The Tibetan Studies program in MESAS is a partnership between the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, the Department of Religion, and the Emory-Tibet Partnership. The Tibetan language program in MESAS is also linked to the Tibetan Studies Program in Dharamsala, India, administered by Emory’s Center for International Studies Abroad (CIPA). Tibetan language was first incorporated into MESAS in 1998. Over the years, there has been a steady growth of students interested in learning Tibetan language, especially among those hailing from South Asian countries and China. Tibetan language is offered at the elementary, intermediate, and conversational levels. Except for some graduate students specializing in West and South Asian Religions in the Graduate Division of Religion, the majority of students have shown greater interest in developing the colloquial form of the Tibetan language over the classical. Accordingly, every effort is being made to groom students to gain the necessary skills in spoken Tibetan from the 101 through the 102 levels. Thereafter, they are encouraged to join immersion programs such as CIPA’s Tibetan Studies Program in Dharamsala, India.

Because of the vibrancy of interest in Tibetan studies among students and faculty from across Emory, in the fall of 2013 MESAS launched expanded courses on Tibetan culture and history at the introductory level. Consequently, courses on Tibetan History (MESAS 270) and Tibetan Culture (MESAS 370) were offered for the first time in Emory College. These courses have been well received, and I have personally found teaching them to be a very rewarding and challenging journey. Student enrollment in these courses as well as in Tibetan language has grown steadily. Without a doubt, much credit for this goes to His Holiness the Dalai Lama frequent visits to Emory, his acceptance of the position of Presidential Distinguished Professor at Emory in 2007, and above all, his consistent efforts in bringing people and cultures of diverse origins closer for global harmony and peace. The frequent presence of maroon-robed Tibetan monks in the Emory-Science Initiatives program has also piqued interest in Tibetan culture and history. Another important factor is the growing interest in China and the current political, social and humanitarian issues facing Tibet. With the growth of information technology in the hands of our students, many seek a better understanding of the dichotomy between Chinese and Tibetan cultural and historical realities. Emory’s open academic atmosphere provides one of the best platforms to fulfill this need by providing contending views in the classroom and avoiding the discourses of cultural hegemony. Emory deserves considerable credit for including instruction on Tibetan language, culture and history as a part of its curriculum. For me personally the real beauty and most important blessing of the program has been to learn something new from our students and colleagues every day.

-Desphak Rigzin
Instructor and Language Coordinator in Tibetan Since 2000

The Persian Studies program at Emory is one of the few in the Southeastern United States and is a major part of the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Central Asian Studies (MESAS). The program offers a major and minor in Persian as well as graduate study leading to an M.A. degree and a Ph.D. program in Islamic Civilizations Studies (ICIVS). The Persian Studies program at Emory was established in 1988, and has been named a partner program in the Persian Studies Network of the Association for Asian Studies since the program’s inception. The growth of information technology and the increasing interest in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Central Asian Studies have contributed significantly to the growth of the Persian Studies program at Emory. Currently, the Persian Studies program offers courses in all levels from elementary to advanced, as well as supervised reading courses for graduate and undergraduate students interested in special studies in the fields of Persian language, literature and culture. Undergraduate students have the option to minor in Persian while Persian is one of the required languages for the graduate program in Islamic Civilizations Studies. Since fall 2013, MESAS has offered two more courses on Persian and Iranian studies. MESAS 190, Language and Politics in Iran and Central Asia, is a freshman seminar that addresses the political ramifications of linguistic diversity and language conflict in Iran, Afghanistan and the five newly independent states of Central Asia, plus the neighboring regions of the Caucasus, Turkey and Pakistan. The course tries to answer questions about such concepts as ethnicity, language diversity, political power and language policy, nationalism, and modern nation-states.

The course MESAS 270, Viewing Iran through its Cinema, deals with contemporary Iranian society and the social issues it faces. Cinema is the most popular medium for depicting and analyzing social, political and intellectual life in the modern world.
In its 100 year history, Iranian cinema has developed considerably and, as one of the major film industries of the Middle East, reflects various aspects of Iranian culture and social life. This course provides an overview of Iranian society through its cinema, especially since the 1979 Iranian revolution. This revolution changed the political and social scene of Iran and affected the whole Middle East region dramatically. Through readings and especially movies produced by internationally known Iranian filmmakers, the course provides a means for studying the main social problems of Iranian society: the Islamic Revolution and its impact on Iranian social and political life, the eight-year war with Iraq and its human and political consequences; the situation of women, gender and political consequences; and modernity; immigration and emigration and how they have affected the political and demographic texture of Iranian society; and the moral crisis that has resulted from all of these intertwined issues. As with all art, cinema is not only a mirror for all of these aspects of society but is also a tool in the hands of the artist for interpreting them.

