

the  
**GLOBAL** RESEARCH  
**PAST** INITIATIVE

# WORKSHOP 2, CAIRO



QALĀ'ŪN COMPLEX  
*Courtesy of Getty Images*

**FEB 15 & 18-24, 2024**

American University in Cairo  
***And Local Historical Sites***

Sponsored by University of Toronto Mississauga

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# MISSION STATEMENT

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What should humanistic research look like in the post-pandemic world?

The Global Past Research Initiative (GPRI) seeks answers to this question by developing a new model of post-disciplinary knowledge production — one that promotes equity in the present by exploring the diversity of the past.

The modern disciplines of social science and humanities are by-products of empire. As these disciplines became professionalized enterprises of knowledge production from ca. 1850 to 1914, the non-west figured as essentially non-historical: institutionalized disciplines positioned societies and cultures outside of Europe and its settler colonies as either “precontact” cultures examined through ethnography, or textual artefacts of “high” civilizations studied in isolation from diachronic processes and the present. In lieu of these developments, after 1945, the Cold War brought a proliferation of area studies programs; these endeavours, while interdisciplinary, were also framed by colonial/imperial organizations of power and knowledge that prioritized empirical study of bounded regions rather than questions of global relevance. We at the Global Past Research Initiative see this disciplinary legacy as a global challenge.

Based at the University of Toronto Mississauga, our multidisciplinary, multiyear project — led by principal investigators, Ajay Rao and Jill Caskey — is a call-to-action for scholars of the premodern world (before ca. 1500) to begin building a productive framework for research, teaching, and graduate training focused on the connectedness of cultures and of archives in ways that push against the legacy of the area studies modality of studying the global pasts. By conceptualizing the study of global pasts away from the dominant disciplinary perspectives of our day, we aim to revitalize the global humanities and provide a more expansive understanding of the humanities' core question – what does it mean to be human?

Our goal is to build a network of collaboration between scholars and students at the University of Toronto, American University in Cairo, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, and Institut Français de Pondichéry. With this wide-ranging collaboration with our international partners and a dynamic team of scholars, we aim to prepare the way for a truly global university, where humanities programs will break free of hegemonic disciplinary boundaries, and embrace non-western and Indigenous ways of knowing and seeing the world by moving beyond disciplinary boundaries. Our hope is to produce knowledge that is transformative, emancipatory, and plural.

A photograph of an interior space in a historical building. It features a balcony with a wooden railing and a stone column. The architecture is detailed with carvings and arches.

# WHAT WE DO

Composed of three interlocking research clusters, the initiative involves three international workshops aimed at sparking dialogue and building research capacity for graduate students and scholars of the premodern world.

These workshops will focus on major methodological and theoretical problems and their implications for our individual research areas, as collaborators bring newfound insights and conceptual frameworks to bear on specific settings, sources, and collections.

## OUR CLUSTERS

### MOBILITY

Focusing on the movement of peoples, goods and ideas in the premodern world as they are reflected in a wide range of sources such as travel narratives, diplomatic accounts, memoirs of pilgrimage, commercial documents or graffiti left by roamers of trade routes and seasonal pastures.

### ART & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Focusing on art and architecture in premodern Eurasia to consider how various groups responded to the diversity of their world and the concomitant circulation of works of art, artists, techniques, media, and ideas.

### STORYTELLING, NARRATIVE & TEXTUALITY

Focusing on the science of texts as a theoretical problem in the global humanities. We will examine diverse practices of lexicography, grammar, rhetoric, metrics, hermeneutics, and commentary, as well as the modes of cultural encounter involved in translation and oral and written story traditions.

INTERIOR, NILOMETER Photograph by Baloncici, courtesy of Getty Images.

# THE MUQARNAS



The Global Past Research Initiative invites participants to probe three themes across the premodern world: Art and the Built Environment, Mobility, and Storytelling, Narrative, and Textuality. These themes intersect and overlap to support the larger project and thus are suggestive of muqarnas — the complex faceted structures composed of interlocking pieces of diverse shapes. Each piece of a muqarnas has a distinct role in a design, however difficult it may be to discern. The round minaret of the Mosque of Al-Aqmar features a band of muqarnas; its interlocking forms expand to support the wide parapet above, creating a new, inhabitable, and highly visible space above the cityscape from which calls to prayer resound. We hope that the workshop in Cairo comes to resemble this muqarnas, with everyone working together from diverse disciplinary, methodological, and institutional vantage points as we listen to each other, explore the city, and consider the overarching problem of the global.

*– Jill Caskey  
Co-Principal Investigator, GPRI*

# WORKSHOP RATIONALE

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The framing of the term **global** is hardly ever questioned in much of what passes as global history, global literatures, and global humanities. More often than not, the term is understood as a concept that's by and large padded by the Anglo-Saxon academic discourse of the 90s. Within this framing of the global, connections, voices from the margins, and autonomous histories are emphasized with a hope that some kind of renewed understanding of global experience can be extracted from these diverse perspectives.

However, the problem with this kind of multipolar perspective is that it assumes that conflicting histories can be presented side by side without ever questioning the legitimacy of their larger discursive legacies. Such liberal-pluralist approaches to the global flatten the differences and reduce political projects to mere commodities while making their own politics of framing the discourse invisible. Too often, the structures of so-called global knowledge contribute more to our ignorance of non-western societies, Indigenous, and premodern pasts than to a meaningful understanding of their differences.

One can see such a framing of the global in almost any handbook of global history, global literature (etcetera) wherein these structures of thought and language that are expressed remain largely Eurocentric. Historians continue to frame the experience of time in the temporal markers of European historiography, and literary scholars are rarely able to provide a glimpse into literary imagination of a non-western past without referring to the genres that have come to be theorized from within the western literary tradition. Essentially translating the differences into a more familiar vocabulary of imperial discourse, most of the modern humanities and social sciences continue to operate outside the philological density that informs the thick forest of non-western pasts.

With each workshop, we are working towards promoting a radical shift in how we conceptualize the global, how perspectives are hierarchized, and the language through which we come to engage the global pasts. We propose to think together and discover opportunities for re-theorization. Only through a diversely collaborative thinking project like the Global Past Research Initiative can we hope not just to provincialize Europe, but to think outside of its given epistemologies.

## WORKSHOP 2: CAIRO

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The Cairo workshop foregrounds Art and the Built Environment, while incorporating the other two research clusters into its programming. Activities are organized around visits to Coptic, Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk sites as well as various museums. Working in small groups, graduate students and scholars across our collaborating institutions will focus on a particular site, collection, or object and present their observations *in situ* to the full group. Presentations will draw upon a common list of readings selected to inspire interdisciplinary dialogue and prompt methodological reflection. Roundtable discussions at the end of the workshop will provide additional opportunities for reflection and deliberation, as will special lectures, optional site visits, and social events.

# WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

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## Faculty Participants, University of Toronto

Jill Caskey  
*Professor & Chair*

**VISUAL STUDIES**

Jessica Lockhart  
*Head of Research*

**OLD BOOKS NEW SCIENCE LAB**

Ajay Rao  
*Associate Professor*

**HISTORICAL STUDIES**

Ruba Kana'an  
*Assistant Professor & Associate Chair*

**VISUAL STUDIES**

Heba Mostafa  
*Assistant Professor*

**ART HISTORY**

Walid Saleh  
*Professor*

**RELIGION / NEAR & MIDDLE  
EASTERN CIVILIZATIONS**

## Faculty Participants & Invited Guests, American University in Cairo

Noha Abou Khatwa  
*Adjunct Assistant Professor*

**ARAB & ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS**

Amina Elbendary  
*Associate Professor & Director of Graduate  
Studies*

**ARAB & ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS**

Eman Morgan  
*Assistant Director for Special Projects,  
Electronic Media & Professional Development*

**RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL  
COLLECTIONS LIBRARY**

May al-Ibrashy  
*Adjunct Lecturer & Conservation Architect*

**ARCHITECTURE**

Ellen Kenney  
*Associate Professor & Chair*

**ARAB & ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS**

Ola Seif  
*Assistant Director for Regional Photography*

**RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL  
COLLECTIONS LIBRARY**

Mariam Ayad  
*Associate Professor*

**SOCIOLOGY, EGYPTOLOGY, &  
ANTHROPOLOGY**

Bernard O'Kane  
*Professor*

**ARAB & ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS**

Stephen Urgola  
*Archivist and Director of AUC Records  
Management*

**RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL  
COLLECTIONS LIBRARY**

## Faculty Participants, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay

Smriti Haricharan  
*Assistant Professor*

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**



# WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

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## Graduate Student Participants, University of Toronto

Rachel Al Rubai  
*Doctoral Student*  
**RELIGION**

Katerina Bong  
*Doctoral Student*  
**ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE & DESIGN**

Yating Liao  
*Doctoral Student*  
**ANTHROPOLOGY**

Sara Ameri  
*Doctoral Student*  
**ENGLISH**

Fahimeh Ghorbani  
*Doctoral Student*  
**ART HISTORY**

Kai Wang  
*Doctoral Student*  
**ART HISTORY**

## Graduate Student Participants, Cairo-Based

### American University in Cairo

Yumna Moussa  
*Master's Student*  
**ARABIC STUDIES**

Sarah Awni Nasr  
*Master's Student*  
**ARABIC STUDIES**

### Ain Shams University

Eman Aly Selim  
*Doctoral Student & Specialized Conservator*  
**ARCHAEOLOGY**

### Cairo University

Muhamad Abdelmageed  
*Doctoral Student & Assistant Lecturer*  
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE**

## Graduate Student Participants, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay

Mutharasu Anbalagan  
*Doctoral Student*  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Himanshu  
*Doctoral Student*  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Harikrishnan N.  
*Doctoral Student*  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Rakesh Das  
*Doctoral Student*  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Sowmya Karunanithee  
*Doctoral Student*  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Amarjeet Singh  
*Doctoral Student*  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**





# Pre-Workshop Activities

## SCHEDULE

**DAY 1**

***Thursday, February 15, 2024***

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
10:15am-10:45am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to AUC Tahrir Campus
11:00am-01:00pm	Brainstorming Meeting with Dr. Adam Talib and Guests  "Doctoral Programming in the Humanities at AUC"  <b>GPRI Participants</b> Jill Caskey Ruba Kana'an Heba Mostafa Ajay Rao Walid Saleh	AUC Tahrir Campus <b>Marriott Room 109</b>
01:00pm-01:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	AUC Tahrir Campus to Hotel

**DAY 2-3**

***Friday, February 16 - Saturday, February 17, 2024***

*No scheduled activities.*

# Main Workshop Activities

## SCHEDULE

*UofT and IIT participants are requested to participate in all scheduled activities. We encourage Cairo-based participants to join us for all workshop activities where group presentations/discussion will take place.*



Denotes activities involving working group presentations and/or scholarly discussion



Denotes optional site visits or social activities, excluding workshop meals

**DAY 1**

***Sunday, February 18, 2024***

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
08:30am-09:30am	Breakfast	Hotel
09:30am-01:00pm	Free time	Hotel & Surrounding Area
01:00pm-01:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to AUC Tahrir Campus
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at AUC Tahrir campus for 01:30pm</i>		
01:30pm-03:30pm	Opening Reception & Lunch	AUC Tahrir Campus <b>Hill House 602</b>
03:30pm-05:00pm	Working Groups Meet	AUC Tahrir Campus <b>Hill House 602 &amp; Harmon Room</b>
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend Nile dinner cruise may depart home</i>		
05:00pm-6:00pm	Explore AUC Campus	AUC Tahrir Campus
06:00pm-06:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	AUC Tahrir Campus to Cruise Start Point
06:30pm-09:00pm	Dinner (Cruise departs at 7pm)	Nile Pharaoh
09:00pm-10:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Cruise End Point to Hotel

**NEW:** There is another event beginning at 6pm in Hill House. As such, all participants must vacate the meeting rooms by 5pm sharp. Visiting guests, and those joining the Nile Cruise are invited to explore the AUC campus from 5:00-5:45pm, and make their way to Mohamed Mahmoud Gate for 6:00pm departure with Zamalek Tours.

# SCHEDULE

**DAY 2**

**Monday, February 19, 2024**

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
07:30am-08:30am	Breakfast	Hotel
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at Hotel for 08:15am (or GEM for 9:15am)</i>		
08:30am-09:30am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to GEM
09:30am-11:30am	<p>Site Visit: Grand Egyptian Museum</p> <p><b>On Site Presentation</b>                      Walid Saleh, UofT                      Mutharasu Anbalagan, ITT                      Eman Ali Selim, Ain Shams</p> <p><i>With support from Heba Mostafa, UofT</i></p>	GEM (accessible portions)
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend lunch may depart home</i>		
11:30am-12:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	GEM to Pyramids Lounge 9
12:00pm-01:00pm	Lunch	Pyramids Lounge 9
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to visit Pyramids may depart home</i>		
01:00pm-01:15pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Lounge 9 to Pyramids
01:15pm-04:00pm	Site Visit: Pyramids	Pyramids
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend dinner may depart home</i>		
04:00pm-05:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Pyramids to Hotel
05:00pm-06:15pm	Free Time	Hotel
06:15pm-06:30pm	Travel (on foot)	Hotel to Felfela
06:30pm-08:30pm	Dinner	Felfela
08:30pm-08:45pm	Travel (on foot)	Felfela to Hotel

