

AMIDEAST Alumni Newsletter (issue 5)

Greetings from AMIDEAST Education Abroad Programs in the Arab World!

Thank you for being a part of AMIDEAST's larger mission to help develop mutual understanding between Americans and the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa.

This is the final edition of the AMIDEAST Alumni Newsletter in this e-mail format. Over the summer, we will be developing an Alumni Association online publication which will hopefully be more user-friendly.

The Alumni Association exists to help our former students, so any information you think would be helpful we'll do our best to include. We hope you have a relaxing summer!

Letter from the Director

Greetings from AMIDEAST Headquarters!

AMIDEAST's Education Abroad Programs in the Arab World began its second half decade last fall. Hard to believe! And we now have hundreds of alumni literally all around the world pursuing their undergraduate and graduate studies, doing research and teaching on Fulbright grants, working in the region we all are so connected with, and completing their undergraduate studies at their home colleges and universities.



One of the real joys of my work is being able to see what becomes of our students after they complete our programs. Fortunately, we have been able to provide opportunities for some to work as interns here at Headquarters in Washington, and three of them are now members of our amazing professional staff - Shino Yoshen (Morocco, 2009-10), Lauren Kardos (Egypt and Jordan, 2011), and Liz Rauh (Egypt and Jordan, 2010-11). In addition there are two others working in other offices here at HQ - Kyle Axberg (Egypt and Morocco, 2011) works in IT and Christina Gordon (Morocco, 2010) works in Office Systems - and two more who have interned with us in Ed Abroad - Abby Ewart (Egypt, 2012) and Macarena Torres (Morocco, 2011 and Egypt, 2012). This summer Que'nique Newbill (Jordan Fall 2011) will join the Fulbright group at HQ and Elora Killian (Egypt 2012-13) will join the Ed Abroad team as an intern. Still others are working as ESL teachers with AMIDEAST in various countries around the region.

Recently I met with one of our former students from the first Jordan group in fall 2009 who is now interning at the National Council on US-Arab Relations, which is a few floors below us at 1730 M Street, NW in Washington, and exchanged emails with still another from that group who is a Clinton Foundation Fellow in Kolkata, India. Still another who studied with us a little over a year ago in Jordan was in to see me a few weeks ago while doing an internship here in DC with the Stimson Center that works on global security issues. There are many more using what they learned with us in a wide range of different ways, enriched by their experiences in the Arab world as undergraduates.

We hope that our programs have opened doors for all of our students. As alumni we want to continue helping open doors for you, and this newsletter and the resources in it for you are another way of doing so. I love hearing from you and am more than willing to meet with any alumni who are in DC who are interested in informational interviews.

Wa salaam,

Jerome B. Bookin-Weiner, PhD
Director of Education Abroad

Education Abroad Updates

A lot has changed in Education Abroad since your participation in a summer or semester program! We are excited to share our recent developments and growth with our alumni.

Education Abroad Summit in Cairo, Egypt

For the first time, AMIDEAST Education Abroad Programs staff from around the region - Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, and Tunisia - gathered together with key staff members from Headquarters in Washington, D.C in Cairo for four days in early January 2013. The purpose of the first AMIDEAST Education Abroad Summit was to share best practices across a range of areas from student service to teaching Arabic, develop an understanding of AMIDEAST policies and procedures that is now shared across all program sites, and brainstorm new approaches to common issues. It was a very intense, productive four days of living (in the Cairo student apartments) and working together!



Education Abroad Staff at the Cairo Summit: (from left) Nada Belhassan (Tunisia), Doha Ait Ahmed (Morocco), Katy Conrad (Oman), Hala Qubein (Jordan), and Matthew Kuehl (Egypt)

New Initiatives

Critical Language Scholarships Program

Beginning summer 2013, we will be operating the Critical Language Scholarships Program (CLS) sites in three locations - Amman, Nizwa (Oman), and Rabat. We will be serving a total of 84 students in these programs that are funded by the U.S. Department of State through American Councils for International Education.

High School Programs

We continue our involvement with the YES (Youth Exchange and Study) Abroad Program and NSLI-Y (National Security Language Initiative for Youth) Program, both funded by the U.S. Department of State. This year there are six students each in Morocco and Oman on the YES Abroad Program attending private high schools in Rabat and Muscat. Next year we will have a total of 15 students on the program, divided between Morocco and Oman.

We began our involvement with NSLI-Y in 2012 with 15 students in Oman and 20 in Morocco for six-week intensive Arabic programs. In summer 2013 we anticipate 15 students in each country, with an additional eight in Oman for the 2013-14 academic year.



YES Abroad Students in Morocco

Alumni Resources

AMIDEAST Education Abroad staff both in Washington, DC and the field constantly watches for educational and professional opportunities for AMIDEAST alumni. We hope you will explore these resources in more depth on the [Alumni Association Website](#).

Alumni Website

As a quick note, the AMIDEAST Alumni Associate website will soon be transferring to a new website and domain. Please keep an eye out for an e-mail update as the new, comprehensive website launches!

Arabic Resources

On our alumni website, we provide a number of language resources to prevent your Arabic from getting rusty following your program. This issue, our featured Arabic resource is: The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center's [Arabic Accents Library](#).

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You can listen to passages covering a variety of topics. These passages are representative of the various Arabic regional accents: Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese, Libyan, Palestinian, Saudi Arabian, Sudanese, Syrian, and Tunisian. These passages will help you practice understanding non-standard Arabic. You can select the passage by level, or by topic.

