



## 2009 Grant Proposal

### **Enhancing the Study of Middle East and Islamic History**

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#### **Program Abstract**

The Department of History at Ohio State University seeks to enhance its superb program in Middle East and Islamic history by expanding the opportunities for student research and study and by promoting greater public awareness of the Middle East and Islamic world.

#### **Project Narrative**

The Middle East and Islamic history program at Ohio State has a long and storied record of excellence. In the 1930s, Professor Sydney Fisher built a doctoral program in Middle Eastern history, making Ohio State the first public university in the country to provide such a program. Over succeeding decades, Professor Fisher and his successors supervised dozens of master theses and doctoral dissertations, established a core undergraduate curriculum, made pioneering contributions to the emergence of world history as a cognate field, and achieved international distinction for their research and scholarship. Today, the Middle East and Islamic program includes Professor Carter V. Findley, Professor Stephen F. Dale, Professor Jane Hathaway, and Assistant Professor Scott Levi. These faculty have collectively published 17 books, and in the last decade they have supervised more than a dozen completed doctoral degrees and placed those students in academic positions at such institutions as Rice University, Western Carolina University, University of Nevada--Las Vegas, University of Richmond, University of Vermont, and Bogazici University (Turkey). Professor Dale was recently awarded the 2009 Distinguished University Scholar Award, the same honor bestowed on Professor Findley in 2000. Professor Findley is also an honorary member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences.

In light of the growing importance of public understanding of the Middle East and Islamic World, the Department of History seeks to enhance its program in the history of these areas. Arguably, the Middle East and the Islamic World have emerged in recent decades as the most important regions of the world for the people and government of the United States. Scholarship on and teaching of these areas is important for gaining understanding of their diverse peoples, for promoting inter-cultural interaction and accord, and for situating the experiences of the American people in that part of the world. One of the core strengths of our program is that it covers Muslim-majority countries from Morocco to Indonesia and Muslim minorities in

other areas—giving it a geographic range that surpasses many other university programs that essentially cover the Arab world only. Building even more excellent graduate and undergraduate programs in Middle East and Islamic history remains one of our crucial missions as a major department in a research university, and achieving a greater voice in public education and understanding is consistent with Ohio State’s long legacy as a land-grant institution.

We seek to enhance our public education and outreach missions in the following ways:

**Undergraduate fellowships for study abroad and language training:**

As we move into an era of globalization, it seems critical to the success of our mission as a public university to promote undergraduate study of the Middle East and the Islamic World. The Department believes that our students’ experiences at Ohio State would be enriched by study abroad in Middle East and other Islamic countries and by training in the languages of those parts of the world. Thus we wish to offer scholarships to our undergraduate majors who are ambitious about pursuing such options. We believe that by seeding such activity, we will stimulate a long-term cultural shift in favor of such activity by future students.

Our department has gained rich experience in hosting teacher-training initiatives by having administered five such programs under the U.S. Department of Education’s Teaching American History (TAH) initiative. These programs have benefited more than 300 public school teachers in more than 60 school districts across Ohio. Our programs have a record of success, demonstrated by higher achievement in standardized tests by the students of those teachers we trained. TAH funds are limited to U.S. history. We seek to broaden the success of our TAH programs to Middle East history teachers.

**Budget**

Undergraduate scholarships (2009-2012) ..... \$18,000

