

Muhammet Topal

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PhD Candidate | MENAS & History

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My scholarship bridges history and social sciences through area studies and theoretical inquiry. Combining intellectual, sociological, transnational and biographical approaches, I focus on the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, and the broader MENA region within comparative and interdisciplinary frameworks that connect these contexts to global debates. I am dedicated to cultivating critical perspectives on the dynamics of the modern era, while pursuing research that traces how historical subjects navigated the transformations they experienced. Beyond academia, I draw inspiration from creative-writing and mountaineering.

Curriculum Vitae**Education**

2021-2026	PhD Candidate University of Arizona (UA) History & MENAS <i>School of Global Studies. Major: Middle Eastern & North African Studies, Minor: History.</i> Supervisor: Benjamin C. Fortna. GPA: 4.00/4.00
2025-2026	University of Arizona College Teaching Certificate Graduate Interdisciplinary Program, University Center for Assessment, Teaching & Technology
2020-2021	INALCO L'Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales History PhD Student at <i>Centre d'Études et de Recherche Moyen-Orient, Méditerranée (CERMOM)</i> . Major: <i>Langue littérature et sociétés du monde</i> . (Doctoral studies continued at the University of Arizona)
2018-2020	MA École Pratique des Hautes Études - Université PSL History & Philological Studies Faculty: <i>Sciences humaines et sociales, Department of Civilisations, cultures et sociétés & Islamologie et mondes musulmans</i> . Supervisor : Özgür Türesay. GPA: Bien (3.70/4.00)
2016-2017	Sciences Po Institut d'études politiques Political Sciences & International Relations BA Minor: Department of <i>Political Sciences & International Relations</i>
2013-2018	BA Boğaziçi University History Faculty: Arts and Sciences, BA Major: <i>History</i> . Supervisor: Edhem Eldem
2013-2014	English Program, <i>Boğaziçi University School of Foreign Languages (YADYOK)</i>
2009-2013	Istanbul Cumhuriyet Anatolian Highschool

Teaching**University of Arizona - Instructor of Record:**

Spring '26	Introduction to Political Islam (HIST/MENA/POL 385)
Fall '25	Middle East Ethnic & Religious Minorities (ANTH/HIST/MENA/JUS/POL/RELI 389)
Spring '25	Introduction to Political Islam (HIST/MENA/POL 385)
Fall '24	Introduction to Political Islam (HIST/MENA/POL 385)
Spring '24	Introduction to Political Islam (HIST/MENA/POL 385)
Fall '23	Introduction to Political Islam (HIST/MENA/POL 385)
Summer '22	Religion of Islam (MENA/REL 160B)

University of Arizona - Graduate Teaching Associate (TA)

Spring '23	Middle Eastern Humanities (MENA 160A Prof. Leila Hudson)
Spring '23	What is Politics? (POL 150 Prof. N. Chomsky & M. Waterstone)
Fall '22	Middle Eastern Humanities (MENA 160A Prof. Leila Hudson)
Spring '22	History of the Modern Middle East (MENA 277 Dr. Lora F. Goffman)
Fall '21	The Roman Empire: Rulers & Ruled (CLAS 335 Dr. Bridget Langley)
Fall '21	Islamic Civilization: Traditional & Modern (MENA 150 Dr. Nayel Badareen)

Eylül Academy¹ - Lecturer:

2015-2021	World History (Ottoman Empire, MENA, Europe, Turkey, Islam) Human and Natural Geography Continental Philosophy
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¹ A private school in Istanbul preparing senior high school students and recent graduates for Turkey's competitive university entrance exams.

Other Professional Experiences

- 2024-2026 Large Language Model Trainer - Outlier AI, (Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages)
- 2021-2026 Outreach Speaker – UA Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES)
- 2018-2020 Archivist & Librarian - École normale supérieure-Paris (Library of Social Sciences and Humanities)
- Summer '16 Intern - Mephisto Publishing House & Bookstore, Istanbul
- Summer '15 Project Assistant - International Architect Sinan Tourism Project, Istanbul Development Agency-TTOK²

Languages

- Turkish — Native (L1)
- Ottoman Turkish — Research (Advanced)
- English — C2 (Advanced)
- French — C1 (Advanced)
- Arabic — B2 (Upper-Intermediate)
- Persian — B1 (Intermediate, in progress)
- Russian — A2 (Elementary, in progress)

Digital Humanities & Education Technologies

- Social Network Analysis (SNA)
- Website Design, Adobe Express
- ArcGIS StoryMaps
- D2L (Brightspace)
- Microsoft Office
- DaVinci Resolve
- PlayLab AI