# SCHEDULE

**DAY 3**

***Tuesday, February 20, 2024***

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
07:00am-08:00am	Breakfast	Hotel
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at Hotel for 7:45am (or Elevated Church for 08:45am)</i>		
08:00am-09:00am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to Elevated Church
09:00am-11:00am	Site Visit: Fustat <b>On Site Presentations</b> <b>Elevated Church/Coptic Museum</b> Jill Caskey, UofT Rachel Al Rubai, UofT Mariam Ayad, AUC <b>Ben Ezra Synagogue</b> <i>Brief introduction by Jessica Lockhart, UofT</i>	Multiple Sites: Elevated (Hanging) Church, Babylon Fortress, Coptic Museum, Ben Ezra Synagogue
11:00am-11:30am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Synagogue to Nilometer
11:30am-12:30pm	Site Visit: Nilometer <b>On Site Presentation</b> Heba Mostafa, UofT	Nilometer
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend lunch may depart home</i>		
12:30pm-01:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Nilometer to Bonne Soiree
01:00pm-02:00pm	Lunch	Bonne Soiree
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to visit Crafts Center may depart home</i>		
02:00pm-02:15pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Bonne Soiree to Crafts Center
02:15pm-03:30pm	Site Visit: Fustat Traditional Crafts Center	Crafts Center
03:30pm-04:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Crafts Center to Hotel
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend dinner may depart home</i>		
04:30pm-06:30pm	Free Time	Hotel & Surrounding Area
06:30pm-08:00pm	Dinner	Hotel Restaurant

# SCHEDULE

**DAY 4**

*Wednesday, February 21, 2024*

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
07:00am-08:00am	Breakfast	Hotel
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at Hotel for 7:45am (or AUC Rare Books Library for 09:15am)</i>		
08:00am-09:30am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to AUC New Campus
09:30am-11:30am	Site Visit: Rare Books Library <b>On Site Presentation</b> Amina Elbendary, AUC Faculty Ola Seif, Photo Curator Eman Morgan, Asst. Director, Special Projects Steve Urgola, AUC Archivist	AUC Rare Books Library/Creswell Collection
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to visit MIA may depart home</i>		
11:30am-01:00pm	Lunch Box & Travel (via Tour Bus)	AUC to MIA
01:00pm-04:30pm	Site Visit: Museum of Islamic Art <b>On Site Presentations</b> <b>National Library Museum</b> Ajay Rao, UofT Himanshu, ITT Noha Abou Khatwa, AUC <b>Museum of Islamic Art</b> Ajay Rao, UofT Yating Liao, UofT Harikrishnan N., IIT	Multiple Locations: National Library Museum (Manuscript Exhibition), Museum of Islamic Art
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend dinner may depart home</i>		
04:30pm-05:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	MIA to Eish + Malh
05:00pm-06:00pm	Dinner	Eish + Malh
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend performance may depart home</i>		
06:00pm-06:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Eish + Malh to Venue
06:30pm-08:00pm	Dance Performance: <i>Tanoura</i> (starts at 7pm)	Performance Venue
08:00pm-08:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Venue to Hotel

# SCHEDULE

**DAY 5**

**Thursday, February 22, 2024**

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
07:00am-08:00am	Breakfast	Hotel
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at Hotel for 7:45am (or Khan el-Khalili for 08:45am)</i>		
08:00am-09:00am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to Old Cairo, City Center
09:00am-12:00pm	<p>Site Visit: Fatimid/Ayyubid</p> <p><b>On Site Presentations</b></p> <p><b>Al Aqmar Mosque</b> Walid Saleh, UofT Muhamad Abdelmageed, CU Rakesh Das, IIT</p> <p><b>Al-Hakim Mosque &amp; City Gates</b> Ruba Kana'an, UofT Sara Nasr, AUC</p> <p><b>Madrassa &amp; Mausoleum</b> Ruba Kana'an, UofT Kai Wang, UofT Yumna Moussa, AUC</p>	Multiple Sites: al-Aqmar Mosque, al-Hakim Mosque & City Gates, Madrasa of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend lunch may depart home</i>		
12:00pm-12:30pm	Travel (on foot)	Madrassa to Café
12:30pm-01:30pm	Lunch	Naguib Mahfouz Café
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to visit Mosque, Museum, or Shrine may depart home</i>		
01:30pm-02:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Café to Mosque
02:30pm-04:00pm	Site Visit: Mosque & Museum	Ibn Tulun & Bayt al-Kiritliya
04:00pm-04:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Museum to Shrine
04:30pm-06:00pm	Site Visit: Shrine of Imam al-Shafi'i <i>Introduction by Dr. May al-Ibrashy</i>	Shrine of Imam al-Shafi'i
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend dinner may depart home</i>		
06:00pm-06:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Shrine to Ain al-Hayat
06:30pm-08:00pm	Dinner	Ain al-Hayat (on Fustat Lake)
08:00pm-08:30pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Ain al-Hayat to Hotel

# SCHEDULE

**DAY 6**

**Friday, February 23, 2024**

**NOTE:** To accommodate prayer, our tour operator has recently revised the itinerary for today's activities. If you are presenting or arranging your own transportation today, please review the schedule closely.

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
06:30am-07:30am	Breakfast	Hotel
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at Hotel for 7:15am (or Sultan Hassan Mosque for 07:45am)</i>		
07:30am-08:00am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to Sultan Hassan Mosque
08:00am-9:00am	Site Visit: Mamluk <b>On Site Presentations Sultan Hassan Mosque</b> Jessica Lockhart, UofT Katerina Bong, UofT Amarjeet Singh, IIT	Sultan Hassan Mosque
09:00am-09:15am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Sultan Hassan to Muayyad Sheikh
09:15am-10:15am	Site Visit: Mamluk (continued) <b>On Site Presentations Muayyad Sheikh Complex</b> Smriti Haricharan, IIT Fahimeh Ghorbani, UofT Bernard O'Kane, AUC	Muayyad Sheikh Complex
10:15am-10:30am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Muayyad Sheikh to Qala'un Complex
10:30am-11:30am	Site Visit: Mamluk (continued) <b>On Site Presentations Qala'un Complex</b> Jill Caskey, UofT Faculty Sowmya Karunanithee, IIT Sara Ameri, UofT	Qala'un Complex

**NEW:** Order of morning site visits has been revised for more efficient travel and to help accommodate prayer preparations taking place from 11:30am onwards at the first 2 locations.

# SCHEDULE

**DAY 6 (CONT'D)**

**Friday, February 23, 2024**

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend lunch may depart home</i>		
11:30am-12:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Qala'un to Azhar Park Restaurant
12:00pm-01:30pm	Lunch	Azhar Park Restaurant
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to visit al-Darb may depart home</i>		
01:30pm-04:30pm	Site Visit: al-Darb al-Ahmar <i>Private tour departing from Azhar Park via electric cars</i>	Multiple Sites: Ayyubid City Walls, Bayt Yakan, al-Maridani Mosque; (time permitting) Aqsunqur "Blue" Mosque
<i>Cairo-based participants who do not wish to attend dinner may depart home</i>		
04:30pm-05:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Azhar Park to Hotel
05:00pm-06:15pm	Free Time	Hotel
06:15pm-06:30pm	Travel (on foot)	Hotel to Le Grillon
06:30pm-08:00pm	Dinner	Le Grillon
08:00pm-08:15pm	Travel (on foot)	Le Grillon to Hotel

**NEW:** To accommodate closing times of al-Darb sites and logistics of travelling to al-Darb with a large group, we have removed a few locations from the visit, which will now take place via a private tour, using electric cars. The visit will begin and end in Azhar Park. Participants may wish to explore the Park, as time permits, either after lunch (if finished earlier) or upon return from al-Darb. Please check in with the tour leader to clarify the departure time and meeting location for the al-Darb private tour.

