

## Marx the Moor: History of Islam in German Thought from Leibniz to Nietzsche Dr. Ian Almond

The difficulties in writing about Marx and Muslims spring from all of the ambiguities, possibilities and latent prejudices of Marx's own attitudes towards the Muslim world. On the one hand, Marx's fierce and uncompromising anti-imperialism, his relentless indignation at the injustices inflicted by a whole triad of imperialisms (Tsarist, Mid Victorian, Napoleonic) upon Arabs, Indians, Turks and Chinese, sets him off from every other major nineteenth-century thinker as an extraordinarily independent moral voice. Accompanying this admirable critique of colonialism, however, is a teology of 'advanced' and 'backward' often differing little in character from those of the imperialists themselves. Marx spoke about Muslim countries, at times, as backward lands rife with despotism, barbarism and illiteracy.

The biography-defying richness of Marx's life and the irreducibility of his enormous oeuvre also supply a set of complicating factors colouring the attitude Marx cultivated towards the religion and followers of Islam: from Marx's own nickname 'the Moor', the Arabian Nights stories he read to his children at bedtime, the comparisons to a Turk he received from several quarters (most notably from the British MP Urquhart, who said he had an intelligence worthy of one), to the irony of his only visit ever to a Muslim country (Algeria) in the final months of his life. The cumulative intimacy of such minutiae does force us to consider what it means to say a thinker thought x or y about a particular subject. In the case of Marx, who could call Turkey "a compact ...mass of Mussulman fanaticism" one year and praise its "great development of communal and provincial life" the very next, we have to ask ourselves what exactly a philosopher is - a single, coherent identity with a meaningful and consistent position on a particular issue? Or a cluster of different, fluctuating voices, each vying with one another for the primacy of expression?

Trying to understand Marx's various ideas about Islam is a task made no easier by Marx's own development as a thinker, particularly with regards his reading of non-European cultures. The Marx of the Communist Manifesto, who could speak sweepingly of an "everywhere" from "India to Ireland", where history was gradually drawing "even the most barbarian nations into civilization", appears to have gradually acquired a more sophisticated knowledge of the non-Western world through the reading of authors such as Kovalevsky and, in the case of Islam, Bernier and Raffles. Numerous

"My husband is at the moment deeply in the Eastern Question [Russo-Turkish wars] and highly elated about the honourable, unwavering entrance of the sons of Mahomet [the Turks] against all the Christian humbug and atrocity-mongers."

-Marx's wife, Jenny, in a letter to Friedrich Sorge, 21st January, 1877

authors have already pointed out an increasingly refined view of Russia in Marx's work from the 1850s onward, and to some degree this can be extended to the Muslim world as well. The Crimean War was certainly a factor in this awakening of Marx's interest in the Ottomans - in one 1853 letter, he tells Engels how the whole 'Eastern question' is "complete Greek to me [ist mir Spanisch]", but promises at the end to "have a look at a couple more books about Turkey, there's a whole stack of them in the Athenaeum". In the years that follow, the possibility of Ottoman Turkey either as a site for revolution or a catalyst towards revolution in other countries (particularly Russia) drove both Engels and Marx to read more about Islam and Islamic societies, part of a general interest in non-European ethnology which culminated in the so-called 'ethnological notebooks' of the late 1870s. Any authentic approach to the image of Islam in Marx's work, therefore, has to deal not with one biographical personality, but rather a whole bristling array of different identities, each coming to the fore at different times, to say different things.

The chapter on "Marx the Moor" will be coming out this summer in Ian Almond's *History of Islam in German Thought from Leibniz to Nietzsche* (Routledge, forthcoming 2009). Dr. Almond is Assistant Professor of English and a faculty member of the Middle East Institute.

### Faculty Workshop: "A Bridge Across the Sand: Modern Arabic Literature in the College Classroom"

This semester, the MEI will offer a half-day workshop on Arabic literature. Dr. Ian Campbell, Assistant Professor of Arabic at GSU will present an overview of authors, works, and resources for teaching, address the major trends in modern Arabic literature, and suggest strategies for how to teach this literature in such a way that typical American college students will be able to relate to it.

This workshop is free to all University System of Georgia faculty. Lunch will be provided. For more information, please contact Alta Schwartz at [aschwartz@gsu.edu](mailto:aschwartz@gsu.edu).

