2020-2021 was probably the first year in known history in which most higher education took place online. Teaching, learning, administration, and even socializing resorted to audio-visual methods. We had to learn from the abrupt change that took place in the last two months of spring 2020 due to the onset of Covid-19 pandemic. Constraints have challenged every party in the past academic year and the situation was far from ideal. Yet, our strong educational vessels had to sail and make the best of whatever stormy conditions there have been. Luckily, we have completed the journey, and this is a brief presentation of some transitions and achievements in the Middle East and South Asia Studies (MESAS) Program.

After her many years of service as the co-director of MESAS with Professor Hank Kennedy ever since we became a program in 2006, Professor Michaele Browers stepped down in the summer of 2020. We are deeply indebted to her leadership and vision. Professors Rais Rahman and Charles Wilkins, both of the History Department, joined Professor Kennedy as the new co-directors at that time, and together they have led MESAS through the 2020-2021 year.

Dr. Darlene R. May, the founder of the Arabic Program at WFU, is retiring this summer after a fruitful career that began at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1973. We are sincerely grateful for her efforts and congratulate her on her achievements and wish her a happy retirement. An article on her inspiring career can be found on pages 3-4.

We are excited to announce that starting July 1, Dr. Peter Knapczyk will join the MESAS program as the tenure-track Assistant Professor of Hindi-Urdu. Congratulations! Under the leadership of Dr. Peter Knapczyk, our Hindi-Urdu sub-program has had continual growth and we are excited to share the numerous student achievements from this past year on page 7. We also want to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Rayed Khedher, formerly of Davidson College, as Visiting Assistant Professor of Arabic during the 2021-2022 academic year.

As in many past years, our program welcomed two outstanding Fulbright Language Teaching Assistants this year for the Arabic and Hindi-Urdu programs. Maram Ahmed had to work online from Gaza and Tabinda Sadiq worked from Lucknow, India. Both teaching assistants had to adjust to the online format and the vast time difference with EST timing.

Among the many outstanding MESAS students, we want to recognize our Arabic student and MESAS minor, Savarni...
A Year in Review continued from page 1

Sanka, who has been named a Rhodes Scholar (page 2). More good news from MESAS-affiliated faculty can be found on pages 9-11.

MESAS sponsored some virtual events, including Dr. Ariel I. Ahram of Virginia Tech who spoke on “War and Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa”. He discussed his latest book, War and Conflict in The Middle East, which explores the causes and consequences of wars in parts of the Arab world: Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Israel/Palestine, and Lebanon.

Also, our Arabic faculty, Dr. A. Z. Obiedat, was invited by WFU Humanities Institute to speak about his forthcoming comparative book, Modernity and the Ideals of Arab-Islamic and Western-Scientific Philosophy: The Worldviews of Mario Bunge and Taha Abd al-Rahman (pages 10-11).

Due to the observed ban on social gatherings, our Arabic Film Series, Annual World Cultural Festival, calligraphy art table, Diwali, and Eid festivals did not take place. Yet, a welcoming session was organized for students on zoom at the beginning of the fall semester.

While we are unable to gather in person this spring to celebrate the achievements of our outstanding Arabic and Hindi-Urdu students (see pages 5-7), we want to congratulate and recognize these students for their hard work and dedication to the study of the Middle East and South Asia regions and the Arabic and Hindi-Urdu languages.

MESAS GRADUATE SAVARNAI SANKA NAMED RHODES SCHOLAR

Recent Wake Forest graduate, Savarni Sanka has been named a Rhodes Scholar. Sanka, who is from Raleigh, N.C., plans to pursue a Master of Public Policy and Master of Science in refugee and forced migration studies. Below Sanka shares her experience with Arabic and the MESAS Department.

I first stumbled into Wake’s Arabic and MESAS Department as a freshman hoping to branch out from a decade of Spanish-language study. I didn’t know it then, but studying Arabic would take me on some of the most memorable adventures of my undergraduate career. Through the Arabic program, I had the opportunity to not only learn a new language but also to learn about the hundreds of millions of people who speak it. I traveled to Morocco on a Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), where I studied Arabic and its Moroccan dialect, dârijah, lived with a host family, and visited some of the most beautiful cities I have ever seen. I learned how to make Middle Eastern cuisine from Syrian migrants I met in Winston, who humored my elementary Modern Standard Arabic skills and offered to teach me regional slang. On campus, I found a close-knit community in my fellow students in the MESAS department: we spent countless hours in late-night study sessions, attended Arabic film nights and extra-curricular cultural events together, and bonded over the shared challenge of learning (and the shared joy of falling in love with) the Arabic language. As I look forward to the next chapters of my academic, personal, and professional journeys, I will carry such fond memories of my time at Wake Arabic/MESAS with me!

