

I. Introduction

In the months since September 11, 2001 the attention of Americans has turned increasingly to the Middle East, and demand for knowledge about the region has multiplied. Whether the topic is war (in Iraq or between Israelis and Palestinians), the global economy and oil, the role of Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world, or the role of Turkey as a partner in NATO and possibly the European Union, there is great and continuing interest in the history of the region and its role in contemporary affairs. The availability of expertise on the area is quite limited, and the old established disciplines appear to be unwilling to allow students to master the empirical knowledge necessary to become expert. Language acquisition is the most elementary component of area studies, but there are an insufficient number of American translators of Arabic to meet the needs of the military, the civilian sector of the government, and private businesses. Demand is up, and the supply of expertise is down, but those who engage in area studies also can be the targets of harsh criticism for any deficiencies in their training. From private think tanks to the halls of Congress there have been repeated inquiries into the quality of training received by those who do most of America's teaching about the Middle East.

The University of Washington Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies has, in a decade, acquired a strong reputation for the excellence of its teaching and the quality of its graduates. Ph.D.'s from this program are in increasingly high demand for teaching positions at academic institutions and for research appointments. Graduates from this program have solid training in language and research and will be important members of the coming generation of scholars of the region. They will play major roles in teaching, research and policy debates about the region in our country. They compete on equal terms with graduates of older and more well-known programs.

Beyond its undoubted importance to contemporary life, the study of the history of the Middle East is also crucial to any understanding of the development of contemporary European and global societies and cultures. The Middle East was one of the three world historical centers in which agriculture, the state, and urban civilization developed, specifically Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley. The civilizations of Anatolia, the Nile and Mesopotamian valleys, and the littorals of the Mediterranean, Arabian, and Red Seas are the sources of religious, philosophic, and legal traditions that deeply inform world culture today. Judaism, Christianity and Islam whose adherents collectively number half of humanity, all arose within a relatively small area of the region and have developed in relationship to each other. The Middle East was a crucial area of human civilization throughout the Roman period—a fact that is frequently forgotten in contemporary arguments about the sources of European culture—and remained central to learning and science in the Byzantine era as well as into the period when the region was Islamized.

Brief History and Context

The Interdisciplinary Program in Near and Middle East Studies at the University of Washington has, in the decade since its foundation, emerged as one of a handful of programs that provide high-quality training to doctoral students and whose graduates have been recognized as highly desirable colleagues in university faculties around the country. Although the program itself is less than a decade old, the University of Washington has a long history of Middle East studies and has a complex institutional network to support a program that is truly interdisciplinary. In 1998 the University undertook a review of the program at its fifth anniversary which included a complete self-study and the formation of a joint internal/external review committee. This process culminated in a very positive review of the program (see Attachment 2). The primary question that arose during that review was whether graduates of this program could obtain academic positions. Because every graduate of the program since its formation has obtained either a tenure-track position or a multi-year post-doctoral position, this program has clearly accomplished the goals set for it in the recent review. This narrative is designed to clarify, in the context of the recent review, the background of the program and the degree to which it has accomplished the tasks set for it five years ago.

The University of Washington has a large and inherently interdisciplinary commitment directly to Middle East studies spread over three distinct administrative units (see Attachment 8). Only one of these units, IPNMES, offers a doctoral degree. Without the other programs, however, it would not be possible to offer the Interdisciplinary doctoral degree because they provide the substantive training in language, literature, the humanities and social science disciplines that make doctoral research possible at the University. Language instruction and the study of literature and culture in the four primary languages of the region (Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish and Persian) are provided in the Near East Language and Civilization department. NELC was founded in 1965, is a department in the College of Arts and Sciences, and has seven full-time faculty members. NELC confers baccalaureate and master's degrees but does not award doctorates. The second important unit supporting Middle East studies at the UW is the Middle East Center. MEC is located in the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies and is a fully-funded Title VI center with a three-year grant from the US Department of Education. It has been in continuous existence since 1970 and provides significant support for teaching and academic interaction. Also located in JSIS, and chaired by the director of MEC, is the program in Middle East studies which awards a Master's degree. IPNMES is located in the Graduate School and is entitled to award the Ph.D.; it does not award any other degrees. In addition there are nearly 50 other faculty members in departments spread across the primary divisions of the University whose major focus is on the study of the Middle East.