Research, Service, Workshops & Certificates

- Spring '26 Co-Organizer, 2nd MENAS Graduate Work-in-Progress Colloquium Series, University of Arizona
- Summer '25 Participant, The 2nd Turkic World Summer School: The Rise of Turkic World, Ibn Haldun University
- Spring '25 Organizer, 1st MENAS Graduate Work-in-Progress Colloquium Series, University of Arizona
- Summer '24 Visiting Scholar - Orient-Institute Istanbul
- Summer '24 Participant, LinguArc Archive Languages Summer School: Ottoman Archives and Diplomata (60-hour), Middle East and Africa Research Center, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University
- Spring '24 Participant, Teaching and Talking about Sensitive Subjects, Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES)
- Summer '23 Participant, LinguArc Archive Languages Summer School: Ottoman Paleography (64-hour), Middle East and Africa Research Center, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University
- Fall '18 Participant, Digital Humanities Workshop, École nationale des chartes | Université PSL
- Spring '14 Participant, Traditional Ottoman Fine Arts Workshop, Boğaziçi University Art Center
- Spring '13 Participant, Creative Writing Workshop, Istanbul Şehir University

Conference & Presentations

Panel Organizer & Chair

- 2026 - Organizer, “Producing Subjects: Knowledge, Sovereignty, and Reform in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Republic”, *Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA) Conference*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, (October 9-11)
- 2025 - Chair, “Sufism and Religious Symbolism in Modern Middle Eastern Literature”, *The 59th Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association*, (November 22-25, Washington DC)

Presenter

- 2026 - “Mountaineering as the Covenant Experience of the Dual: Toward a Relational Ontology of Body and World”, *Thinking from the Dual – Ontology, Theology and the Humanities through the Lens of the Muthannā*, University of Lorraine, (October 13-14, Metz)
- 2026 - “The Rise and Fall of Universal History: Curriculum Regulation and the Fabrication of the Imperial Subject in the Hamidian Empire”, *Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA) Conference*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, (October 9-11)
- 2026 - “Organizing Exit: Political Agency Beyond State-Centered Muslim Politics”, *The 40th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference (MEHAT): Playing with the Scales: The Local, Regional, and Global in Middle Eastern Studies*, University of Chicago (May 1-2)
- 2026 - “Empire of Translations: Making of the Ottoman Public Intellectual from Phanariot Dragomans to the Translation Office”, *6th Mid-Atlantic Ottomanist Workshop*, Rutgers University (April 10-11)

² A project that brought together historians and architects from around the world to create a new tourism route tracing the architectural legacy of Mimar Sinan, the sixteenth-century Ottoman chief architect, across Turkey and post-Ottoman lands.

- 2025 - “Speaking Truth to Power: Mehmed Murad Bey’s Individuation and Political Socialization in the Formation of the Late Ottoman Public Intellectual”, *The 59th Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association*, (November 22-25, Washington DC)
- 2025 - “Finding a Place in the World: The Formation of Political Subjects through History Education (1839–Present)”, *Education in Turkey: Actors and Practices Conference*, Galatasaray University & Institut français d’études anatoliennes -IFEA, (October 9-10, Istanbul)
- 2025 - “The Rise and Fall of A Young Turk Leader: Mehmed Murad Bey and the Political Geography of the Young Turks (1895-1898)”, *History Conference in Memory of Yavuz Selim Karakışla*, Boğaziçi University (May 15-16, Istanbul)
- 2025 - “Center of Power: Social Networks and Agency in the Late Ottoman Istanbul”, *15th Annual TAMU History Conference: Power and Agency*, Texas A&M University (February 7-8, College Station)
- 2024 - “Making of An Ottoman Public Intellectual: Mizancı Mehmed Murad Bey”, *Orient Institute Colloquium Series* (July 31, Istanbul)
- 2024 - “An Orient of One’s Own: Egypt of Ottoman Intellectual Émigrés during the Hamidian Era”, *International Nineteenth-Century Studies Association Conference: The Nineteenth Century Today: Interdisciplinary, International, Intertemporal*, University of Durham (July 10-12)
- 2024 - “The Tale of Two Cities: Comparative Modernization in Istanbul and Cairo from the Perspective of the Ottoman Intellectual Émigrés during the Hamidian Era”, *Society for Global Nineteenth-Century Studies Symposium (SGNCS): Nineteenth-Century Global Cities and Urban Worlds*, Aix-Marseille University (June 6-8)

Publications & Dissertations

Books & Translations

- 2026 **Topal, Muhammet, tr.** 2026. *Biyografi*, by Melanie Nolan. İstanbul: Vakıf Bank Kültür Yayınları. Originally published as *Biography: An Historiography*, Routledge, 2023 (forthcoming).