## Georgia State University MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE

Spring 2009

[www.gsu.edu/mideast](http://www.gsu.edu/mideast)

### HUMAN RIGHTS IN AN AGE OF INSECURITY: A SYMPOSIUM Friday, March 27, 2007, 9:00 am - 5:00 PM, Speaker's Auditorium, Student Center

What are the challenges and opportunities for human rights today? What is the relative significance of the right to security among the panoply of rights? How can human rights monitors overcome decreased public sympathy for habeas corpus, the prohibition of torture, and privacy? This symposium will address the question of what human rights can do in the second decade of the new millennium. Speakers include prominent activists, experts in international human rights and humanitarian law, US intelligence and interrogation, sociology, and political science. This event is free and open to the public. For further information, please contact Dr. Michael Galchinsky, symposium coordinator, at [mgalchinsky@gsu.edu](mailto:mgalchinsky@gsu.edu).

### STUDY ABROAD AND SUMMER INTENSIVE ARABIC

Arabic Language Immersion: Egyptian Colloquial is a new, exciting two-week program in Cairo, Egypt. While immersed in the language and culture of Egypt, participants will study in the heart of the city alongside the local natives. They will be assigned tasks to perform by communicating directly with native speakers on a daily basis.

Taught by Dr. Dona Stewart as well as experts and guest speakers from Egypt, the course will include both a language and cultural component. The language component will be taught on-site, at the hotel conference facility, where participants will reside. The cultural component will include field trips, excursions, and visits to locations in Egypt's capital city, Cairo and to Egypt's second largest city, Alexandria. By the end of this course, students will be able to communicate in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic with native speakers on an intermediate level. Through immersion and lots of practice, they will gain the proper skills that will give them confidence in speaking, writing, reading and listening in Egyptian Colloquial.

Here in Atlanta students can take advantage of our [Intensive Summer Arabic Program](#), taught by Dr. Ian Campbell. This course will provide students with a near-total immersion experience equivalent to two semesters of normal Arabic study; students who complete the course will receive credit for ARBC 1001 and ARBC 1002. Dr. Campbell will teach the alphabet and the basics of grammar and vocabulary, enabling students to actually converse in this challenging but rewarding language.

### THE SIXTH ANNUAL MIDDLE EAST FILM FESTIVAL: MARCH 30 - APRIL 3

The MEI is proud to present a week of films from and about the Middle East. For a list of films and schedules, please visit [www.gsu.edu/mideast](http://www.gsu.edu/mideast) or contact Alta Schwartz at [aschwartz@gsu.edu](mailto:aschwartz@gsu.edu).

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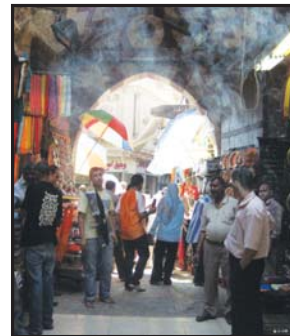
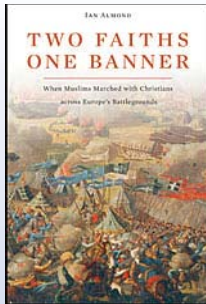


Photo by Dona Stewart

## NEW FACULTY PUBLICATIONS AND UPDATES

Dr. Ian Almond:  
**Two Faiths, One Banner:  
When Muslims Marched  
with Christians across  
Europe's Battlegrounds**



When, in our turbulent day, we hear of a “clash of civilizations,” it’s easy to imagine an unbridgeable chasm between the Islamic world and Christendom stretching back through time. But such assumptions crumble before the drama that unfolds in this book. *Two Faiths, One Banner* shows how in Europe, the heart of the West, Muslims and Christians were often comrades-in-arms, repeatedly forming alliances to wage war against their own faiths and peoples.

Here we read of savage battles, deadly sieges, and acts of individual heroism; of Arab troops rallying by the thousands to the banner of a Christian emperor outside the walls of Verona; of Spanish Muslims standing shoulder to shoulder with their Christian Catalan neighbors in opposition to Castilians; of Greeks and Turks forming a steadfast bulwark against Serbs and Bulgarians, their mutual enemy; of tens of thousands of Hungarian Protestants assisting the Ottomans in their implacable and terrifying march on Christian Vienna; and finally of Englishman and Turk falling side by side in the killing fields of the Crimea.

