Formalizing Arab and Muslim American Studies
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Proposal

To formalize Arab and Muslim American Studies (AMAS) as an Ethnic Studies unit within American Culture.

Rationale

Since 2006, AMAS (formerly AAS) has been referred to as an "emerging ethnic studies unit." Eight years later, it is a program with a minor starting next term, course offerings, an internship program, graduate students, an advisory board, and events. While there is only one dedicated faculty member, AMAS is creating links with faculty across campus and we are hiring this year.

Minor

Between 2010 and 2014, 42 Certificates in Arab American Studies were awarded. We no longer offer Certificates. Next term, the minor in Arab and Muslim American Studies will be in effect.

Courses

AMAS Fall 2014 offerings

AMCULT 215, Introduction to Arab American Studies, Matthew Stiffler, 70 students
AMCULT 498, Why Do They Hate Us?: Perspectives on 9/11, Evelyn Alsultany, 18 students
COMM 477, Women and Islam: The Politics of Representation, Shazia Iftkhar, 30 students.
AMCULT 390, Internship in Arab and Muslim American Studies

AMAS Winter 2015 offerings

AMCULT/ARABAM 235, From Harems to Terrorists: Representing the Middle East in Hollywood Cinema, Evelyn Alsultany
AMCULT/ARABAM 390, Internship in Arab and Muslim American Studies
ENGLISH 313/ARABAM 311, Contemporary Muslim Literature, Aliyah Khan
AMCULT, Arabs and Muslims in Science Fiction, Saladin Ahmed
AMCULT/ARABAM 498, Why Do They Hate Us? Perspectives on 9/11, Evelyn Alsultany

Advisory Board

Arab and Muslim American Studies has a newly assembled Advisory Board. It consists of Andrew Shryock, Professor, Department of Anthropology; Shazia Iftkhar, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies; and Aliyah Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of English

Graduate Students

There are currently three graduate students in American Culture who focus on Arab and Muslim American Studies: Mejdulene Shomali (fifth year); Dominic Garzonio (first year); and Meryem Kamil (first year). There are graduate students in other departments who benefit from AMAS: Nama Khalil in Anthropology, Dahlia Petrus in Middle East Studies, Christina LaRose in English, and Candice Haddad in Communication Studies. I routinely receive inquiries about AMAS from prospective graduate students and from graduate student at other universities. American Culture has been identified by graduate students as a place to pursue research in Arab and Muslim American Studies.

Internship

We offer a robust internship program with 8 placements in community organizations in Ann Arbor (The Back Door Food Pantry, Jewish Family Services, Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project, Arab Studies Institute), Dearborn (Arab American National Museum, ACCESS, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and Southfield (Council on American-Islamic Relations).

Fall Events

We co-sponsor relevant events and organize a few events each academic year.
September 22: Lila Abu-Lughod, Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University "Caught in the Cross-Publics of the 'Muslimwoman'" (organized by IRWG)
September 25: Amr Zahr, Arab American Comedian, screening of documentary film about Arab Americans lobbying for a census category, "We're Not White"
October 9: Elmaz Abinader, poet, memoirist, playwright and novelist, reading from her book of poetry, "This House, My Bones"
October 21: Sherene Razack, Professor of Sociology and Equity Studies, University of Toronto, "Law's Preoccupation with the Muslim Psyche: Contemporary Biological Racism" (collaboration with Communication Studies, co-sponsored by CMENAS, Islamic Studies, and IRWG)
November: Community Building/Backpacking Event.

What will change if AMAS is formalized?

It will be officially recognized as an Ethnic Studies unit within American Culture. Pending approval from the LSA Dean's office, the director would receive equivalent compensation to other Ethnic Studies directors and AMAS would receive equivalent funding for programming.