The IPNMES is one of about 20 programs in the United States that offer the doctorate in Near and Middle East Studies (see Attachment 1). Far more common are disciplinary doctoral programs that allow students to narrowly specialize in an area without attaining linguistic, cultural or historical mastery. Although disciplinary programs often provide intense methodological training they rarely allow doctoral students to begin a new language or to spend time abroad apart from dissertation research. The IPNMES by contrast, as outlined in its Mission Statement, provides advanced graduate students the opportunity to pursue cross-disciplinary research and to obtain linguistic and cultural mastery of the materials necessary for serious scholarly pursuits (see Appendix F). IPNMES students are therefore required to cultivate methodological training from at least one discipline and to acquire facility in at least two regional languages.

The IPNMES was approved in September 1991, and in its first full year of operation it accepted four graduate students. Since then the program has expanded continuously: in 1995 it had 8 students; in 1997 it had twelve; and since 1998 it has had 15 students which constitutes its current maximum enrollment under university regulations. These students are collectively an extremely impressive group in terms of scores on entrance examinations and grades (see Appendix A).

Support for students comes from a three-year fellowship, the Marsha Glazer Fellowship, awarded triennially. The program also provides some support for graduate students in the form of one nine month student research assistantship per year. It also provides travel funds for graduate students to conferences. Additionally, Ph.D. students frequently are asked to be teaching assistants in JSIS, NELC, or other departments and receive Foreign Language Area Study grants.

II. Self Study: Main Text

Section A: Self-evaluation

The primary strength of the IPNMES is the breadth and depth of the faculty engaged in teaching and research on the Middle East at the UW (see Appendices D & G). This breadth and depth translate into the faculty's capacity to provide advanced graduate education for students engaged in multi-disciplinary research in the historical or modern Middle East. Program faculty train students in disciplinary research methods, language and literature, and empirical knowledge of the region. This enables students to undertake innovative and multidisciplinary research. Student research therefore crosses the traditional boundaries between the social sciences and humanities. Doctoral dissertations have engaged social movement and feminist theory to examine the role of women in Israeli politics; the sociology of religion and new religious movements to explore the dynamics of religious change in Second Temple Judaism; the role of the internet and other electronic media in the creation of "virtual" Kurdistan; and legal theory and sociology to examine the Islamic law of inheritance.

Work in the historical and modern Middle East now demands an expansion of what was formerly area studies from its role as a collector of empirical material to research that attends to the links between theoretical enterprise and empirical research. Broadly defined, Middle East studies scholars have long maintained that it is impossible to cultivate useful empirical knowledge of the region without mastering the languages, cultural context, and broad history of the region, whereas the canonical disciplines have downplayed the importance of empirical knowledge relative to the construction of theory. Unfortunately the implicit scholarly division of labor in this model made those who studied the Middle East simple providers of raw material to others who then undertook to fashion sophisticated theoretical arguments. This model is no longer satisfactory because it neither produces valuable empirical research nor valid theoretical arguments. Middle East scholars can and do enter theoretical debates of major concern in disciplines while remaining capable of undertaking original research in primary regional languages and archives.