This bold book reveals how the idea of a “Christian Europe” long opposed by a “Muslim non-Europe” grossly misrepresents the facts of a rich, complex, and—above all—shared history. The motivations for these interfaith alliances were dictated by shifting diplomacies, pragmatic self-interest, realpolitik, and even genuine mutual affection, not by jihad or religious war. This insight has profound ramifications for our understanding of global politics and current affairs, as well as of religious history and the future shape of Europe.  
<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/ALMTWO.html>

**Dr. Ian Campbell**

“Mapping Moroccan Literature: The Spatial Practices of Modernity in ‘Abdelmajid Ben Jallun’s *Fi al-Tufula*” in the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Volume 39, Number 3, 2008, pp. 377-397(21)

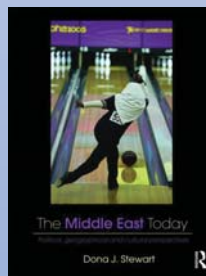
This article addresses ‘Abdelmajid Ben Jallun’s 1956 autobiographical novel *Fi al-Tufula* from the perspective of the spatial theories of the French cultural geographer Henri Lefebvre. Ben Jallun spent his early childhood in England and brought the sociospatial practices of 20th-century Britain—what Lefebvre would term “abstract space”—to Morocco with him, where he encounters a profoundly different set of sociospatial practices. The paper describes these Moroccan practices and defines them as “labyrinthine space” by examining the differences Ben Jallun childhood alter ego encounters when trying to make his way through the city and receive an education. As he grows

into adolescence, Ben Jallun adapts to the labyrinthine spaces of traditional Islamic culture in Morocco and creates a hybrid space of his own; this enables him to have a bird’s-eye view of the nascent Moroccan literary scene. He uses this space and the perspective it provides him to create a map of Moroccan literature and in effect creates the idea of “Moroccan literature” as opposed to literatures by authors from various Moroccan cities. Yet this act is itself a political act, an accrual of power to Ben Jallun.

“The Cell and the Ward: Imprisonment, Servitude and Nationalist Identity in Two Novels by Abdalkarim Ghallab” in *Middle Eastern Literatures*, Volume 11, Issue 3 December 2008, pages 301 - 315.

This article addresses issues of nationalist activity against the French protectorate by the central characters in two novels by Moroccan editor and author Abdalkarim Ghallab: *Dafanna al-Mai* (1966) and *al-Muallim Ali* (1971). Both central characters in these two very similar novels are sent to prison for their nationalist activity; their time in prison encourages them to bond with other nationalists and to become more effective activists rather than discouraging them from further activity. In *Dafanna al-Mai*, the central character’s freedom to engage in nationalist activity is dependent upon the labour of household servants who are themselves imprisoned in his family home. These women are effectively voiceless, not only in the text of the novel itself but also in the most comprehensive scholarly criticism of the work. Hamid Lahmadani’s detailed analysis of the text completely erases the servants in order to foreground the central character’s development. *Al-Muallim Ali* rewrites essentially the same story, but by making its protagonist a working-class hero, it creates a more believable transition from worker to activist without making this dependent on mute, imprisoned women.

Dr. Dona Stewart:  
**The Middle East Today:  
Political, Geographical &  
Cultural Perspectives**



“The Middle East Today” is an accessible and comprehensive introductory textbook for undergraduate students of Middle East Studies, Middle East politics and geography. The book features a host of pedagogical features to assist students with their learning. These include detailed maps, case studies on key issues, boxed sections, suggestions for further reading. In addition, the book is further supplemented by a companion website that contains sample chapters, a selection of maps formatted for use in presentations, annotated links to online resources and websites, hints and pointers for answering the end of chapter questions.

