

APSA Hosts 11th MENA Research Development Workshop in Partnership with the Center for the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University

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Co-leaders Dr. Daniel Tavana (Penn State University) and Dr. Lisa Blaydes (Stanford University) with workshop participants during a research feedback panel.

In December 2024, APSA's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Program hosted a research development workshop for early-career scholars from the Arab MENA region in Kuwait City. The six-day in-person workshop, titled "The Politics of Identity in the Middle East and North Africa" was held in partnership with the Center for the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at Kuwait University. This marks the 11th MENA workshop organized by APSA since the launch of the MENA initiative in 2013. The research development workshops are designed as a small-group professional development and networking opportunity for early-career Arab scholars, offering a series of lectures, roundtables, and research feedback panels to support fellows in advancing their research on a specific theme in MENA Political Science.

The 2024 workshop convened 21 PhD candidates and early-career scholars in political science and other social science disciplines undertaking research that examines the theme of identity politics in the MENA region. Led by Drs. Hamad Albloshi (Kuwait University), Sarah Almutairi (Kuwait University),

"The opportunity to meet and share ideas with junior scholars was the most valuable part. It was a safe space of peers at the same level of study, research, and knowledge which is less intimidating and more encouraging to speak freely and feel empowered to share my thoughts."

—Workshop Fellow

Lisa Blaydes (Stanford University), and Daniel L. Tavana (Penn State University), the workshop aimed to support fellows in refining their research manuscripts and situating their contributions within broader academic debates. Research project submissions ranged from early-stage proposals to advanced draft manuscripts nearing completion.

Through feedback-focused panels and thematic seminars, participants received constructive feedback on the substance and design of their research projects from both co-leaders and fellow peers. The workshop also featured dedicated sessions on research design and methodology, where facilitators guided participants in refining their research question and theoretical framework. Discussions covered key topics such as concept building and measurement, as well as the complexities of fieldwork, data collection, and ethical considerations in the MENA region. Drawing on their own fieldwork experiences, co-leaders and guest speakers shared insights, best practices, and discussed potential ethical dilemmas researchers may face while conducting research in the region. Participants also had the opportunity to receive personalized guidance and feedback



From left: Dr. Nourah Shuhabibi (Kuwait University), Dr. Ghanim Al-Najjar (Kuwait University), and Dr. Hamad Albloshi (Kuwait University), during a roundtable discussion on Identity Politics in the Arab Gulf States.

"I have attended a number of workshops throughout my career, and this was by far the most transformative."

—Workshop Fellow



Workshop participants and co-leaders gather for a group photo at the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, Kuwait University (Shadadiya Campus).

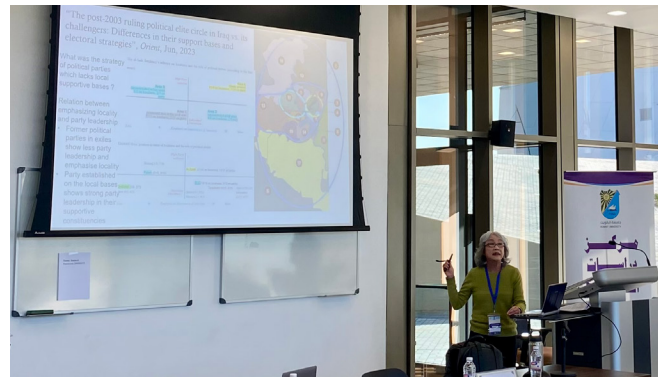
**"The feedback from the co-leaders was extremely helpful and enhanced my work's positionality, giving me a better framing for my research and a clearer understanding of which audience it speaks to."
—Workshop Fellow**

during designated office hours with facilitators.

In addition, the program included roundtables and professional development sessions featuring guest scholars from Kuwait, as well as regional and international academic institutions. Thematic seminars offered presentations and discussions on a wide range of sub-themes related to identity politics in the MENA region, including gender identity and survey research, religion and national belonging, and ethnic and tribal identities in electoral politics.

Following their participation, fellows were awarded a complimentary three-year membership to APSA, joining a growing network of alumni from the MENA workshops.

Funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York, APSA's MENA Program is a multi-year effort to support political science research and networking among early-career scholars across the Arab MENA region. For program news, updates, and additional information, contact menaworkshops@apsanet.org or visit the project website: <http://web.apsanet.org/mena/>. ■



Dr. Keiko Sakai (Chiba University) shares insights from her research in Iraq during a session exploring religion and national identity.



Guest speakers Dr. Yuree Noh (University of Utah) and Dr. Steve L. Monroe (National University of Singapore) discuss their fieldwork in Jordan and the Gulf Region during a session on gender identity and survey research.



From left: Drs. Shareefa A. Al-Adwani (American University of Kuwait), Fahed Al-Sumait (American University of Kuwait), and Daniel Tavara (Penn State University) during the "Careers in Political Science" panel at Kuwait University. The panelists discussed career paths in political science, sharing insights into the academic job market in the US and the MENA region, as well as their personal experiences navigating academic and professional opportunities in both contexts.