Interested in taking your area study to the region? The Middle East and South Asia Studies (MESAS) program has four unique opportunities planned for the upcoming summer. Students are offered the chance to earn academic credits for the minor while engaging the culture and peoples of the region first-hand. Whether studying language and Islam in Morocco, environmental communication in India, cultural anthropology in Nepal, religious traditions in Indonesia, or the annual Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, each program offers a unique and exciting student experience.

The Morocco program will be based in Fes, one of the cultural capitals of the entire Middle East. Students will be immersed in the local language and culture while staying with a Moroccan family. A total of 9 credit hours are offered, including 6 hours of either Arabic or French language study and an additional 3 hour in English, REL 362 -Islam in Morocco taught by Darlene May, this summer’s resident director. Academic study will be enriched by special excursions, including weekend trips to local exotic locations, an overnight desert excursion, and an extended trip to Marrakesh, Essaouira, and...
Summer Study Abroad (continued from p. 1)

Casablanca. The program is offered during Summer Session I.

Dr. Ananda Mitra and the Communications Department are sponsoring the Immersed in India and Wake the Himalayas trip during the Summer Session II. Accommodated housing will be based in Calcutta and Delhi, with visits to Chennai, Bangalore, Mysore, Ooty, Jaipur and Agra. The program will study how environmental issues are discussed in media and cultural language while earning 3 hours of credit for COM 370 - Culture and Communication in India: Sustainability vs. Globalization. Other cultural topics will include the emergence of the Bollywood film industry, classical Indian music, and an optional service opportunity working with Tibetan refugees in the mountain desert region of Ladakh. Three other major excursions to the Himalayas, the “Golden Triangle,” and several cities in southern India. As senior Mary Stagmaier said after her experience to India last summer: “Don’t pass up the opportunity or think twice about it. You must go!”

The Indonesia and the Netherlands: Ramadan Observerd program will also be offered during Summer Session II. Students will enjoy a multicultural experience observing and participating in local religious traditions during the special month of Islamic fasting. The trip includes three weeks staying in the island Java and two weeks in Amsterdam. Several exciting and enriching excursions to important Muslim, Buddhist, and Jewish religious sites are planned as well. The Religion Department will offer 3 hours in REL 390 - Ramadan Observed for the program. Students will gain lifetime experiences while comparing the religious practices of various Muslim communities between the two countries.
Summer Study Abroad (continued from p. 2)

Sponsored by the Anthropology Department, the 2014 Summer Program in Nepal (SPIN) immerses students in the rich culture of Nepal. The program is heavily focused on getting students experience living in the local environment. The program will include an adventurous trek at the beginning of the summer, as well as a 3-week home stay in a local home. Six total credit hours are offered, including ANT 383 - Culture of Nepal (3 hours) and ANT 384 - Research Project (3 hours). Students will conduct research on a variety of topics related to the culture, caste system, and effects of development while learning the local language in a Nepalese village. The program dates are May 20 - June 27.

For the first time, undergraduates are invited to attend the Divinity School’s program at the annual Festival of World Sacred Music in Fes, Morocco. Music and dancing from around the world will be displayed during one of the premier intercultural and interfaith events. Under the direction of Dr. Neal Walls, students will attend performances, enjoy unique site visits, and perform academic study during the 10-day event from June 12-22. Three hours of academic credit will be transferred for the course REL 216 Religion and Music. The course will broaden student exposure to global sources of music, Islam and Sufism, post-colonialism in North Africa, and Moroccan culture.

For additional information about each of these programs contact Darlene May (Morocco) at maydr@wfu.edu, Ananda Mitra (India) at ananda@wfu.edu, Steve Folmer (Nepal) at folmersj@wfu.edu, Nelly van Doorn-Harder (Indonesia) at van-doopa@wfu.edu, or Neal Walls (Fes Festival) at wallsnh@wfu.edu.
In many respects, the story of Mrs. Silvia Correa’s path to Winston-Salem might sound familiar: that of someone looking for the opportunity to find a great job and a warmer climate. However, our new Interdisciplinary Administrative Assistant has enjoyed many unique life experiences. Mrs. Correa moved to New York from her native country of Uruguay in 1981. She eventually relocated to Winston-Salem in 2006, seeking a change of pace and working in local schools. After starting out as a substitute teacher at Brunson Elementary, she made a name for herself in the administrative office as an assistant and lead secretary.