The original announcement can be read online: Wake Forest senior Savarni Sanka named Rhodes Scholar. Written by Kim McGrath and Cheryl Walker. Published online November 22, 2020.
Darlene May came to Wake Forest University in 2005, after what she jokes was “the world’s longest maternity leave” from her tenured position at Rhodes College in Memphis. After 23 years raising her two sons, a decade of which was spent in Egypt, May quickly set about the task of familiarizing herself with new teaching methods and new textbooks, dove into workshops, and began building connections with Arabic language teachers across the country in order to undertake what she describes as “a really exciting teaching challenge” and “opportunity to develop as a teacher.” May started the Arabic program as the sole instructor of the language, teaching one and a half classes, with only about a dozen or so students. Today the minor offers four full years of modern standard Arabic, from beginning to advanced, as well as regular courses in Arabic literature and culture and occasional courses in various colloquial Arabic languages. In addition to May’s position as a full-time Teaching Professor, the program faculty includes a tenure-track professor and a Fulbright Arabic Language Teaching Assistant.

May’s approach to teaching Arabic draws on her training in Arabic linguistics. “Linguistics gave me that framework I needed to really understand how Arabic works as a language and then to be able to explain that to students in a simple way. Most textbooks in the field just ask students to use the language but not necessarily with understanding why they are, for example, constructing a sentence in a particular way.” May compares Arabic to algebra, due to its logical but complex grammatical structure; she finds it easier to learn and master if you can see how the parts work and fit together. Her approach to teaching is focused on cuing students to bring out the answers themselves, and she often asks the entire class to go to the blackboard at once to dictate or conjugate so she can give them immediate feedback. This combination of actively speaking and writing with immediate feedback — something that she has missed sorely during pandemic restrictions — is how she works to instill good Arabic habits, something she much prefers to trying to undo back Arabic habits that develop with less of a hands-off approach.

As someone who has developed such a successful teaching career, not once but twice in her extensive academic career, one might expect May to be ready to retire. Yet, in the most recent years, she seems to have, if anything, expanded the ways in which she engages in teaching and campus life. In just the last three years alone, her involvement has included her time as Faculty Fellow at Luter Residence Hall; her participation on the Residential College Steering Committee, the Learning Spaces Committee, and the Teaching Professional Promotion Committee; and becoming a founding member of the University’s chapter of Every Campus a Refuge, which assists our local refugee community. May cites her “personal relationships with students” through mentoring them as Arabic speakers and in their individual research as the “the thing that makes it difficult to retire.” “This is,” May says, “what has kept me coming back every year: the opportunity to connect in a deep and meaningful way with these wonderful students that we have at Wake Forest.”
“Linguistics gave me that framework I needed to really understand how Arabic works as a language and then to be able to explain that to students in a simple way. Most textbooks in the field just ask students to use the language but not necessarily with understanding why they are, for example, constructing a sentence in a particular way.”
Darlene May

May is well-known among Arabic students for her willingness to do whatever it takes for her students to succeed. As Savarni Sanka, a recipient of the Rhodes Scholarship, recounts, “that included carving out time between her many meetings to coach me through difficult Arabic texts, encouraging me to apply for a Critical Language Scholarship, creating an Arabic independent study for me when I returned from the program, finding a professor to teach me Arabic in Salamanca, and so much more.” Sanka’s experience also attests to May’s commitment to the whole student: “I’ll remember fondly the newspaper clippings she brought me about local Salvadoran restaurants (because she knew I loved Latin American cuisine); the trip she took with me and my friends to watch a Bollywood film; and the hours she invested in SAFAR, Chai Chat, and other student initiatives I was involved in that she wanted to support. She was an integral part of my college experience and will always be one of the shining lights of the Arabic department!”

May’s other high point of her career at Wake Forest was her promotion to full Teaching Professor. May recounts how surprised she was at how deeply satisfying she found that accomplishment, likening it to how she felt after submitting and defending her dissertation and receiving her Ph.D. “I feel complete after receiving that promotion. It’s an acknowledgment of all the time and effort and passion I have put into this field that I really love,” she said.