Post-private tour, the tour bus will return all international participants (and anyone wishing to attend dinner or get back downtown) to the Hotel. Participants will have about an hour of free time at the hotel before travelling on foot to Le Grillon for dinner.



# SCHEDULE

**DAY 7**

***Saturday, February 24, 2024***

**NOTE:** Our concluding roundtable discussions will now take place downtown, at AUC Tahrir Campus. If you are arranging your own transportation today, please review the schedule closely.

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
08:00am-09:00am	Breakfast	Hotel
09:00am-09:30am	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to AUC Tahrir Campus
<i>Cairo-based participants to arrive at AUC Tahrir Campus for 9:45am</i>		
10:00am-12:30pm	Roundtable Discussion, Session 1	AUC Tahrir Campus <b>Oriental Hall</b>
12:30pm-01:30pm	Lunch	AUC Tahrir Campus (catered) <b>Oriental Hall</b>
01:30pm-04:00pm	Roundtable Discussion, Session 2	AUC Tahrir Campus <b>Oriental Hall</b>
<i>Cairo-based participants should arrange their own transportation home</i>		
04:30pm-05:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	AUC Tahrir Campus to Hotel
05:00pm-06:30pm	Free Time	Hotel
06:30pm-07:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Hotel to Abou el Sid
<i>Cairo-based participants who wish to attend closing dinner to arrange their own transportation to restaurant</i>		
07:00pm-08:30pm	Closing Dinner	Abou el Sid
08:30pm-09:00pm	Travel (via Tour Bus)	Abou el Sid to Hotel

# OUR CORE TEAM

The GPRI is a multidisciplinary, international research initiative. We call upon researchers from several areas of expertise, both chronological and geopolitical, to collaborate on this global challenge. Our core team comprises four dynamic people, two principal investigators and two project managers, who supervise the execution of our research activities.



**AJAY RAO**  
*Co-Principal Investigator*  
*Historical Studies*

My fascination with global pasts grows from my passion for Sanskrit, a language that I fell in love with in my early twenties. As an undergraduate, I studied Sanskrit in Puna (India) with traditional scholars and was captivated by the language's beauty. These classes were Sanskrit-medium, and by hearing and speaking the language I felt my study of the past coming alive in the present, rather than remaining buried in a dead past. The inherent complexity of its aesthetics and how it structured perspectives on the world resonated with me deeply and I was hooked on it. This engagement with the present animates my work as a scholar, and I have always sought to connect my research with contemporary political and social realities. The Global Past Research Initiative offers powerful possibilities for scholars like me, who are focused on highly technical and specialized fields, to bring our work into dialogue with researchers working with different religious, cultural, and intellectual archives.



**JILL CASKEY**  
*Co-Principal Investigator*  
*Visual Studies*

Well before I became a historian of art and architecture, I was fascinated by the remains of the distant past and how they can tell stories about their makers and original users. My interests in medieval art emerged gradually and through other endeavors—writing, music, curiosity about places beyond my hometown in Illinois, studying cities as an undergraduate. For me, the appeal of medieval art lies in its strangeness and in the relative sparseness of its documentation; this combination of features sparks my creativity. I also relish the range of legibility and expressiveness in medieval art. Some works seem unforthcoming, offering few hints to the historian eager to uncover their stories; others loudly proclaim their significance in multiple ways—through form, inscriptions, images, and materials. In my work on the medieval Mediterranean, I have looked outside of canonical contexts to examine works of art, people, and ideas that are indicative of fluidity rather than fixity, contact rather than constraint. I look forward to exploring with Global Past participants these dynamics on a larger scale.



**AQSA IJAZ**  
*Co-Project Manager*  
*Language Studies*

I am a self-professed lover of words (philologist) at the time when philology seems to have lost its conceptual currency in modern humanities. With a long history of various border crossings, I was born and raised in Lahore, Pakistan where I was trained as a pilot and a classical musician before joining academia. I studied English Literature, Philosophy, and French in Lahore, and went on to discover the fields of South Asian and Religious Studies in Germany and the United States before pursuing my doctoral studies at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. As a medievalist, I am fascinated by the temporality of the past and diverse ways in which it elicits our scholarly and poetic attention. The drive to listen to and communicate the multilingual voices of the dead is at the heart of my academic and artistic work. It is this drive that has led me to write my doctoral dissertation on the 12th-century Persian poet, Nizami Ganjavi and the multilingual reception of his most celebrated love-poem *Khusrau u Shirin* in Persianate India. My research is geared toward challenging the methodological frameworks of European historiography and re-conceptualising the history of ideas from within the philological density of Islamicate India.



**ALISHA STRANGES**  
*Co-Project Manager*  
*Women & Gender Studies*

I am a queer, community-based, public humanities scholar with deep ties to the performing and visual arts. While Historical Studies proper has not been a central focus for me as an academic, public history, and particularly those projects that focus on preserving underheard or less visible histories, has always captivated my attention. As a theatre artist, I spent a decade devising original, collectively created performances drawn from the lived experiences of the queer, trans, and non-binary creators I worked alongside. As an undergraduate, student group facilitator at U of T, I spearheaded the [anti-Archive Project](#), documenting the ephemeral evidence of the [Qu\(e\)rying Religion](#) program's 10+ years of supportive programming for QTBIPOC students of faith. Most recently, as a project oral historian and a research manager for the [LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory](#) (PI Elspeth Brown), I've refined and further mobilized this passion in a more formal, scholarly-grounded, yet still creative way. I am intrigued by The Global Past's desire to build a framework for the research, study, and education of premodernity that de-centres Europe and privileges a decolonial and anti-imperial lens. As a scholar of gender and sexual diversity studies, it is always compelling to support work that explores the value of "leaked boundaries," so to speak.

# OUR GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

*Our graduate research assistants collaborate with the core team to support the planning and execution of our workshop series and the amplification of our research outcomes via social media and digital media creation projects, such as blogs, vlogs, and podcasts.*



**SARA AMERI**

*English*

My interest in literature was sparked when I read Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* for the first time as a teenager; my fascination with medieval literature particularly was shaped by reading heaps of Arthurian romances (sometimes instead of attending classes!). I have since moved to study a wholly different kind of medieval literature: mystical and visionary writing. I am interested in the local contexts that produced these texts as well as the resonances they share across cultures. The other side of my scholarly, and sometimes leisurely, pursuits involves plagues and pestilences, especially the Black Death — a topic I started thinking about coincidentally a few months before the Covid-19 pandemic. I am fascinated by the different stories people tell themselves in different parts of the world to make sense of global crises and new diseases. How these stories vary, travel, and transform is what drew me to the *Books and the Silk Roads* project; it is also what I hope to explore further in the collaborative and multidisciplinary environment of the Global Past.