Peer Reviewed Articles & Chapters

- 2026 **Topal, Muhammet.** "A Camel Story: Hadji Ali and the Transimperial Routes of Labor, Identity, and Enterprise." *Footnotes: A Journal of History* 8 (University of Arizona, 2026): 70–84. <https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/uahistjnl/article/id/10174/>
- 2025 **Topal, Muhammet.** "In Pursuit of Representation, Memory, and Narrative: Three Travelers on the Silk Road | Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, and Benjamin of Tudela". *Tarih Dergisi*, no. 32 (Special Issue: Silk Road), edited by Kahraman Şakul (2025): 178–86. <https://www.academia.edu/130470854/>

Book Reviews

- 2015 **Topal, Muhammet,** “İmbilim Ders Notları: Dile Dışarıdan Bir Bakış.” Review of *İmbilim Ders Notları* [Semiology Course Notes], by Bilge Karasu. *EdebîFikir*, February 4, 2015. <https://edebifikir.com/kitap/imbilim-ders-notlari-dile-disaridan-bir-bakis.html>

Dissertations

- 2026 **Topal, Muhammet.** *The Making of an Ottoman Opposition: Mizancı Mehmed Murad Bey between Loyalty and Dissent*. PhD dissertation in progress, University of Arizona, September 2026. Committee: Benjamin Fortna (chair) Linda Darling, Yaseen Noorani, Maha Nassar, and Jadwiga Mooney.
- 2020 **Topal, Muhammet.** *Individuation et politisation : Portrait d’un intellectuel ottoman en tant que journaliste*. Master’s thesis, École pratique des hautes études, September 2020. Jury: Özgür Türesay (chair), Nicolas Vatin (co-chair) and Alexander Toumarkine.
- 2018 **Topal, Muhammet.** *Uncertainty of the Persian Border: The Making of an Ottoman-Qajar Borderland from 1823 to 1913*. BA graduation project, Boğaziçi University, May 2018. Supervisor: Edhem Eldem.

Selected Fellowships & Awards

- 2026 Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA) Travel Grant, \$500
- 2026 UA Graduate College Fellowship, \$2,500
- 2022-2026 UA Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Internship & Research Award (‘22, ‘24, ‘25, ‘26), \$6,000
- 2026 University of Chicago Travel Grant, \$500
- 2021-2025 UA Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Outreach Scholar Grant, (‘21, ‘22, ‘23, ‘24, ‘25), \$1,350
- 2025 Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Travel Grant, \$500
- 2024 UA Graduate & Professional Student Council (GPSC) Research & Travel Grants, \$5,000
- 2024-2025 UA MENAS Travel Grant (‘24, ‘25), \$1,000

2022-2024	UA MENAS Michael Bonine Memorial Travel & Research Award ('22, '23, '24), \$2,000
2023	UA Graduate College Fellowship, \$2,500
2023	UA MENAS Adel Gamal Advanced Arabic Language Award, \$500
2021-2023	INALCO International Research Mobility Grant ('21, '23), €2,400
2019-2020	EPHE International Research Mobility Grant ('19, 20), €2,000
2018-2025	International Scholar Grant, Cultural Affairs Directorate of Touring Club of Turkey, €12,000
2017	Erasmus+ European International Mobility Grant/Scholarship, Sciences Po, €2,500
2014-2018	National Scholar Grant, Cultural Affairs Directorate of Touring Club of Turkey, ~ \$5,500

Selected References³ & Affiliations

Benjamin Fortna	Professor, University of Arizona	bfortna@arizona.edu
Linda Darling	Professor Emerita, University of Arizona	ldarling@arizona.edu
Yaseen Noorani	Associate Professor, University of Arizona	ynoorani@arizona.edu
Maha Nassar	Associate Professor, University of Arizona	mtnassar@arizona.edu
A. Toumarkine	Professor, INALCO	alexandre.toumarkine@inalco.fr
Özgür Türesay	Associate Professor, EPHE-PSL	ozgur.turesay@ephe.psl.eu
Nicolas Vatin	Emeritus Director of Research, CNRS; Director of Studies, EPHE-PSL	nvatin@ehess.fr
Edhem Eldem	Professor, Columbia University, Collège de France and Boğaziçi University	ee2383@columbia.edu
	Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA)	
Member	Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA)	

³ Additional references regarding teaching, academic service, and other professional activities are available upon request.