

2011-12 CASA FULL YEAR FELLOWS

Hossameddine Abouzahr finished an M.A. in Middle East Studies and an MPP at the University of Michigan in December 2010. He started studying Arabic independently in 2008 and then continued studying Arabic throughout his graduate studies. After completing CASA he hopes to work in the Middle East in the fields of development and human rights.

Anna Bailey completed a B.A. in Arabic and French at Dartmouth College in June 2011. She has studied Arabic previously in Tangier, Morocco, and hopes to travel and study more extensively in the Middle East in the coming years. Her academic interests include classical and contemporary Arabic poetry, literature, and linguistics, as well as postcolonial studies and immigration. She has no definite plans following completion of the CASA Program, but is considering possibly pursuing a Ph.D. in Arabic literature or a degree in immigration law.

Sierra Bayles graduated this year from Columbia University's School of General Studies with a B.A. in Women's and Gender's Studies and a concentration in Arabic Language and Literature. After completing CASA, she intends to pursue a Ph.D. in Cultural and Linguistic Anthropology, specializing in the Middle East.

Connie Cannon is a Ph.D. student at the University of Washington in Near and Middle Eastern Studies. She holds a B.A. in Middle East Studies/Arabic from Brigham Young University and a J.D. from the University of Chicago. A licensed attorney, her work focuses on Islamic Law, Legal-religious Thought, and Comparative Legal Systems in the modern Middle East.

Elinor Cannon graduated this year from Tufts University with a major in Arabic and Int'l Letters and Visual Studies. Throughout her undergraduate career she studied Arabic and Spanish and the interactions between the two language and cultures, culminating in her senior honors thesis "Diary of an Illegal Immigrant," a translation of an Arabic book by Rachid Nini. She hopes to continue her study of Arabic after CASA by working in translation and teaching.

Nathan Christensen graduated in May 2011 from the University of Georgia with a B.A. in History and Arabic Studies. He has previously studied Arabic in Sana'a, Yemen and Marrakech, Morocco. Academically, Nathan is interested in radical pedagogy, post-colonial studies and the history of liberation thought. After CASA he intends to continue his study of history at the graduate level.

Jeremy Dell is a graduate student in the History Department at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studies African history. Previous research has taken him to Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso. He is interested in West African intellectual history broadly construed, with a particular interest in textual practice, Islamic education, Sufism, and expressive culture. While at CASA, he especially looks forward to exploring West African diasporic communities in Cairo.

Emily Drevets finished her B.A. in International Relations with a minor in Arabic and Muslim Societies at Boston University in 2011. She has studied Arabic in Salalah, Oman (CLS) and Rabat, Morocco (Boston University program) as well as at Boston University. Her academic interests focus on developmental issues in the Middle East.

Mary Elston just completed her M.A. in Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, and next year she intends to apply to Ph.D. programs in Anthropology. She received her B.A. in Middle East Studies and Development Studies from Brown University in 2007. Mary has studied Arabic in Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, and Morocco, and currently her research interests include language ideologies, semiotic processes, and discursive authority in Islam.

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Ryan Fan graduated from Cornell in 2010 with a B.A. in Linguistics and Mathematics. He has studied Arabic in Cairo, and in Alexandria while on a Fulbright Grant. After CASA, he hopes either to pursue a Ph.D. in Arabic Linguistics or to continue living and working in Egypt.

Jeremy Farrell is a graduate of Tulane University and is currently a M.A. candidate at UCLA in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures under the direction of Dr. Michael Cooperson. His research interests include images of asceticism in Arabic literature, historical preservation and issues in contemporary North Africa. He hopes to pursue these interests in a career involving digital preservation and publishing of written patrimony.

Christopher Forney graduated from Amherst College with a B.A. in history. Since graduation he has studied Arabic intensively and has just finished an 18-month period of study with the Qasid Institute in Amman, Jordan. After his time with CASA, he hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in the medieval history of the Mediterranean Basin.

Benjamin Gittleson received his B.A. in 2011 from Tufts University, where he majored in International Relations and Arabic. He is particularly interested in foreign policy and the role of the media in the Middle East, and he has studied Arabic at Tufts and the University of Jordan in Amman.

Anthony Goode graduated this year from George Mason University with a B.A. in French. He has studied French in Morocco and Guadeloupe and Arabic in Egypt (Middlebury-CV Starr School in the Middle East). After completing CASA he plans to pursue graduate studies in Arabic and linguistics.

Katherine Goodin graduated from Brown University in 2008 with a degree in Comparative Literature: Literary Translation, focused on translating Latin literature into English. She studied Arabic at Middlebury's language school summer 2009, and at the American University in Cairo on a Fulbright grant from 2009-2010. She plans to work in Arabic media and literary translation, and is applying for graduate study this fall.

