

Yale University Strengthens Contemporary Middle East Studies

New Haven, Conn. — The Council on Middle East Studies of the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale has announced an initiative to promote richer understanding of contemporary issues in the Middle East. The initiative will complement Yale's already substantial offerings and resources in ancient, pre-modern and modern Middle East Studies, and expand research and teaching on the Middle East, and its relations with the rest of the world. In the first three years of the initiative, the Yale-Middle East Visiting Faculty Program, the keystone component, will bring distinguished visiting scholars to teach courses and do research on the region at Yale.

"In today's changing world, it is more important than ever to study the contemporary Middle East," said Yale University President Richard C. Levin. "This initiative will sharpen our understanding of the Middle East and its diverse peoples, religions and cultures."

The initiative will enhance interdisciplinary teaching and research on the contemporary Middle East through the following components.

The Yale-Middle East Visiting Faculty component, led by the current chair of the Council on Middle East Studies, Ellen Lust-Okar, will bring together three visiting scholars each year, from different disciplines and countries, whose research will focus on regional issues with global implications. In addition to conducting research, the visiting scholars will teach one course, participate in a year-long multidisciplinary workshop on religion and politics and hold a final conference in the Middle East. Two visiting scholars for 2007–2008 have already been named. They are Shaul Mishal, professor of political science at Tel Aviv University and an expert on Palestinian politics and Islamic fundamentalism and Farhad Khosrokhavar, professor of sociology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

Khosrokhavar's area of expertise is Iran, Islam and the West. The third scholar is expected to be a specialist on North African law and politics. In the next two years, this component will focus on issues of global health and concerns of state construction and consolidation.

The Iranian Studies component will expand Yale's resources for the study of Iran and its neighbors, including a lecture series, workshops, and support for an exchange of scholars, the expansion of the Yale library's Persian holdings and bibliographic resources and faculty and student research projects. This component, which was launched in the fall of 2006 with a monthly seminar series led by Yale Professor of History and Carnegie Scholar Abbas Amanat, will gain momentum with a conference next fall on "Iranian Identity Boundaries and Modern Political Culture." Daryoush Ashouri, a prominent Iranian author, translator, researcher and public intellectual, will be visiting Yale in 2007, and Arang Keshavarzian, a researcher focusing on Iranian politics, economic development, clergy-state relations and social movements, will continue as a MacMillan Center Research Affiliate.

The Turkish Studies component, supported by a Federal Title VI grant as well as funding from Yale and external sources, is expanding the University's resources and programs focused on the language and culture of Turkey. As part of this Initiative, the University will offer three levels of Turkish language instruction, continue to run the successful Turkish film series, revitalize the Friends of Turkey Association and develop other programs like the outreach workshop on Turkey for K-12 teachers. The program is bolstered by the recent inclusion of Bogazici University into the Fox International Fellowship, which permits a robust exchange of scholars between Yale and Turkey.

The Public Health component, which brings together Yale faculty and students from a range of departments and professional schools, will expand work already underway on public health-related issues in the Middle East, and other developing areas. Kaveh Khoshnood, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, who has been spearheading this effort, will lead a forum next year for Iraqi public health officials and practitioners, Yale faculty, and international institutions to discuss

development of the Iraqi public health system. Also planned is a multidisciplinary seminar on Health and Foreign Policy that will attract graduate students in law, medicine, international relations, public health and the social sciences.

ERICE (Empowerment and Resilience in Children Everywhere) is an international collaborative project aimed at improving the lives of Israeli and Palestinian children. The project includes Israelis, Palestinians, Europeans and Americans, and is headed at Yale by James Leckman, the Neison Harris Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale School of Medicine, and Phyllis Cohen, Associate Clinical Professor, Yale Child Study Center. Founded in 2004, ERICE has among its goals the support of research on the prevalence and nature of childhood disorders in this conflict region, the implementation of treatment programs and the establishment of training and degree programs.

"The MacMillan Center is pleased to support the initiative," said Ian Shapiro, the Sterling Professor of Political Science and Henry R. Luce Director of the MacMillan Center. "It dovetails with our ongoing searches for faculty who focus on the contemporary Middle East, and we anticipate that its activities will grow in both scope and depth in the near future. The visiting faculty component has been funded for three years, and other components have either received initial gifts or have good prospects, and we will be exploring sustaining and permanent funding for these and new components as they develop."

"I am very pleased that the University and the MacMillan Center have supported this multi-faceted initiative," said Lust-Okar. "The Council on Middle East Studies sees this as an excellent opportunity to build upon existing accomplishments such as the teaching of all four of the region's major languages, the Title VI National Resource Center recognition, and continuing resources such as the Libby Rouse fellowships for independent student research, and to enhance the University's ability to recruit scholars of the Middle East."