**KATERINA BONG**

*Architecture, Landscape & Design*

I am an architectural historian with a special interest in building technology, infrastructure, engineering, and architectural manuals of the early modern Italy. I come from a family of engineers, my father studied civil engineering and my grandfather worked as a construction manager building dams, bridges, and highways in South Korea. Though unconsciously, this background slipped into my research which melded with my studies in art and architectural history. As a historian of the built environment, I am fascinated by the impulse towards sturdy buildings, stable cities, and a robust society (specifically the aversion towards failure, collapses, and defects) which functioned as a common driver for many civilizations across geographical and temporal scales. Many of these building knowledges were passed down as building manuals which recorded and illustrated building procedures, materials, and techniques. My doctoral dissertation examines building manuals in general, and European and Asian architectural knowledge in particular, to insert the artisanal, practical, and infrastructural knowledge as key tools of methodological enquiry in the study of the built environment.



**FAHIMEH GHORBANI**

*Art History*

Growing up in Iran, I have always been surrounded by marvelous artifacts and splendid architectural monuments, palaces, mosques, bridges, and traditional bazaars. The magnificence and mystery of historic objects and ancient sites intrigued me from an early age and fascinated me with a language that I could not understand. My desire for deciphering that language and penetrating that enigmatic world of beauty and meaning led me to study traditional Iranian arts and crafts. My study examines the agency of objects and craft-making practices within the current discourses in the field of Islamic art and architecture. My research contextualizes the notion of craftsmanship within the intellectual landscape of the premodern Islamic world, in which making was often recognized as a form of contemplating and thinking. By connecting the manual processes of making with the intellectual realms, I trace a craft-oriented worldview that has its origin in medieval Islamic theology and philosophy. Methodologically speaking, my critical approach explores the need for developing a theory rooted in the culture-specific frameworks applicable to the study of Islamic art and architecture.

# OUR INVITED GRADUATE STUDENTS

*Our invited graduate students span five institutions, including the University of Toronto, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, American University in Cairo, Cairo University, and Ain Shams University. Working across various disciplines, their innovative research methods not only challenge existing paradigms of premodern inquiry but also embrace risks to expand the boundaries of knowledge in their respective fields.*



**MUHAMAD ABDELMAGEED**  
*Cultural Studies*  
CAIRO UNIVERSITY

Coming from an English Studies background, my specialization in the hermeneutics of critical and literary theory compelled me to commit myself critically to decolonial theories. The glaring ethnocentrism of theory and the unfortunate compartmentalization of the human sciences have led theory to neglect the pre-1500 intellectual legacy of the Arabic-Islamic civilization. It is not expected that theory wrestles with Arabic-Islamic logic, kalām, or uṣūl al-dīn, yet the contribution of this civilization is inseparable from these epistemic kernels. A new historiography of past global networks of knowledge is in need of decolonial theories to transcend the largely textual philosophies of theory and its lack of commitment to inclusivity. As an assistant lecturer and a Ph.D. candidate at Cairo University in the pre-1500 dialectics, my commitment to decolonizing the past is one of the ways forward towards actualizing this much-needed inclusivity.

My fascination with global history and religion was first truly sparked by a high school trip. I grew up in a small, rural community in Alberta and my family and I had saved up for a high school culinary trip to Italy. Coming from a place where escalators were a luxury, I was absolutely blown away by Florence. I came to Toronto for post-secondary and was determined to learn more about peoples, cultures, histories, and languages. However, growth isn't an end goal for me, it's a constant process. My research examines the interconnected networks of religious groups, and how their socio-cultural contexts shape and mold the beliefs and practices of individuals within these networks. I am fascinated by investigations of religious space, art, architecture, and ritual and love to explore the embodiment of religion within material culture and theology. My dissertation utilizes the application of network theory to analyse how women participated and influenced late antique Christian asceticism around the Mediterranean in light of limited written source materials. Outside of my research, I am a museum professional and work in collections management, storage, and conservation.



**RACHEL AL RUBAI**  
*Religion*  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Let me take you on a journey through my life as a budding archaeologist. It all began in the heart of a charming village of Tamil Nadu located in South India, where the landscape was adorned with traces of ancient cultures. Local legends whispered of hidden treasures concealed within enigmatic inscriptions and towering megaliths, sparking my fascination for archaeology. And as I embarked on my academic journey, I ventured into the realm of history during my undergraduate studies, and later delved into the world of archaeology at the postgraduate level. With each step, my enchantment with the art, architecture, and technologies of ancient civilizations deepened. The thrill of unravelling history through exploration and excavation felt like piecing together an enthralling puzzle, drawing me further into this captivating field. My passion eventually found a niche in the realm of microliths — those diminutive stone tools that held stories of their own. This path led me to my current pursuit: a Ph.D. dedicated to unravelling the mysteries of the origin and evolution of microlithic technology in South India. Today, as an enthusiastic archaeologist, I continue to journey across the globe, exploring the diverse cultures of our world, each new exploration expanding my knowledge and igniting my curiosity further.



**MUTHARASU ANBALAGAN**  
*Humanities & Social Sciences*  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY

My academic journey has been profoundly shaped by my unwavering fascination with Archaeology and Indological studies, particularly in the realms of South Asian temple architecture, iconography, ethnography, and ancient Indian history. I landed upon archaeology in particular while I was doing journalism. During the reporting days, I was assigned to do special feature stories on Odisha's archaeological temple and monuments — for which I had to visit and collect information. In this process, I encountered many curious aspects of temple history and archaeology. Exploring the subtle meanings of architectural patterns and iconographic images emboldened me to study this subject further. More importantly, I currently focus on the local or regional socio-cultural influences on the classical temples, which has been a central aspect of my academic inquiries.



**RAKESH DAS**  
*Humanities & Social Sciences*  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY

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**HIMANSHU**

*Humanities & Social Sciences*

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY**

Growing up in Haryana, until I encountered the obscure and shrill forces of something that has gone but is still being invoked to drive the now, everything around just randomly. The folk tales, literature on various late 20th-century religious movements and contemporary social stirs fuelled by them were where I recognised the dance of premodernity. Its golden age was not always alluring since, gradually, it forced me to evaluate the values, identity, the way of being given to me, and even my own and my 'others' existence. The peak of enchantment was an encounter with thoughts of Ancient and classical philosophies (majorly Sanskrit) as discipline; it was full of mystery, rigorous arguments, injunctions, and stories, but it was also shocking to experience that almost nothing from the so strong foundations of Sanskrit philosophy itself was engaging with the sites where I first encountered it — culture. This apparent absence of philosophically critiquing its own sociality and cultural grounds, especially in the academic study of Sanskrit philosophy, further became a significant preoccupation in my research in philosophy. However, I also see that 10-11th CE philosopher Abhinavagupta and his 'Philosophy of Recognition,' with which I am currently working in the initial year of my Ph.D., may render absence of this absence and provide some significant tools to theorise South Asian sociality.

