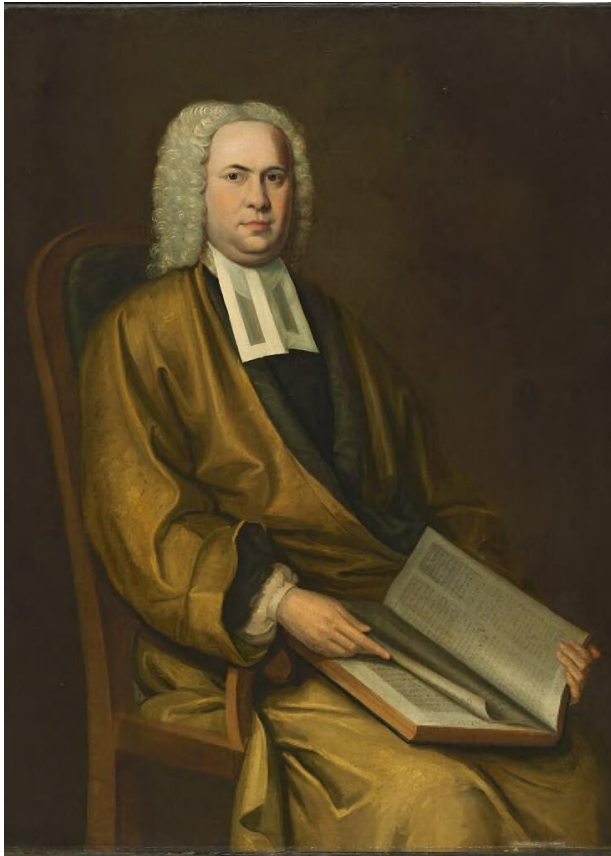


History of Islamic Studies at Harvard Timeline

Home Page

The founders of Harvard College, “dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches,”¹ had long required students to study Hebrew for the purpose of Biblical studies.² Interest in Hebrew extended, to interest in Arabic for its utility in shedding light on Hebrew, and to the ancient Near East as the “Bible lands.”³ Interest in Islam as a religion and Muslim societies slowly began to develop in the late 19th century at Harvard and expanded tremendously with the development of area studies after World War II. From Biblical studies and Orientalism to postwar area studies to an interdisciplinary and global field, Islamic studies has evolved alongside Harvard over much of its long history and now reflects increasingly diverse interests, perspectives, and approaches.



Portrait of a Cleric [formerly entitled *Charles Chauncy (1592-1672)*], c. 1755-1756, oil on canvas, 48 7/16 x 38 in. Harvard University Portrait Collection, Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, MA, <https://hvr.d.art/o/304845>.

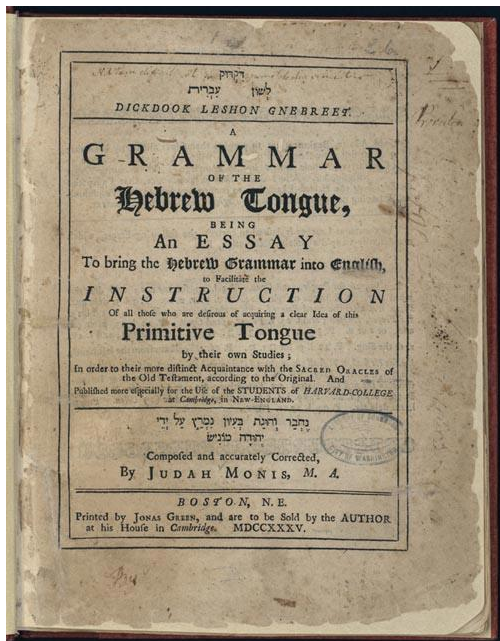
¹ “New Englands First Fruits,” 22.

² Lyon, “XIII. Semitic, 1880-1929,” 231.

³ Lockman, *Field Notes.*, 8.

1654-72 – Early Arabic Instruction

According to Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison, Harvard's first two presidents, Henry Dunster and Charles Chauncy, saw themselves as "primarily Orientalists"⁴ who studied and taught not only Hebrew, but also Aramaic, Arabic, and Ethiopic.⁵ In his 1896 paper on "Semitic Studies in American Colleges," Rabbi William Rosenau wrote that Arabic was added to the Semitic languages already being taught during the presidency of Chauncey (1654-1672).⁶ This instruction was most likely from Chauncy himself, who had studied Arabic at University of Cambridge in England,⁷ taught it to local ministers outside of Harvard,⁸ and "boasted that he knew more Arabic than any other person in the American colonies."⁹ Since Chauncy's presidency, Arabic may have been taught at Harvard occasionally as an adjunct to Hebrew but was only formally offered with Professor Crawford H. Toy's appointment in 1880.¹⁰



Judah Monis, *Dikdook Leshon Gnebreet [A Grammar of the Hebrew Tongue]*, 1735, Boston: Jonas Green, Hebraic Section, Library of Congress (22), www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-haven.html#obj19.

1765 – Hancock Professorship of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages Established

⁴ Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England*, 20, 45.

⁵ Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue*.

⁶ Rosenau, *Semitic Studies in American Colleges: A Paper Read Before the Central Conference of American Rabbis in Milwaukee, Wisc., July, 1896*. See also Ernest McCarus, "History of Arabic Study in the United States" in Rouchdy, *The Arabic Language in America*, 207.

⁷ "Charles Chauncy."

⁸ Edwards, "Reasons for the Study of the Hebrew Language." 115.

⁹ Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue*, 9.

¹⁰ Yamak, "Introduction The Middle Eastern Collections of the Harvard Library.", vii.

The Hancock Professorship of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages, the third oldest endowed chair at Harvard after the Hollis Professorship of Divinity and the Hollis Professorship of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, was established in 1765 and was the professorship through which Arabic was taught at Harvard, even if sporadically, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The statutes for the Hancock Professorship required that the professor be a Protestant, a Master of Arts, instruct students in the Oriental languages, especially Hebrew and Chaldee [Chaldaen Aramaic], give public lectures in the chapel once per week, and offer private instruction 2-3 hours per week to such of his pupils as should desire it “in the Samaritan, the Syriac, and the Arabic.”¹¹ The first instructor dedicated to teaching Hebrew at Harvard was Judah Monis, a former Jewish rabbi born to Sephardic parents¹² “in Italy or in one of the Barbary states,”¹³ possibly in Algiers,¹⁴ who published the first Hebrew grammar in America. Monis’s successor in Hebrew instruction, Stephen Sewall, was the first to hold the Hancock chair.¹⁵