The success of the program is measured, in part, by the ability of students to develop links in their own research between theoretical issues of disciplinary importance and empirical research and to present them at conferences or in print (see Attachment 4). Presentations include those by students who have produced written work published either in peer-reviewed journals or in the book-length form. Besides peer-reviewed and academic publications, several students have undertaken book-length translations that have been published by a commercial press and have been widely reviewed. In one case our student shared a literary prize awarded to an internationally famous author: the author for the literary work and our student for the translation. Our students have also received fellowships, prizes and awards from a wide variety of sources, including the Social Science Research Council and the Graduate School of the University of Washington (see Attachment 3). A further measure of the program's success is whether its doctoral students actually find employment. In this regard, the program has proven to be more successful than many disciplinary programs. Every student who has graduated from the program has received either a full-time tenure track academic position or a post-doctoral fellowship (see Appendix E). A last measure of the success of the program is its ability to attract support from faculty members. Because the program provides no financial or other material compensation to faculty, it is wholly dependent on the willingness of University faculty to work with our students. We have attracted nearly 35 members of the faculty who have worked closely and tirelessly with our students in their pursuit of the doctoral degree.

The weaknesses of the IPNMES program are the mirror of its strengths. The single most important weakness in the program is the absence of any common intellectual discourse or even common experience. Because all faculty have primary commitments to the disciplinary departments in the College of Arts and Sciences there is no course similar to the scope and methods courses that ordinarily acquaint incoming graduate students with the core issues of a discipline (or an interdisciplinary program) and in which they engage in some mutual discussion. Given the small size of the program it is unrealistic to suggest a faculty line be devoted to it, but it does seem plausible that at least one faculty member annually be offered resources from the Graduate School to teach an introductory interdisciplinary course for the graduate students in lieu of a regular disciplinary teaching assignment.

The crucial challenge for the IPNMES is to retain a sufficiently large group of faculty on campus concerned with Middle East topics. Because the program cannot hire faculty or affect hiring decisions it is wholly dependent on the decisions of disciplinary departments. The IPNMES has close links with NELC whose members provide the necessary instruction in language and literature for all our students. The bulk of IPNMES students in recent years have been engaged in social science, and thus the crucial concern for the health of IPNMES are hiring and retention in the social sciences and the Jackson School. Thanks to an initiative through the Program on Society and Justice, the Department of Anthropology has hired an assistant professor who specializes in Iran. The retirement of Jere Bacharach in 2004 from the History Department, however, creates the possibility of a devastating gap in the program. Luckily the Middle East Center has been able to promise some resources to the History department to bridge the period of Bacharach's departure, and the History Department has been authorized to hire a historian in the coming year. More generally, however, trends in the social sciences in the last two decades of the 20th century have made departments reluctant to hire area specialists, and in the absence of area specialists in the disciplinary departments any interdisciplinary program will be threatened.

IPNMES students are required to take core courses in various disciplines. It is sometimes the case that the departments do not have room for graduate students outside their own departments in these courses. It would be valuable for IPNMES if its students could have some priority or certainty of admission to these courses. Usually only a single IPNMES student in occasional years wishes to enroll in these core seminars. When an IPNMES student cannot gain entry it causes a significant problem for his or her progress.

The final concern for the health of IPNMES on campus is to increase the level of support for the graduate students who enter the program. IPNMES competes nationally for incoming students with somewhat similar programs at universities such as Princeton. Entry into the Princeton Ph.D. program in Middle East Studies requires presentation of a paper at an annual conference of applicants to the program; all who are invited to enter the program are given five years of financial support. The UW program compares favorably with the Princeton program in terms of faculty support, breadth of interdisciplinary activity, and in regard to academic positions obtained by graduates. Obviously this program cannot offer several full-support packages, but it would make the program more attractive to incoming students if it had a higher level of financial support than one fellowship given out every three years and one nine-month research assistantship per year.

Section B: Research and Productivity

Balancing demands of the home departments and the IPNMES is wholly the responsibility of the individual faculty members who choose to participate and to mentor students in the program. The single mechanism for ensuring balance is our requirement that admission to the program requires at least one faculty member to agree to advise and monitor the incoming student. The program has been fortunate in the generosity of faculty in the various units to find time and energy to work with graduate students. The high quality of the graduate students we have admitted has been a strong incentive for faculty to work with them, especially in units (such as NELC and JSIS) that do not themselves award doctoral degrees. The generosity of our faculty has allowed us to benefit from their willingness to accept that the satisfaction of working to enhance student learning is sufficient reward.