In her new position at Wake Forest University, Mrs. Correa has a diverse array of administrative responsibilities. She assists 6 different academic programs, including the Middle East and South Asia Studies, Latin America and Latino Studies, American Ethnicity Studies, Humanities, and Neuroscience programs. She hopes to fulfill all of these responsibilities and be a reliable source of support to faculty members and students. She is available to complete major or minor declarations, promote department events, translate between Spanish and English, and offer advice from her unique perspective. That is not all, however. Mrs. Correa also wants to reach out to the local Hispanic community, both at Wake Forest and in Winston-Salem. She encourages all students to “study hard, set goals, and do whatever is necessary to achieve them.”

Mrs. Correa’s personal life is quite interesting as well. Not only is she fluent in Spanish, but she even knows a little French and Italian. Perhaps she will be inspired to add Arabic or Hebrew to her list while working with the MESAS program as well? Her traveling experiences are also impressive, including time spent in Canada, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. As she says, "Every place has something unique to offer, and that is what I try to find whenever I visit a place." In particular, she loves travelling with her family to visit the beauty closer to home, from Boone, NC to see the Blue Ridge Mountains each fall and either the beaches of North Carolina’s Outer Banks or Florida each spring.

Please feel free to stop by Mrs. Correa’s office at 313 Kirby. To contact Mrs. Correa, email her at: correas@wfu.edu. Or call 758-4497.
Born and raised in Winston-Salem, Imam Khalid Griggs knows “The Dash” as well as anyone. He is described by Muslim students on campus as devout, ambitious, and a strong advocate for improving the local presence of Muslim student life. More than just a pastoral figure, a senior Muslim student spoke of Imam Griggs as “the first person you go to for information or concerns regarding the religion or the traditions.” In this way, the Imam serves a dual role on campus. He is a both a facilitator for the needs of the Muslim community at the administrative level and serves an equally important role as a personal guide for students by finding ways to help them express their personal beliefs and identity.

One of the more unknown parts of Imam Griggs’ biography involves his early life and his path to embracing Islam. The Imam found Islam in 1972, during his senior year of college. He attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he studied political science and English. His encounter with Islam constituted a major event that would lead him down a process of study and activism that would eventually spark his return to Winston-Salem. After nearly 16 years, Imam Griggs moved back to his hometown and began giving visiting lectures in the religion department of Wake Forest University. The University had been actively trying to improve the activity of the growing number of Muslim students on campus from some time. In January 2012, Imam Griggs was offered the position of Associate Chaplain for Muslim Student Life.

Imam Griggs is also the Chairman of the Board of the Islamic Circle of North America’s Council for Social Justice, an international organization promoting Islamic values and Muslim life in the U.S. and beyond. His work in leading that organization’s National Campaign Against Hunger, an initiative aimed at assisting all of those who are in need and educating people about the ongoing hunger crisis, is well known and widely praised.

To contact Imam Griggs, email him at: griggska@wfu.edu
Conference Review: The Promise of Religious Pluralism

From February 28th to March 1st, Wake Forest hosted 16 of the world’s most renowned religious scholars on interfaith theological studies. “The Promise of Religious Pluralism: Comparison and the Introductory Study of Theology” was a gathering of scholars with academic backgrounds and expertise in Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and indigenous traditions. The purpose of the conference was exceptionally relevant: to provide a forum for dialogue between different religious faiths about the need for religious pluralism in comparative theology.

Religious pluralism and comparative theology invite people of faith to develop in-depth knowledge and respect for other religious traditions within their personal beliefs. As said by the lead sponsor of the event, Dr. Michelle Voss Roberts, Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture at the Wake Forest Divinity School: “if we’re going to do the work of theology in a pluralistic world we need to listen to the work of others in different faith traditions and that can be generative conversation.”