Hossein Samei  
Senior Lecturer and Language Coordinator in Persian

South Asian Studies

Students in MESAS 270, Popular Culture in India, address three important questions through the course: “What is popular?” “What is Culture?” and “What is India?” Through readings, class discussions, activities, and course projects, students address contemporary social issues reflected in cultural elements such as literature, religion, film, fashion, food, and music. Examples of student projects include a comparison of gender stereotypes in classical literature with those found in modern comic books and an analysis of the evolution of the figure of the courtesan in Bollywood cinema. The class discussions draw on the perspectives of students from diverse backgrounds with diverse interests, many of whom have no connection to India at all. Through this course students develop their ability to analyze primary material source material, develop, support, and modify arguments, present information to a diverse audience, lead discussions in a multicultural and interdisciplinary context, and communicate clearly and effectively through various media. In addition to developing these skills, students will leave the course with greater exposure to and appreciation of modern Indian culture and an understanding of issues surrounding diversity in Indian and global contexts.

MESAS 370, Cultural Nationalism in South Asia, situates the countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh within their historical contexts and compares the ideas of national culture presented from different perspectives. Through which cultural forms do people express a national identity? What brings ethnically and religiously diverse people together as a nation? What does it mean for Pakistan to be an Islamic Republic and has this changed during periods of military rule? How have notions of Hindu nationalism evolved and how do they operate in a secular state? How are ideas of national belonging reflected upon the peoples of these nations and the territories they inhabit? Questions such as these provoke classroom discussions that draw on students’ analyses of primary and secondary sources. Students gain exposure to the works of independence era figures and the formation of these nations in a global and historical context. The works, understanding, and movements of major figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Swami Vivekananda, Benazir Bhutto, Jinnah, Singh, Bhindranwale, Salman Rushdie (who has been known to make an in-class appearance), and Narendra Modi, to name a few, introduce students to the evolving ideas and tensions of nationalhood and national belonging in South Asia and provide students with the opportunity to reflect on similar notions in other parts of the world.

- Elliott McCarter  
Instructor and Language Coordinator in Hindi-Urdu

MESAS 370 Gandhi: Non-Violence and Freedom  
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), more popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi, became a legend in his own lifetime. His thought, actions, and especially his non-violent political philosophy acquired followers across the world. His non-violence has been described not just as idealistic preaching, but also as a political tool and was an inspiration for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. His economics are gaining ground among people who are looking for an alternative to the consumer society that relentlessly demands the earth’s resources.

In his own lifetime, Gandhi inspired a devoted mass following, evoked serious criticism and even violent confrontation, which led in the end to his assassination by a fundamentalist Hindu. Among national leaders in India, B. R. Ambedkar, who represented the untouchables, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who represented Muslims, clashed with him, while Nehru was critical of him but faithfully followed him. World leaders such as Nelson Mandela were inspired by him and David Ben-Gurion of Israel hung a picture of him in his bedroom. Admiration for Gandhi as well as criticism of his thought and leadership continues to the present day. There are as many hagiographic writings about him as there are critical monographs. Dozens of scholars have studied his life and the work continues.

-V. Narayana Rao  
Visiting Distinguished Professor of South Asian Studies
Modern Hebrew Program

MESAs Modern Hebrew program offers a three year sequence of instruction in the language in addition to more advanced fourth year topic classes in Hebrew literature, media and linguistics, as well as directed study in Hebrew for students with advanced levels of proficiency. Hebrew students can pursue various summer intensive programs in the U.S. and Israel, and take advantage of Emory study abroad opportunities.

In addition to Hebrew language courses, Hebrew students are also encouraged to select from a series of cross-listed content courses, which explore modern and contemporary Israel from different perspectives.

In-depth reading of fiction (prose and poetry) and documents provide students from all backgrounds with an understanding that goes beyond headlines of the multicultural challenges of the state. Topics such as cultural, religious, political, and literary traditions. The term "Israel literature" refers to Modern Hebrew Literature authored by Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Israeli authors in the Middle East after the establishment of the Jewish state. Palestinian literature is produced by Palestinians divided by different geographic locations (Israel, Occupied Territories, Palestinian Diaspora) and languages (Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French). The goal of this course is to illuminate the ways in which Jews and Arabs narrate their national identities and claims of belonging to the same country, which they co-inhabit.

Modern Hebrew Literature covers the Zionist revival and is authored in Yiddish and Hebrew by European, American, and Palestinian Jews, prior to 1948. Israeli Literature is territory- and state-defined and authored in Hebrew by Jews and Arabs after 1948. Israeli-Palestinian Literature analyzes stories and poems composed by Arabs and Jews who are separated by different but intersecting historical, religious, political, and linguistic traditions. The term "Israel literature" refers to Modern Hebrew Literature authored by Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Israeli authors in the Middle East after the establishment of the Jewish state. Palestinian literature is produced by Palestinians divided by different geographic locations (Israel, Occupied Territories, Palestinian Diaspora) and languages (Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French). The goal of this course is to illuminate the ways in which Jews and Arabs narrate their national identities and claims of belonging to the land that they co-inhabit, and to develop a better understanding of the cultural dimensions of the Middle East conflict.