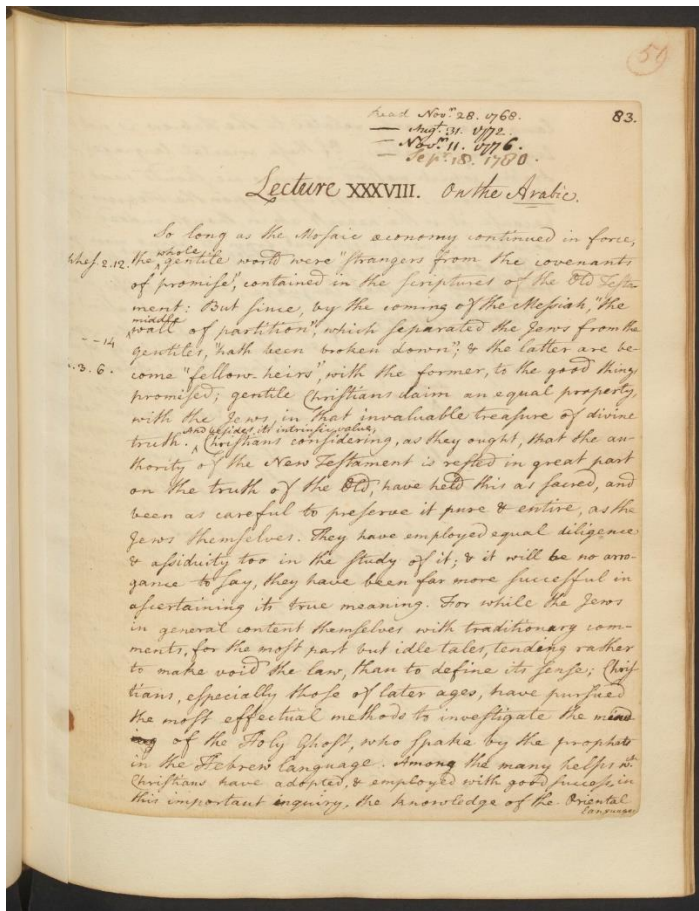
¹¹ Peirce, *A History of Harvard University: From Its Foundation in the Year 1636 to the Period of the American Revolution*, 232.

¹² Rosovsky, Bell, and Steel, *The Jewish Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe*, 4.

¹³ Peirce, *A History of Harvard University: From Its Foundation in the Year 1636 to the Period of the American Revolution*.

¹⁴ Adams, *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Nineteenth Century*, 211.

¹⁵ Peirce, *A History of Harvard University: From Its Foundation in the Year 1636 to the Period of the American Revolution*.



Harvard University, Harvard University Archives, HUG.1782_B06-METS

Sewall, Stephen, 1734-1804. *Papers of Stephen Sewall, 1764-1797*. Professor Sewall's lectures on the Hebrew and Oriental languages, Vol. 3d, 1768-1780. HUG 1782 Box 6, Harvard University Archives, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/urn:3:HUL.ARCH:11148290>.

1768 – Stephen Sewall Delivers Lectures on Arabic

Stephen Sewall, the first Hancock Professor, delivered lectures on Arabic as part of his lecture series on Oriental languages in which he discussed Arabic's alleged origin at the Tower of Babel, development, characteristics, and importance to the "Mahometans" because of its being the language of the "Alcoran."¹⁶ Like his predecessors, Sewall viewed Arabic as a tool for Biblical exegesis. "Of the Oriental languages," he said, "the Arabic, which method requires we should next consider, throws the most light upon the Hebrew. Not because it is the nearest akin, though indeed its relation is very close, but from its being more generally extant, a very great variety of treatises on different subjects being written in that language, which treatises, many of them at least, are handed down to the present day." Professor Sewall called it a "pity, not to say disgrace," that Harvard was behind its peer institutions in Europe in the study of Arabic.

¹⁶ Sewall.

Sewall himself taught Arabic through private instruction, as was required by the statutes of his professorship.¹⁷

[Read Stephen Sewall's lecture notes]

Link :

https://islamicstudies.harvard.edu/files/aisp/files/stephen_sewall_on_the_arabic.pdf?m=1606754594



Crawford Howell Toy (1836-1919), Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School, <https://library.hds.harvard.edu/exhibits/hds-20th-century/toy>.

1880 – Crawford H. Toy Joins Harvard Faculty and Teaches Arabic

Crawford H. Toy was born in Virginia in 1836 and studied at the University of Virginia and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After serving in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, Toy spent two years in Germany studying theology and Semitic languages at Berlin. He then became a professor of Old Testament interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary but resigned due to his unwillingness to accept the doctrine of inspiration of the scriptures, which was insisted upon at that institution.¹⁸ Professor Toy then joined Harvard Divinity School, at which “no assent to the peculiar doctrines or practices of any denomination of Christians” was required, as Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages and

¹⁷ Edwards, “Reasons for the Study of the Hebrew Language,” 116.

¹⁸ “Toy, Crawford Howell,” 621-22.

Dexter Lecturer on Biblical Literature.¹⁹ In his first year at Harvard, Professor Toy taught Old Testament Hebrew and offered Arabic as an elective.²⁰

11. General Semitic Grammar. *Half-course. Sat., at 9.* Professor TOY. (VII.)

Course 11 can be taken by those only who are acquainted with at least three Semitic languages, of which one must be Arabic.

The following courses do not require a knowledge of Semitic languages

6. Babylonian-Assyrian History from native sources, with comparison of the Greek and Roman writers. *Half-course. Fri., at 2.* Professor LYON. (V.)
12. History of Israel, political and social, from the period of the Judges until Ezra. *Mon., Wed., at 2.* Professor LYON. (V.)
13. History of the Hebrew religion, with comparison of other Semitic religions. *Fri., from 2 to 4.* Professor TOY. (V.)
14. History of the Spanish Califate. *Half-course. Sat., at 12.* Professor TOY. (VIII.)

The Semitic Seminary meets on the first and third Mondays of each month, at 7½ P.M.

Indo-Iranian Languages.

1. Sanskrit. — Perry's Primer (Sanskrit into English and English into Sanskrit). — Reading at sight. — Whitney's Grammar. — Lanman's Reader (the classical part). — The Pañcatantra (Book II.). *Mon., Wed., Fri., at 3.* Professor LANMAN. (VI.)
2. Sanskrit Drama. — Kālidāsa's three plays (Çakuntalā, Urvaçī, Mālavikā). — Ratnāvalī. *Mon., Wed., Fri., at 2.* Professor LANMAN. (V.)
3. Sanskrit Epos. — Reading and critical study of the Mahā-Bhārata. *Tu., Th., 1.30 to 3.* Professor LANMAN. (X.)
- [4. Old Iranian. — Reading of the Avesta. *Three times a week.* Professor LANMAN.] (XI.)
Omitted in 1889-90.
- [5. Pāli. — The Sacred Books of Buddhism. *Tu., Th., from 2 to 3½.* Professor LANMAN.] (XI.)
Omitted in 1889-90.

Greek.

Harvard University Course Catalog, 1889-1990, in which the "History of the Spanish Califate" course is first listed under Semitic Languages and History, Harvard University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Announcement of Courses of Instruction Provided by the Faculty of Harvard College for the Academic Year 1889-90. Cambridge, Mass.: Published by the University, May 1889, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:39991423>.