I have been enamoured by different humanities and social sciences domains since I was young. However, sociology came to occupy a special place in my heart. I fell in love at first sight when I opened the book *The Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context* by Lewis A. Coser. My love for sociology has persisted from then on. I am inquisitive about anything concerning humans, their ideas and society. I like to observe humans in group behaviours and record them academically or creatively. I am currently pursuing my Doctorate in Philosophy in Sociology from IIT Bombay. My current research focuses on the imaginaries of Eris and Eri Poramboke lands in North Chennai. In this context, I have spent time in the field trying to understand the changing imaginaries of the Eris and practices around it from the past to current times. While my research does not focus solely on the past, it forms a significant crux. In disciplines like sociology, not many are interested in the past, but I believe that in this research on Eris, looking beyond the Eurocentric approach to accommodate the local Tamil imaginaries of the past does provide interesting insights. As part of the Global Past Initiative, I am interested in networking with scholars attempting to look beyond hegemonic understandings to alternative understandings of the past and, thus, subsequently, the present.



**SOWMYA KARUNANITHEE**

*Humanities & Social Sciences*

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY**

I have long been interested in cultural diversity rooted in local social dynamics that involved long-distance interaction across Eurasia from a non-Western perspective. I have a multidisciplinary academic background in Chinese, history, and archaeology and working experience with Russian and Japanese scholars about the movements of goods, people, ideas, technologies, and subsistence strategies in Early Eurasia. In my MPhil project completed in Hong Kong, I systematically present the circular jades in Hong Kong before 500 BC and discuss the two manufacturing systems in the production process: working by freehand and working with a manufacturing device, elucidating local innovation and cultural developments. By addressing these topics, the project contributes to the discussions on early circular jade production in Hong Kong through raw material selection, technology choices, technological continuity, and transformations in prehistoric Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta. This research enhances the visibility of a then "marginal" region in terms of the Shang political structure. It demonstrates that the local developments in Hong Kong were essential and comprehensive on their own and in their connection and unique contributions to those of other regional societies in East and Southeast Asia. My Ph.D. project will mainly focus on the Eurasian steppes from the late third until the late second millennium BC and try reconstructing the network of prehistoric cultural links in this vast area. I choose the Proto-Silk Road — the Hexi Corridor and Tao River Valley in North-western China on a critical location in this network — as a case study, where we possess relatively limited information before it became a part of the Han Dynasty and a crucial section of the Silk Road. I will take the jade production organization and transmission network of raw materials and technologies to fill the research gap, thus reflecting the local social dynamics and urbanism development, human-environment interactions, and long-distance communications along the Proto-Silk Road.



**YATING LIAO**

*Anthropology*

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

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**YUMNA MOUSSA**

*Arabic Studies*

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
IN CAIRO**

I found my way to a career in the history of Islamic art and architecture by wandering through the alleyways of Historic Cairo. Seeing hieroglyphs carved on the walls of a mosque that was simultaneously supported by Roman columns stirred up in me a profound curiosity towards the eccentricities of medieval Islamic history. The spoken legends surrounding the seemingly anachronistic elements experienced by the locals in their daily exchanges at mosques, shrines, and madrasas intrigued me even further. Such continuous relationships between material culture and present-day life in Islamic cities like Cairo taught me a lot about what it means for heritage to be living. This led me to work with several local organizations that advocate for more community engagement in conservation projects of Islamic material culture. It has also inspired my academic research which explores the biographies of patterns in Islamic contexts and the cultural semiotics of Islamic commercial space.

My research interests emerge from what I consider to be my residual identity amidst the transient situations that dotted my lived experiences. Dare I say that my encounters with the past, histories, and the makings of such were part of my everyday life, even before my breaking into academia. My upbringing in cosmopolitan environs populated by government employees, not only made the colours of India's diversity brighter, but also offered a closer look at different cultural layers that premeditate a sense of relatability within social interactions amidst the diversity. In fact, I could even refer to my very late introduction to Tamil literacy — my native tongue — at the upper primary level as my first foray into research. I do not know what is more uncanny about the experience — a trilingual kid effectively reducing his illiteracy to one language or acquiring literacy in my own native tongue as a virtual outsider. Although, I do lean heavily towards the mysteries of structures and strictures, simultaneously enabling and unabling certain modes of thought, as uncannier here. While the consciousness of an ancient past emerged through the endeavour, it bore no service or resemblance to the post-colonial, governmental (and other so adjectivized) modernities. Yet the existence of such a past is implausible to realize without entanglement into modern modalities that sustain unconsciously. This unfamiliarity of the familiar is a sensibility that constantly guides my doctoral research on Tinai. Subsequently, I wish to carry this sensibility into other areas such as a labour history of wet nursing in caste societies, modern materiality from a technocentric perspective, the vernacularization of political consciousness, science, and technology in 20th and 21st century India.



**HARIKRISHNAN N.**

*Humanities & Social Sciences*

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY**

Growing up in Cairo I have been surrounded with countless splendid heritage, but I was not intrigued until my very first field trip where I went inside one of the buildings and had this experiential moment with it. My passion for Islamic art and architecture started then and the link between heritage and the community became my interest. A lot of historical sites are endangered and need conservation. Therefore, we must assure that our heritage — whether it be tangible or intangible — is safeguarded and transmitted from one generation to the other. This will not happen unless there is a change in the mindset while conserving to a more appropriate reuse strategy, and city management. I believe that the community is the protagonist of change, and even if it is hard to achieve this aspired adjustment nowadays with the immense challenges the world is facing, it is our duty to educate the youth about their heritage as they will be the protectors of it one day. People need to be exposed to their history to guarantee a preserved identity. I aspire to create a full album sketched about historic Cairo showing the architecture, arts, and crafts of the different dynasties and how they enriched our culture using and integrating my scientific and artistic backgrounds. This requires collaborative efforts between interdisciplinary approaches, and I look forward to sharing this with the Global Past's diverse collection of participants.



**SARAH AWNI NASR**

*Arabic Studies*

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
IN CAIRO**

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**EMAN ALY SELIM**

*Archaeology*

**AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY**

I am a Greek papyrologist and conservator who hails from Egypt, the homeland of Archaeology. My initial fascination with the papyri sprang from my Greek studies at the Faculty of Arts, where I obtained my master's degree in editing Greek papyri and Ostraca. While editing an unpublished Greek papyrus text, my professor discovered that, although the letters are readable, they are not functional to produce readable words, demonstrating that the papyrus sheet is incorrectly conserved. At this point, I became curious about the conservation process and realized how crucial it is to comprehend the papyrus construction as an ancient writing material. This inspired me to enroll in the master's program in the conservation of Antique Photographs and Ancient Paper Heritage, and as time went on, I grew increasingly fascinated with the papyrus plant's potential to produce one of the oldest and most durable writing materials. I currently work as a specialist conservator at the Ain Shams University-Faculty of Archaeology, with a particular emphasis on manuscripts and papyri. Furthermore, I began my doctoral dissertation in Green Conservation and Digital Preservation for Papyri Collections, as I believe that studying this priceless material from a digital perspective will be essential for its preservation process in the future and ensuring the sustainability of our heritage.