- Ofer Yeivin
Associate Professor
of Hebrew Language, Literature, and Culture

On a typical day at Sarah College, I wake up at 6 A.M. to go to guided meditation in the temple. Breakfast would consist of eggs, cereal, jam, instant coffee, and juice. We had Tibetan language class every morning after breakfast. Then we would have either Tibetan Culture or Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. We ate lunch with our Tibetan roommates in either the cafeteria or the kitchen and dining area. In the afternoon, we would do our homework and wash our laundry by hand. We would also walk around the area or take a taxi up to McLeod Ganj to explore the area. In the evenings, we would have Tibetan language class again where we would practice speaking with our roommates. Sometimes we would watch movies together at night with a projector in the lounge library. Though sometimes we stayed up late talking, singing, studying, and baking, we often ended up going to bed earlier than we would back home so we could get up in the morning for breakfast and meditation. The six weeks at Sarah College were the most structured part of the experience. We spent another three weeks with host families, a week on our own travelling (Spring Break), and six weeks on our own at the Kalsang Guest House in McLeod Ganj.

On the weekends we went on field trips to various places which corresponded to our current section in the Tibetan Culture class. A major trip we embarked on together was a four day pilgrimage to Tso Pema (Lotus Lake). We hiked around the Bir settlement, visited the cave of Guru Rinpoche, and learned about the story of how he created the lake out of his burning body when the king attempted to execute him for teaching his daughter the Dharma. When the king discovered Guru Rinpoche alive within a lotus flower floating on the lake, he repented and converted to Buddhism. We hung prayer flags with names of ourselves and those we loved on a hill near the cave. We also enjoyed a ton of Indian food!

Besides the knowledge of Tibetan language, religion, and culture, I grew as a person. The experience in India made me feel empowered, because I accomplished what I did not think I could - travelling abroad and writing a 35-page independent research paper on Tibetan Buddhist mums. Before embarking on this journey, the thought of travelling and conducting research in India terrified me, but I left assured that I could conquer the world. The people you meet remain as friends even after you have returned to the states. You will be running around a lot of the time, but also have time for reflection in the lovely surroundings at the foothills of the Himalayas. The intensive learning experience does not require you to know Hindi or Tibetan, and you will be surprised how much you accomplish in a few months. The Independent Research period prepares students for Honors projects. You will study Tibetan Buddhist philosophy under Geshe Kelzang Wangyal, the first woman to be named a Geshe (highest degree in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy). You will have private audiences with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness the Karmapa. You will commune with Tibetan activists and artists. The Dharamsala program encourages students to accept their failings, to keep moving forward, and to be the best they can be, both personally and interpersonally.

EMORY TIBETAN STUDIES PROGRAM

SHARES HER EXPERIENCE WITH THE EMORY TIBETAN STUDIES PROGRAM

College Senior Elizabeth Hennig

On this journey, the thought of travelling and conducting research in India terrified me, but I left assured that I could conquer the world. The people you meet remain as friends even after you have returned to the states. You will be running around a lot of the time, but also have time for reflection in the lovely surroundings at the foothills of the Himalayas. The intensive learning experience does not require you to know Hindi or Tibetan, and you will be surprised how much you accomplish in a few months. The Independent Research period prepares students for Honors projects. You will study Tibetan Buddhist philosophy under Geshe Kelzang Wangyal, the first woman to be named a Geshe (highest degree in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy). You will have private audiences with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness the Karmapa. You will commune with Tibetan activists and artists. The Dharamsala program encourages students to accept their failings, to keep moving forward, and to be the best they can be, both personally and interpersonally.
I FRANE, MOROCCO

COLLEGE SENIORS KADIYA SY AND NAVEED HADA SHARE WHAT IT’S LIKE AT THE EMMORY ARABIC LANGUAGE AND NORTH AFRICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

KS: When I first got there I couldn’t understand the local dialect. When we arrived in Fes, our guide helped us with our luggage and introduced us to Moroccan music, as our cars came to a stop. We talked about Arab Idols.

NH: On a typical day, I’d wake up around 7, grab my khobeza fromage (bread and cheese) from the cafeteria, and be in class by 8.

KS: We would have regular classes until noon and then we would focus on tea, calligraphy, tajweed, and music for an hour before we would have lunch.

NH: After lunch we’d sit together as a group to do homework because there was quite a lot of it. By 7 or 8 we’d be free to go get dinner, hang out, or go to the souk. This is where the people of Morocco really open up, get immersed in the local culture.

KS: The program also arranged for three weekend trips. One to Marrakesh, one to Volubilis – a Roman ruin – and one to Merzouga – the desert area.

NH: We were at Marrakesh during Ramadam and after the breaking of the fast, it was magical. We went to this place called Jemaa El-Fnaa. It’s a center in Marrakesh where we saw snake charmers, henna artists, people with monkeys and birds, lots of food vendors, and musicians.

NH: As a student you go there to improve your Arabic skills so you try to speak Arabic the majority of the time. There are sometimes words or phrases you can’t seem to say so you have to express it in English.