To select a passage by level, click the radio button next to the specified level. To select a passage by topic, click the radio button next to the topic you are interested in. You can select all topics in a group by clicking the "ALL" button for that group. Once you have made your selections, click the "Submit" button at the bottom of the screen.

Search results appear with one original and ten accent versions. You may listen to the original and compare it with the regional accent versions.

Levels

All


2

2+

3

Topics

All
 Culture
 Economy
 Environment
 Geography
 Military
 Politics
 Science
 Security
 Society
 Technology



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By selecting your Arabic experience and the type of material you are interested in, this interactive library enables you to listen to excerpts recorded in ten different colloquial Arabic dialects. This is a great way to hone your colloquial Arabic listening skills and vocabulary.

We hope you will visit the Alumni Association website to explore our other Arabic language practice resources. In addition, we provide interactive Media and MSA texts, blogs, vocabulary practice resources, and links to useful YouTube channels and music.

Mosaic - Spring 2013

We love receiving student and alumni submissions for [Mosaic](#), our ongoing collaborative student blog. Feel free to submit an article, blog entry, photos, or creative writing on your program abroad to DocsEdAbroad@amideast.org. Below is a recent post from one of Education Abroad's Spring 2013 Morocco Blog Abroad Correspondents, [Isabel Spence](#).

"Coming to a different country from America, in particular from a city in America, it is easy to think that you have come from a place of great diversity to a place of little diversity. This provides an interesting question; especially in Morocco's case. In American cities and in Boston where I hail from, it is easy to see people of all kinds of heritages every day out on the street. The question of diversity in Morocco is an interesting one and it is also of individual interest to just how I fit in when it comes to living in Morocco.

There might not appear to be a lot of variety in Morocco at first glance. This would be a totally inaccurate assessment however as Morocco's history and location is prime for a mixing of many different peoples from different countries. Morocco sits in a special location, between Europe and Africa as well as having strong connections with the Middle East. My Moroccan friend and I were recently discussing how Morocco's location influences its peoples and he told me this saying that the last king, Hassan II, used to summarize Morocco's position: Morocco is a tree with its branches in Europe and its roots in Africa.



Historically, Morocco has a diverse native people. The Europeans called these people Berbers or "Barbarians" but they prefer the name Amazigh for a singular person or Imazighen for the whole group. The Imazighen originally came down from Andalucía in Spain to live in Morocco and from there separated into three different subcategories in Morocco based on the dialect of their own unique language. With the spreading of Islam, Arabs came to Morocco and so the blending of Imazighen and Arabs began. Many Moroccans now a days sport mixed heritage. To further diversify the country, many peoples from Sub-Saharan Africa find homes in Morocco if they are hoping to immigrate to countries in Europe as they search for jobs..."

Featured Book

Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia by Robert Lacey

Recommended by Cara Lane-Toomey, Senior Program Officer

One day last summer I picked up the book "Inside the Kingdom" when passing through an airport. At the time, I had been back in the U.S. for about a year after living in Cairo, and I was Middle East-sick; missing the sights and sounds of Egypt while also yearning for my days as a Middle East Studies graduate student. Reminiscing about the days when my only job was to study the region I have grown to love, I was drawn to this book on Saudi Arabia. From the moment I cracked open Robert Lacey's tome, I was entranced.

The first word that always came to mind when I thought of Saudi Arabia was "hidden." Hidden faces, hidden agendas, and places hidden from the view of non-Muslims. What Lacey most deftly accomplished in his book was to shed light on Saudi Arabia's closed society and the historical events of the past three decades that have shaped this kingdom.

The book begins by Lacey describing the massive influx of oil money into Saudi Arabia in the 1970s and the profound effect this new wealth had on society. Lacey argues the societal changes served as a catalyst for the famous 1979 Islamic fundamentalist occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Juhayman Al-Otaybi. The incident struck immense fear in the Saudi royal family and, as a result, they ceded a great deal of power to religious clerics in order to shore up support. Lacey argues the unwillingness of the government to stand up to religious figures fed the growth of radical Islam and influenced Saudi Arabia's role in the war in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf, the emergence of Osama Bin Laden, and the events of September 11, 2001.

As a country with enormous wealth and influence in the Middle East and beyond, Saudi Arabia is a place steeped in controversy. For those of us who study or love the Middle East, Robert Lacey's book is an essential tool for understanding a kingdom that we cannot afford to overlook.

Spring 2013 Photo Contest Winners

Our last Photo Contest was our most exciting yet! Below are the first and second place photos of the Spring 2013 winners. We encourage you to submit your photos from your program abroad for the Fall 2013 Photo Contest! Guidelines and submission details can be found on [our website](#).

First Place

Sam Hobert, Spring 2013 Area & Arabic Language Studies Participant in Cairo Egypt, submitted the below photo of students in Luxor.



Second Place

Rahwa Hassen, a Summer 2012 Learn & Serve in Tunisia Participant, submitted the below photo of an abandoned boat in the largest salt lake in the Sahara, Chott el Jerid.



As always, we enjoy hearing where life has taken AMIDEAST alumni! Feel free to get in touch with us if you have any suggestions for the Alumni Association, or just to update us on your current successes.

Best regards,

Jerry Bookin-Weiner, Cara Lane-Toomey, Shino Yoshen, Lauren Kardos, and Liz Rauh

The AMIDEAST Education Abroad Team

Contact Us

AMIDEAST Education Abroad
1730 M St., NW Suite 1100
EdAbroad@amideast.org
Washington, DC 20036

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AMIDEAST | 1730 M Street NW | Suite 1100 | Washington | DC | 20009