I have had the pleasure of working with Darlene May from almost the very beginning of her time at Wake Forest, where I have served alongside her in developing the Arabic program, study abroad programs in Morocco and Egypt, and Every Campus A Refuge. We have shared countless meals and stories along the way. What stands out the most to me is her passion for her work, the high standards she always set for herself, and her patience and generosity in bringing out the best in all of those around her. I am so grateful to continue to reap the gifts of the legacy she bestowed on us when she made her magnificent return to academia to help establish the Arabic Language Program at Wake Forest University, for she has touched so many lives during her time here.

**REFLECTION ON WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY**

- BY DR. DARLENE MAY

I leave my full-time position teaching Arabic language at Wake Forest University with a mixture of sadness and satisfaction. Sadness because I cannot imagine not being on campus and in the classroom with students again in the fall and not collaborating with my wonderful colleagues—faculty as well as staff—in the MESAS Program. I have especially loved welcoming the freshmen and at the same time working with the 3rd- and 4th-year students and marveling at how far they have progressed in their study of Arabic since their first class in August several years before. Satisfaction because my 16 ½ years at Wake Forest have been incredibly special and fulfilling. Seeing the program develop from a course and a half to a full curriculum of 20 courses and from 8 students to 70-plus with 13 to 15 minors every year has been immensely gratifying. Indeed, my decision to retire from Wake Forest has been every bit as difficult as my time at Wake Forest has been fulfilling. Now I depart thankful beyond measure to have so many lovely memories to take with me, and I leave behind my deeply heartfelt wishes for the continued growth and success of the Arabic Program and all those who share in it.
The Arabic Program, founded in 2005, has been recognizing its top students in both the first-year class and the class of graduating minors every spring since 2017. It has become the custom for Dr. Darlene May and Dr. Ahmad Obiedat to host every April a celebration during which the accomplishments of all the Arabic students are celebrated and the top students are presented with special award certificates designed by Dr. Obiedat. Because of the pandemic, however, we were forced to forego our celebratory gathering not only in 2020 but also this year. Nonetheless, we will continue to honor our students by introducing this year’s award winners to you in this issue of the MESAS newsletter.

The Award for First Rank in the First Year
The winner of this award is Dalal Malak Ahmidouch. Dalal is a rising sophomore from Greensboro, North Carolina, and a member of the class of 2024. She intends to major in Computer Science and minor in Arabic. During her first year on campus she was active in two student groups—SAFAR (Student Association for the Advancement of Refugees) and WFU Robotics—and worked at The Bridge. Next year she will serve as an RA. When not busy with her studies, her favorite activities are swimming and crocheting. Having spent time in both Morocco and Algeria, she has a particular affection for the peoples and cultures of North Africa and intends to use her developing Arabic skills to connect with more Arabic-speaking persons and to find new and creative ways to use this language that she has come to love.

The Award for Second Rank in the First Year
This award is shared this year by two students: Mia Elizabeth Pearsall and Melanie Ruth Cionfolo. Mia is a rising junior from Chicago who is majoring in Politics and International Affairs and double minoring in ME-SAS and Global Trade in Commerce. On campus she is active in the pre-law fraternity, volunteers as a peer leader on the university’s judicial committee, and has served as a research assistant for a journalism professor. She is looking forward to taking up yet another language—Catalonian—while spending the fall semester on a study abroad program in Barcelona, Spain. She chose to begin studying Arabic in order to develop sufficient language skills to use Arabic either for research purposes or for work as a Foreign Service Officer in the Middle East. Her ultimate goal is to make a positive contribution to diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Middle East countries through better communication.

Melanie is a rising sophomore from Knoxville, Tennessee, who plans to major in Accounting and double minor in Arabic and MESAS. On campus she serves as a student advisor, is an active member of Delta Zeta, and works in University Stores. Her favorite non-academic activities are exercising and bowling. She decided to give Arabic a try this year because she wanted to challenge herself and learn a new language that would be entirely different from English. Now that she has finished her first year of study, her goal is to become sufficiently proficient to be able to use Arabic professionally in her intended career in counterterrorism.
The Award for Outstanding Senior in Arabic
This year there are four graduating seniors who have minored in Arabic. While all of them have been exemplary and dedicated students, the top award goes to **Addison Kaye Collins**, a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, who has earned her B.A. Magna Cum Laude with a major in Politics and International Affairs and minors in Arabic, MESAS, and Spanish. Addison is being recognized for her four-year devotion to Arabic language studies, being the only minor this year to have completed all eight semesters of our core Modern Standard Arabic courses. In addition, she has taken extra MSA conversation and literature courses and has spent a summer studying abroad in Morocco—all while maintaining a 4.0 average in the minor.

