greater funding. Nonetheless, it is likely to strike many American Studies scholars from the region and elsewhere as odd that an American Studies program at a Palestinian University in Jerusalem offers a course on “American Foreign Policy” with a tentative list of research topics that includes “Is the president primarily responsible for U.S. foreign policy?,” “Should Congress leave foreign policy to the President?,” “Is the separation of powers an impediment to conducting effective foreign policy?,” etc., but does not include any topics dealing with recent or contemporary U.S. political and military involvement in the Middle East. As Yousef points out in his article, and as participants in the 2005 CASAR workshop at AUB affirmed, funding is a serious and vexing problem for many American Studies programs in the region, and trying to balance the need for financial support with the need for complex and critical research and a variety of viewpoints is not easy. The program at Al Quds has certainly been able to attract students—in part by waiving the English language requirement for

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26) “Senator Chafee,” Al Quds University American Studies Institute (ASI).  
<http://asi.arts.alquds.edu/>.

students—and between 2002 and 2006, 40 students graduated from the program with an M.A.<sup>27)</sup> In addition to its graduate program, the ASI at Al Quds has “strong links with the Arab-American Center in Dearborn, Michigan.”<sup>28)</sup>

The Center for American Studies and Research at the American University of Cairo was begun in 2006 with a bequest from Prince Alwaleed bin Talal of US\$ 10 million. The Center’s long time director has been Jerry Leach, who recently retired. Dr. Leach, who has a Ph.D. from Cambridge in Social Anthropology and International Development, worked for many years as a diplomat, director of the non-profit organization World Affairs Councils of America, and as an administrative official for the Peace Corps. He held high-level positions in the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, and thus has close ties with top U.S. government officials. He has helped to create links between the center at AUC and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University and organized tours for AUC American Studies students to Washington, DC, during which they have met significant government and policy officials. Like the centers at Al Quds, the University of Jordan and the American University of Bahrain, the Center at AUC has relied heavily on the Fulbright program to provide it with faculty and researchers. Under Dr. Leach’s leadership, the center had a very substantial outreach component, manifested most clearly in his own very active speaking campaign. He sought out platforms at large public universities outside of Cairo to make presentations on a

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27) Yousef, “On Teaching American Studies in Jordan,” 152.

28) *Ibid.*, 154

variety of American Studies topics that were, largely of necessity, chosen to avoid friction. According to a 2011 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*:

When Mr. Leach arrived at Egyptian universities with his translator, hundreds of students would surround him, asking for his autograph and e-mail address. He would talk with students for two hours in a packed auditorium, then the auditorium would be emptied and a new group of students would file in. That rhythm could last for a day.

But he faced many barriers before he ever got to a podium. He has made overtures to about sixteen universities. He has only spoken at four.

“Universities are usually the most open of societies’ institutions,” he says. “Here it is exactly the opposite.”

To start, he had to find a faculty member on each Egyptian campus willing to help him coordinate an appearance. Egyptian professors notoriously juggle three and four jobs to make a living, and their work leaves them little free time. After Mr. Leach located a willing faculty partner, he still faced questioning by administrators: Was he planning on passing out Bibles, preaching free sex, or pushing a pro-Israel point of view? He learned that religion, sex, and politics were out as topics. Instead, he talked about marriage, family, media, cross-cultural stereotypes, and global warming.<sup>29)</sup>

Within the Center, however, Dr. Leach did not necessarily shy away from controversial subjects. He organized a series of films that addressed contentious topics in American Studies such as *Bowling for Columbine*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and the PBS film *Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War*.

The Center, which is housed within the School of Global Affairs

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29) David Wheeler, “Changes in Egypt Could Strengt the Ties With U.S.,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. February 9, 2011, <http://chronicle.com/article/Changes-in-Egypt-Could/126317/>.

and Public Policy, consists of a permanent director, an assistant director and visiting Fulbright scholars. It offers a Minor in American Studies, consisting of five courses, including three required courses, one of which is entitled “What is America,” which was taught by Dr. Leach during his tenure at the Center, one in American government, and another in American history.

For several reasons, the Center in Cairo is undergoing profound changes. AUC moved in 2010 from a campus in the center of Cairo to a location with difficult accessibility far from the city center, the regime of Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in 2011, and Dr. Leach retired in 2011. (As of this writing, no new director of the Center has been named). At the annual meeting of Alwaleed bin Talal Centers in Edinburgh in March of 2011, Dr. Leach offered a graphic description of the upheavals that led to Mubarak’s ouster and his responses and those of his students and colleagues.<sup>30)</sup>

The Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) at the American University of Beirut was founded in 2004, and as mentioned earlier, also with a bequest from Prince Alwaleed bin Talal. It was the product of significant study and preparation by international American studies scholars such as Djelal Kadir, Amy Kaplan, Melani McAlister, and Richard Rorty all significant architects of international American Studies, and AUB faculty. One outcome of this study process was a consensus that for the Center to be effective as a forum for a wide variety of views on the U.S., it could not be seen

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30) Jerry Leach in “World of Islam and the West: the view from Beirut, Boston, Cairo, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Washington D.C.” You Tube. April 14, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIxrF0nGdyI>

as an instrument of U.S. policy. Even the hint that the Center was an arm of “soft power” by the U.S. in the Middle East would, these scholars warned, undermine its position as a good-faith medium for analyses of the U.S.—and its principal ally in the region, Israel—from across the political spectrum.

