

APSA MENA Workshops

Political Science in the Arab Middle East & North Africa



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: MENA Workshop Fellows

“Visuality and the Creation of Liminal Spaces of Participation: Ethnographic Approaches to the Middle East and North Africa” July/August 2021 – Virtual Program

The American Political Science Association ([APSA](http://www.apsanet.org)) is pleased to announce a Call for Applications from early-career scholars who would like to participate in two-part virtual summer workshop. The workshop, held over zoom during two weeks in July and two weeks in August, will bring together up to 12 selected fellows. Following their full participation of the workshop, all fellows will receive three-years membership to APSA. **The deadline for applications is Friday June 4, 2021.**

The workshop is part of a multi-year effort to support political science research among early-career scholars in the Arab MENA region, and to strengthen research networks linking Arab scholars with their colleagues overseas. More information on APSA’s MENA Workshops and related MENA programming can be found online at <http://web.apsanet.org/mena/>.

Eligible Participants

The workshop is intended for PhD students who are citizens of countries in the Arab MENA region, especially those who are currently based at universities or research institutes in the region. Non-citizens of Arab MENA countries who are currently based at universities or research institutes in the Arab MENA region may also apply. The program is open to scholars in political science and other social science disciplines undertaking research related to the workshop theme (as described below). Scholars should apply with a research project in progress that they will discuss at the workshop. Professional fluency in English is required.

Workshop Theme

The workshop will be led by Amal Abdrabo (Alexandria University, Egypt), Osman Balkan (Swarthmore College, USA), Arig Eweida (Alexandria University, Egypt), and Jillian Schwedler (Hunter College, USA). Building on Asef Bayat’s concept of “social non-movements,” workshop attendees will examine the everyday “politics of presence” as practiced by ordinary people within public spheres across the MENA region after the Arab uprisings. We seek to explore how power is produced and reproduced within society, how citizens engage in political expression even in repressive contexts, and how these practices use public spaces as sites of meaning-making. Participants will address the methodological challenges of doing this type of analysis, focusing on forms of interpretative research such as ethnography, participant-observation, interviews, and critical discourse and semiotic analysis. Applicants need not be already familiar with the literature on liminality and visibility, as the workshop will be centered around exploring the literature and developing research projects that connect with the following themes:

Liminal Spaces of Participation

How do ordinary actors press for political change under challenging conditions? Where are the spaces of the political, and what might we see when we look for politics in unusual and unexpected places? For example, graffiti, music, and art are means of publicly expressing dissent and imagining alternative futures. What other spaces and practices function as liminal spaces for political engagement and sites of meaning-making? How do regime efforts to

control freedom of expression shape liminal spaces of participation? Applicants are encouraged to think creatively about all forms of personal and collective expression in public spaces. These can include straightforward protest movements and demonstrations to seemingly apolitical forms of transgression involving the reshaping or reappropriation of urban spaces and resources for everyday needs (squatting, electricity or water theft, picnicking where one is not supposed to) or the creation of alternative systems of solidarity and mutual aid (food sharing, social services, parallel institutions) in response to a neoliberal politics of austerity. Participants in the workshop will explore the literature on liminality and how it helps reveal dynamics of power and resistance as well as the flux of uncertainty. We will particularly consider the work of Thomassen (2014) on the condition of “living through the in-between” as reflecting a permanent way of modern life.

Visuality as a New Approach

What is the relationship between aesthetics and politics? How can we explore the visuality of liminal spaces of participation, the creation of “non-spaces” of participation, and how citizens seek to claim the right to their own cities? Urban art, graffiti, and other modes of visual protest, for example, all work to produce political sensibilities and subjectivities. Applicants are encouraged to center visuality in thinking broadly about, for example, the connections between art, culture, and political activism. Following Rancière (2004), we will consider how aesthetic practices can decenter hegemonic regimes of truth and representation by engendering a new “distribution of the sensible.” We will also explore multiple methods to analyze visuality in highly repressive contexts, including ethnographies of space and place.

How to Apply

First, review the eligibility requirements and program expectations on the APSA website, then follow the web link to the online Application Form. Completed applications, including all necessary supporting documents (in PDF or Word Format), must be submitted by Friday June 4. Selected fellows will be contacted by mid-June.

Applications must be in English and include:

1. The completed online [Application Form](#).
2. A detailed recent Curriculum Vitae/resume.
3. A research statement (2,000 words maximum) describing the work-in-progress you plan to discuss at the workshop. This statement should outline the research question(s), the methods used, the data/fieldwork on which it is based, and how it relates to the workshop theme(s). The research project should not be any part of a co-authored project and should not be an excerpt from a work that is already completed or accepted for publication. Submissions may be derived from a dissertation project if it fits the workshop theme.
4. One letter of reference on official letterhead and scanned as electronic file. If you are a graduate student, the letter should be from your dissertation / academic supervisor. If you are a researcher or faculty member, the letter can come from a former dissertation supervisor, a colleague at your home institution, a university official, or an employer. Your letter can be uploaded with your application material or sent directly to menaworkshops@apsanet.org.

For more information and questions, contact us at menaworkshops@apsanet.org; please do not contact the co-leaders directly.