Now that Addison is a WFU alumna, she has begun working as a Management Development Associate at McMaster-Carr in Atlanta. Her plan is to eventually return to academia to obtain a graduate degree in a field in which she can use her Arabic skills professionally—probably either international business or international law. In the meantime, she will find many opportunities for continuing to practice Arabic in Atlanta’s vibrant and growing Arabic-speaking community.

The Senior Award for Excellence in Arabic
The winner of this award is **Mohamed Yasin Ahmidouch**. Elder brother of our first-year award winner Dalal, he calls Greensboro, North Carolina, home. He has just graduated with a B.S. degree Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa. His major is Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; his minors are Neuroscience and Arabic. Mohamed is being recognized for having completed three full years of core Modern Standard Arabic language courses as well as a literature course, all while maintaining a 4.0 average in the minor. In addition to MSA, he has proficiency in the Maghrebi dialect and French, both of which are spoken in his home. His personal deep interest in Arab-Islamic Studies as well as his family roots have led him to travel widely in Morocco, Algeria, and the Andalusian region of Spain. Locally, he shares his linguistic and cultural skills and gives generously of his time by serving as Off-Campus Coordinator for the student organization SAFAR and volunteering extensively with the growing Arabic-speaking refugee and immigrant community in Winston-Salem. On-campus jobs that have kept him busy are working at The Bridge, tutoring Arabic and chemistry in the Learning Assistance Center, and doing undergraduate research at the Wake Forest School of Medicine. In his free time he enjoys speedcubing, programming, beat-making, and sneaker-heading (for readers who are not with the times, “collecting and trading sneakers as a hobby”). As a WFU alumnus, Mohamed plans to continue to work on clinical research and apply to medical school, with the idea of incorporating his language skills into his future endeavors.

We wish all of our award winners a hearty portion of tawfiq, enduring success and personal fulfillment in the pursuit of their goals. We look forward to welcoming back to the Arabic program in the fall our continuing students, and we wish our graduates a happy transition to a new and exciting phase of their lives.
The Hindi-Urdu program, founded in 2018, has continued to grow in exciting ways despite this year of pandemic. At the close of the 2021 spring semester, we are pleased to recognize the accomplishments of our students and instructors. Congratulations to all our graduating seniors!

**MESAS minors with Hindi-Urdu language concentration**

This spring marks the first time that students will complete the MESAS minor with a language concentration in Hindi-Urdu. Arif Ahmed and Ameen Faizi both completed the four-year Hindi-Urdu course sequence and continued their Hindi-Urdu studies this year in our new advanced-level courses. Thanks to Arif and Ameen for their many contributions to the Hindi-Urdu program.

**Outstanding Hindi-Urdu Student Awards**

We would also like to celebrate the outstanding performance and dedication of two students from the Elementary Hindi-Urdu course: Anjali Purohit and Chris Cates. Anjali will graduate this spring with a double-major in Sociology and Spanish. Chris is a junior majoring in Sociology and Theatre, with a minor in Dance. Throughout the year, Anjali and Chris performed at the top of their class, demonstrated leadership in group projects and plays, and made excellent progress in their Hindi proficiency.

**Richter Scholarship**

Another of our graduating students, Sara Ahmed, was selected in spring 2020 for the Richter Scholarship to carry out her project on the culture and language surrounding mental health in Jaipur, India. Unfortunately, Sara was unable to carry out her original research program due to restrictions on travel during summer 2020; however, she was able to complete a portion of her research as an independent study in the fall 2020. Sara will enter the MA program in Counseling this fall.

**Hindi-Urdu FLTA: Tabinda Sadiq**

The Hindi-Urdu program would also like to recognize the outstanding contributions of our 2020-21 FLTA, Tabinda Sadiq. Due to the pandemic, Tabinda could not join us on campus, but her online presence greatly enhanced our Hindi-Urdu courses and ensured a high-level of student engagement during a difficult year.

