News of the Syrian Studies Association

Annual Meeting Held in Boston
Lawson Elected President, Semerdjian is Member-at-Large and Kalmbach Grad. Student Rep.

The Syrian Studies Association held its annual meeting in Boston on November 21, 2009 in association with the Middle East Studies Association annual meeting. As a result of the presidential elections Fred Lawson will serve a three-year term as president. Peter Sluglett was thanked for his service as president. Elyse Semerdjian was designated as member-at-large. Hilary Kalmbach will serve a two-year term as graduate student representative.

Fred Lawson is Professor of Government and Chair of the Government Department at Mills College, Oakland, California. He is the editor of the new collection *Demystifying Syria*, published by Saqi Books in London (2009). He contributed an essay on improvements in Syria's relations with Turkey to that volume. He has also written studies of the Hizb al-Sha'b of the 1940s for a book edited by Christoph Schumann on liberalism and nationalism in the Arab world that will be published in 2010 by Routledge, and a survey of the transformation of the Syrian Muslim Brothers for a volume on regimes and oppositions edited by Holger Albrecht.

Elyse Semerdjian is Associate Professor of Islamic World/Middle East History at Whitman College. She specializes in Ottoman Syria and holds an interest in marginality, particularly gender, ethnicity, and religion. Her book *Off the Straight Path: Illicit Sex, Law, and Community* was published by Syracuse University Press in 2008. In 2007-2008, she received a Fulbright to work on her new book project dealing with the Ottoman Armenians of Aleppo. She has served on MESA's Nominating Committee (2009), and was the editor of this newsletter (2004-2007).

Hilary Kalmbach is a doctoral student at University of Oxford, St Antony's College. She is a social historian whose work focuses on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Egypt and Syria. Her article “Social and Religious Change in Damascus: One Case of Female Islamic Religious Authority”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (April 2008), pp. 37-57 won the first British Society for Middle Eastern Studies graduate article competition in 2007. Her doctorate focuses on the Dar al-'Ulum teacher's training college in interwar using institutional records, journals and memoirs to write a social history of individuals involved with the school, placing it in a context of social, educational and religious change. Beverly Levine, our previous Graduate Student Representative, is now our Syria Liaison as she is
in Damascus doing research on her doctoral dissertation which focuses on the social history of medicine during the French Mandate period. The position of Lebanon liaison remains open.

Peter Sluglett and Andrea Stanton now compose the prize committee.

There were two SSA-sponsored panels at MESA in Boston: and “round table” under the title “Between Cooperation and Resistance: The League of Nations Mandates in the Middle East” and the panel “Crossing Over: Negotiating Levantine Borders during the Mandate and After”.

The SSA annual reception was held immediately following the business meeting. A large gathering heard Joshua Landis, Eyal Zisser, Sadiq al-Azm and Amr al-Azm speak on aspects of the current socio-political climate in Syria. A lively Q&A followed.

SSA Seeks Submissions for Article and Dissertation Prizes

In 2010, the SSA seeks submissions for two prizes, the bi-annual article and dissertation prizes. Dissertations filed between July 2008 and August 2010 and articles published between July 2008 and August 2010 are eligible. The deadline for submissions is Sept. 1, 2010. Winners will be announced at the SSA annual meeting in November 2010. Inquiries can be directed to Peter Sluglett (Sluglett@aol.com) or Andrea Stanton (andrea.l.stanton@gmail.com), co-chairs of the prize committee.

SSA Seeks Panels to Sponsor for MESA 2010 in San Diego

The Syrian Studies Association invites proposals for panel presentations at this year's Middle East Studies Association of North America annual meeting in San Diego. As a MESA affiliate, the SSA is permitted to sponsor up to three panels. Sponsorship highlights your presentation to MESA attendees and underscores the significance of our area of study.

If you wish to have your panel considered for SSA sponsorship, please send your panel and paper descriptions for review to the SSA Secretary-Treasurer, Geoff Schad, at gschad@alb.edu by Monday, February 5, 2010.

Panelists should be members of the Syrian Studies Association. For membership and other information about the SSA, please visit its website: http://www.ou.edu/ssa/.

Join the Syrian Studies Association!

Annual dues are $25 for professionals and $10 for students, payable by check. Membership is free for Syrian nationals residing in Syria. Contact our secretary-treasurer Geoffrey D. Schad at gschad@alb.edu.

Check out the Syrian Studies Association Website at http://www.ou.edu/ssa

The Syrian Studies Association has Facebook page. Join the group!

The SSA is an international association organized to encourage and promote research and scholarly understanding of Syria in all periods and in all academic disciplines. The SSA is a non-profit, non-political association affiliated with MESA (the Middle East Studies Association of North America).

The SSA defines Syria as the area included in historic Bilad al-Sham until 1918 and Syria following that. We invite scholars who study the peoples and territories of what is today Syria, Jordan, and Palestine before 1918 and those who study Syria before that date to join the SSA.