My interest in this project is motivated by the combination of an investment in sources from the past and a concern for present predicaments. Broadly, I am interested in exploring how premodern being and thought in the Indian subcontinent — specifically, in the Urdu, Persian and Punjabi poetic and philosophical traditions — can help us navigate the contemporary landscape of technological modernity. The problematic here, as I understand it, is two-pronged: a flattening of being and thought through an ontological-hermeneutical collapse of premodern structures of meaningfulness, especially in the Global South; and a simultaneous material-existential collapse in the form of the climate crisis. Having an academic background in philosophy has compelled me to focus on attempting to understand how premodern thought can engage with the former against the material background of the latter. The hope is that this attempt could help us better navigate the landscape of technological modernity. Through this workshop, I seek to explore possibilities of such models of approaching the premodern that can serve as alternatives to discourses which structurally re-produce ersatz mimeses of modern structures of thought and modern ways of thinking.



**AMARJEET SINGH**

*Humanities & Social Sciences*

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY**



**KAI WANG**

*Art History*

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

Originally from China, I am currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in art history at the University of Toronto. I completed my bachelor's and initial master's degrees in art history in China before pursuing my second master's degree at the University of Toronto. During my time in China, I was involved in research projects such as the Getty-funded "Global Medieval Art" program, and I also embarked on an academic trip to Central Asia to explore premodern Islamic art and Buddhist caves. These experiences broadened my perspective and enabled me to connect Chinese medieval art with different visual traditions. With over a decade of dedicated study in the field, my current research primarily focuses on premodern Chinese painting. However, I also maintain a broad interest in art history spanning various eras and regions, including medieval Islamic art and Byzantine art. Additionally, I hope to study premodern Chinese art from a global perspective.

# OUR TORONTO TEAM

Our University of Toronto Team Members constitute the Toronto-centred base of the GPRI, and support the work of our three research clusters.



**SULEYMAN DOST**

*Historical & Cultural Studies*

I thought I was going to become a political scientist or an international relations specialist. I don't know exactly what happened along the way but here I am, working on early Islam and the Qur'an. I believe I was intrigued by the challenges posed by some scholars of early Islamic history who argued that we know way less than we thought we knew about the beginnings of Islam. Heeding their provocative siren call, I turned my attention to whatever scraps of material evidence we could have on pre-Islamic Arabia and eventually I got fascinated by the source-critical questions that fuel the study of other religions as well, especially in their formative periods. That's why I believe the Global Past project is the kind of place where I can air some of my comparative questions and learn from scholars having similar challenges in their fields.



**AMANDA GOODMAN**

*Religion / East Asian Studies*

Amanda is an Assistant Professor of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the transmission and spread of Buddhist tantra in the 'borderland' regions between China and Tibet during the 8th-12th centuries. Taking the Dunhuang manuscript cache as her primary archive, her work explores the ways in which tantric forms of Buddhist ritual were appropriated and altered along the Sino-Tibetan frontier, as well as in central China. Her work employs historiographical and text-critical methods, along with insights gleaned from ritual studies and the archaeology of the book, to discuss the production of Buddhist specialist knowledge related to techniques of personal cultivation in the pre-modern period, and the various formats used to disseminate that knowledge in the age of the Buddhist manuscript.



**NYASHA JUNIOR**

*Religion*

I'm an amateur and professional bookworm. I'm a Black woman who was born and raised in the Deep South of the USA. I'm a biblical scholar and an associate professor in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. My teaching and research address issues of gender, race, ethnicity and their intersections. At the heart of my work is a commitment to critical reflection and cross-disciplinary engagement regarding ancient Christian and Jewish texts and traditions and their reception. I combine my academic scholarship with public-facing work that helps me to reach a broader audience and contribute to public discourse.



**ALEXANDRA GILLESPIE**

*English & Drama*

I'm Vice-President of the University of Toronto and Principal of U of T Mississauga, where I've had the privilege to work as a professor of English and global book history for the past twenty years. I believe in the power of academic collaboration and community — and I love working with colleagues on big projects that make connections across different times, places, and research methods. So, my research and teaching range widely: from the poetics of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* to the history of text technologies, from scientific approaches to book history to literary theory and philosophy. On these topics I have published about fifty articles and six co-edited volumes, plus an original monograph, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*. I have also had the opportunity to join several international research networks, including as co-primary investigator of a Mellon-funded project, *The Book and the Silk Roads*, which culminated in 2021-22 in a public exhibit at the Aga Kahn Museum. My current research project — also supported by the Mellon foundation — is *Hidden Stories*, which brings together more than 130 collaborators from 60 institutions to develop new understandings of premodern books through their local and global relations.



**MARIA HUPFIELD**

*Visual Studies / English & Drama*

I seek a genuine, placeful connection with the local Nishinaabeg cultural knowledge and land on which I live and work. This connection begins by looking back at oral tradition and storytelling to provide an enduring, relevant, and continuous relationship in the present. By our nature Nishinaabeg Peoples are transdisciplinary, anticolonial, matrilineal, nonhierarchical, and grounded to "L"and, language and ceremony. Indigenous work does not conform to modernist western understandings of art as a depersonalized commercial product but rather argues for a deeper awareness of artistic creation existing as living culture by makers in an ongoing series of relations with community, places, ideas, and materials, that change contexts and intent in meaning-making. I am a member of the Nishinaabeg People and belong to Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario, Canada. As an Assistant Professor in Indigenous Performance and Media Art, Department of Visual Studies / English & Drama, and a Canadian Research Chair in Transdisciplinary Indigenous Arts, at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) where I run the Indigenous Creation Studio, I work to move traditional and digital art from the land to the classroom, into virtual space, both now and into the future.



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**RUBA KANA'AN**  
*Visual Studies*

Growing up in Jordan was an immersive experience of a global past. I was surrounded by histories and cultures that were rooted there but always linked to elsewhere — other times, places, people, ideas, materials, and styles. I took mobility and intersectionality for granted and they stayed with me throughout my academic and professional career. Becoming a specialist in Islamic art and architecture is also an exercise in inhabiting multitudes. As an academic, I teach medieval and early modern art and architecture of vast regions in Asia, Africa, and Europe. As a museum professional I focused on the power of storytelling through objects as the connective tissue of human understanding and exchange. And as a researcher I work with artefacts, monuments, and texts to explore medieval artists and how they envisioned and created their work, patrons and the stories behind their grand gestures, and materials and how they were experienced and moved across time and space.



