

For Immediate Release



## **US and European students head to AUB for an intensive summer course in Arabic**

Beirut, Lebanon- 16/07/2013 -Despite recent turmoil in the region, 63 students from all corners of the globe have enrolled in an intensive summer course at the American University of Beirut to develop their Arabic language skills.

While the majority of the students are from the United States, others come from Canada, Denmark, France, Norway, UK, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Argentina, Italy, Switzerland and Russia. Students will spend a total of seven weeks at AUB, studying Arabic and absorbing the culture. The program ends on August 7.

Program participants said that one of the main attractive elements of the program was the diversity in the pool of applicants.

“It’s way more diverse, more liberal,” said Rasmus Jacobsen, a Danish student with a master’s in political science from the University of Southern Denmark, referring to his decision to learn Arabic in AUB as opposed to other countries in the region.

Run by the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES) at AUB, the seven-week Summer Arabic Program offers a total of 186 hours of intensive Arabic. Students are divided into eight levels based on their understanding of the language, ranging from introductory to high superior levels. Students learn Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) integrated with colloquial Arabic and walk away with nine credits under their belts.

First established in 1972, the CAMES program was reactivated in 1991 after a hiatus during the civil war. The Summer Arabic Program started in 2000 with about 20 students and has seen peaks of over 90 students. It targets those who want to learn Arabic for academic purposes, whether they are focusing their studies on Arabic or the Middle East in general.

“What they take away is that they learn an amazing amount,” said Aliya Saidi, assistant director at CAMES. “They progress more or less the equivalent of one year of Arabic in seven weeks.”

Lebanese-American Nate George enrolled in the program to help him access in Arabic documents for his research on the Lebanese civil war and US foreign policy in the Middle East. He said that the best aspect of the program is working in Arabic all of the time.

“It’s intensive,” he said. “The class is entirely in Arabic from beginning to end...it’s good because it’s total immersion.”

This summer, for the first time, students were also able to take a separate course in colloquial Arabic, offering students the opportunity to focus on the Lebanese dialect. The six-credit course is at an intensive intermediate level, and requires that students have had prior experience learning Modern Standard Arabic.

“I like the flexibility built into the program,” said Jacobsen, adding that the program allowed him to build a vocabulary that is relevant to the current times. In the session following reports of Egypt’s recently ousted president, the class learned the terms for “president” and “removed” in their colloquial discussion. “We discuss relevant issues and incorporate actual events.”

The program also offers the chance for students to explore other areas of Lebanon, with trips to places like Byblos and Jeita. More local field trips include Arabic bookstores and the national museum, and students also engage in community service by visiting orphanages and nursing homes. They also participate in cooking activities, practice Arabic calligraphy, and watch local movies or learn the dabke.

Ekaterina Pukhovaya, who is studying the history of Asia and Africa for her master’s at Moscow State University, was especially excited at the prospect of learning about Lebanese culture firsthand.

“We discuss cultural stuff, like songs, films, *mosalsalat*,” she said, using the Arabic term for “TV series” in the region. “[These are] things I never got to learn in Moscow.”

“It gives you the chance to meet people you otherwise would not have met,” said Nik Nevin, an American student studying history at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

“I’ve never seen a more beautiful campus than AUB. I love it here in terms of that and the academics,” said George comparing the campus to schools abroad. “It’s a completely different scene. It makes it interesting; it makes it a breath of fresh air.”

ENDS

**For more information please contact:**

Maha Al-Azar, Associate Director for Media Relations, [ma110@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ma110@aub.edu.lb), 01-75 96 85

**Note to Editors**

**About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor’s, master’s, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

**Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:**

Website: [www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>  
Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)