

Damascus Full Year Fellows 2008-2009

Meagan Bridges received her M.A. in Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University in May 2008. Before that, she studied political science at Duke University and graduated in May 2006 with a B.A. She has been studying Arabic for 5 years. Her primary interests include journalism and local media development in the Arab world. She is also interested in Arabic-English translation and hopes to enter the business immediately after completing CASA.

Cole Bunzel graduated from Princeton University in 2008 with a B.A. in Near Eastern Studies. He has studied Arabic previously in Damascus (summer 2006) and Cairo (summer 2007), as well as at Princeton, where he also studied Persian. He plans to pursue higher degrees in Middle East/Islamic studies.

Leah Caldwell was born and raised in Houston, Texas and is currently working toward obtaining an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. She has worked as a journalist and researcher for the past few years, but her current research interests lie in understanding the practical applications of the Shi'a Marja'iyya.

Adam Coogle is currently a M.A. candidate at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University with a focus in culture and society. He holds a B.A. in Religion and B.S. in International Affairs from Florida State University. Academically, he is interested in issues pertaining to the various Christian communities throughout the Middle East. Directly after finishing the CASA program in Damascus, he will return to Washington and resume his studies at Georgetown.

Peter Glanville is a doctoral student in Arabic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is interested in Arabic syntax and phonology, as well as Arabic sociolinguistics. He became interested in Arabic after spending some time in the Middle East teaching English. After graduating in 2025 he hopes to teach Arabic and Arabic linguistics at a university in America or Britain.

Chris Gratien graduated this year from Georgetown University with a M.A. in Arab Studies. His academic interests are history and linguistics. After completing CASA, he would like to pursue a Ph.D. in History or Middle Eastern Studies.

Rachel Levine graduated with a B.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago in March 2008. As an undergraduate she organized a weekly Arabic-language lecture series and taught adult Arabic classes. Since graduating she has worked as a translator for an immigration law firm and for various non-profit organizations. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Arabic Literature upon completion of her CASA fellowship.

Ruth McDonough graduated this year from Swarthmore College with a B.A. in Religion and minors in Linguistics and Peace & Conflict Studies. Her interests range from Syrian food preparation to modern Arabic literature. After completing CASA, Ruth plans to

apply her studies to encouraging cross-cultural education in America and the Arabic-speaking world. Eventually, she would like to pursue further education in Arabic Language and Literature.

Jeannie Miller is currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University, and plans to write her dissertation on Abbasid prose literature.

Maria del Rosario Jazmin Puignau is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. She has a B.A. in Political Science and Economics and got her M.A. in Political Strategy. Formerly she worked as a consultant and TV broadcaster as well as journalist. She teaches Arabic and Italian at SBCC. Currently she is working on Islamic and Christian political theory. Her dissertation is focused on the genre “Mirror for Princes” and the translation process which took place in Italy and Spain.

Zachary Queen graduated this year from Brigham Young University with a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies/Arabic and Russian. He spent last summer studying Arabic in Amman, Jordan. He’s particularly interested in the language itself, especially the local Syrian dialect. He plans to work for a few years before pursuing a M.A. in Arabic Linguistics. He would like to end up teaching.

Ryan Rittenberg graduated from Cornell University in 2004 with a B.A. in Near Eastern Studies. He is currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Pennsylvania in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. He is interested in early Islamic commercial law.

Alexandre Roberts graduated this year from Princeton University with an A.B. in Physics and a certificate in Near Eastern Studies. His academic interests center primarily on the history of the Middle Eastern world during the early centuries of Islam. After CASA, he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in History.

Erika Solomon graduated this year from Harvard University with a B.A. in History and Literature. During and after CASA, she will be on a Harvard research grant, collecting oral narratives from Iraqi refugees. She later plans to pursue a higher degree in Middle Eastern History and Literature, and is particularly interested in studying oral and written historiography.

Sarah Standish graduated from Barnard College with a B.A. in Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures and Human Rights in May 2008. She has studied in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, and this makes her all the more happy to be in Syria now. After completing CASA, she hopes to work with a non-governmental organization on issues of refugees and human rights in the Middle East, and eventually would like to pursue a degree in Middle Eastern history.