**SEUNGJUNG KIM**  
*Art History*

Seungjung is an Associate Professor of Greek art and archaeology in the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto. Her research involves concepts of time and temporality in the visual culture of Archaic and Classical Greece — in sculpture, vase painting, and monumental painting — which she contextualizes to the larger cultural history, bridging philosophical, social, literary and scientific understandings in ancient Greece. Moreover, her interest in the phenomenology of visual perception has engaged her actively with film theory, and more broadly with philosophy of history and theory of art history.



**JESSICA LOCKHART**  
*Old Books New Science Lab*

Jessica is the Head of Research for the Old Books New Science lab including The Book and the Silk Roads. Her research investigates the affect of wonder within medieval fictional writing, using “everyday marvels” such as a sports competition, a pillow, a lost puppy, a corpse, a puddle, and a field of sand to study how wonder is theorized and pressed into service in medieval texts. Her primary sources are texts from three imaginative genres — riddle, romance, and dream vision — from late antiquity in North Africa through to late medieval Britain. She is currently writing her first monograph titled, *A Covered Quality: Medieval Riddles and Chaucer's Fiction*.



**HEBA MOSTAFA**  
*Art History*

Heba is Assistant Professor of Islamic art and architecture at the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto, St. George and Senior Fellow at Massey College. She received her doctorate from Cambridge University's Department of Architecture in 2012 and holds degrees in architecture and the history of Islamic architecture from Cairo University and the American University in Cairo. Her research explores the formation of Islamic architecture through the lens of early Islamic sectarianism and governance, addressing the mediation of political conflict and confessional division through architecture at the intersection of politics and the sacred. She focuses on Islam's interface with late antiquity, Christianity and Judaism through commemorative architecture, pilgrimage and ritual practice, with a particular focus on Jerusalem and Cairo. Her current project explores nature veneration practices in Medieval Cairo, with a focus on the Nilometer at al-Rawda Island, bringing into conversation the mediatory role of nature in reconciling the religious, spiritual, and scientific contexts in Medieval Islam.



**WALID SALEH**  
*Religion / Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations*

Walid is a Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. He is a specialist on the Qur'an, the history of its interpretation (Tafsir), the Arabic manuscript tradition, Islamic apocalyptic literature, and the Muslim reception of the Bible. His first book, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsir Tradition* (2004), was the first monograph length study of al-Thalabi (d. 1035) and his influence on the history of Qur'an commentary tradition. His second monograph, *In Defense of the Bible* (2008), is a detailed study and an edition of al-Biqā'ī's (d. 1480) Bible treatise, “The Just Verdict on the Permissibility of Quoting from Old Scriptures,” which is the most extensive discussion of the place of the Bible in the Islamic religious tradition. He is also a specialist on Arabic paleography and teaches advanced courses on the manuscript tradition of Arabic written literatures.



**KAREN RUFFLE**  
*Historical Studies*

Karen is a Professor of History of Religions at the University of Toronto Mississauga and the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto Scarborough. She specializes in the study of South Asian Shi'ism with a focus on devotional texts, ritual practices, and Shi'i material practices in South Asia. She has conducted field research in India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Her publications include *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shi'ism* (2011) and *Everyday Shi'ism in South Asia* (2021).

# OUR INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Our international collaborators and partners at the American University in Cairo, the Institut Français de Pondichéry, and the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay help us expand the scope of our central research questions beyond the contours of the North American academy.



**HUGO DAVID**  
*Indology*  
**INSTITUT FRANÇAIS  
DE PONDYCHÉRY**

Hugo is the Head of the Department of Indology, Institut français de Pondichéry. His main area of research is the history of Indian philosophical systems and traditions of linguistic analysis, with a focus on Sanskrit grammar, poetics and Vedic exegesis. His doctoral thesis, submitted in 2012 at the École pratique des Hautes Études (Paris), consisted of a critical edition, French translation, and study of the Śābdanirṇaya ("An Inquiry into Verbal Knowledge") by the 10th-century Advaitin Prakāśātman. Before joining IFP, he was active at the University of Cambridge (2013-14) and at the Institute for the Intellectual and Cultural History of Asia in Vienna (2015).

Amina is an Associate professor of Middle East history and Chair at the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations at the American University in Cairo (AUC). Her research interests include Mamluk social and cultural history, Arabic historiography, and Islamic political thought. Her publications include the monograph *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (2015). This book explores reports of urban protest and dissent in the cities of Egypt and Syria under the late Mamluk and early Ottoman regimes and analyzes both the historiography of protest and the intricacies of urban politics in the late medieval period. She is currently working on a research project on popularization and late medieval historiography.



**AMINA ELBENDARY**  
*Arab & Islamic Civilizations*  
**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
IN CAIRO**



**SMRITI HARICHARAN**  
*Humanities & Social Sciences*  
**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY**

Smriti is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay. Her research areas include Iron Age-early historic archaeology, popular perceptions and relationships with the past, landscape archaeology, contemporary archaeology, and experimental archaeology. She has conducted field work in Chennai, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh. She is also the author of *Siruthavoor: An Iron Age-Early Historical Burial Site* (2016).

The variegated and dynamic 'lives of thinking patterns' intrigue me; the camouflaged life of these robust and challenging ideas hides itself from our naked eye and we develop methods and insights — an eagle eye—to penetrate deep into their complex lives. I am interested in uncovering the concealed lives of these ideas in the history of South Asian thought. Being born and raised in Srinagar (Kashmir), somehow I got interested in the lives of these ideas in Sanskrit sources and thus became preoccupied with the Kashmirian Abhinavagupta (10th-11th CE) and his philosophical tradition. I began as a philologist and believe that philology shares an inherent relationship with philosophy. In the recent past my interests have grown to investigate how to think creatively using the South Asian sources of thinking. Situated in the South Asian context, why is it that we read ancient philosophy as a mummified category today? Does it have a contemporary creative life? My guide to thinking through these ideas is Abhinavagupta and his non-dual Śaiva philosophy.



**MRINAL KAUL**  
*Humanities & Social Sciences*  
**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY**



**ELLEN KENNEY**  
*Arab & Islamic Civilizations*  
**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
IN CAIRO**

Ellen is an associate professor and chair of Islamic art and architecture in the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations at The American University in Cairo (AUC). Before joining the department in 2011, Kenney was a research associate in the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she researched collections and worked on preparations for the new galleries of Islamic art that re-opened in November 2011. Previously, she taught courses in Islamic art and architecture at New York University, Fordham University and the State University of New York's Fashion Institute of Technology.

# CREDITS

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Program conceptualized and designed by

**ALISHA STRANGES & AQSA IJAZ**

*Co-Project Managers, GPRI*



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**"If you want light, you must light a fire."**

- Mawlana Rumi

*Original Calligraphy by Stewart J. Thomas*