Because there are no faculty lines directly associated with the program, because it does not hire or retain faculty on its own, and because there are no courses directly associated with the program, the issues of research and productivity are not applicable to this program. Because the single administrator, Jean Rogers, to work with the program is also responsible for other larger and more diverse programs, we have only a small role in encouraging and enhancing her professional development and productivity. The program encourages her to take an active role in managing the program because the administrative support is invariably far more crucial to its viability than any single faculty member. Ms. Rogers advises students on all administrative policies, keeps students on track, ensures that the program meets Graduate School requirements, and oversees the budget of the program. The program would be pleased to work with the other programs that Ms. Rogers administers to seek more recognition for her work.

The only paradigm that informs a large fraction of study of the Middle East is the now -25-year old work by Professor Edward Said, **Orientalism**. Our students are aware of the context within which this work arose and are exposed to the debates between Said and others such as Bernard Lewis, Kanan Makiya, and Fouad Ajami. They are encouraged to explore other approaches that are dominant in the existing disciplines (for example: economic modeling, quellencritik, feminist theory) where appropriate and to move away from the formulaic repetition of dated paradigms.

Section C: Relationships with Other Units

The relationship with other units is adequately described in the self-analysis. Lacking resources of its own IPNMES is primarily dependent on the willingness of individual faculty members in other departments to cooperate with students. The IPNMES holds at least one faculty meeting each year (in the fall). MEC allows discussion of IPNMES business at its monthly meetings when necessary. It is understood by NELC and MEC that members of those programs will be active on the admissions committee and student evaluation committee of IPNMES.

Section D: Diversity

While the program and its members fully support University policies in regard to diversity, IPNMES has no direct way to influence the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the faculty or staff because it makes no hiring decision on its own nor is it consulted when the Graduate School or various departments make hiring decisions. We have retained approximately 95% of students who entered the program and retention is thus not now a concern for the program. IPNMES does have a significant number of Muslims, women and non-citizens among its students. IPNMES fosters a sense among students that they can discuss and debate freely important scholarly and non-academic issues in the context of the program and its faculty. By their own diversity IPNMES students provide the university community with a sense of the diversity of Middle Eastern and especially Muslim societies.

Section E: Degree Programs

The IPNMES program awards the doctoral degree and only the doctoral degree. All incoming students are required to have a Master's degree. The aim of the program is to educate research scholars who conduct multi-disciplinary research and to encourage work that crosses the boundary between the humanities and the social sciences. This requires students who are well educated **within** disciplinary frameworks and who have broad language preparation and deep historical knowledge.

All students are **required** to study two of the regional languages (usually: Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, Persian). One of these languages must be offered for admission and it is expected that students will be able to use it fluently for research and communication. They are also **required** to study at least one of the primary European languages, besides English, in which a significant research tradition exists (usually: French, German, Italian or Russian).

All students are required to take two method and theory courses in at least one primary academic discipline. Students who plan to conduct field work or work with documents are encouraged to take the primary graduate courses on field techniques and research design in either the Anthropology or Political Science departments. Students whose work will be aimed at textual (rather than archival) work in the humanities are encouraged to take the primary scope and methods courses in Comparative Literature, English (or other) literature, or the equivalent in other departments.

IPNMES students are also required to take at least two disciplinary core courses in the appropriate fields. The courses survey the literature of a broad field of inquiry and ensure students are exposed to the core paradigms of a discipline. Examples of such courses would be graduate seminars on comparative politics, cognitive anthropology, comparative legal institutions, or political economy.