After a protracted and wide-ranging search, Patrick McGreevy was named the Director in 2004. His books include *Imagining Niagara: Meaning and the Making of Niagara Falls*, and *Stairway to Empire: Lockport, the Erie Canal, and the Shaping of America*, published in 2009. He served as the director from 2004 to 2009, when he became the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at AUB. I served as Director from 2009 to 2011, when Alex Lubin, chair of the Department of American Studies at the University of New Mexico, was named the Director. My areas of interest include Latin America, especially Brazil; medieval and renaissance Spain and Portugal, especially the so-called *convivencia* in *Al-Andalus*; and modernism and theatre. At AUB I have taught modern American theatre and modern American literature, among other courses. I have also written a number of pointedly political plays dealing with race and cultural encounters in U.S. history. Dr. Lubin has written on so-called “mixed marriages” and miscegenation laws in Jim Crow Mississippi, and his current area of interest is the presence of African-Americans, Black Caribbeans and Blacks from Britain in the Mediterranean region, especially the Arab world. He has also been extensively involved in the study of and campaign for Palestinian rights and self-determination.

Since its inception, the Center has relied on one-year visiting faculty, funded by the Center and the University, to teach courses in

American Studies, along with the director. Every year there are generally two visiting positions: a junior position, which has been held by Khadijeh Fritsch-El Alaoui, Marcy Newman, Susanne Weidemann, Adam Waterman, Robert Ross and Sam Haselby, and the Edward Said chair, a senior position, which has been held by William Marling, Noel Ignatiev and Robert Reid-Pharr. The director is the only full-time faculty member, but AUB faculty from English, History, Anthropology, Architecture and other departments teach in the program and serve on the Center's executive committee. Visiting faculty offer courses in their areas of expertise, e.g. History of the Civil War and Labor History (Ignatiev); Empire and Race (Reid-Pharr); the Holocaust in American literature and culture (Weidemann); Globalization (Marling); Images of Arabs in American Society (Fritsch-el Alaoui). The director generally teaches the "Introduction to American Studies" course, as well as a course in his or her area of interest. The center offers a Minor in American studies, which requires the introductory course and four others from various categories. To date, 22 students have graduated with Minors, and Dr. Lubin and the board of international advisors (Melani McAlister, Rami Khouri, Scott Lucas, Djelal Kadir, Amy Kaplan and Stanley Katz) are hoping to introduce an M.A. in the near future. The major impediments to offering an M.A. include the lack of permanent faculty in the program and the fact that A.U.B.'s History and Archaeology Department surprisingly has no historian whose area of expertise is the United States. The Center's Assistant to the Director, Nancy Batakji Sanyoura, has been at CASAR since its inception, and she handles a wide range of duties including organizing the bi-annual international conference, helping with curriculum issues and administrating

research grants and travel.

The three major projects the Center is engaged in besides teaching are research, organizing a lecture/visiting artists series and producing its bi-annual conference. The Center funds faculty who are giving papers on American Studies-related topics at institutions in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere. It also offers summer grants for research in Lebanon, elsewhere in the Arab world, the U.S. and at libraries and institutions containing archives of American Studies material and hosts visiting researchers at AUB.

The lecture series usually offers between 20 and 30 events per year and has included speakers and artists as diverse as Noam Chomsky, former Senator Bob Graham, Richard Rorty, Mustafa Bayoumi, Brian Edwards, Salim Washington, Kathy and Henry Chalfant and Hilton Obenzinger. For obvious reasons in the period from 2004-2009, areas of focus of the lecture series included U.S./Middle East relations, critiques of the so-called “clash of civilization,” critiques of U.S. policy in the Middle East, discussions of the Iraq invasion and occupation, the U.S. diplomatic and military relationships with Israel, contemporary political crises in Lebanon, the security measures introduced in the U.S. and Europe after September 11, 2001 and representations of Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. and Europe. From 2009 to 2011 the series also included arts-related projects on theatre, jazz, American banjo music and street art—frequently with a cross-cultural component—as counterpoints to the facile products of American culture available in Beirut and elsewhere in the Arab world and as an antidote to the U.S. government’s apparent lack of interest in promoting events related to American culture in the Middle East.

