Message from the Chair

With this issue we reactivate NMC’s long-dormant Newsletter. Our intent is to maintain a monthly e-newsletter that will report on the activities and research of the NMC community, with periodic circulation of hard copy versions of the Newsletter for those who prefer the traditional format. NMC is literally bursting at the seams with an incredible array of activities, events and research, and it is important that we maintain a regular form of communication that keeps everyone abreast of what we are doing collectively. Our aim is to tell—and celebrate—our story in all of its color, diversity, and brilliance, but to do so we will need your help. We intend to highlight the full disciplinary range of NMC’s programs and research, but it is important that we also receive reports and updates on the activities and life of the Department, so please let us know what you are doing!

This issue welcomes new faculty members Jeannie Miller and Maria Brosius, as well as Yosefa Raz, the Anne Tanenbaum Postdoctoral Fellow in Jewish Studies, announces the launch of the Institute of Islamic Studies, and profiles the recent publications and scholarly presentations of our faculty and students. We also celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates, most notably Dr. Jane McAuliffe, and we mourn the loss of Oktay Aksan, a dedicated member of the NMC community. I hope you enjoy this first issue,

Timothy P. Harrison

Department News

Prof. Harrison reads the Honorary Degree Citation for Dr. Jane McAuliffe at fall convocation (see story on p. 7)
New Faculty join NMC

Dr. Jeannie Miller. In January 2014 it will be a year since NMC welcomed Prof. Jeannie Miller as a new faculty member. Prior to her appointment, Prof. Miller completed her doctoral studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University, with Arabic language training in Damascus, Syria.

This year Prof. Miller is teaching courses on “Arabic literature in translation” and “Survey of Classical Arabic literature.” Her research has primarily focused on al-Jahiz, the ninth century polymath known as the founder of both Arabic rhetoric and Arabic compulsory prose (adab). Her interests also include Arabic language theory and rhetoric, debate texts, and the relationship between pre-modern narrative traditions in Arabic and European languages, both at the learned and popular levels. Prof. Miller also has a theoretical interest in how living bodies have been imagined historically, how they function in literature, and how this visualization relates to the technical sciences: physical theory, chemistry, philosophies of the senses, and medicine.

Prof. Miller is currently working on a monograph with the provisional title “Everything is Speakable: Language and Materiality in al-Jahiz’s Book of Animals.” It is about al-Jahiz’s understanding of the relation between language and the physical world, and how this theoretical background informs followed by a Readership in Ancient History at Newcastle University, before joining the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations of University of Toronto.

In addition to her research, publications and teaching activities, Prof. Miller is presently co-organizing a three-day seminar at the American Comparative Literature Association Convention, in New York (March 19-22, 2014), entitled “Islamicate Theories of Metaphor and the Literal.” The seminar will bring together papers on Persian, Hebrew, and Arabic rhetoric, as well as papers on the history and politics of how this rhetorical tradition has been studied and used, both in scholarship and later literary work.

Dr. Maria Brosius. This fall Prof. Brosius joined the NMC faculty, and will be teaching courses on Ancient Persia and Pre-Islamic Iran. This year she is teaching an undergraduate course on Ancient Persia that explores the history of the Ancient Persian empires of the Achaemenids and Parthians up to the Sasanians.

Prof. Brosius studied at the University of Münster in Germany (Ancient and Modern History, German Language and Literature, Akkadian), before completing her doctorate in Ancient History at the University of Oxford under the supervision of Professor David Lewis on Royal and Non-Royal Women in Achaemenid Persia, subsequently published as Women in Ancient Persia (559-331 B.C.) (Oxford 1996; repr.1998, 2002). Having studied Elamite with Dr. Jeremy Black of the Oriental Institute, Oxford, she has worked on published and unpublished texts from the Persepolis archive at the University of Chicago and the Archaeological Museum, Tehran. She has held a British Academy Post-doctoral Fellowship and taught Ancient History at Queen’s College, Oxford, some of the formal and stylistic features that scholars have found challenging in al-Jahiz’s texts: his grotesque sensibility, his representation of debates without fixed premises or agreed-upon argumentation method, and his subtle hovering between evocative and technical senses of words.