1889-90 – Crawford H. Toy First to Teach Islamic History

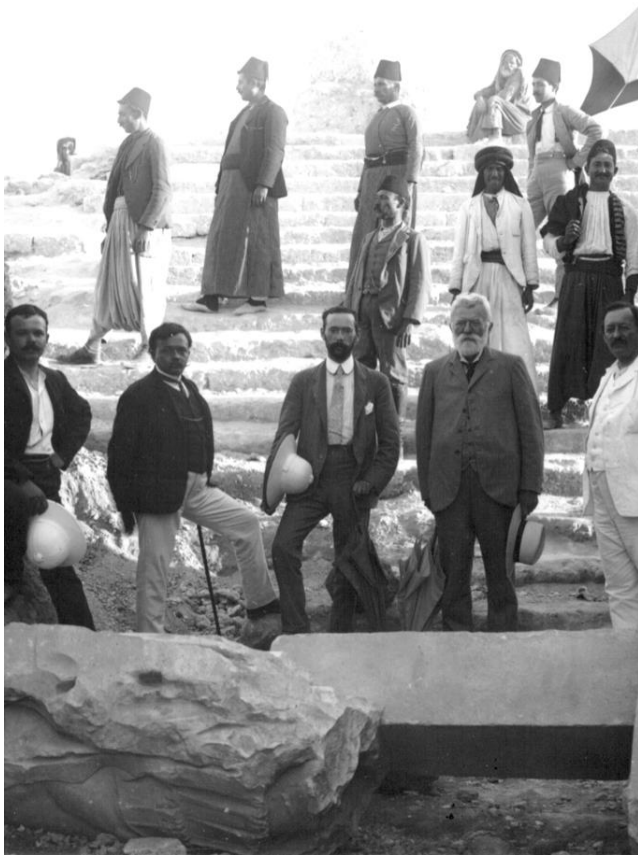
The division of "Semitic Languages" founded by Professor Toy was re-named "Semitic Languages and History" and his "History of the Spanish Califate" became the first course on Islamic history taught at Harvard.²¹ This course and "Political and Literary History of the Bagdad

¹⁹ Sever, "Harvard University Catalogue 1880-81," 28.

²⁰ "Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1880-81," 57.

²¹ "Harvard University Announcement of Courses of Instruction 1889-90," 3-4.

Califate” were then offered in alternate years²² and were both expanded over time to include topics such as the Qur’an, the history of Islam in India and Egypt, the Crusades through Muslim sources, the Barbary States, and Muslims in Sicily. Professor Toy’s Arabic offerings also expanded in subsequent years to include the study of Wright’s *Grammar*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, the *Mu’allaqāt*, *Mutanabbī*, Ibn Khaldūn, and *Kitāb al-Aghānī*.



David Gordon Lyon (white-bearded) on an excursion in Samaria in 1908, photo courtesy of Joseph Greene, Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East, Cambridge, MA.

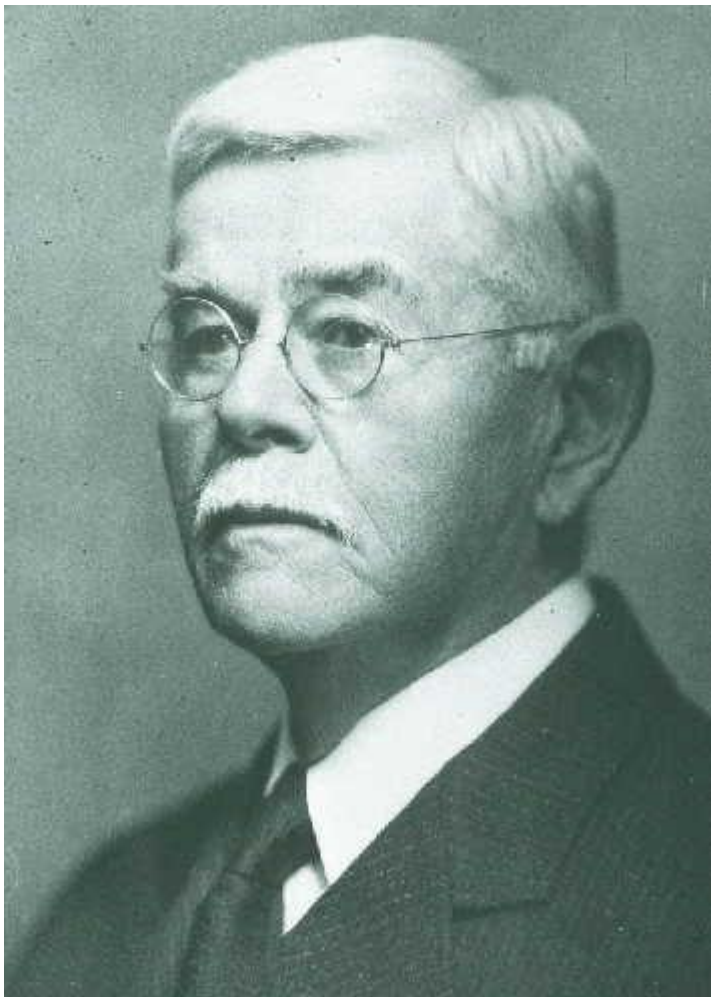
1889 – Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East Founded

Today’s Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East was founded in 1889 as the Harvard Semitic Museum by Assyriologist David Gordon Lyon, first Hollis Professor of Divinity and later Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages,²³ for teaching and research related to the ancient Near East. In the same year, Lyon’s mentor and friend, Crawford Toy, proposed the establishment of a Semitic Fund to purchase manuscripts and other materials in Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and other Near Eastern languages for Harvard. A gift from Jacob H. Schiff, a

²² “Harvard University Catalog 1890-91,” 56.

²³ Lyon, “XIII. Semitic, 1880-1929,” 231.

Jewish investment banker and philanthropist from New York, made the establishment of the Semitic Fund and Museum possible.²⁴ Professor Lyon assembled the original collections between 1889 and 1929 when he travelled to the Ottoman lands of Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem to purchase hundreds of ancient artifacts and manuscripts.²⁵ Although the Semitic Museum was established for the study of the Near East before Islam, its founding demonstrated Harvard's commitment to the study of the "Orient" and became a means for its first significant interactions with Muslim societies. In 2020, the Museum was re-named the "Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East" to more clearly reflect its core mission. [citation: In Situ]



James Richard Jewett, photo courtesy of Jim Childers, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/87213659/james-richard-jewett>.

²⁴ Parsons, *Crawford Howell Toy*, 205-7

²⁵ Greene, "A Complicated Legacy: The Original Collections of the Semitic Museum," 61.

1911 - James Richard Jewett Becomes First Professor of Arabic

James Richard Jewett began pursuing Semitic studies at Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1884, and then continued in Germany and Syria. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Strasbourg where he wrote a dissertation on “Arabic Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases”²⁶ and then taught Semitic languages at Brown University, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Chicago. In 1887, Professor Jewett returned to Harvard as Instructor in Semitic Languages and taught courses in Hebrew Bible, Arabic, and Ethiopic. In 1911, he was appointed Harvard’s first Professor of Arabic.²⁷ Professor Jewett’s Arabic courses included the study of Wright’s *Grammar*, Socin’s *Grammar*, selections from the Qur’an, hadith, and classical works on geography and history. He also taught Semitic 15 on the “Political and Social History of Mohammedanism till the End of the Crusades,” later the “Political and Social History of the Mohammedans to the Conquest of Egypt by Selim I” and a research course on “Arabic Sources for the History of the Crusades.”



George Foote Moore (1851-1931)

²⁶ Jewett, “James Richard Jewett.”

²⁷ Lyon, “XIII. Semitic, 1880-1929,” 235.