KS: We heavily relied on our Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) but were able to use some of the Moroccan dialect we learned. I felt like the people of Morocco were willing to work with people wanting to use MSA to get around. They would even sometimes speak in Levantine or Egyptian dialect expecting students to more readily understand it. They’d even teach you some phrases if you were finding something particularly difficult.

NH: I would highly recommend this program. You meet new people, get immersed in the culture, and understand how people and societies function first hand.

T ELHALIF, ISRAEL

COLLEGE JUNIOR FAITHYOUN HUH AND SENIOR AZIZ MACPHERSON BROWN SHARE WHAT IT’S LIKE TO DIG AT THE EMMORY ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

FYH: On a typical day, we’d wake up early so we could be at the lab by 5 AM. We’d work until 8 and then have breakfast. Afterwards, we’d work until 12:30 with a short 15 minute break at 11. By then we’d have lunch, take a rest from the lab until 4. Then we’d do some pottery washing in the lab. You find a lot of pottery! We’d also have a lecture there and then have dinner. After that we’d have our free time and then start back over the next day! There’s different from other programs because it doesn’t have a regular classroom setting. The lectures in the afternoons are in the labs where artifacts are photographed and catalogued.

AMB: We stayed at a kibbutz that was beautiful. Everyone there was very nice to us.

FYH: There were some volunteers that were our age. We were right next to the residents and usually in the area when we were going on the weekend trips. These trips were trips built into the program and we saw many parts of Israel. In the south, we visited where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. We also toured Jerusalem. In Northern Israel we visited Dan, Meggido, Hatzor, Caesarea Maritima, the Sea of Galilee, and Tibetar.

AMB: You never really stop doing archaeology; we went on a hiking trip on a free day and went to a Byzantine church just down the road. The first thing we did at work was clear away all the brush at the dig site. We continued another square someone dug out of from a previous season.

FYH: This is a field school. You’ll teach you anything you need to know there so you don’t really need to know how to dig beforehand. Even for those whose interest isn’t in Israel, it provides good experience that will be needed to assist on digs in other locations. Most importantly you learn a lot of things you can’t learn in the classroom because you actually apply those concepts in the field.

AMB: It looks like paradise there. There was a lemon tree outside our house with a picnic table under it. It was relaxing to just sit under it and observe nature. After work, we would climb up the hill just to watch the sun set over the landscape.
The Islamic Civilizations Studies (ICIVS) Ph.D. program at Emory University offers a unified thematic approach to the global impact of Islamic civilizations. Focusing on the trans-regional and trans-national connections that have been part of Islamic civilizations from the beginning, the program promotes a multi-perspectival examination of Islamic civilizations by drawing on the multiple disciplines of Emory's faculty. By using a broad-based, trans-regional, and multidisciplinary approach to understanding and analyzing the Islamic world, graduates of the ICIVS program will be well prepared to assess and make sense of the momentous changes that have and are taking place in this region in a wide range of professional capacities.

The ICIVS Program was founded in 2011. The first class of students enrolled in Fall 2013. The program will welcome its third class of students in fall 2015 and is growing stronger each year, with a current total of eight students. In the section below, current ICIVS students talk about their work.

**Jeremy Farrell**

**Research Interests:** Islamic asceticism; literary constructs of asceticism in classical and medieval Arabic literature; textual studies and codicology; poetics of ritual; modern Arabic poetry; translation

I came to Emory planning to work on Sufi Quran commentaries in the late pre-modern period. In my coursework I fell in love with the commentary of the prolific Ottoman scholar and Sufi Ismail Hakki Bursevi (1653-1725). However, in order to do justice to the study of Bursevi and his work, I realized that I needed to better understand the Ottoman context in which he wrote. Accordingly, I have begun studying Modern Turkish with the intent of later studying Ottoman Turkish and researching Ottoman political and intellectual history. I am studying Turkish in Turkey this summer and plan to conduct further research in Turkey in the next two years.

**Rahimjon Abdugafurov**

**Research Interests:** Muslim views about non-Muslims, specifically Christians and Jews; Islamic law; Islamic mystical theology; Islamic humanism; constructive theology; Islamic philosophy

Initially, my research project was on Muslim views about Christians and Jews from an Islamic legal point of view, specifically on fatwas or Islamic legal opinions from Central Asia. As a result of my studies and working closely with premier professors at Emory University, my research focus has been transformed into a more concrete project, which includes views, not only from an Islamic legal perspective, but also from the perspectives of Islamic Humanism, Constructive Theology, and Islamic Mysticism. One of the Muslim thinkers who included all these fields in his works is Abd al-Karim al-Jili (d. 1424), a native of Baghdad, who wrote over thirty books on Islamic Theology, Mysticism, Philosophical and other subjects. He was a religious pluralist and humanist. He gave substantial attention to non-Muslims, specifically Christians and Jews in his works. What is most important about his works is his humanism. Jili’s humanism centers on the fact that all people are descendants of Adam. He believed that humans are judged by God based on what they do more than in what they believe. My research goal is to bring forth an alternative discourse from an open-minded Muslim scholar and offer it to discussions of Muslim relations with non-Muslims today.