Tabinda is from Lucknow, India, where she is pursuing a PhD in English literature from Lucknow University. Being fluent in both Hindi and Urdu, Tabinda was able to assist students in both scripts and languages, and her presentations on life and culture in India were highlights of our courses. As course offerings for the Hindi-Urdu program expand, Tabinda played a key role in leading our advanced level courses. We wish Tabinda all the best for her future studies and career!
THE FULBRIGHT FLTA FOR ARABIC

- BY DR. DARLENE MAY

The Arabic Program was fortunate to have as its Fulbright FLTA for the 2020-21 academic year Ms. Maram Ahmed, who joined us remotely from Gaza City, the largest city in the Gaza Strip, which is part of the Palestinian Territory. Ms. Maram came to us with a B.A. in English Language as well as a Diploma in Educational Methodology from the Islamic University of Gaza in addition to having had several years of professional experience as a translator and an English teacher in elementary and secondary schools operated by UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East).

During the past year she assisted Dr. Darlene May primarily in the first-year Modern Standard Arabic courses, working with nearly 30 students. In spite of daily challenges related to an ongoing limited supply of electricity and unpredictable internet access, she regularly attended classes via Zoom and engaged with small groups of students in breakout rooms as well as in informal conversation sessions that she designed to enrich the in-class curriculum. With her solid background in Classical Arabic, Quran, and Islamic Studies, she also worked with Dr. May’s fourth-year Arabic minors on pronunciation and reading fluency. For most of the month of May Ms. Maram faced the additional challenge of weeks of Israeli rocket strikes on her city that resulted in extreme shortages of water, food, fuel, and medical supplies as well as the loss of family friends killed when their homes were leveled. She herself spent many nights unable to sleep while surrounding neighborhoods were shelled. In spite of all this, she missed only one meeting with students. We are very thankful that Ms. Maram and her family are safe and well, and we are delighted that she will be assisting the Arabic Program in person during the 2021-22 academic year. In applying to be a Fulbright FLTA, one of her wishes was finally to meet a native speaker of English. We are looking forward to welcoming her to our campus at the end of the summer and making that wish come true!

FULBRIGHT LANGUAGE TEACHING ASSISTANT PROGRAM

The Fulbright FLTA Program is sponsored by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). As part of the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, the Fulbright FLTA Program is designed to develop Americans’ knowledge of foreign cultures and languages by supporting teaching assistantships in over 30 languages at hundreds of U.S. institutions of higher education.

https://foreign.fulbrightonline.org/about/fulbright-flta
Chanchal Dadlani - Art History

Chanchal Dadlani received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities for her book *Translating India: Mughal Art and French Knowledge Production in the Eighteenth Century*. The book examines the art collection of Jean-Baptiste Gentil, an officer of the French East India Company who lived in Mughal South Asia from 1752-78. It focuses on a set of illustrated works that were co-produced by Gentil and a select group of artists. Moving beyond strictly biographical or stylistic approaches, the book interprets the collection in relation to multiple political, artistic, and knowledge systems, from the manuscript workshops of north India to the networks of early Orientalism. Ultimately, the book highlights the central role played by Mughal cultural legacies during a key phase of European colonial expansionism, restoring agency to the South Asian artists who have been rendered all but invisible in the historical record.

Peter Knapczyk - Hindi-Urdu

Reading Hindi receives Honorable Mention for AAS Buchanan Prize

The Association for Asian Studies selected Dr. Knapczyk’s textbook, *Reading Hindi: Novice to Intermediate* (Routledge 2020), as honorable mention for its “Franklin R. Buchanan Prize for Asia Curriculum Materials.” This prize recognizes “excellence and innovation in curricular and instructional materials.”


Penny Sinanoglu - History


Barry Trachtenberg - Jewish History

Continued from page 9

A. Z. Obiedat - Arabic


Modernity is the label that denotes most of the changes humanity has experienced over the course of the past five centuries. More, it is often the banner of the forces leading those changes, and sometimes the object of those fighting them. Descriptively complex and normatively controversial, modernity can be seen as the mother of all of humanity’s characteristically novel problems. Does it remain, paradoxically, their best solution?

Modernities and the Ideals of Arab-Islamic and Western-Scientific Philosophy is a book that envisions modernity’s best-case scenario. This scenario — of a modernity that benefits postcolonial and Western peoples without harming them — contrasts with the views of modernity and modernization that now dominate the Western and Arab-Islamic concourse. “The West versus the rest” is one of modernity’s central predicaments, and the Arab-Islamic world is one of the rest that has paid, and is paying, a great price for modernity. In the Arab-Islamic context, the consideration of modernity has been left to two spectrums of thought. The first is sectoral, unsystemic, and ignorant of the rich Arab intellectual heritage: it runs from militant atheism to militant Islamism. The second is absolutist, reactionary, and dismissive of cross-civilizational learning: it runs from a Western-centric and imperialist worldview, to one espousing native infallibility and postmodernism. Modernity and the Ideals of Arab-Islamic and Western-Scientific Philosophy instead seeks a philosophical grounding for the modern ideal, in contrast with premodernity and postmodernity, and in consideration of the Arab-Islamic context.

