Conference on
Understanding Oman: A Unique Player in the Gulf Region

Organized by
The Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (CSAMES)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
and
The College of Economics and Political Science
Sultan Qaboos University

Co-Sponsored by:
Center for African Studies, Center for Global Studies, Department of History, Department of Religion, Department of Sociology, Program in Arms Control, Domestic and International Security (ACDIS), Women and Gender in Global Perspective Program

April 22-23, 2019

Purpose and Overview
Oman has undergone considerable economic and social transformation since 1970 and at the same time it has played important roles as a mediator in the Middle East’s regional conflicts. However, Oman’s multi-faceted development and the country’s contributions to international peace and stability remain under-studied. The purpose of this conference is to provide a forum for discussing broad, multi-disciplinary assessments of Oman’s development by leading scholars in the field. This is expected to encourage further research on Oman and to offer insights and lessons for the country and the Middle East region.

Conference Program

Monday April 22

Opening Remarks - 9:00am-9:20am
Hadi Salehi Esfahani, CSAMES Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Jerry Dávila, Executive Director, Illinois Global Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Panel 1: Oman’s Historical Heritage - 9:20am-10:40am
Chair: Kenneth M. Cuno, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
J.E. Peterson, Historian and Political Analyst Specializing in Oman
“The Role of Tribes in the Evolution of States in the Arabian Peninsula”
Valerie Hoffman, Department of Religion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
“The Role of Ibāḍī Islam in Omani History”

Break: 10:40am-11:00am

Panel 2: Economic and Financial Development - 11:00am-12:20am
Chair: Hadi Salehi Esfahani, CSAMES Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Asma Al-Zaidi, Department of Operations Management, Sultan Qaboos University
“Oman’s Macroeconomic Performance since 1970”
Reza Aghdam, Department of Economics, Sultan Qaboos University
“Financial Development in Oman”
Lunch: 12:20pm-1:40pm
Panel 3: Institutional Development and Foreign Policy - 1:40pm-3:40pm

Chair: Clifford E. Singer, ACDIS, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Calvin Allen, Dean Emeritus of the College of Arts and Sciences, Shenandoah University
“Governance and Institutional Development in Oman”

Marc J. O’Reilly, Department of Political Science and Chair of the International Studies Committee at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio
“Omani Foreign Policy”

Janice Jayes, Historian and Political Risk Analyst, Illinois State University
“Oman’s Soft Diplomacy in a Contentious Region”

Break: 3:40pm-4:00pm

Panel 4: Women’s Roles and Participation in Oman’s Development - 4:00pm-5:20pm

Chair: Colleen Murphy, WGGP Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Amy Erica Smith, Department of Political Science, Iowa State University
“ELECTING WOMEN TO NEW ARAB ASSEMBLIES: THE ROLES OF GENDER IDEOLOGY, ISLAM, AND TRIBALISM IN OMAN”

Linda Pappas Funsch, Department of Middle East Studies at Frederick (MD) Community College
“The Role of Women in Oman’s National Development”

Conference Dinner: 6:30pm

Tuesday April 23

Panel 5: Human Resources and Education in Oman - 9:00am-10:30am

Chair: Asef Bayat, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Usamah Al Farhan, Department of Economics, Sultan Qaboos University
“Labor Markets and Employment Trends in Oman”

Michael K. Thomas, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Illinois at Chicago
“Technology and Education in Oman”

Break: 10:30am-10:45am

Panel 6: Natural Resources Management in Oman - 10:45am-12:15am

Chair: D. Fairchild Ruggles, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Reza Aghdam, Department of Economics, Sultan Qaboos University
“Agriculture, Water, and Sustainable Development”

Abdullah Al-Badi, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Sultan Qaboos University
“Renewable and Sustainable Energies in Oman”

Closing Session: Panel Discussion - 12:15pm-1:00pm

Chair: Hadi Salehi Esfahani, CSAMES Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Asef Bayat, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Kenneth M. Cuno, Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Valerie Hoffman, Department of Religion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign