

KURDISH

POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



In the face of unprecedented and unique challenges brought by the pandemic, KPSP proved to be resilient and pressed on. While we had to suspend our international travels and campus events, we continued to pursue a variety of activities contributing to greater scholarly understanding of Kurdish issues, facilitating intellectual exchanges, fostering international collaborations, and deepening student interest in Kurdish people and politics. You can find an overview of these activities in our newsletter.



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OPPORTUNITIES

Kurdish Studies Certificate

The Kurdish Political Studies Program is delighted to introduce a [Certificate in Kurdish Studies](#) students can earn while pursuing their degrees in Political science, history, and anthropology. The Kurdish people remains the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, and one of the largest ethnic groups without a state of their own. Students who complete this certificate will develop a deep understanding of the longstanding issues that originate from the unique circumstances of the ethnic group and will gain an insight into Kurdish politics important for the understanding of the Middle Eastern politics and society at large. The certificate will be especially beneficial to students seeking careers in the government, academia, non-profit organizations, and private companies working on security and humanitarian issues.

Dr. Najmaldin Karim Fellowship in Kurdish Political Studies

Since Spring 2017, KPSP sponsors the Dr. Najmaldin Karim Fellowship for undergraduate students at UCF. The fellow is provided a research space conducive to educational and professional development and conduct a research project related to Kurdish politics, broadly defined, under the supervision of KPSP faculty in every spring semester.



Fall 2021 Fellow

Mohammed Al-Awwad

Mohammed is a majoring in Political Science and minoring in Philosophy. Mohammed will conduct research on conspiracy theories involving Kurds in the Arab world under the supervision of Dr. Güneş Murat Tezcür.



Spring 2021 Fellow

Sofia Griement

Sofia is Biomedical Science student minoring in Cultural Anthropology with a certificate in Global Health Anthropology. She is writing an Honors Undergraduate Thesis on traditional healing practices among Yazidi diaspora in Germany. Her work is supervised by Dr. Tyler Fisher of Modern Languages and Literatures. Her research involves in-depth interviews in German.



Spring 2020 Fellow

Alexi Sadaka

Alexi graduated from UCF with degrees in political science and economics in spring 2020. As part of his fellowship, he wrote a paper on the US military aid. He is currently a collateral management analyst at Goldman Sachs.

AWARDS

Best Article Award in Kurdish Political Studies

Established in 2016, this award sponsored by KPSP recognizes the best article in Kurdish Political Studies by a rising scholar during the previous calendar year. The award is open to all articles published in English language peer-reviewed journals, and all social science and humanities disciplines. In 2020, the award committee was composed of Ozlem Goner (City University of New York), Güneş Murat Tezcür (University of Central Florida), and Metin Yüksel (Hacettepe University).

2020 Awardees

Ahmad Mohammadpour and Kamal Soleimani

“Interrogating the Tribal: The Aporia of ‘Tribalism’ in the Sociological Study of the Middle East,” *British Journal of Sociology* 70(5) (2019), 1799-1824.70(5) (2019), 1799-1824.

Ahmad Mohammadpour and Kamal Soleimani’s article is a welcome critical intervention into the state of the field of Kurdish Studies. They offer an emphatic rebuttal of the widespread tendency to assume tribalism as an inherent feature of the Kurdish experience and draw compelling examples from all pieces of Kurdish lands.

Marlene Schäfers

“Archived Voices, Acoustic Traces, and the Reverberations of Kurdish History in Modern Turkey,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61(2) (2019), 447-473.473.

Marlene Schäfers’ rich ethnographic study carefully reveals complex and engendered practices of historicity and archiving, as well as the contradictory processes of selective re-constructions of subaltern histories. By paying diligent attention to Kurdish female singer-poets’ (dengbêjs) personal narratives and their passionate constructions of the archive brings their voices to life.

Honorable Mention

Onur Günay

“In War and Peace: Shifting Narratives of Violence in Kurdish Istanbul,” *American Anthropologist* 121(3) (2019), 554-567.

Based on an extensive ethnographic study among Kurdish workers in a low-income neighborhood of Istanbul, Onur Günay offers a rich narration of the masculine world of Kurdish workers. Günay’s study transcends both the paradigm of victimhood that often sidesteps the agency of ordinary people and the conventional binary conceptualization of Kurdish politics as a struggle between the state and the insurgents.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION



Strengthening Global Citizenship of Kurdistan-Iraq Youth Model United Nations 2021

Model United Nations (MUN) are educational conferences which offer its participants an opportunity to learn the parliamentary procedure and decision-making process employed by the United Nations by simulating the work of its committees. The ongoing cooperation between **UCF and Soran University** in Iraqi Kurdistan seeks to bring this experience to Iraq by organizing the country’s first National Model United Nations. The conference which will take place at Soran University in November 2021, seeks to bring together one hundred participants from across Iraq. For three days the students will assume the role of country delegates, take part in the parliamentary proceedings, and debate issues of international importance while practicing policy research, negotiation, and the drafting of resolutions. The project is funded through an international collaboration grant from the **International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)**.



Miroslav Shapovalov of KPSP and Mohammed Obaid Shwani of Soran University in February 2021.

SELECTED VIRTUAL PUBLIC EVENTS

Kurdish Literature and Culture - October 2, 2020

Together with the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, KPSP hosted discussion with two scholars in the area of Kurdish literature. Dr. Wendelmoet Haleink, a research fellow at the Center for Gender Research at Oslo University, gave a talk titled "Music, Migration, and Conflict: Kurdish Women's Memories in Narrative and Song". Dr. Frangis Ghader, a Research Fellow at the Centre for Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter, introduced the audience to the social significance of Kurdish poetry with a talk titled "Poetics of Change: The Emergence and Development of Modern Kurdish Poetry". The discussion was moderated by Dr. Haidar Khezri, an Assistant Professor at UCF.

Reflections on Kurdish Politics - November 20, 2020

The event featured Dr. Mesut Yeğen and Dr. Michael Leezenberg, two prominent scholars in the area geopolitics and political economy of the region. In his presentation titled "Ethnopolitics to Geopolitics: Turkish State and the Kurdish Question since 2015", Dr. Yeğen discussed the way in which the Turkish state has engaged the Kurdish question in Turkey and how the change in its engagement strategy - from internal assimilation to focusing on Kurds outside of Turkey - may be understood as a transition from ethnopolitics to geopolitics. In his talk titled "Beyond Oil: The Political Economy of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq" Dr. Leezenberg demonstrated that the study of political economy of Kurdistan unjustly focuses on oil extraction, ignoring other sectors. This neglect, he argued, prevents the academia from understanding the obstacles to reviving regional agriculture and manufacture. The event was moderated by Dr. Güneş Murat Tezcür of UCF.

Old Fire in New Words for the Kurdish New Year: Poetry and Translation - March 26, 2021

Organized by KPSP and the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, the event featured stimulating discussions of the traditions and new trends in Kurdish poetry. Dr. Alana Marie Levinson-LaBrosse, Director of Kashkul Center for Arts & Culture at American University of Iraq Sulaimani, opened with a conversation about the history of the erotic in Kurdish Poetry. David Shook, a poet and translator, delivered a talk titled "Something Missing from this World: New Currents in Contemporary Kurdish poetry. The event, moderated by Dr. Tyler Fisher of UCF, was accompanied by a reading of Kurdish Poetry by the participants.



MODERATOR
Haidar Khezri, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, College of Arts and Humanities
University of Central Florida

SPEAKERS
Music, Migration and Conflict: Kurdish Women's Memories in Narrative and Song
Wendelmoet Hamelink, Ph.D.
Research Fellow at the Social and Cultural Planning Office (The Hague) and at the Centre for Gender Research (STK) of Oslo University

Poetics of Change: The Emergence and Development of Modern Kurdish Poetry



MODERATOR
Dr. Tyler Fisher
Associate Professor, College of Arts and Humanities,
University of Central Florida

SPEAKERS
Two Centuries of the Erotic in Kurdish Poetry
Dr. Alana Marie Levinson-LaBrosse
AUIS Assistant Professor and Director of Kashkul Center for Arts & Culture

Something Missing from this World: New Currents in Contemporary Kurdish Poetry
David Shook
Poet, Translator, Editor

MUSIC
Dr. Nahro Zagros
Soran University

POETRY READING
David Shook; Alana Marie Levinson-LaBrosse; Zédan Xelef, Tyler Fisher, and Haidar Khezri

For More Information Contact:
kurdish@ucf.edu

To Join the Zoom Meeting Event:
[Click Here](#)
Meeting ID: 952 9954 9114

Organized by the *Kurdish Political Studies Program & Department of Modern Languages and Literatures*

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STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

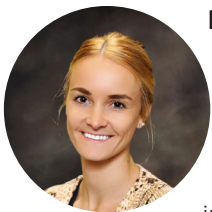


TUTKU AYHAN, Security Studies Ph.D. '21

Tutku, originally from Izmir in Turkey, has been a KPSF affiliate since August 2017 when she started her doctoral studies at UCF. Tutku defended her dissertation titled Trauma, Resilience, and Empowerment: Post-Genocide Experiences of Yazidi Women in July 2021. Tutku is joining Binghamton University as a Post-Doctorate Fellow at the Institute of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention in August 2021.

Tutku's work focuses primarily on the gender relations among Yazidis, a religious minority in northern Iraq subjected to genocidal attacks by the self-styled Islamic State in 2014. A key finding in her dissertation is that while the survivors of sexual violence and abduction experienced the worst trauma, they can also show the highest levels of post-traumatic growth and empowerment when they are supported by their community. Depending on the destination country, immigration may also bring positive changes and empower women, especially with community support in their new home. Tutku's dissertation questions generalized assumptions about women's post-conflict experiences as well as the established categories of victimhood and calls for a more effective and inclusive policymaking for women in post-atrocity settings.

"I am truly grateful to KPSF for supporting me throughout my fieldwork among displaced and local Yazidis in Duhok, Kurdistan. I am also grateful to the program for deepening my understanding of the highly intricate power dynamics and inter-ethnic relations in not only Kurdistan, but in the Middle East".



DOREEN HORSCHIG, Security Studies Ph.D. '21

Doreen, originally from Altenburger Land in Germany, started her doctoral studies at UCF in 2017. She was a research and teaching assistant for the KPSF for three semesters. Doreen is currently the Hale Fellow at Ploughshares Fund and will be a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in fall 2021.

Doreen defended her dissertation titled An Illusional Nuclear Taboo: Mechanisms of Domestic Attitudinal Patterns for Extreme Methods of War in Spring 2021. Doreen's dissertation focuses on the conditions under which public may endorse the use of first-strike nuclear weapons and employs survey experiments in Israel and the United States. Her theoretical framework, informed by Terror Management Theory (TMT), suggests that respondents would be more likely to endorse extreme forms of warfare including nuclear strikes when they are reminded of their mortality. Her findings support this argument as respondents who are treated with increased salience of their own mortality are more likely to support the use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, political ideology, threat perception, and



religion are all significant factors in shaping individuals' attitudes towards the use of nuclear weapons. Her dissertation demonstrate why nuclear weapons disarmament, elimination, and non-proliferation remains deeply challenging.

"The Roger Hale fellowship presents me with an outstanding opportunity to develop my professional skills by working at a leading nuclear security institution. Getting the fellowship is not just a validation for me and my research work, but also for the doctoral Security Studies program and my dissertation advisor Dr. Güneş Murat Tezcür."



MOHAMMED AL-AWWAD, Intern at U.S. Consulate in Erbil

A junior at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs majoring in Political Science, Mohammed has been selected for a highly competitive internship with the U.S. State Department in fall 2020. He served as Human Rights Research Intern at the United States Consulate of Erbil, Iraq, as part of the Virtual Student Federal Service that allows students to take internships in a remote mode from fall 2020 to summer 2021.

"As a human rights research intern at the Consulate, my research involves the writing of reports thanks to which I am significantly improving my research skills. This experience is allowing me to understand how the federal service and diplomacy work and inform policymaking."

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

G.M. Tezcür ed. Kurds and Yezidis in the Middle East: Shifting Identities, Borders, and the Experience of Minority Communities. I. B. Tauris, 2021.

This book, edited by Dr. Tezcür, comprises the leading voices in Kurdish Studies and combines in-depth empirical work with theoretical and conceptual discussions to take the debates in the field in new directions. The book comprises the leading voices in Kurdish Studies and combines in-depth empirical work with theoretical and conceptual discussions to take the debates in the field in new directions. It diversifies the literature on Kurdish Studies by offering close analyses of subjects which have not been adequately researched, and in particular, by highlighting the Kurds' relationship to the Yezidis. Case studies include: the political ideas of Ehmede Xani, "the father of Kurdish nationalism"; Kurdish refugees in camps in Iraq; the perception of the Kurds by Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire and the Turks in modern Western Turkey; and the important connections and shared heritage of the Kurds and the Yezidis, especially in the aftermath of the 2014 ISIS attacks.

Güneş Murat Tezcür and Doreen Horschig, "A Conditional Norm: Chemical Warfare from Colonialism to Contemporary Civil Wars," Third World Quarterly 42(2) (2021), 366-384.

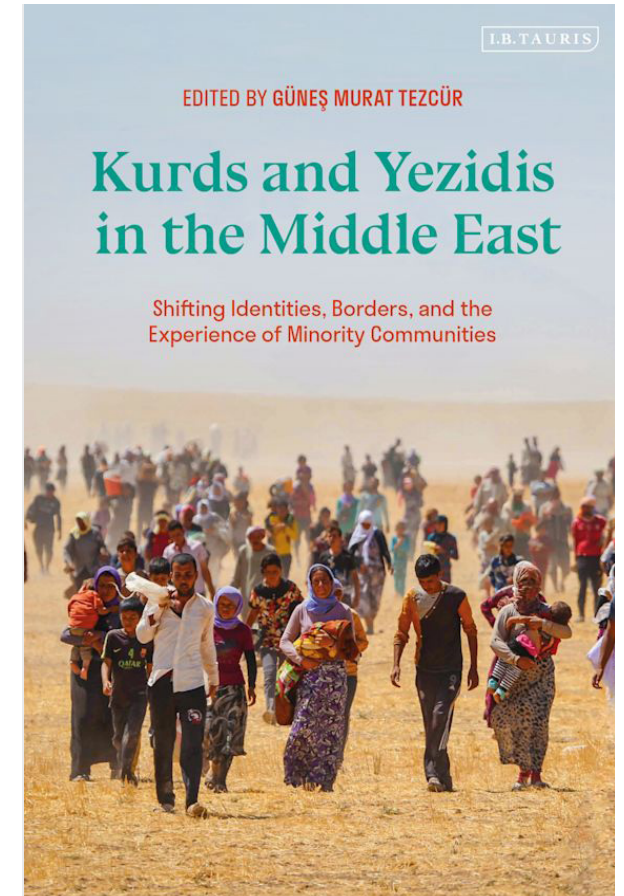
Drs. Tezcür and Horschig question the strength of the norm against Chemical Weapons (CW) and explore under what conditions this norm is violated. They argue that the anti-CW norm has never had universal status and always remained conditional on a hierarchy of victims. CW attacks targeting certain groups have been more readily justifiable and generated ineffective and inconsistent third-party reactions. Consequently, certain groups, who are implicitly or explicitly perceived to be outside the pale of civilized order, remain more vulnerable to CW attacks than others.

Haidar Khezri. "Kurdish as a Stateless Language in the United States," Journal of National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages 30(1) (2021), 48-101.

By using intersectionality as the theoretical framework, the article argues that the educational structures of power converge, at Kurds home countries and abroad, to create a set of conditions under which the stateless Kurdish language exists, always in a kind of invisible but persistent multiple jeopardy. It shows how Kurdish in the U.S., similar to the Middle East, has been merely tolerated, and finds itself excluded from opportunities reserved for languages that enjoy privileges pertaining to statehood, such as Arabic, Persian, and Turkish.

Tutku Ayhan and Güneş Murat Tezcür. "Overcoming 'Intimate Hatreds': Reflections on violence against Yezidis." In Conceptualizing Mass Violence Representations, Recollections, and Reinterpretations, eds. N. J. Aafredi & P. Singh. London: Routledge, 2021.

The IS's violent campaign against the Yezidis in northern Iraq in August 2014 was an unmitigated disaster for the community. Ayhan and Tezcür demonstrate that the relationships between Yezidis and their neighbors, mostly Sunni Muslims, exhibited complexity and countervailing tendencies that could not be accurately captured by a prism of minority victimhood. At the same time, religious stigmatization transmitted across generations fomented anti-Yezidi violence and provided justifications for extreme practices. What is most unprecedented about the IS attacks is the growing international awareness of Yezidis and acceptance of them as a faith group entitled to rights, recognition, and dignity.





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