These events are frequently co-sponsored with the Department of English, the Center for Arab and Middle East Studies, the Department of Fine Arts and Art History and other departments.

Perhaps the Center's most impressive achievement has been its bi-annual conference. The first conference, in 2005, was entitled "America in the Middle East, the Middle East in America"; it offered several dozen panels with scholars from North America, Europe and the Middle East. The opening address, on translation of English-language books into Arabic, was given by Juan Cole, and the closing address, on the aftermath of 9/11, by Melani McAlister. In addition to the workshop on American Studies in the Middle East alluded to above, the conference offered an intriguing example of what Edward Said termed "contrapuntal consciousness," i.e. seeing both "America" and the "Middle East" as constructs and as historical realities, as geographical spaces and imaginative realms and seeing both simultaneously from without and from within. For example, some Iraqis whose friends and relatives had been gassed by Saddam Hussein's regime, supported the U.S. invasion of their country, whereas some American scholars saw it as a reprise of failed European colonial enterprises, instead of justified retribution for the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Those holding such profoundly contradictory opinions engaged in civil but spirited debates.<sup>31)</sup>

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31) "Follow-Up Report on the Workshop: American Studies in the Middle East. Held on Tuesday, 20 December 2005 in Conjunction with the conference "America in the Middle East/The Middle East in America." September 3, 2009. Prince Alwalee Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Alsaud Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR), Faculty of Arts and Sciences, American University of Beirut. September 3, 2009. [www.aub.edu.lb/fas/casar/Conferences/1/Pages/AMSTreport.aspx](http://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/casar/Conferences/1/Pages/AMSTreport.aspx)

The second conference, entitled “Liberty and Justice: America and the Middle East,” again attracted dozens of historians, political scientists, anthropologists and others from North America, Europe and the Middle East, including many of the most significant scholars in their fields. Highlights included a plenary session on the state of U.S./Middle East relations with most of the members of CASAR’s international advisory board, and a discussion on American Studies in the Middle East with Liam Kennedy (Clinton Institute for American Studies, University College Dublin, Ireland); John Hillis (American Studies Program, American University of Bahrain); Seyed Mohammad Marandi (North American Studies Program, University of Tehran, Iran); Patrick McGreevy (CASAR, American University of Beirut); Mohammad Dajani Daoudi (American Studies Institute, Al-Quds University, Palestine); Hani Elayyan (Department of English, University of Jordan); Osama Abd El-Fattah Madany (Department of English, Menoufiya University, Egypt); Mounira Soliman (Department of English, Cairo University, Egypt); Sirene Harb (Department of English, American University of Beirut).

The most recent conference, in 2010, “Connections and Ruptures: America and the Middle East,” featured over 90 speakers from 15 countries. The opening address was delivered by Scott Lucas, Chair of the Department of American Studies at the University of Birmingham in the U.K., and the keynote was delivered by Ussama Makdisi, Professor of History at Rice University, and author of *Faith Misplaced*, *Artillery of Heaven* and other significant studies of U.S./Middle East relations. The talk by Dr. Makdisi, who was born in Lebanon, and whose mother is the noted author Jean Makdisi,

who is the sister of Edward Said, also recognized the extraordinary contribution of scholars at the conference such as Timothy Marr, Brian Edwards, Melani McAllister and others to American Studies in the Middle East. He called for more scholarship by people who are multi-lingual and who can offer perspectives about American influence in the region from the perspectives of Arabs, Iranians, Muslims and Middle Easterners.

The call for papers for the next conference, “Shifting Boundaries: America and the Middle East,” which will be held in January 2012, received over 200 submissions from over two dozen countries, a clear testament to the fact that the conference has become one of the most significant sites of exchange for research about the Middle East, American empire, and international American studies. As Amy Kaplan, Djelal Kadir, Moustafa Bayoumi and others pointed out during the 2010 conference, CASAR’s bi-annual meeting has become a crucial medium for redefining and globalizing American Studies. The proceedings of all the conferences are available on the Center’s website.

The other center in the region that requires mention in this study is the North American Studies Program at the University of Teheran, which was begun in 2006 and is housed within the Faculty of World Studies. The Center has had several exchanges with CASAR at AUB, including two visits by Dr. McGreevy to teach at the program in Tehran, visits by professors and graduate students from Tehran to AUB, and presentations and panels by scholars from Tehran at CASAR’s international conference. Unfortunately, like the program at Al-Quds, which is linked due to ideology and the need for funding to a particular government, in this case to the U.S., and to a lesser