In the West, several revolutions were needed to advance the modernization project, envisioned chiefly as the following: 1- science unveils mysteries of nature; 2- democracy advances over tyranny; 3- technology and capitalism bring prosperity; 4- secular humanism articulates universally applicable ethics. These are generally considered to form a matrix of positive outcomes, yet many in the West, both scholars and members of the general public, are aware of a dark side to modernity. Hence, they envision a reformed modernity, or else postmodernity.

As for Arab-Islamic cultures, which have deep premodern roots, the perceptions of modernity are staggeringly different. Their view of modernity’s dark side can be seen in a second matrix, this time of negative outcomes: 1- environmentally, the Arab world, as with the third world more generally, suffered degradation, and exploitation of its natural resources; 2- politically, it suffered external colonialism and internal dictatorship; 3- economically, Arabs felt the imbalanced boom in wealth going to the former colonizer and Westernized elite; 4- spiritually, Arabs suffered mockery of the very culture that made them historically literate and sovereign, i.e., Islam. A concomitant judgment of many in the Arab world, as with some within the West itself, is that they would rather remain alive in whatever premodern manner than be killed with the aid of, or for the sake of, modernity. The descriptive understanding and normative evaluation of modernity at the crossroads of the Arab-Islamic and Western worlds invites multilateral philosophical conversation. Unfortunately, Arab-Islamic and Western philosophical conversation is largely absent, or immature. In the West, Arab-Islamic philosophy is perceived to have died with Averroes (Ibn Rushd, d. 1172 CE), and no conversation can be fruitful with a dead counterpart. In the Arab-Islamic world, Western philosophy is perceived to have lost interest in addressing the fundamental problems of knowing, being, and acting. Several Arab thinkers gave up on modernity following the advancement of postmodern philosophy, and its vindication of obscurity, irrationalism, anti-realism, and post-virtue. Within the larger Arab world, these postmodern fashions came to be viewed as the essence of Western modernity. Between on the one hand a false perception of the death of the Arab-Islamic philosophical counterpart, and on the other of a pseudo-characterization of modernization as a convoluted postmodern path, both parties fell into dual misconceptions of modernity.

Modernities and the Ideals of Arab-Islamic and Western-Scientific Philosophy seeks to dispel these dual misconceptions, arguing by way of dual counterexamples. It presents a Western representative, Mario Bunge, whose work embodies the ideals whose existence in the Western world the Arab-Islamic camp denies: clarity, adherence to a scientific
outlook, comprehensiveness, and respect for global human and social values. In parallel, it presents an Arab-Islamic representative, Taha Abd al-Rahman, whose work embodies the ideals whose existence in the Arab-Islamic world the Western camp denies: knowledge of contemporary Western philosophy, organic growth from an Arab-Islamic heritage, logical consistency, and sophistication of discourse.

Considering the divergences and convergences between their respective philosophies, the central argument of the book is that the common ground between Western and Arab-Islamic worldviews is to be found, first of all, precisely in modernity’s best-case scenario: equitable prosperity, and beneficial guardianship of the natural world. The harmful ideologies, institutions, and technologies of some of modernity should not disqualify it as an ideal, provided it can overcome these mistakes — in much the same way that the harmful treatments and bad practices of medicine have not disqualified medicine as an endeavor, because in seeking to overcome its mistakes and to progress, it has provided real benefit to humanity.

The second common ground between Western and Arab-Islamic worldviews is their traditional appreciation of logical rationality, which I expand into the principle that the right to criticize falsity is coupled with the duty to abide by truthfulness. The developing world, and the Arab-Islamic world in particular, has every right to counter the harmful aspects of modernity. Yet, when these efforts go to the extreme of denouncing the naturalistic, rationalistic, and humanistic basis of the modern project, then the Arab-Islamic world loses any prospect of advancing sustainable global human welfare, and forsakes the only method that can elevate its own impoverished conditions: science-based sustainable development coupled with rational institutional organization. In short, the right to criticize misguided modernity leads to the duty to accept its best-case scenario, and these are the common grounds between the Western and Arab-Islamic worlds.