1902 - George Foote Moore Teaches Islam in History of Religions

George Foote Moore was born in Pennsylvania in 1851 and studied at Yale University and Union Theological Seminary before joining the Presbyterian ministry. He began his teaching career at Andover Theological Seminary before joining the Harvard faculty in 1902.²⁸ At Harvard Divinity School, Professor Moore taught a course under the new heading of "History of Religions" that included the religions of Japan, China, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, the Western Semites (including Judaism and Mohammedanism), India, Persia, the Greeks, the Romans, the Germans, the Celts, and Christianity. He later also taught courses focused on Islam that covered the topics of the life of Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, the Muslim conquests, and Islamic law and theology. The second volume of his two-volume work, *History of Religions* (1919), is devoted to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.²⁹ Professor Moore also had an interest in the "history of Mohammedan heresies" and presented a paper on Babism and Bahaim at the American Oriental Society while he was its president.³⁰

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THE RENASCENCE OF ISLAM *

WILLIAM THOMSON

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE term 'renaissance' in the title of this paper is perhaps a misnomer. Neither the blame for its misapplication, however, nor the credit for a just use of it, should be laid at my door. For it has been employed frequently of late with reference to various developments in several Muslim countries. And the chief aim of the following brief examination of the origins and trends of thought within the world of Islam is simply to discover what meaning, if any, it may have in this connection.

The late Adam Mez of Basel entitled his brilliant analysis of tenth century Muslim culture *Die Renaissance des Islams*.¹ This title was not entirely satisfactory. Mez felt, but no better suggestion occurred to him. His subject was the transformation of Islam in the ninth and tenth centuries of our era from a simple faith to a complex civilization through the introduction of Greek scientific ideas, Graeco-Roman legal conceptions, and Christian theological doctrines.

This transformation, however, did not signify to any extent a revival of the old Greek spirit of free, rational enquiry into things with its emphasis upon the natural world and this present life in contrast to the supernatural world and the future life, but simply the application of the ideas of Hellenism to the problems raised for the faith and practice of primitive Islam by its very contact with these ideas. It was not so much a rebirth of the Greek spirit as a reincarnation of its works.

The result of that transforming process was the Islam of to-

* Read before the American Historical Association, General Session: Religious Factors in Modern European History. Providence, R. I., Tuesday, Dec. 29, 1936.

¹ Heidelberg, 1922.

²⁸ "George Foot Moore."

²⁹ Barton, "A Great Book on Three Great Religions, History of Religions II," 425-7.

³⁰ "The American Oriental Society," 329.

Thomson, William. "The Renaissance of Islam." *The Harvard Theological Review* 30, no. 2 (1937): 51-63. Accessed May 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1508244>.

1929 – William Thomson and Islamic Intellectual History

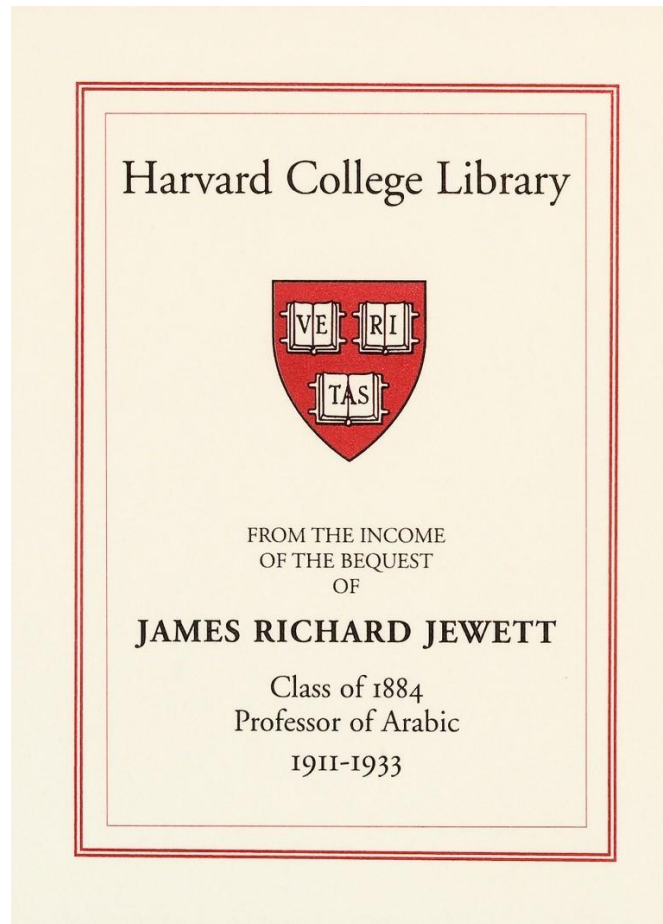
William Thomson earned his Ph.D. in 1924 at Harvard where he wrote a dissertation entitled, "Isaac of Nineveh: A study in Syrian mysticism." He began his career at Harvard as Associate Professor of Arabic in 1929³¹ and later became the first James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic³² until his retirement in 1954.³³ Professor Thomson's research and teaching focused on early Islam, Islamic intellectual history, and Eastern Christian mysticism. His courses spanned the departments of Semitic Languages and History, History of Religions, and History and included, "The Political and Social History of Moslems to the Decline of the Abbasid Caliphate (c. 950 A.D.)," "The History of Moslem Religious Thought from Mohammed to Al-Ghazali," "The Development of Moslem Orthodoxy," and "The Development of Moslem Sects." His publications included articles on "The Early Muslim Sects" (1937), "The Concept of Human Destiny in Islam" (1945), and "An Introduction to the History of Sufism" (1945).³⁴

³¹ Lyon, "XIII. Semitic, 1880-1929," 235.

³² Lockman, *Field Notes*, 16.

³³ "Divinity School to Lose Three Professors in July."

³⁴ "Harvard Divinity School Faculty Writings File: BMS 13001/Thomson: Writings of William Thomson."



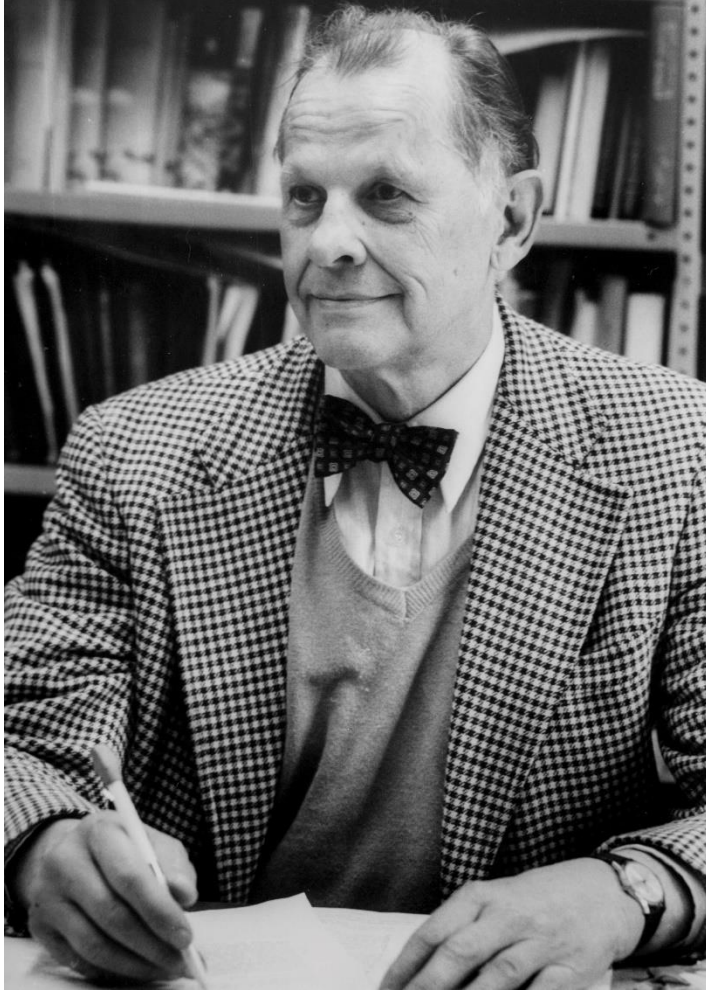
James Richard Jewett Fund, Harvard College Library Funds,
https://library.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/static/funds/415_489706.html.