extent like the ones in Jordan, Bahrain and Cairo, which also share a clear Westward tilt, the Tehran program is closely aligned to the a government position, i.e. the Iranian. For example, in a comparative study of representations of Iran in U.S. textbooks and representations of the U.S. in Iranian textbooks, which was published in the most recent AUB conference proceeding, numerous examples of U.S. bias and misrepresentation were cited, whereas no examples whatsoever of Iranian bias and misrepresentation were offered.<sup>32)</sup> In general, although Dr. Marandi, who holds dual U.S./Iranian citizenship and frequently comments on relations between the two countries on television and in other media, is open to more nuanced and competing views, the other scholars from the program frequently offer a Manichaeic vision of U.S./Iranian relations, in which Iran is always an innocent victim responding to the malevolent designs of the U.S. It is understandable that many Iranians would hold such views since former President George W. Bush designated Iran as part of the “axis of evil” and their country is effectively encircled by U.S. military forces. Moreover, international bodies largely controlled by the U.S. and their allies have undertaken extreme measures to limit Iranian nuclear development while turning a blind eye to Israel’s large nuclear arsenal, and in the 1950s the U.S. overthrew a legally elected government and installed a reactionary dictator who maintained close relations with Israel and created a brutal secret police force.<sup>33)</sup> The reticence by Iranian scholars from the Center to

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32) Seyed Mohammad Marandi, “Iranian and American History Textbooks and Representations of Iranian-American Relations,” in *Connections and Ruptures*.

33) Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 2005).

express any views at odds with the current Iranian government may be a result of the fear that such views will be seen as aiding Iran's enemies—of which there are obviously many—or because scholars understandably fear reprisals. Nevertheless, instead of offering the contrapuntal consciousness that Said so values or contributing to the globalization of scholarship in the humanities in general or American Studies in particular, such one-sided scholarship reinforces a view of an irreconcilable clash between cultures that are essentially at odds with one another.

As the Algerian model of American Studies cited at the beginning of this survey suggests, the discipline can benefit and has in fact benefited enormously from multilingual, multicultural scholars who employ their oblique and singular visions in the service of dismantling unitary notions of “America.” Although I am obviously not an unbiased observer, it seems clear that in addition to the Algerian programs, the center at AUB has offered the most productive model for American Studies in the MENA region. While acknowledging the many positive attributes of the United States—contributions to the creative arts, a culture of entrepreneurship, an ideal of individual liberty—it has not shied away from looking closely at racial injustice, American imperial projects and militarism, the perils of the national security state, and the distorted view of Zionism held by many Americans. As the American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald writes in his essay “The Crack-Up,” “the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.”<sup>34</sup>

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34) F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up,” in *The Art of the Personal Essay*, ed. Philip Lopate (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1994), 520.

American Studies programs in Algeria, Al Quds/Jerusalem, Bahrain, Beirut, Cairo, Jordan and Tehran have, it seems, produced their most significant scholarship and creative cultural and intellectual encounters when they have followed Fitzgerald's perceptive maxim.

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## Abstract

# American Studies in the Middle East

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This article is a survey of the current state of American Studies in the so-called MENA, i.e. Middle East North Africa, region. Information is drawn from the websites of various universities and departments, published articles on American in this part of the world and the personal experience of the author as the director of a center for American Studies at the American University of Beirut.

After tracing some of the reasons why American Studies has recently become a more significant discipline in the region—especially a general push towards the internationalization of the discipline, the failure of the Oslo peace process, the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, increasing American political and military involvement in the Middle East and the so-called “Arab spring”—the study attempts to trace some of the most significant historical trends in American Studies in the Middle East and North Africa. Beginning with the example of American Studies in Algeria in the 1970s, the study lays out some of the important motifs necessary to understand the development of the discipline, such as decolonization of the countries of the region formerly under the control of European powers, the Cold War, the creation of the state of Israel and the increase in American cultural influence due to the dissemination of Hollywood movies and the global marketing of products ostensibly related to an American lifestyle.

The remainder of the study is devoted to a survey of the current and recent state of American Studies at universities in Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, occupied Palestine, Iran and Lebanon. The study compares and contrasts the general approach of the discipline at various institutions in these countries,

examines their ties to local governments and to the U.S. government, offers a sense of the quantity and kinds of courses they offer, identifies faculty members and speakers who have worked with these programs, looks at the other activities they undertake (such as lectures, film series, conferences, fact-finding trips, etc.), and offers some quantitative data about the numbers of students in such courses, the kinds of degrees offered and the numbers who have graduated with degrees in American Studies.

The study concludes with some observations about current trends in American Studies in the region and some evaluations about which approaches at the various institutions surveyed have, in the author's estimation, been most successful.

### **Key Words**

American Studies, Middle East, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Iran, Algeria, Arab spring, Palestine, Egyptian revolution, Prince Alwaleed, American exceptionalism, CASAR, Amy Kaplan, Ussama Makdisi, Patrick McGreevy, Seyed Mohammad Marandi