The book highlights a host of current issues facing the Middle East, linking them to the rich political, geographical and

## FACULTY, STUDENT AND COURSE UPDATES

cultural history of the region. The author examines the crises and conflicts, both current and potential, likely to dominate the region in coming years. Key chapters of this title focus on: stereotypes of the region; the making of the modern state system; contemporary Islamist thought; the Arab-Israeli conflicts; the struggle for economic and social development; and, democracy and political transformation in the region. Designed to both introduce and develop a deeper understanding of this rapidly changing region, “The Middle East Today” is an essential text for all students of Middle East Studies, Middle East politics and geography. <http://www.routledgemiddleeaststudies.com/books/The-Middle-East-Today-isbn9780415772433>

**NEW COURSES: RELS 4470/6470**

**MARTIN BUBER: HIS THOUGHT AND INFLUENCE**

Martin Buber is arguably the most important Jewish thinker of the twentieth century. He was almost single-handedly responsible for the revival of Hasidism, he was at the forefront of Jewish dialogue with Asian religions, he was the architect of what is now known as dialogical philosophy, and he was a significant contributor to Israeli cultural and political matters. Moreover, his influence extends to a number of disciplines and conversations that cut across disciplines: not only theology, ethics, and mysticism, but also education, aesthetics, literary hermeneutics, psychology and psychotherapy, and even theatre and sports studies. In this course, we will explore a range of Buber’s writings and examine his reception both inside and outside of Jewish circles.

**SECOND ANNUAL STUDENT PHOTO CONTEST**

All GSU students are invited to submit their photos of or about the Middle East for the second annual MEI student photo contest. Winners will be posted on our website and displayed in the department. For more details and to see last year’s winners, please visit [www.gsu.edu/mideast](http://www.gsu.edu/mideast).

**MODEL UNITED NATIONS AND MODEL ARAB LEAGUE TEAMS WIN TOP AWARDS**

In Fall 2008, the Model United Nations and the Model Arab League Teams attended the Southern Regional Model UN Conference in Atlanta. This year they fielded their largest delegation yet (46 students) and represented four countries - Algeria, Gambia, Saudi Arabia and Senegal. All four teams won awards; Algeria and Gambia won the Outstanding Delegation Award (The Top Award), Saudi Arabia and Senegal won the Honorary Mention Award. In addition, GSU delegates won outstanding delegate awards in 4 of the 8 committees. The achievement is especially notable because 30 of the 46 delegates were new to the team and most of them had never been to a UN or Arab League simulation before.

The faculty advisor, Dr. Rashid Niam would like to thank the Department of Political Science, The Middle East Institute, The Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences and of the Provost for their continued support for this program and a special thanks to Greg Hodgins, a graduate student in political science who volunteered his time to help prepare the team.

**ARABIC COFFEE HOUR**

Various Tuesdays, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM  
MEI Library, 20th Floor, 34 Peachtree Bldg

Please join faculty and students in the GSU community for coffee, tea, and sweets while we practice our Arabic. You don’t need to be in an Arabic class or fluent to participate, just come ready to participate and bring a friend. Please visit [www.gsu.edu/mideast](http://www.gsu.edu/mideast) for a list of days and for more information.



**NEW STUDENT GROUP: THE TURKISH CULTURAL ASSOCIATION**

In response to interest from the GSU community, the MEI is proud to announce the formation of a new student group, the Turkish Cultural Association (TCA). The TCA will organize meetings and events that will allow those with an interest in Turkish culture to explore the many facets of this diverse and interesting country. The TCA welcomes all students, faculty, and staff regardless of their cultural identity and hopes to provide a welcoming space for all who would like to experience a greater understanding of Turkish culture. For more information, please contact the faculty advisor, Nur Yigitoglu, [dasnyy@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:dasnyy@langate.gsu.edu).

**2009 SOUTHEAST TURKISH OLYMPIAD**

On May 09, the MEI is proud to host the 2009 Southeast Turkish Olympiad, organized and sponsored by the Istanbul Center of Atlanta. International Turkish Language Olympiads have been organized annually in Turkey since 2003. Students from more than 100 countries participated in 2007 Olympiads. These events provide for the broad usage of the Turkish language in the Southeastern United States, rewarding and honoring the best students. The MEI’s Turkish Instructor, Nur Yigitoglu, will be among the judges. The Olympiads will offer competition in the following categories and sub-categories: Turkish as a Foreign Language Competition for Teenagers, Turkish as Foreign Language Competition for Adults, and Turkish as a Native Language Competition for Teenagers. Each category features competitions such as singing, poetry reading, special skills, folklore, grammar, and writing. The Southeast Olympiad will be held in the Performance Auditorium at GSU. For more information, please visit [www.istanbulcenter.org](http://www.istanbulcenter.org).