

CASA Fellows 2014-2015

Karen Alderfer graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in June of 2013 where she received a BA in Arabic and Comparative Literature. Her research interests include contemporary Arabic literature with a focus on queer writing and the overlap between online writing and the novel. After finishing CASA, she hopes to continue her studies of Arabic literature.

Michelle J. Balon

Ashley Bisutti is a PhD student at Indiana University interested in Arabic Pedagogy and Second Language Acquisition. She holds a BS in Biology from Christopher Newport University (2008) and an MA in Arabic Studies from University of Michigan (2010) and spent three summers studying Arabic in Morocco (2007-2009). She also taught Arabic at the College of William and Mary 2011-2013.

Elisabeth Boeck (Liz) graduated this year from Northwestern University with a BA in Middle East and North African Studies and a minor in Environmental Policy and Culture. She spent last year studying Arabic at the University of Alexandria in Egypt. Liz is particularly interested in issues of land conservation and sustainable agriculture. After CASA, she hopes to work in environmental education in the Middle East.

Cunha, Priscilla is currently an MA student at the University of Texas at Austin, specializing in the Teaching of Arabic as a Foreign Language. In the past, she studied Arabic in Jordan through Cornell University's Intensive Arabic Program, and she has also lived and worked in Egypt and Qatar. After graduating, she hopes to teach Arabic at the university or high school level and to work designing Arabic curricular materials.

Basma (Elizabeth) Guthrie graduated magna cum laude from Smith College and received her MA with high distinction in Arab Studies from Georgetown. Her nickname "Basma" comes from Tunisia where she constantly smiled to compensate for her elementary Arabic skills seven years ago. Basma hails from Baltimore, Maryland, and lives between Washington, D.C., and the Middle East. She is excited to return to Jordan after 3 years working in Amman. Upon completing the CASA fellowship, Basma hopes to pursue a Ph.D. for an eventual career balancing teaching and research in the field of linguistics.

Tynan Kelly

Samuel Kieke recently graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a BA in Arabic, Middle Eastern Studies, and International Relations and Global Studies and has previously studied Arabic abroad in Tunisia and Morocco. Upon completing his fellowship with CASA, Sam intends to get his masters in Middle Eastern Studies or an MA/PhD in Sociology.

Emily Larsen

Nadirah Mansour graduated from Princeton University in June 2014 with a degree in Near Eastern Studies and minors in Arabic and Creative Writing (Fiction). Her academic interests include Arab intellectual history, Islamic institutional history, and religious authority. After CASA, she'd like to pursue a graduate degree in history.

Estefanía Valenzuela Mochón graduated from the University of Granada, Spain, with a B.A. in Translation and Interpreting. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Arabic Linguistics at the University of Texas, in Austin. Her research interests include Sociolinguistics, Teaching Arabic as Foreign Language, Forensic Linguistics, and Translation.

Aseel Najib graduated from Harvard with an MA in Islamic Studies, and from Columbia with a BA in Middle Eastern Studies and Creative Writing. Her research interests include medieval Islamic social and intellectual history, ethics and historiography.

Maria H. Nelson graduated this year from Princeton University with BA in Near Eastern Studies and a Certificate in Arabic Language and Cultures. Her academic interests include sociolinguistics, gender and sexuality in the modern Middle East, and the history of activist movements. She has previously studied Arabic in Irbid, Jordan (Yarmouk University) and Amman, Jordan (AMIDEAST).

Caitlyn M. Olson is currently a PhD student in the NELC department at Harvard University, pursuing interests in Islamic intellectual history. She is especially curious about philosophy and theology from the 13th century onward. Previously, Caitlyn earned a BA in Religion from Middlebury College, conducted research as a Fulbright grantee in Morocco, and served as an academic fellow at NYU Abu Dhabi.

Edward Pechet graduated with a BA in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from Boston University. Since graduation, he worked for two years as an ESL teacher in Riyadh and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. At the moment he works as an SAT tutor and for an education company that works with Chinese high school students studying in the United States. He is interested in translation, international affairs and political and economic development in the Middle East.

Hannah Porter graduated this year from the University of Maryland with a BA in Arabic Studies. She is interested in Arabic linguistics and translation and has studied in Yemen (YCMES) and Morocco (AALIM). She plans on pursuing a PhD in Semitic languages, with a focus on the endangered South Arabian languages such as Hobyot and Soqotri.

Eric Rosen graduated in 2014 from Dartmouth College with a BA in Government and minor in Arabic. He has previously studied Arabic in Cairo and with Middlebury's Summer Language School. After CASA, he hopes to explore and travel throughout the wider Middle East before pursuing an MA in Middle Eastern politics.

Galina Rudik

Hassan Shibani received his master's degree from Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 2013 after studying music performance at the University of Oregon. He wrote his master's thesis about Syrian refugees in Jordan, but he is also interested in political Islam and ulama with a focus on Syria. This will be his first time studying Arabic in the Middle East.

Vineet Surapaneni graduated this year from the University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. in Economics, Government, and Arabic. His interests include the modern political and ancient history of the Middle East. After CASA, he plans to find work that is at the intersection of his interests.

Rawad Z. Wehbe earned a BA/MA in Arabic from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles. In fall 2013, he began his PhD in Arabic at the University of Texas at Austin. His academic and professional interests include literature (pre-modern and modern), literary translation, and pedagogy. In addition to offering inspiration for a dissertation project, he hopes CASA will also provide the opportunity to create an international community of academics, artists, and activists invested in advancing and revolutionizing Arabic studies in the United States and all over the world.

Katy Whiting is a current Master's student at the University of Texas at Austin where she specializes in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics. Previously, she graduated from Macalester College in 2011 with a Bachelor's degree in Religious Studies and Middle Eastern Studies. She has studied Arabic in Jordan (The University of Jordan), Tunisia (Borguiba Institute) and volunteered in Palestine.

Orion Wilcox graduated this year from the University of Mississippi with a BA in Economics and a minor in Arabic language. His academic interests include the history and politics of the Modern Middle East, economic development and US foreign policy. Immediately following CASA, Orion plans to work in either journalism or international education. He has previously studied in Morocco and Jordan.