**Donohon Abdugafurova**

**Research Interests:** Sufi women from Turkistan who lived in late 18th and early 19th centuries; oral traditions of Turkic peoples

I'm particularly interested in the relationship between music makers and music listeners in the Muslim world. In the case of Qawwali music, musicians' performance practices and performance styles are largely dictated by Sufi leaders. I'm interested in exploring the ways in which musicians take advantage of alternative performance contexts to experiment with new expressive elements while avoiding censorship by religious authorities.

**Issac Foster**

**Research Interests:** Role of music and musical practices in Islamic culture and religious contestations of authority and authenticity within Islam; Persian and South Asian samā' rituals

Women's vibrant voices as writers and poetsesses emerged in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I'm interested in exploring the ways in which these women writers enriches scholarship on women's involvement in Islamic civilizations.
I spent this last academic year at Emory’s humanities center, the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, and had the opportunity to work on a number of projects, some old and some new. I was able to complete an Arabic edition and translation, under the English title Disagreements of the Jurists, of Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib (literally, the Conflicting Hermeneutic Principles of the Islamic Legal Schools) by the tenth-century Isma’ili author al-Qadi al-Nu’man. The appearance of this new edition and translation is significant for several reasons. Al-Qadi al-Nu’man (d. 363A.H. / 974 A.D.) is arguably the most important author in the history of Isma’ili Shi’ite Islam. He single-handedly established the Isma’ili legal system as well as the Isma’ili traditions of hadith and tafsir, and he counts among the most prominent Isma’ili authors on theological matters, including the Imamate, the legitimate leadership of the Muslim community. As the chief judge and ideologue of the Fatimid Empire, he played an instrumental role in bolstering their legitimacy and establishing their institutions. His major work on law, Da’i al-Islam (The Pillars of Islam), the standard legal text for Isma’ili Muslims from the tenth century until the present, was translated by Asaf Ali Ashgar Fyzie and Isma’il Poonawala; the revised version was published in 2000 and 2002. Now, this translation of Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib makes the theories of scriptural interpretation on which al-Qadi al-Nu’man based his legal scholarship available to a wider audience. Together, the two works represent a major part not only of the oeuvre of al-Qadi al-Nu’man but also of Fatimid heritage, a legacy that was ravaged by the Ayyubid dynasty and preserved primarily by the Egyptian antiquarian al-Maqrizi, who, though a Sunni, had a curious fascination with the Fatimids, and by the Ismailis themselves, who preserved Fatimid works in private, often secret libraries. Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib has been known to scholars in Islamic studies since the mid-twentieth century. In 1955, Fyzie provided a concise outline of the content of the Ikhtilaf in a collected volume on law in the Middle East. In 1969, he expressed the hope someone would undertake the study and publication of al-Qadi al-Nu’man’s work Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib. In the early 1970s this call was answered, and two editions of the work were published, in 1972 and 1973. The 1972 edition was completed at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Simla by Shamoon Tayib Lokhandwalla, a scholar who had completed a dissertation on the early history of Isma’ili law at Oxford. His edition included an extensive introductory essay discussing the work and its place in the history of Islamic jurisprudence. The 1973 edition was produced by Mustafa Ghalib, an Isma’ili scholar from Syria who has edited many Isma’ili works. The Arabic text for the new edition was established primarily on two manuscripts kept at the Institute for Ismaili Studies. While all the accessible manuscripts copies are of late date, it was possible to correct many of the errors and infelicities found in the two editions published by Lokhandwalla and Mustafa Ghalib, the apparatus provides a full list of significant variants from the two manuscripts and from Lokhandwalla’s edition.

This is the first translation of the work into any language. Completed ca. 348 A.H. / 957 A.D., Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib is a sustained critique of Sunni legal hermeneutics, essentially a refutation of the Sunni genre of usul al-fiqh, legal theory. In it, al-Qadi al-Nu’man presents a Shi’ite system of legal hermeneutics, stressing the authority of the Imam and arguing that law must be based on three sources: the Qur’an, the Sunnah or the example of the Prophet Muhammad as preserved in hadith reports, and the statements of the Imams. He critiques the main hermeneutic principles of the Sunnis, including taqallid (the acceptance of opinions on authority), ijmā’ (consensus), qiyas (analogies), ra’y (sound judgment), ijtihad (independent interpretation), istilhāf (jurisprudential preference), istiṣlah (inference), and nazar (speculative reason), arguing that they all involve the subjective judgment of the jurist and are not justified by scriptural texts. The work is particularly interesting for another reason: it preserves a large number of quotations and arguments from early Sunni works of legal theory that are not extant, and so provides evidence for Sunni intellectual history not found elsewhere. The work, I argue, is based to a large extent on al-Wusul ila Ma’rifat al-Iṣlaḥ (Access to Knowledge of Legal Theory) by Muhammad ibn Dawud (d. 297 A.H. / 909 A.D.), the son of the founder of the Zahirī school of law, which was extremely influential in the ninth and tenth centuries but subsequently died out. Ikhtilaf Usul al-Madhahib is thus the second most important source of Zahirī jurisprudence after the works of the famous Ibn Hazm.