Kristin Hickman has a B.A. in Anthropology and French and Francophone Studies from Barnard College. She has studied Arabic in New York (Columbia University), Chicago (University of Chicago), Oman (World Learning Center), and Morocco (Qalam wa Lawh) where she taught English for two years. She is currently finishing her second year as a Ph.D. student in Anthropology at the University of Chicago. Her interests lie in language, memory, and pedagogy in the Middle East.

Tyler Huffman graduated from Duke University in 2009 with a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies and a B.S. in Mathematics. He is currently a graduate student at the American University of Beirut in the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies. He has previously studied in Yemen (Yemen College of Middle Eastern Studies) and Syria (Damascus University). Academically, he is interested in modern Arabic literature, particularly Syrian novels from the past decade.

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Yamila Irizarry-Gerould is graduating from Tufts University with a degree in Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic. Her academic interests in the region have focused on issues as varied as women's rights, the Iraq War, water sharing in the Jordan River Valley, and the nuclear issue. She is originally from Northampton, M.A. and Puerto Rico.

Stephen Kalin graduated from Davidson College in 2009 with a degree in Political Science, and was a Presidential Intern in the Development Office at the American University in Cairo during the 2009-2010 academic year. He has studied Arabic previously in Egypt, Jordan and Oman. His academic interests include public policy, contemporary Arab political theory, and the media.

Matthew Keegan graduated from Williams College in 2007 with a degree in Religion and History. He received a fellowship to study at Cambridge University where he received an M.Phil. in Islamic Studies. His Arabic studies have brought him to Yemen, Egypt, and Middlebury. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Religion Department at Princeton University where his research interests include medieval Arabic literature and Islamic law.

Paul Kohlbry earned his B.A. in history from the University of Southern California. He then moved to Palestine, where he worked and taught from 2008 – 2011. He hopes to get a Ph.D. in anthropology after completing CASA.

Michael Kremer graduated this year from Tufts University with a B.A. in International Relations. He has studied Arabic in Egypt (Middlebury School in the Middle East) and spent the past two summers working for non-profit organizations in Kenya. He is interested in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and Africa.

Noga Malkin graduated from Barnard College of Columbia University in 2009 with a degree in Political Science and Human Rights. She has spent the past two years working for Human Rights Watch in Jerusalem. She has studied Arabic in Egypt, Palestine, Israel, at Columbia University, and at Middlebury College. She is interested in social policy and the Middle East, and is slightly obsessed with Turkey; she occasionally fantasizes about reconvening the Ottoman Empire.

Jessica Martin started the Masters in Arabic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin after three years teaching and studying in Japan. She is interested in medieval Arabic and Japanese literature, communicative pedagogy, and literary theory. After CASA and the M.A., she plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature.

Spenser Mestel graduated from Dartmouth College with a B.A. in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies with a concentration in Arabic. He's primarily interested in international development and the Arab world. After the CASA program, he hopes to attend graduate school and then work for the United Nations Development Program.

Adnan Moussa graduated from Wayne State University with a degree in Near Eastern Studies. He is particularly interested in the political ideologies that span across the Middle East. After completing CASA, he plans to continue his higher education paying special attention to the "Arab Spring" and its impact on future reforms.

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Shawn O'Donnell received her B.A. in History from the University of California, Berkeley in 2004 and her M.A. in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota in 2011. She taught English in Cairo between 2004 and 2006 before returning to the U.S. to work for Google for two years before entering graduate school. During her graduate studies she interned for a Syrian development NGO in the summer of 2009 and spent the past academic year as a Boren Fellow studying Arabic at IFPO in Damascus. Her professional interests lie in development and refugee issues in the Middle East.

Allegra O'Donoghue graduated from UC Santa Barbara in 2008 with a B.A. in Middle East Studies. She studied Arabic at ALI at the American University in Cairo in 2007, and completed the Language Flagship Program in Damascus in 2010. Her interests include human and cultural geography, and their parallel in the natural environment, as well as Arab music. Over the years, she has performed with the UCSB Middle Eastern Ensemble and the American University in Cairo's "AUCeyat."

Christopher Opila graduated this year from Middlebury College with a B.A. in International Politics and Economics. He spent his junior year in Alexandria, Egypt studying Arabic language and culture at the C.V. Starr School in the Middle East. Academically, he is particularly interested in political dissent and economic development in the Middle East.

Yuval Orr graduated this year from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. His research focuses on youth movements and music in the Middle East, particularly hip-hop. Following his CASA Fellowship, he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in political anthropology.

Michael Oskin has worked with a number of refugee rights agencies. He will soon complete an M.A. in Migration and Refugee Studies, and holds an M.A. in Middle East Studies and an M.S.Ed. He also worked as a political organizer, directed youth development programs, and served as a Teach for America corps member.