Aside from her research, publications and teaching activities, Prof. Miller is presently co-organizing a three-day seminar at the American Comparative Literature Association Convention, in New York (March 19-22, 2014), entitled “Islamicate Theories of Metaphor and the Literal.” The seminar will bring together papers on Persian, Hebrew, and Arabic rhetoric, as well as papers on the history and politics of how this rhetorical tradition has been studied and used, both in scholarship and later literary work.
University of Toronto launches Institute of Islamic Studies

We are pleased to announce the launch of the Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS), which was officially established on July 1, 2013, after an extensive consultation process and governance review. The core vision of the IIS is to foster a coordinated program of activities that will provide a focal point for tri-campus scholarship on the Islamic world, advance understanding about Islam in society, inform public policy and raise the profile of the Islamic studies endeavours at U of T.

An interdisciplinary extra-departmental unit (EDU:C), the IIS will focus primarily on research and outreach by leveraging the strong educational programming already in place across the University. The U of T has a long and distinguished history of research and teaching in Islamic Studies, with no less than 35 faculty members currently affiliated with departments across all three campuses, whose core expertise is in Islamic studies or whose research deals in some way with the Islamic world. It is our hope that the IIS will be able to facilitate this exceptional cross-disciplinary breadth by helping to coordinate a program of activities and provide a focal point for scholarship on the Islamic world, advancing understanding about Islam in society, informing public policy, and raising the profile of Islamic studies at U of T.

As part of its activities, the Institute will develop a web portal to showcase Islamic scholarship and teaching across the University. The portal will serve both as an electronic resource and provide information on Institute events, including links to the rich set of activities in other academic units across the three campuses. The site will also include links to the programs and faculty of the many units engaged in Islamic studies. In addition, the Institute will foster and facilitate networking activities across the University. It will create both a physical and virtual space where U of T scholars and students can meet, as well as organize conferences and seminar series. The mandate of the IIS encompasses mounting tri-campus activities, including colloquia and seminars at UTM, UTSC and the St. George campus. In the longer term, the Institute will also sponsor distinguished visitations, exchanges and fellowships.

The IIS will be housed in the Jackman Humanities Building, with its offices currently under renovation on the fifth floor. Dr. Walid Saleh, Professor of Islamic Studies in the Departments of Religion and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, has been appointed the Institute’s inaugural Director. Professor Saleh has recently outlined some examples of activities that the Institute will sponsor during his tenure as director. These will include visiting lecturers, workshops, seminars, and a yearly conference on various topics that engage our faculty and community that is related to Islamic Studies. Professor Saleh has also emphasized that this program will seek to highlight the centrality of the Uof T as one of only two universities in Canada that has comprehensive Ph.D. training in Islamic Studies. The IIS will connect and network the U of T with other Canadian universities and international institutions to promote the work of our colleagues, and help the research of graduate students. Professor Saleh is also keen to see the IIS sponsor programs that will engage and involve undergraduate students in the activities of the Institute. Finally, an important function of the IIS will be to foster collaborations with other units at the U of T.