1936 - James Richard Jewett Professorship of Arabic Established

The James Richard Jewett Professorship of Arabic was established through a gift from Professor Jewett's wife, Margaret Weyerhaeuser Jewett, and was the first chair of Arabic established at an American university.³⁵ The chair has since been held by William Thomson, Sir Hamilton Gibb, Muhsin Mahdi, Wolfhart Heinrichs, and Khaled El-Rouayheb. Professor Jewett's gift to the Harvard College Library also established a fund for the purchase of Arabic books and books relating to "Moslem religion and history."³⁶

³⁵ Yamak, "Introduction The Middle Eastern Collections of the Harvard Library," vii.

³⁶ "Harvard College Library Funds: James Richard Jewett Fund."



Richard N. Frye (1920-2014), Voice of America, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-scholars-planned-iranian-burial-limbo>.

1949 – Richard Frye First Professor of Iranian Languages

Richard Frye, “dean of the world’s Iranists,” was born in 1920 in Birmingham, Alabama and earned his B.A. at the University of Illinois and Ph.D. at Harvard. He held posts at Columbia, in Germany, and in Iran and served in the secret intelligence agency known first as the Office of the Coordinator of Information and then the Office of Strategic Services, the wartime agency preceding the CIA, in Afghanistan. Professor Frye’s expertise spanned ancient to contemporary Iranian studies and he was called “*Irاندوست*,” “friend of Iran,” by an Iranian linguist for his love of all things Iranian.³⁷ His courses included Old Persian, Middle Persian, Modern Persian, Sogdian, Pahlavi, Old Turkish, “Iranian Languages and Literatures to Firdosi,” and “Iranian Religions.” In 1957, he became Harvard’s first Aga Khan Professor of Iranian³⁸ and was one of the founders of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He published over 20 books and 150

³⁷ Giudicessi, “Professor Richard N. Frye Dies at 94.”

³⁸ “Frye Chosen First Iranian Professor.”

articles including *The Heritage of Persia* (1962) and “The Charisma of Kingship in Ancient Iran” (1964).³⁹ Among his notable students is Roy Mottahedeh, Gurney Research Professor of History.



(Top left) Founding Director of CMES, William Langer; (top right) Founding Associate Director of CMES, Richard Frye; (bottom, left to right) Former Associate Director Susan Miller, Director William Graham, Professor Roger Owen, Former Associate Director Thomas Mullins, and Former Director Roy Mottahedeh in the mid-1990s; photos courtesy of Eric Edstam, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

1954 – Center for Middle Eastern Studies Founded

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) at Harvard was founded in 1954 to “counter the Soviet threat in the Middle East” and “to train selected men for service in private industry and in government,” according to the proposal by the Committee on International and Regional Studies.⁴⁰ Its first director was William Langer who, although primarily a scholar of modern European and diplomatic history, had been teaching courses on the modern Middle East⁴¹ since

³⁹ Giudicessi, “Professor Richard N. Frye Dies at 94.”

⁴⁰ Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University Reflections on the Past, Visions for the Future*, 3.

⁴¹ Kann, “Historian Langer Enters Retirement After 37 Years On Harvard Faculty.”

1935. CMES saw tremendous growth from 1957 to 1964 under the leadership of Sir Hamilton Gibb, who secured significant funding for the Center, especially from the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. In 1990, in line with the emphasis of his predecessor as director, Roy Mottahedeh, the new CMES director William Graham sought to expand the mission of CMES to encompass the broader Islamic world by having Professor Mottahedeh chair a new Islamic Studies Committee under the CMES umbrella.⁴² This led to the two working together over a decade later to establish the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program in 2005, which enabled CMES to return to its original focus on the Middle East.⁴³



Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb [photographic Portrait], 1954, Harvard University Archives, https://images.hollis.harvard.edu/permalink/f/100kie6/HVD_VIAolvwork281844.

1955 - Sir Hamilton Gibb Bolsters Islamic Studies and Advocates an Interdisciplinary Approach

⁴² Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University Reflections on the Past, Visions for the Future*, 27.

⁴³ "History."

Sir Hamilton Gibb resigned from his position as Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford and became Jewett Professor of Arabic and University Professor at Harvard in 1955.⁴⁴ During his time at Harvard, Professor Gibb drew many students and faculty to the university including George Makdisi, George Kirk, and Albert Julius Meyer. Professor Gibb sought to move beyond the rigid Orientalist approach of European scholarship and embrace a more interdisciplinary one to train each student to be an “academic amphibian” who could be at home in different academic environments while remaining grounded in classical training, with philology and history at its core.⁴⁵ In February 1964, Professor Gibb tragically suffered a stroke, leaving a leadership void in CMES for many years.⁴⁶ His publications include *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (1923), “The Islamic Background of Ibn Khaldūn’s Political Theory” (1933), *Modern Trends in Islam* (1945), *Mohammedanism* (1949), and *The Life of Saladin: From the Works of Baha' Ad-Din and 'Imad Ad-Din* (1973). Among his notable students is Roy Mottahedeh, Gurney Research Professor of History.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-roy-mottahedeh-sir-hamilton-gibb-preeminent-arabist-and-islamicist>



⁴⁴ Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University Reflections on the Past, Visions for the Future*, 7.

⁴⁵ Babai, 9.

⁴⁶ Babai, 11-12.

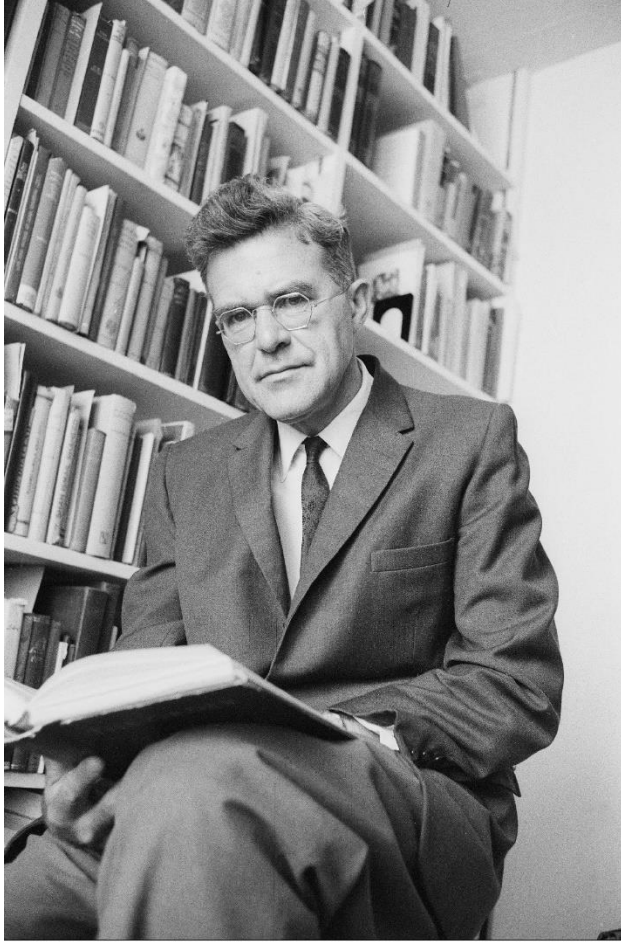
George Makdisi (1920-2002), photo courtesy of Linda Greene, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