Damien Pieretti graduated from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in May 2009 where he majored in Culture and Politics with a concentration in Arab studies. After graduation Damien moved to Cairo where he has worked for a number of organizations, most recently an Egyptian public relations agency specializing in investor relations. Upon completion of CASA, Damien plans to continue working in Egypt, possibly in the field of business or economic development.

Graham Pitts graduated from Earlham College in 2006 with a B.A. in History. He is now pursuing a Ph.D. in Trans-regional History at Georgetown University and hopes to devote the rest of his career to teaching.

Michal Raizen is a doctoral candidate in the Program of Comparative Literature at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests include contemporary Israeli, Palestinian, and Franco-Maghrebi literature and film. With an area studies focus in ethnomusicology, Michal is writing a dissertation on the role of music as a textual language that functions within and alongside literary and cinematic texts as a means of representing loss.

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Jason Reeder graduated with a B.A. in linguistics from Brown University in 2011. His main academic interests are in poetics and applied linguistics, specifically Arabic language acquisition and pedagogy and the role of nonviolent communication in facilitation and conflict management.

Jason Schroeffer graduated from the University of California at Berkeley with a B.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures in 2009. Currently he is pursuing his graduate education at the University of Texas at Austin in Arabic Studies. Academically, he is interested in Arabic dialectology. After completing CASA, he intends to pursue a Ph.D. in Arabic Studies with a focus in Linguistics.

Alexander Scott graduated from McGill University in 2008 with a B.A. in Linguistics. His interests include Arabic linguistics as well as contemporary Arabic literature. After completing CASA, he intends to pursue an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies, and, in the future, a career in diplomacy.

Alexandra Siegel graduated this year from Tufts University with a B.A. in Arabic and International Relations. She studied abroad in Amman in 2009 (University of Jordan) and has participated in the Middlebury Summer Arabic Language Program. Most recently, she completed a senior thesis on gender differences in Palestinian and Israeli public opinion on the peace process. She is very excited to have the opportunity to study in Cairo as a CASA fellow this year!

James Spencer graduated this year from George Washington University with degrees in Political Science and International Relations. Linguistically, he has studied Arabic in Alexandria, Egypt at the TAFL center and taught English to Egyptians. After CASA he plans to work for an international consultancy firm involved in Egypt and later to attend the Contemporary Arab Studies program at Georgetown University.

Rachel Sternfeld is a doctoral student in political science at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research focuses on commercial media in the Arab world. She has a M.A. from SOAS (London) and a B.S. from NYU.

Stephen Strigle graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in May 2011 with a B.A. in Arab Cultures and American History. In addition Stephen has participated in the AUC ALI program summer 2010 and in the UVA-Yarmouk University Summer Arabic program summer 2009. After CASA, Stephen hopes to work for the U.S. State Department analyzing foreign politics.

Jana Suleiman will be graduating from Harvard University with a B.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in May 2011. She has studied Arabic for 3 years while at Harvard. She recently completed an honors thesis on creative, nonviolent resistance in Palestine. After CASA, she hopes to return to graduate school to obtain both a M.A. and Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies.

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Raphael Vagliano graduated in 2009 from Columbia University with a B.A. in Political Science. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Damascus, Syria. During his year and four months in Damascus, in addition to continuing his Arabic studies, he freelanced for a local English-language newspaper and interned at the Office of the UNHCR, where he worked primarily with non-Iraqi refugees. He intends to work for a humanitarian organization within the Middle East in the future.

Andrew Watrous received his A.B. from Princeton University in 2009. He lived in Morocco after graduating, where he studied coalition bargaining in city councils. He has studied Arabic in Cairo, Fes, and Vermont. He intends to pursue a Ph.D. in political science.

Michael White graduated in December of 2010 from Brigham Young University in Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic with a minor in Philosophy. He has studied Arabic in both Jordan and Egypt and plans on obtaining a Ph.D. in Arabic Linguistics.

Julie Yelle received her B.S. in Foreign Service in Regional Studies of the Middle East in 2008 from Georgetown University. She has maintained her focus on the Middle East and North Africa while working in the areas of civic education, conflict resolution, youth empowerment, community development, and democracy assistance.

Summer Only Fellow

Susanna Ferguson graduated from Yale University in 2009 with a B.A. in History and is currently pursuing a M.A. in Near Eastern Studies at NYU. She has studied Arabic in Syria and Oman. Her interests include gender, development, activism, and human rights in the Middle East, as well as the politics of Syria and Lebanon. After participating in the CASA program for summer 2011, she will return to NYU to finish her degree, and hopes to either apply to Ph.D. programs in Middle Eastern History or work in the nonprofit sector after graduation.