The IIS will be launching its activities in the winter term with a series of invited speakers, and will be sponsoring reading groups and a variety of undergraduate student activities. So please look for email announcements. The IIS’s website will soon be up and functioning. There is also an email list that interested faculty can join. Faculty and students who wish to propose an activity, receive more information about the IIS’s forthcoming activities, or join the email list, are encouraged to contact Professor Saleh (walid.saleh@utoronto.ca).
Connaught Summer Institute on Islamic Studies Call for Fellows

The University of Toronto’s 2014 Connaught Summer Institute on Islamic Studies invites applications from pre-dissertation PhD students for the second innovative, intensive 8-day seminar on Islamic studies and research design, to be held from May 25–June 3, 2014. Using the City of Toronto as the backdrop to our inquiry, the 2014 Connaught Summer Institute on Islamic Studies will address the implication of competing publics for the study of Islam. “Islam” does not exist in a vacuum. A context always accompanies the use of the labels “Islam,” “Islamic,” or “Muslim” in the academy, government, civil society and elsewhere. Accounting for that context and recognizing its effect and implications for advanced research in Islamic studies are the aims of the 2014 Summer Institute.

To foster an intensive research seminar, the number of fellows in each year’s Summer Institute is small, diverse, and reflects a diverse range of perspectives and interests. As such, the application process is an open, international competitive process. Successful applicants will have their travel and accommodation costs fully covered. Applicants must be pre-dissertation graduate students enrolled in a PhD (or equivalent) academic program, and focused on the study of Islam. Applicants from all fields of Islamic studies are encouraged to apply. Pending final approval of funding, applicants will be notified of final selection process within two weeks of the application deadline.

Application deadline:
January 7, 2014 15, 2013
Further info: http://www.csis.ca/call-for-fellows.html

NMC welcomes Dr. Yosefa Raz

Dr. Raz has joined the NMC’s research and teaching community as the Anne Tanenbaum Postdoctoral Fellow in Jewish Studies. In August 2013 she completed her PhD at the University of California at Berkeley with a dissertation on “Weak Prophecy: Recasting Prophetic Power in the Classical Hebrew Prophets and in their Modern Reception.”

Besides her research activities, this semester Dr. Raz is teaching a 2nd-year course, “Survey of Modern Hebrew Literature,” which emphasizes biblical intertextuality. In the winter term she will teach a 4th year class on the Hebrew Bible entitled “Jeremiah, Life and Afterlife of a Prophet.”

Dr. Raz’s postdoctoral research is focused on the redaction and reception of biblical prophetic texts, especially the way in which prophetic power is articulated and transformed in modernity. Her scholarly toolbox includes textual criticism, philology, and linguistic analysis, but also theories of melancholia, Romantic poetry, European cultural history, and the Israeli political landscape as they intersect with prophetic figures and notions of prophecy. In an effort to deepen thinking about ‘reception history’ and its ties to the history of interpretation and secularism, Dr. Raz will be organizing a working group (in cooperation with NMC faculty members Dr. Sarianna Metso, Dr. Judith Newman, and Dr. Walid Saleh) to which she would like to invite the wider University of Toronto community, as well as general public. Details will be announced on the departmental website.

Doctoral Degrees Awarded

We would like to extend our congratulations to the following members of the NMC community who have recently received their doctorates:


Brian Janeway (June, 2013) “Cultural Transition in the Northern Levant during the Early Iron Age as Reflected in the Aegean Ware at Tell Tayinat.”

Chad Stauber (April, 2013) “Prophetic Scribalism: A Semantic, Textual and Hyper-textual Study of the Serek Texts.”
Recent Publications by NMC Professors


This collection of studies is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor J. Brian Peckham, a scholar who has been instrumental in furthering the cause of Phoenician studies over the past decades. The collection is aimed at advancing our understanding of the grammatical and historical features of the Phoenician language, a favorite topic that Professor Peckham rigorously studied and taught. The first set of studies concentrates on linguistic features of Phoenician qua Phoenician. They include investigations of phonology and morphology, as well as linguistic approaches to syntax and text-level pragmatics. The second set of studies seeks to situate aspects of the Phoenician language typologically or within comparative, etymological, and historical Semitics. The result is a group of studies covering topics ranging from case endings, negation, pronominal usage, and phonology to dialectology, etymologies, and text linguistics. Given the use of Phoenician throughout the Mediterranean littoral, this volume contains something of interest for numerous areas of investigation, including comparative Semitics, Anatolian, early Mediterranean, and even Hebrew and biblical studies.