The program requirements have ensured that our students meet the objectives of the program. Students who complete the degree program invariably have attained facility in the use of one regional language and a good working knowledge of one other. They have a good grasp on the political, social and cultural realities of the region and they are conversant with the primary debates in at least one discipline. These students have provided the critical mass that makes the program itself attractive to other potential students. Their achievements have provided the program with national recognition. Their presence has also positively affected the ability of UW faculty to engage in innovative projects of their own. For example, students from IPNMES provided crucial teaching support for the award-winning Arabic Distance Learning program sponsored by NELC and MEC. Other program students have, as research assistants, enabled professors to undertake research in areas where they lack linguistic competency. IPNMES students also provide access to information about the Middle East for the general public especially through the outreach programs of the Middle East Center. Our objectives are comparable to those of other similar programs although our insistence that students master a disciplinary paradigm is unique. Having been a visiting faculty member at a peer program (the Near Eastern Studies department at Princeton University) I am certain that our students are as well prepared as any in the country.

Internally we measure the success of IPNMES in achieving our goals by close supervision of our students' progress through the program. Every student is assigned a faculty adviser who ensures that the student makes continuing progress. In addition, every student is subject to an annual review by a faculty committee. Only after the faculty committee formally affirms that the student is making good progress on an annual basis is the student allowed to continue.

Externally students are evaluated by their success in receiving invitations to address professional meetings, in publishing in refereed journals, and in playing a role in professional associations. The most important external measure of the success of our students is job placement. This was the one area that the Five-Year Review committee posed as the crucial hurdle for the program. By any measure IPNMES is doing phenomenally well. All students who have obtained a Ph.D. have also obtained full-time tenure-track employment or extensive post-doctoral grants. In the past three years, for example, students have been offered (and accepted) tenure-track appointments in Political Science at the University of Florida and San Francisco State University.

Faculty advisers mentor the students with whom they work. Because the program is so small and so flexibly tailored to student needs, doctoral candidates work closely with faculty members who are extremely interested in their students' well-being. The most important form of mentoring and preparation is the insistence that students actually master disciplinary as well as area-studies curriculum.

We rely on student connections to their faculty mentors to remain apprised of student success.

Section F: Graduate Students

A list of graduate students with their research interests and previous degrees is provided in Attachment 6. Student awards and presentations are in Attachments 3 and 4 respectively. A discussion of student composition and trends and issues in enrollment is provided in Part II, Sections A & E.

1. Recruitment and retention

a. Recruitment

Students are attracted to the program largely based on the strong reputation of the program and the interdisciplinary flexibility that the program offers. As mentioned in Section A and shown in Appendix G and Attachment 4, the 15 students and 32 faculty members in the program are heavily represented at regional, national, and international professional meetings, representing the University of Washington's Middle East studies programs. Additionally, as mentioned in the introduction, there is a continuing and increasing interest in the history of the region and its role in contemporary affairs, placing a high demand on Middle East programs nationwide. With these issues in mind, we frequently update and promote the web site (<http://www.grad.washington.edu/inter/nme.htm>) and distribute program literature via email and list-serves and at various professional organizations' meetings.

b. Retention

Student retention rates are on the order of 75 percent. Attrition is due primarily to the absence of funding for talented and qualified students. Without significant financial support from the University there is no way to minimize attrition.

2. Inclusion in governance and decisions

Because the program is primarily maintained through the voluntary activity of faculty members, there is only a minimal governance process. Graduate students have an annual meeting and are encouraged to propose changes to the program faculty.

Students may bring grievances to the faculty advisor or to their own advisors or to any member of the program with whom they work. The chair of the program would then attempt to resolve any dispute and, failing resolution, ask for assistance from the relevant University resources. No grievances have been lodged since the founding of the program.

3. Graduate Student Service Appointments: process and procedures

The primary criterion for appointment to a service appointment is the absence of any financial support for a student making good progress in the program. The secondary criterion is whether the student can provide useful research or teaching support for a faculty member. In general no student receives a program-funded service appointment for more than one quarter per year. They are supervised by the faculty member with whom they work. In the absence of any

financial support from the program and the very limited time period of service appointments, no specific training can be provided to graduate students, but every faculty member who has worked with one of our students has found them to be knowledgeable, intelligent and diligent.