

*Middle East Studies and the Liberal Arts Workshop*

**PROPOSAL**

The Middle East Studies Interest Group, which was formed in response to Grinnell College's Expanding Knowledge Initiative, would like to propose a three-day workshop entitled "Middle East Studies and the Liberal Arts," to be hosted by Grinnell College in the Fall semester of 2008. The workshop will build on a Grinnell summer workshop held in May 2006, "Expanding Curricular Offerings in the Middle East," and on a Grinnell faculty visit to the American University of Cairo in March 2007. The Mellon-funded workshop would provide a forum in which faculty from the "Mellon 23" colleges can discuss the goals, challenges, and especially the practical strategies of establishing an effective program in Middle East Studies in a small, liberal arts college context.

The initial response to the proposed workshop has been overwhelmingly positive, and seven faculty members from Carleton, Macalester, Smith, Swarthmore, and Williams have agreed to serve as co-sponsors of this proposal (please see the attached list of scholars and their C.V.s). We envision an attendance of 20 scholars from a wide diversity of disciplines, representing both schools with established programs in Middle East Studies and those wishing to develop one. To frame the discussion, the workshop will feature two plenary speakers: Dr. James Morris (Boston College), who has extensive experience setting up liberal arts programs in Middle East Studies, and a faculty member (to be confirmed) from the American University of Cairo, who will address the interface between American college courses and off-campus study.

The rest of the workshop will consist of panel discussions, working lunches, break-out sessions, and brief presentations on the current state of Middle East Studies at the various colleges. The topics to be addressed will include:

- curricular development in Middle East Studies, especially introductory and capstone courses
- the creation of interdisciplinary courses and programs
- the relationship between and approaches to teaching Islamic and Jewish Studies in the liberal arts context
- the links (cultural, literary, religious, political) between the Middle East and regions such as North Africa and South and Southeast Asia
- the role of faculty study tours and student and scholar exchanges
- integration of study abroad into the study of the Middle East
- challenges of hiring new faculty in the highly competitive field of Middle East Studies

- strategies for introducing Arabic and Hebrew language instruction in the small liberal arts college setting
- benefits of consortial resources in setting up courses and programs related to the Middle East

Evaluation of workshop outcomes will be based on the action plans to be drafted in break out sessions by the representatives of each institution. These action plans will be published to the wider group following the end of the workshop; in addition, reports on progress made at individual institutions will be submitted to the workshop organizers and shared with all participants by the end of the academic year of 2008-09. It is our hope that the ideas and experiences shared at the workshop and beyond will enable the participating schools to better define and implement their own campus objectives for Middle East Studies. At the same time, the contacts made at the workshop will create a valuable inter-institutional network of scholars who will continue to provide one another with mutual support and advice.

## ***CO-SPONSORS***

### **1. Carleton College**

Stacy N. Beckwith  
Associate Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature  
sbeckwit@carleton.edu

Dana Strand  
Andrew W. Mellon Professor of French and the Humanities  
dstrand@carleton.edu

### **2. Grinnell College**

Timothy S. Dobe  
Assistant Professor, South Asian Religions  
dobetimo@grinnell.edu

Susan Ireland  
Professor of French  
Ireland@grinnell.edu

Kathryn A. Kamp  
Professor of Anthropology  
kamp@grinnell.edu

Elizabeth Prevost  
Assistant Professor of History  
prevoste@grinnell.edu

Saadi Simawe  
Professor of English  
simawe@grinnell.edu

### **3. Macalester College**

Khaldoun Samman  
Assistant Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of Middle Eastern Studies and Islamic  
Civilization Program  
samman@macalester.edu

### **4. Smith College**

Suleiman Mourad  
Assistant Professor of Religion  
smourad@email.smith.edu

### **5. Swarthmore College**

Walid Hamarneh  
Arabic Instructor  
whamarn1@swarthmore.edu

### **6. Williams College**

Magnus T. Bernhardsson  
Associate Professor of Middle Eastern History  
Magnus.T.Bernhardsson@Williams.edu

William R. Darrow  
Jackson Professor of Religion  
William.R.Darrow@Williams.edu