1959 – **George Makdisi Teaches Arabic and Islamic History**

George Makdisi was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1920 and studied at the University of Michigan and Georgetown University before earning his Ph.D. at the University of Paris at the Sorbonne in 1964.⁴⁷ From 1959 to 1973, he served on the Harvard faculty in the Department of Semitic Languages and History which became the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, first as a lecturer and eventually as a full professor, and taught courses including “Arabic Poetry,” “Arabic Grammar and Grammarians,” “Islamic Historiography,” and “Islamic Religion and Law.” Professor Makdisi was the preeminent Arabist and Islamicist at Harvard immediately after Professor Gibb and was a specialist in Islamic history whose publications include *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (1981), *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (1990), and *Ibn ‘Aqil: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (1997). In 1973, he left Harvard for the University of Pennsylvania where he served as Professor of Arabic until his retirement in 1990.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “George Makdisi, May 15, 1920 - September 6, 2002 Media, Pennsylvania.”

⁴⁸ “George Makdisi, May 15, 1920 - September 6, 2002 Media, Pennsylvania.”



Harvard University, Harvard University Archives, W557705_1

Pemberton, *Smith, Wilfred C.*, 1965, photograph, Office of News Public Affairs, Harvard University, https://images.hollis.harvard.edu/permalink/f/100kie6/HVD_VIAolvwork557705.

1964 – Wilfred Cantwell Smith Teaches Global, Comparative Religious and Islamic Studies

Wilfred Smith was born in 1916 in Toronto, Canada. After he studied Oriental Languages at the University of Toronto and pursued graduate studies in Cambridge, England, Professor Smith and his wife, Muriel, spent five years with the Canadian Overseas Mission Council in Lahore, India where he taught Islamic and Indian history. When his dissertation at Cambridge was rejected due to its critique of the British Raj, Professor Smith pursued another doctoral program at Princeton, which he completed in 1948. Professor Smith was then appointed the first Birks Professor of Comparative Religion at McGill and became the founding director of McGill's Institute of Islamic Studies in 1951. In 1964, he joined Harvard Divinity School where he and Muriel developed the Center for the Study of World Religions and he built the Comparative Religion and Study of Religion programs.⁴⁹ Among his publications are *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis* (1946), *Islam in Modern History* (1957), and *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962). His colleagues remember him for his critiques of Orientalism and area studies, as “one

⁴⁹ Graham et al., “Wilfred Cantwell Smith, In Memoriam.”

of the last puritans,” and for his commitment to taking people of all faiths and cultures equally seriously.⁵⁰ Among his notable students is Professor *Emeritus* William A. Graham.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-william-graham-wilfred-cantwell-smith-and-global-islamic-studies?in=user-775598562-582960913/sets/islamic-studies-at-harvard>



Annemarie Schimmel, 2002, photograph, 8.4 x 11.1 inches, Alamy, <https://www.alamy.com/mediacomp/imagedetails.aspx?ref=D3BD92>.

1967 – Annemarie Schimmel First to Teach Indo-Muslim Culture

Annemarie Schimmel was born in 1922 in Erfurt, Germany. She was introduced to the divan of Jalaluddin Rumi as a student at the University of Berlin and began a lifelong journey of scholarship in the Islamic mystical tradition. After earning her first doctorate in 1941 at the age of 19 and a second in 1951, she became History of Religion chair at Ankara University in Turkey. In 1967, Professor Schimmel accepted Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s invitation to come from Bonn to Harvard as its first Lecturer on Indo-Muslim Culture.⁵¹ She taught only in the spring term, usually spending the fall in Pakistan or Bonn. In 1970, Professor Schimmel became the fourth woman granted tenure in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.⁵² Her courses included “Islamic Calligraphy,” “Ghalib’s Persian Poetry in the Context of the Indian Style,” and “Maulana Rumi

⁵⁰ Graham et al.

⁵¹ Asani et al., “Annemarie Schimmel, Faculty of Arts and Sciences - Memorial Minute.”

⁵² “First Tenured Women.”

and his Influence on East and West.” Among her publications are *Gabriel's Wing* (1963), *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* (1997), and *Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art, and Culture* (2004). Her notable students include Ali Asani, Harvard’s current Professor of Indo-Muslim Culture, and Wheeler Thackston, Professor of the Practice of Persian *Emeritus*.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-ali-asani-first-class-with-annemarie-schimmel?in=user-775598562-582960913/sets/islamic-studies-at-harvard>



Muhsin Mahdi, Harvard Gazette, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/04/muhsin-mahdi/>.

1969 – Muhsin Mahdi Teaches Arabic Philosophy

Muhsin Mahdi, one of the world’s leading experts in Arabic history, philology, and philosophy, was born in Karbala, Iraq in 1926. After earning his B.A. from the American University in Beirut and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, he taught at the University of Baghdad and the University of Chicago. Professor Mahdi then came to Harvard in 1969 as Jewett Professor of Arabic and served as director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and chair of the

Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.⁵³ He taught courses including “Arabic Philosophic Texts,” “Sources, Methods, and Problems in Islamic Intellectual History,” and “Medieval Arabic Political Philosophy.” He also helped to institute and teach Foreign Cultures 14, a core curriculum course aimed at helping students understand the economic and cultural foundations of current political problems, with a focus on the Middle East.⁵⁴ Professor Mahdi is especially known for his work on the philosopher al-Fārābī, *Ibn Khaldūn’s Philosophy of History* (1957), and his critical edition of *One Thousand and One Nights* (1995).⁵⁵ Among his notable students is Professor *Emeritus* William A. Graham.

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-william-graham-muhsin-mahdi>



⁵³ Graham et al., “Muhsin Mahdi, Faculty of Arts and Sciences - Memorial Minute.”

⁵⁴ Early, “Twelve FAS Faculty Members to Retire.”

⁵⁵ Graham et al., “Muhsin Mahdi, Faculty of Arts and Sciences - Memorial Minute.”

T. Kevin Birch, *Oleg Grabar - portrait*, The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, USA, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12111/5598>.