Such a topic of conversation could not be more relevant to the campus of Wake Forest University. Exciting initiatives have emerged from the administration in relation to the strategic plan to “embrace the challenges of religious pluralism.” The University has made important new hires in the Chaplain’s Office (see the profile of Imam Griggs on p. 5) and interfaith student life continues to grow under the leadership of a vibrant Interfaith Student Council. A next important step is to deepen the engagement with religious pluralism in academic study with initiatives that match those in student life.

“The Promise of Religious Pluralism” conference demonstrates in multiple meaningful ways how comparative theological work can reshape the basic discipline of theology. The conference was clearly successful in starting the conversation, but it is only a starting point for more necessary conversations in the future. To conclude with Dr. Voss Roberts remarks: the academic space we live in on this campus is a critical time to “be reminded of who our neighbors are and who our classmates are to widen our worldview.”
Film Review: “Omar”

Some films attempt to entertain, inspire, or even frighten viewers. *Omar*, the Oscar nominated foreign film, which screened at Winston-Salem’s Aperture Cinema the first week of March, somehow manages to accomplish all three simultaneously. In fact, the film is as much a tragic love story as it is a profound political statement. Directed by Hany Abu-Assad, who also directed the first and only other Palestinian film to receive an Oscar nod (*Paradise Now*, nominated in 2006), *Omar* depicts the challenges of a young Palestinian adult struggling to live under Israeli occupation in the West Bank. At first, the life of Omar, played by Adam Bakri, seems relatively simple and generally relatable. He has a job as a local baker and strong aspirations to marry a young woman, the love of his life. If only it were so simple.

When the trio of Omar and his two close friends plot to kill an Israeli soldier, everything changes. From the thrilling alleyway and rooftop chases with Israeli intelligence agents, to the brutal interrogations and piercing twists that happen afterwards, the film captures this emotional story with conviction. The viewer’s past assumptions about right and wrong in the Arab-Israeli conflict are quickly bent—and at some points even broken.

The point of the film does seem to much to be to change your mind about a controversial issue that is already rigidly defined by both sides. It seems, instead, to aim at offering a narrative that renders the conflict human. With a level of artistic realism described as “remarkable” by *The Washington Post*, it is hard not to feel either passionate, frustrated, or both by the film’s dramatic ending. Overall, *Omar* is a must-see film for those interested in trying to better understand Palestinian-Israeli relations, or anyone who just wants to enjoy a gripping and heartfelt drama.

Although *Omar* did not win the Oscar last week, the film has already won six international prizes, including the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at Cannes, a category aimed at encouraging innovated and daring works. Perhaps a third nomination will be the charm for this filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad.
The Program in Middle East & South Asia Studies

The Middle East and South Asia Studies program organizes events, encourages study abroad, and offers an undergraduate minor, all aimed at providing students with opportunities to engage in a multidisciplinary study of the history, politics, literature, peoples, and cultures of the Middle East and South Asia.

Upcoming Events

March 19th, 26th, and April 2nd: 3-part multicultural and interfaith lecture series titled “Oh Jerusalem” by Visiting Professor Leah Kinberg at 7:00pm in Temple Emanuel Sanctuary. Located at 201 Oakwood Drive, Winston-Salem, NC, 27103

March 27th: “Great Decisions 2014: Islamic Awakening” presented by Professor Michaelle Browers. Sponsored by The Center for International Studies event, A Citizen’s Forum on Current Foreign Policy Issues. 7:00pm in Scales Fine Arts Center: A102

March 31st: “Hajj in the Time of Cholera: Disease Vectors and the Pilgrimage to Mecca from Southeast Asia,” visiting lecture by Cornell University Professor History Dr. Eric Tagliacozzo. 5pm in ZSR Library Room 404

April 7th: “Jihad: Past and Present” public lecture by Visiting Professor Leah Kinberg at 7:00pm in the Annenberg Forum (Carswell 111)

April 9th: visiting lecture titled “What to Do about Syria?” by Dr. Stephen Zunes, Professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of San Francisco. 5:00pm in Kirby B-02 (basement)

For additional information about faculty, events, course offerings, visit the Middle East & South Asia Studies website at http://college.wfu.edu/politics/mesasprogram/