Other lost sources quoted in the work include Ibn al-Ikhshid al-Baghdadī’s Kitāb al-‘Ilmā’ (The Book of Consensus) and other Mu’tazili works that remain to be identified. I also worked on a mono-graph discussing the role of rhyme and rhythm in the Qur’an. One piece of this project which I completed is the article “Divine Epithets and the Dibacchius Clausulae in the Qur’an,” which appeared in the Journal of Qur’anic Studies 15.2 (2013): 22-44. Inspired by Latin rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian, I sought to detect passages in the penultimate and ultimate feet of Qur’anic verses formed a clear rhetorical pattern in combination. This method had not been explored in the history of Arabic rhetoric, which focused on the last metrical foot of Qur’anic verses.
At the heart of my two books, a third one in progress, and the scholarly articles that I have published in India and the West, I became particularly interested in these questions in the course of my work for a DPhil in History at the University of Oxford (1996-2000) in which I explored the domestic world of the early Mughal emperors of India. Historical writing on pre-colonial India had for too long concentrated on warfare, political and administrative institutions, economic conditions, and trade of the Mughal Empire. The paucity of challenging social histories of this period was striking. What lay behind this were two particularly intriguing assumptions. One was a belief in the existence of sharply separated public and private domains in pre-colonial (as in colonial and post-colonial) South Asia, with the Mughal private sphere collapsed into a stereotypical image of something called the harem. The second was an assumption about the inadequacy of source materials for social history. A leading historian once asked, ‘How will you write a history of the domestic life of the Mughals? There are no sources for it?’

In spite of this historiographical ultimatum about sources, my dissertation and the book that came out of it, Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World (CUP, 2005), showed that other kinds of histories could be written. The problem I suggested, is not one of sources alone; it is about the politics of history writing. The sources exist for very different kinds of histories, as long as the right questions are asked. I focused, for instance, on the memoir of a Mughal princess, Gulbadan Banu Begum, an aunt of the Mughal king Akbar (1556-1605). Scholars had been aware of this source, especially since its translation and publication in English in 1902, but it had remained peripheral in previous writings. Through an exploration of mundane details regarding the so-called soft society of women and children via accounts such as Gulbadan’s, my book unfolded the domestic world of sixteenth century Mughal kings. Detailing the complex relations in which noble men and women negotiated their everyday lives, and the public-political affairs conducted in the inner quarters as well as the outer courts, I drew attention to the historically specific meanings, the richness and the ambiguity of Mughal domestic life.

A principal proposition of my work was that the coming into being of a more institutionalized harem under Akbar was part of the making of a new Mughal imperium. The first two Mughal kings spent much of their lives wandering in Afghanistan, Central Asia and India, with courts and harams following them in camps. Their better-known successors, Akbar, built the first grand sandstone palaces and haram. The domestic world was pivotal in the transition towards imperial exaltation and regulation.

My reading of Gulbadan Banu Begum’s memoir brought to life a complex sphere of domestic relations: her memoir depicted the Mughal family as altering over time, being creative, contradictory, and very fluid in terms of personal relationships and kinship structures. Returning to the domain of official chronicles in the light of ‘peripherally’ sources such as Gulbadan’s allowed many new findings to appear. On the basis of this ‘rediscovered’ archive, I suggested a number of new ways in which Mughal social history could be written. As a gendered and more self-consciously political history, my book showed that a history of court life cannot simply be hived off from mainstream political history as supplementary. Indeed, an account such as the one I put forward served to reopen other questions of crucial importance in Mughal history, including the very processes of the making of an empire, and the establishment of distinct court ceremonials and symbols of grandeur.

The obvious sequel to Domesticity and Power would have been a second book, dealing with the later Mughals. I decided, however, to break what might become a mere extension of my previous work, and perhaps a repetition of my original propositions, transposed onto the more archivally accessible later Mughals. Instead, I chose to explore issues of domesticity, women’s education and reform in a later period - the long nineteenth century - that marked the transition from late Mughal to colonial society. Here, other issues emerged. One was the overwhelming historiographical focus on the nature of colonialism, from the 1870s onwards. Although women had been at the heart of the colonial and reformist writings, their image was frozen. Actual life stages such as girlhood disappeared, and there was no history of girls becoming women. The so-called ‘lack of sources’ problem appeared again. Deliberately beginning with the 1800s, and harking back to textual traditions even earlier, my second book Coming of Age in Nineteenth Century India: The Girl-Child and the Art of Playfulness (CUP, 2013) opens up the archive for histories of the girl-child and woman. By using a diverse range of texts in Hindi, Urdu, and Persian - didactic and fictional accounts, tales, instruction manuals, biographies, and family portraits - I critique linear models of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. I re-suscitate and describe the playfulness and creativity of girls and women even in the confining circumstances of the nineteenth century. I explore the sexuality, emotion, adventurousness, friendship and potential of women - many critical facets of the female subject - as articulated in four different sites: forest, school, household, and rooftops.