This innovative textbook combines the best of traditional grammars, new insights into Hebrew linguistics, and a creative pedagogical approach. The material has been field tested and refined for more than a decade by the authors, who are actively engaged in teaching Biblical Hebrew and in scholarly discussions and research. *Beginning Biblical Hebrew* includes fifty brief grammar lessons with accompanying work-book-style exercises, appendixes providing more detailed explanations, and a full-color reader—bound at the back of the book for right-to-left reading—that incorporates comics, line drawings, and numerous exercises, all in Hebrew. The work offers a realistic approach to beginning Hebrew, helping students comprehend texts without overloading them with too much information. Professors in seminary and university settings can adapt the book to either one-semester or full-year courses. An accompanying website offers helpful resources for students and professors. Resources for students include flash cards and audio files. Resources for professors include sample quizzes, sample exams, sample lesson plans, and a full-color printed instructor’s manual.


The titulary of the ancient Egyptian king was one of the symbols of authority he assumed at his coronation. At first consisting only of the Horus name, the titulary grew to include other phrases chosen to represent the king’s special relationship with the divine world. By the Middle Kingdom (late twenty-first century B.C.E.), the full five-fold titulary was clearly established, and kings henceforth used all five names regularly. This volume includes all rulers’ names from the so-called Dynasty 0 (ca. 3200 B.C.E.) to the last Ptolemaic ruler in the late first century B.C.E., offered in transliteration and English translation with an introduction and notes.
NMC Well-represented at Professional Association Meetings

NMC was well-represented at this year’s annual meetings of our professional associations (ASOR, SBL, and MESA), with faculty and students presenting on a wide range of topics. Congratulations to all!

American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) Annual Meeting in Baltimore (MD), November 20-23, 2013:
- Steven Edwards, “Ebla and the North Orontes Valley: A Network Approach to Political Hegemony”
- Kevin Fisher and Stephen Batiuk (University of Toronto), and David Schloen (University of Chicago), “The Computational Research on the Ancient Near East (CRANE) Project: Large-Scale Data Integration and Analysis in the Orontes Watershed”
- Brian Janeway, “Cultural Transition as Reflected in the Aegean Pottery at Tell Tayinat”
- Tracy Spurrier, “Feed a Cold, Starve a Fever—A Study of Health and Well-being in Upper-Class Nimrud”
- Lynn Welton (University of British Columbia) and Stephen Batiuk (University of Toronto), “Settlement in the Amuq Plain in the Early Bronze Age”

Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Annual Meeting in Baltimore (MD), November 23-26, 2013:
- Krzysztof J. Baranowski, “The Modal Sequence in the Amarna Letters from Canaan and the Difference between Yaqtul and Yaqtula”
- P. M. Michele Daviau (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Emily Zeran (University of Toronto) “Astarte’s Horse and the Zoomorphic Figurines from Khirbat al-Mudayna”
- Sarianna Metso, “The Interplay of Oral and Textual Traditions in Community Compositions from Qumran”
- Jonathan Vroom, “The Rule of Ezra or the Rule of Torah? Ezra’s Legal Hermeneutics and the Torah’s Legal Authority”

Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting in New Orleans (LA), October 10-13, 2013:
- Jairan Gahan, “Private Matters in Public Space: Prostitution in Iran in Pahlavi Period”
- Nefise Kahraman, “In Search of Curative Spaces: Tubercular Industry in Early 20th Century Iran as Reflected in Literary and Medical Texts”
- Ida Meftahi, “The ‘Negative Space’ of the ‘Popular’ in Twentieth century Iran”
- Golbarg Rekabtalaei, “Morality in Motion: Early Cinema and Education in Early Twentieth Century Tehran”
- Noa Shaindinger, “Imagining Futures: Planning the return of the Palestinian refugees”
- Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, “Considering the institution of the Islamic Republic as a ‘divine design and geometry’ (naqshah va hindisah-‘i ilahi)”