1969 – Oleg Grabar First to Teach History of Islamic Art and Architecture

Born in Strasbourg, France in 1929, Professor Grabar earned his A.B. at Harvard in Medieval History and his Ph.D. at Princeton in Oriental Languages and Literatures and the History of Art. In 1969, he joined the Harvard faculty as Professor of Fine Arts and became the first to teach the history of Islamic art and architecture at Harvard.⁵⁶ His expertise, however, included the peoples, history, and culture of Muslim societies more broadly. Professor Grabar taught courses such as “Medieval Islamic Art (1000-1300)” and “Studies in Islamic Decorative Art” and is remembered for his “flamboyant, exciting, and always substantive” lectures and ability to make Islamic art and architecture appealing to non-specialists. His publications include *The Formation of Islamic Art* (1973), *The Illustrations of the Maqamat* (1984), *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (1996). Professor Grabar played an instrumental role in the founding of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture in 1979 and became the first Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art in 1980.⁵⁷ His student, Gülru Necipoğlu, is Harvard’s current Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art.

⁵⁶ Necipoğlu et al., “Oleg Grabar, Faculty of Arts and Sciences - Memorial Minute.”

⁵⁷ Necipoğlu et al.



Abdelhamid I. Sabra (1924-2013), <https://muslimheritage.com/the-late-professor-abdelhamid-i-sabra-an-obituary/>.

1972 – Abdelhamid Sabra First to Teach History of Arabic Science

Abdelhamid Sabra was born in Tanta, Egypt in 1924 and studied philosophy at the nascent Alexandria University. In 1950, the Egyptian government sent him to the London School of Economics where he earned a doctorate in the Philosophy of Science under Karl Popper and wrote a dissertation on the “Theories of Light from Descartes to Newton.” Sabra then taught at Alexandria University and the Warburg Institute in London. In 1972, he accepted an offer to join the History of Science Department at Harvard, where he remained until his retirement in 1996⁵⁸ and taught courses such as “Arabic Scientific Texts,” “Islam and Scientific Thought,” and “The

⁵⁸ “A. I. Sabra (1924-2013).”

Reception of Greek Thought in Islam.” Professor Sabra is best known for his contributions to the study of medieval Arabic science, especially *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham* (1989), a critical edition, English translation, and commentary of *Kitāb al-Manāẓir*. In 2005 he was awarded the George Sarton Medal for lifetime achievement by the History of Science Society and a prize by the Kuwait Science Foundation.⁵⁹

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-william-graham-abdelhamid-sabras-expertise-in-history-of-science-and-kalam>



Wheeler Thackston, <https://www.zoominfo.com/p/Wheeler-Thackston/7434968>.

1972 – Wheeler Thackston Brings Expertise in Persian Studies

⁵⁹ “A. I. Sabra (1924-2013).”

Wheeler Thackston earned his bachelor's degree at Princeton in Oriental Languages and Literatures and his Ph.D. at Harvard in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures under the supervision of Annemarie Schimmel. From 1972 until his retirement in 2007, Professor Thackston taught as Professor of the Practice of Persian at Harvard in the same department.⁶⁰ He taught courses such as "The Qur'an," and "Selected Readings in Classical Persian Literature" and is known for his uncanny gift for multiple languages, including Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, and Syriac. If someone needed training in Uighur, for instance, Professor Thackston could teach them beyond his regular classes. He is known for his Persian and Classical and Qur'anic Arabic grammars and his translations of Saadi's *Gulistan* (2008), the *Baburnama* (1996), and the *Jahangirnama* (1999). Professor Thackston has also produced manuals or editions of texts in Levantine Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Syriac, Uzbek, Luri, and Kurdish.⁶¹



William A. Graham, Harvard Divinity School

1973 – William Graham Advocates for Islamic Studies across Faculties

⁶⁰ "Wheeler Thackston."

⁶¹ "Wheeler Thackston."

After receiving his B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Ph.D. from Harvard, Professor Graham joined the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard in 1973 and later also the Faculty of Divinity in 2002. His scholarship has focused on early Islamic religious history and textual traditions, especially Qur'an and hadith, and on the global history of religion. In addition to his teaching in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the Study of Religion and his later work for a decade as Dean of Harvard Divinity School, Professor Graham served as director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, master of Currier House, chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and director of the Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program. Among his many publications are *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (1977), which was awarded the American Council of Learned Societies History of Religions Prize in 1978, *Beyond the Written Word* (1987) and *Islamic and Comparative Religious Studies* (2010).⁶²

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-william-graham-islam-in-the-broader-university-curriculum>

1978 – Wolfhart Heinrichs Brings Expertise in Arabic Studies

Wolfhart Heinrichs was born in Cologne, Germany in 1941 and studied Semitic languages, Arabic, and Islamic studies at Cologne, Frankfurt, London, and Giessen. He joined the Harvard faculty in 1978 and held the James Richard Jewett Chair of Arabic in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Among his many accomplishments was working with Fuat Sezgin in Frankfurt to produce the first *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (1967) and serving as co-editor of the major second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, for which he wrote 50 entries.⁶³ His courses included "History of the Arabic Language," and "Medieval Arabic Writings on Grammar and Literary Theory." His publications also include *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Isti'āra in Arabic Poetics* (1977), *Studies in Neo-Aramaic* (1990), *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Shari'a* (2008), and *Die Muqaddima: Betrachtungen zur Weltgeschichte* (2013). His untimely death in 2014 after a brief hospitalization only months before his planned retirement was mourned by the generation of Arabists and Islamicists that he trained and colleagues around the world.⁶⁴

⁶² "William Graham."

⁶³ Graham et al., "Wolfhart Peter Heinrichs, Faculty of Arts and Sciences - Memorial Minute."

⁶⁴ Graham et al.



(Top: left to right) Harvard president Derek Bok, the Aga Khan, and MIT president Jerome Wiesner in 1979; (bottom: left to right) Gülru Necipoğlu, Director of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Farrokh Derakhshani, and the Aga Khan in Dubai in 2016

1979 – Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture and Professorship of Islamic Art Established

The Aga Khan Programs for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology were established in 1979 for the study of Islamic architecture, urbanism, visual culture, and conservation and are supported by endowments for instruction, research, and student aid established by His Highness the Aga Khan. Through its programs at Harvard’s Department of History of Art and Architecture and Graduate School of Design, AKPIA seek to increase the visibility of the pan-Islamic cultural heritage in the modern Muslim world.⁶⁵ In 1983, AKPIA began to publish *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of*

⁶⁵ “AKPIA.”

the Islamic World with Professor Oleg Grabar, Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art, as its founding editor.⁶⁶

1986 – Roy Mottahedeh Becomes First Professor of Islamic History

Roy Parviz Mottahedeh was born in New York City in 1940. He graduated from Harvard College with an A.B. in history in 1960 and earned a second B.A. in Persian and Arabic from Cambridge University. He then went on to earn his Ph.D. at Harvard under Sir Hamilton Gibb and Richard Frye and was elected a Junior Fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows. Professor Mottahedeh began his teaching career at Princeton where he earned tenure and was one of the first MacArthur Fellows. He returned to Harvard in 1986 as Professor of Islamic History, where his many accomplishments have included directing CMES, founding the *Harvard Middle East and Islamic Review*, and founding the Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program.⁶⁷ He is well-known for his many publications including his books, *Loyalty and Leadership in Early Islamic Society* (1980) and *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (1985), and his article, “The Clash of Civilizations: An Islamicist’s Critique” (1995).

Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/user-775598562-582960913/prof-roy-mottahedeh-the-importance-of-history-in-islamic-studies>

1991 – Islamic Legal Studies Program Founded at Harvard Law School

With the aim of being a truly global school of law, Harvard’s was the first law school in the United States to begin offering courses on Islamic law in the 1950s. At the invitation of the late comparative law professor, Arthur von Mehren, several visiting professors taught single courses on Islamic law. The Islamic Legal Studies Program (ILSP) was founded in 1991 under the directorship of Frank Vogel, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Adjunct Professor of Islamic Legal Studies, who led the program until 2006.⁶⁸ Among ILSP’s initiatives was the Harvard Islamic Investment Project, undertaken in collaboration with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Harvard Business School, that was dedicated to research on Islamic banking and investment.⁶⁹ Today, the Program in Islamic Law, directed by Professor Intisar Rabb, and Program on Law and Society in the Muslim World, directed by Professor Kristen Stilt, promote the study of Islamic law at Harvard Law School.

⁶⁶ “Muqarnas.”

⁶⁷ “Roy Mottahedeh.”

⁶⁸ “Who We Are.”

⁶⁹ Babai, *Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University Reflections on the Past, Visions for the Future*, 28.



1993 - **Gülru Necipoğlu Named Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art**

An alumna of Harvard's History of Art and Architecture Department, Gülru Necipoğlu has taught at Harvard since 1987 and was named the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art and Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University in 1993. Professor Necipoğlu's scholarship focuses on questions of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, transregional connectivities between early modern Islamicate empires, and cross-cultural artistic exchanges with Byzantium and Renaissance Europe. Her monumental studies of Ottoman art and architecture: *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace* (1991), *The Topkapı Scroll—Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (1995), and *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (2005), have inspired generations of scholars of Ottoman, Mediterranean, and Islamic studies, across a variety of disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.



1997 – Cemal Kafadar Named Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies

Cemal Kafadar, a renowned scholar of Ottoman and Islamic history was named Harvard's first Vehbi Koç Professor of Turkish Studies in 1997. Dr. Kafadar, who has been a Professor of History at Harvard since 1993, bridges the study of the late medieval and early modern eras of European and Middle Eastern social and cultural history. His luminous work *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* is considered standard reading for all students of early modern European and Islamic history. Professor Kafadar's breadth of expertise on the nature of Ottoman and Islamic society in the eastern Mediterranean has opened new avenues of research in areas of urban studies, environmental studies, travel literature, popular culture, broadening the field of Islamic studies.



Leila Ahmed, photo courtesy of Michael Naughton, Harvard Divinity School

1999 – **Leila Ahmed Becomes First Professor of Women’s Studies in Religion**

Leila Ahmed was born in Cairo, Egypt and earned her bachelor’s degree and Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge. She then moved to the United States and became a professor of women’s studies and Near Eastern studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Professor Ahmed joined the Harvard Faculty of Divinity in 1999 as the first Professor of Women's Studies in Religion, thereby becoming a pioneer not only in Islamic studies but also in women’s and gender studies. She was appointed to the Victor S. Thomas chair in 2003 and became the Victor S. Thomas Research Professor of Divinity upon her retirement in 2020. Professor Ahmed’s many publications include her book, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (2011), which has been widely acclaimed and was the winner of the Grawemeyer Award in Religion for 2012, *Women and Gender in Islam: The Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1992), and *Edward W. Lane: A Study of His Life and Work and of British Ideas of the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century* (1978), as well as many articles.



Marina Tabassum examines student work during final reviews for the fall 2017 studio, “\$2,000 Home,” Aga Khan Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/research/research-centers/aga-khan-program-at-the-gsd/>.

2003 – Aga Khan Program at Harvard Graduate School of Design Founded

The Aga Khan Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD), founded in 2003, is part of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard and MIT, dedicated to the study of Islamic art and architecture, urbanism, landscape design and conservation. The Aga Khan Program at the GSD provides tuition and scholarships to doctoral and Ph.D. students studying the impact of development in the shaping of landscapes, cities and regional territories in the Muslim world. The program’s research and activities focus a lens on the design of public spaces, environmental concerns and land use and territorial settlement patterns from World War II to the present.



Baber Johansen, photo courtesy of Michael Naughton, Harvard Divinity School

2005 – Baber Johansen Teaches Islamic Law at Harvard Divinity School

Baber Johansen was born in Berlin, Germany where he earned his Ph.D. at Freie Universität Berlin. He then served on the faculty there and later at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Centre d'étude des normes juridiques) in Paris. In 2005, he was appointed Professor of Islamic Religious Studies at Harvard Divinity School, where he taught until his retirement in 2020. Professor Johansen has also been an affiliated professor at Harvard Law School and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and has served as acting director of the Islamic Legal Studies Program and the director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He has also been a faculty associate and a member of the executive committee of Harvard's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. Professor Johansen's publications include *Muhammad Husain Haikal Europa und der Orient im Weltbild eines ägyptischen Liberalen* (1967), *Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent* (1988), and *Contingency in a Sacred Law: Legal and Ethical Norms in the Muslim Fiqh* (1999).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ "Baber Johansen."

2006 – Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program and Professorships Established

In 2005, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud pledged a \$20 million gift to Harvard University for the establishment of a university-wide Islamic studies program that would be interdisciplinary and global. “I am pleased to support Islamic studies at Harvard and I hope that this program will enable generations of students and scholars to gain a thorough understanding of Islam and its role both in the past and in today’s world,” Prince Alwaleed said. The gift also gave Harvard the funds to endow professorships in Islamic studies, support graduate students, and to digitize Islamic manuscripts.⁷¹ Roy Mottahedeh, Gurney Professor of History, served as the Program’s founding director and committed to expanding Islamic studies at Harvard to better reflect the geographical spread of Muslim cultures.⁷²



2014 – Khaled El-Rouayheb Named James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and Islamic Intellectual History

⁷¹ “Harvard Receives \$20M Gift for Islamic Studies Program.”

⁷² Chen, “Islamic Studies Director Tapped.”

Khaled El-Rouayheb began his teaching career at Harvard in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in 2006 and was named James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and Islamic Intellectual History in 2014. A native of Lebanon, Professor El-Rouayheb first studied history as an undergraduate then as a graduate student at the American University of Beirut before earning a second bachelor's in philosophy from the University of Copenhagen. He earned his doctorate in Oriental Studies from the University of Cambridge in 2003. Professor El-Rouayheb's research ranges from the intellectual and cultural history of the Arabic-Islamic world in the Mamluk and early-Ottoman periods (1200-1800) to the history of Arabic logic and the history of Islamic philosophy and theology. His numerous articles and monographs include *Before Homosexuality in the Arabic-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (2005), *Relational Syllogisms & the History of Arabic Logic, 900-1900* (2010), *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century* (2015), and *The Development of Arabic Logic, 1200-1800* (2019). He is also the co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* (2016) and the editor of the book series *Makers of the Muslim World*, published by Oneworld Publishers.

2020 - Islamic studies Today

Today, Islamic studies at Harvard is represented across the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard Law School, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Business School, Harvard Graduate School of Design, and Harvard Medical School. It is also increasingly interdisciplinary and global in nature, with faculty, visiting scholars, students, and programs that increasingly represent the scope, diversity, and complexity of Muslim societies and communities around the world.

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