As I was examining these female worlds of decoration, and freedom in my two books on pre-modern and early modern India, I received an invitation from Random House (India) to write a ‘critical biography’ of Mughal Empress Nur Jahan. Nur Jahan is an iconic figure, legendary and celebrated in popular memory; yet there is no definitive history of her time and activities. The only substantial study on her came out more than twenty years ago. The invitation to write about her allowed me to return to the Mughals and take the questions of evidence, historiographical imagination, and the making of feminine worlds, to a wider public domain. Under contract with WW Norton (USA/UK) and Random House-Penguin (India), some draft chapters of the book are now under review by the editor.
When I was eleven, I went to Israel for a two-month visit to see a lot of archaeological sites, religious sites, and visit family. I became fascinated with the Middle East while I was there. Towards the end of that trip, Sharon came to the temple mount, and I saw a huge battle erupt. I climbed up the Mount of Olives, and looking down at the temple mount I watched what was happening around Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. I saw people running away from people shooting and saw clouds of tear gas. There were funerals every day, and it seemed like the world was collapsing around me. The experience left its mark on me, and I became interested in the region.

In lieu of taking classes in the traditional school system, I began auditing classes at Emory when I was thirteen. My experience in Israel led me to enroll in Arabic when I first began auditing classes at Emory. My first Arabic class was a few days before 9/11. A lot of students wanted to take Arabic after it happened, but I managed to get into the class beforehand. As soon as I started taking Arabic, I became much more interested in the whole concept of conflict.

During my junior year, I enrolled in an intensive summer study program at the Arabic Language Institute at the University of Damascus. I visited a friend I met at Emory and her family in Beirut after classes ended. I ended up there a few days before the 2006 Lebanon War. I was stuck there for a week in south-central Beirut, about a mile and a half from the bombings. I felt a mix of fascination and deep anger. I was witnessing history; this is the kind of thing I had been studying for the past 5 years. This was the stuff of my major. I had been studying history, studying wars, studying conflict, studying what happened in Israel, and here I was in Beirut witnessing this war. It was absolutely mind-boggling to be on the ground witnessing what I had been learning.

Finding myself in the middle of a war for a second time cemented my desire to focus on conflict resolution. After I graduated, I enrolled in the MA Program in Middle Eastern Studies at the American University of Beirut. I also got a job as an intern reporter for the Daily Star newspaper where I covered topics like musical festivals, business, and politics. I was fortunate enough to cover a few major political stories about the war, including the prisoner exchange and the reconstruction. I wrote a paper entitled ‘UNIFIL Mandate and Rules of Engagement’, Middle East Policy and Society, Volume 1, (AUB, 2009). It examines how rules of engagement are a political statement that dictates policy. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon’s ROE changed after the 2006 invasion of southern Lebanon. Even since the change, they’ve been deemed a failure, because their ROE is incapable of addressing the goals of their mandate.

I finished the program and worked as a fellow in the Senate under the newly elected Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) under her foreign policy advisor for about a year. As a fellow I aided in drafting her cybersecurity law, preparing her trip to Israel, performing legal research, and writing letters to officials like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. What drew me to the senate was my desire to see how foreign policy is drafted and enacted. My time in the senate made me realize that economics influences every decision being made, so I wanted to focus on business.

After my fellowship ended, I started working for Global Business Reports as a journalist and eventually became a project director. My work took me to Kazakhstan, Turkey, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and China. I focused primarily on topics relating to the energy, mining, chemical and pharmaceutical industries. As an investment journalist, I spent a lot of time with CEOs. I was fascinated to hear the stories of how they started and managed their large companies and I realized I wanted to be in their shoes making the decisions.

As a journalist I was constantly recording all my interviews and realizing that transcribing them was frustrating. The tools available were not adequate, and it was difficult to find people to consistently and accurately transcribe content for you. My initial business concept was to create a better transcription service and better software. I came back to Atlanta, started learning about tech and software development, and pitched to investors. However, the business you start never ends up being the same. I ended up changing my business model and began focusing more on the software. I went through a customer discovery program at Georgia Tech. We launched, had contracts with big companies, made revenue, and had 46 transcriptionists at our peak. The model proved too difficult to scale, so eventually it led me to create my current venture, a product called BetterLoop. It’s a tool you can use to provide feedback for anything you’d want. We want to implement feedback tracking so that when you give it, you actually know it’s going to be heard.

Because I was a MESAS major, I had the opportunity to learn history, politics, literature, and languages. When you see how all of that works together, you can see how the world works and appreciate it better. If there was any advice I could give to current MESAS students it is that you should study what you’re passionate in and you’ll be successful in one way or another. If you have the drive, you’ll find yourself pursuing more opportunities.