Al-Bimāristān al-Manṣūrī (the Manṣūrī hospital), founded by the sultan al-Manṣūr Sayf ad-Dīn Qalāwūn (r. 678-689/1279-1290) at a moment of cultural shift, is both the object of this study and a lens through which to view the links between medicine, politics and culture in Mamluk Egypt and Syria. The exploratory research described here is intended to result in a history of this hospital that will cast light on aspects of the intellectual history of the Mamluk period that, despite several recent groundbreaking studies, still remains largely unknown and underappreciated. Two approaches have been used: 1) source analysis with primary focus on two documents, the diplomas for the riyyāsat at-tibb (chief physicianship in Egypt and Syria) and the tadrīs al-bimāristān (chair of medicine at the hospital) examined with respect to their structure and three themes (ḡihād, ʿilm, and medical education) and 2) network analysis focusing on individuals who had some affiliation to the hospital whether as founder, later donor, physician, administrator, student, or patient.
Dr. Jane McAuliffe (MA, 1979; PhD, 1984) Receives Honorary Degree from the University of Toronto

Dr. Jane McAuliffe was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, at the University’s fall convocation on November 15, 2013. Dr. McAuliffe was one of the first graduates of the U of T’s Religious Studies program, earning an MA in Religious Studies in 1979, and a PhD in Islamic Studies in 1984. Between 1986 and 1992, she held an academic appointment in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, serving as Associate Dean from 1990 until 1992, and then returned to Toronto, where she served with distinction as Chair of the Department and Centre for the Study of Religion, and Professor of Islamic Studies in NMC (1992-1997). In 1999, Dr. McAuliffe was appointed Dean of the College at Georgetown University, and in 2008 she became the eighth President of Bryn Mawr College, completing her term this past spring.

As a scholar of Islamic studies, Dr. McAuliffe is internationally renowned for her work on Qur’anic Exegesis. Despite her extensive administrative responsibilities, McAuliffe has maintained a prodigious pace of high-level scholarship. Her many publications include the six-volume *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*, a standard reference in the field, and the first reference work of its kind in a Western language, the *Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an*, and the forthcoming *Norton Anthology of World Religions* and *Norton Critical Edition of the Qur’an*.

An exceptional educator, an internationally renowned scholar, and a distinguished academic leader, Dr. McAuliffe exemplifies the best attributes that any university can hope to inspire in its graduates, and we are proud to claim her as one of our own.

Oktay Aksan
31 December 1934-13 November 2013

It is with great sadness that we write of the passing of Oktay Aksan. Oktay was the beloved husband of Virginia H. Aksan, a PhD graduate in Ottoman history of a forerunner of our department, Middle East and Islamic Studies, Professor of History at McMaster University, and an active member of our department’s Graduate Faculty. Oktay and Ginny were married for thirty-one years but they were acquaintances and friends since the mid 1960s when they met in Kadıköy, Istanbul.

Oktay, the son of a grocery storekeeper in Kadıköy, was a man of many talents. He loved to guide his friends on their travels in Anatolia, was a keen amateur philosopher and historian, and greatly enjoyed football and woodworking. He immigrated to Toronto, Canada in 1967 where he worked as a bus driver for the TTC until 1995. At the same time he studied at the U of T and in 1988 received a BA in Philosophy and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

Oktay was immensely proud of his BA degree. He was very devoted to our department, frequently accompanying Ginny to our seminars in Ottoman studies and was the driving force beyond the establishment of the Oktay and Virginia Aksan Scholarship Fund for Turkish Studies at NMC. Oktay was always excellent company, and his wit and wisdom will be sorely missed. *Nur içinde yatsın* (“may he sleep in the heavenly light”). A memorial for Oktay Aksan is planned for the new year.
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