Eugene majored in MESAS and Chinese Literature and Language and minored in Arabic.
JOCELYNN RAMIAH ‘13C
TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

We asked a MESAS major about her masters program and the internships she’s been involved with since graduating.

“Shortly before graduation in May of 2013, I entered in a senior study abroad program with CIPA. It was called the European Sephardic Culture Program. We basically trekked across Europe visiting historical sites - mostly mosques, synagogues, and churches. It was a great experience! I learned about how three religions interacted from a historical, religious, political, and social point of view. Once the program finished, I traveled Morocco for a little while and eventually headed for Tel Aviv University in September. When I began my coursework in the Middle Eastern Studies Masters Program in October, I enrolled in two semesters of Hebrew Ulpan [an intensive Hebrew language program]. In addition to this, I participated in an Arabic class taught in Hebrew which was extremely challenging to say the least.

Within a couple of weeks of starting classes, I began my internship with the African Refugee Development Center (ARDC) working as the Language Program Coordinator and as an Information Officer at the front desk. As a member of the Refugee Education Center (REC) Team, I provide refugees and asylum seekers with English and Hebrew language instruction. It seems like a full time job sometimes, but I love it. In addition to my responsibilities as a coordinator, I also teach a class of 13 students and occasionally substitute for other teachers. As an Information Officer, I assisted with registering clients applying for refugee status. I’ve also sat in on a few meetings where refugees protested their status in Israel and their orders to go to Holot. I have been interning with this organization for a year now. In addition to my ARDC internship, I concurrently interned in public relations with Oleh Records, an organization promoting Israeli artists worldwide, because of my love for music. Currently, things are winding down for me. Although I will complete with all of my classes at the end of August, I will be in Israel for another year working on my master’s thesis. I am planning on continuing my internship with the ARDC and starting another one in October that focuses on fostering peace between Israelis and Palestinians. I have travelled within Ramallah, Nablus, Nazareth, Jericho, and Bethlehem. I have heard a multitude of narratives, and they have inspired me to want to do more especially, in light of the current and intensified conflict. I would like to say that my experiences at Emory have deeply shaped my trajectory in Israel. While at Emory, I worked with the GED Refugee Program, and that’s what inspired me to get involved here. I was part of the Muslim Students Association (MSA) as the Outreach Chair my senior year and I helped out with and coordinated several of Shabbat dinners with the MSA & the Hillel. I enjoyed bringing people together, and I am hoping to do the same here. My experience at Emory really helped to open the door to everything that I am involved with in Israel: be it culture, language, religion, and the people. My experience with the MESAS department specifically fostered my passion to continue to do what I love.”

MESAS: When did you first realize you wanted to be a MESAS major?

JR: My passion for studying the Middle East began to slowly develop when I enrolled in my first Arabic class during my freshman year. In high school, I was heavily involved in journalism. Thus, I wanted to be a journalist, and I considered reporting specifically on the Middle East, because I found it to be an intriguing region. However, it wasn’t until the beginning of my junior year until my interest fully materialized. I remember that year taking a class on the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was then that I knew for sure this was what I wanted to study.

MESAS: What specific skills that you learned as a MESAS major have been the most useful to your career since you’ve graduated?

JR: My linguistic skills have proven to be invaluable since I began my work at an NGO. Under the guidance of some amazing professors, I studied Arabic for the equivalent of 4 years and Hebrew for 2 years. It has been extremely helpful considering many of the clients at the ARDC are Sudanese and speak Arabic. Sometimes the only language that I can communicate with the many Eritrean clients is in Hebrew. It really helps to be able to break the language barrier and engage in a productive conversation in order to assist them.

MESAS: Were there any skills you unexpectedly learned as a MESAS major that you didn’t expect to learn when you first came to Emory?

JR: My studies as a MESAS major were a gateway to becoming “more hands on.” I learned how to interact with diverse groups of people and to relate with individuals on different levels. I was able to take what I learned from books and apply to my everyday life. That’s what I am doing now.

MESAS: As a MESAS major, how would you “recruit” Emory students to the MESAS program?

JR: As a Middle East focused MESAS major, I would recruit Emory students by telling them that the Middle East is one of the most fascinating regions to study. As a student, I was really captivated by its religious and cultural diversity. Most importantly, the MESAS professors truly helped to foster and encourage my passion. I felt as though my interests blossomed even more because of the strong foundation and support system provided by the faculty and staff alike. Also, the study abroad opportunities are one of a kind. I studied Arabic in Morocco with Dr. Rkia Cornell and Jewish history in Europe with Dr. Benjamin Hary, and each summer was absolutely remarkable.

-Jocelynn entered Oxford College in 2009 and continued on to Emory College of Arts and Sciences, where she majored in Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies and minored in Arabic.
MESAS
DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

Emory University
Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies
537 Kilgo Circle, Callaway Center S-312
Atlanta, GA 30322
404-727-2670
mesas.emory.edu

Newsletter design and many photographs by Faysal Akbik.
Ruby Lal’s photo courtesy of Myron McGhee.