

For Immediate Release



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AUB launches its Farouk Jabre Center **for Arabic & Islamic Science and Philosophy**

The Farouk Jabre Center for Arabic & Islamic Science and Philosophy at the American University of Beirut (AUB) was formally launched on November 26, 2018, in an inaugural lecture by distinguished scholar George Saliba, who is the first Jabre Khwarizmi Chair of Arabic and Islamic Science at AUB, and the founding director of the center.

The center is an academic body that focuses on the study of the history of Arabic science and philosophy as it was known through the last millennium-and-a-half, for the purpose of finding inspiration in the civilization's successes. It aims to erase any misconceptions and stigmas related to understanding this history through reconsidering foundational sources of that culture. It also intends to build a new vision that overturns the myth that Arabic language, and thus the Arabic culture, is un conducive to scientific writing and advances, by proving that the language is simply a tool of a thinking mind and highlighting that several sciences were, in fact, effortlessly articulated in Arabic throughout history. In order to achieve its mission, the center will be organizing and hosting colloquia, symposia, lectures, and discussion groups as well as teaching courses, rejuvenating students' interest, and encouraging different AUB departments to teach courses that engage with and support the center's message.

The plan to create an endowed center for the study of Arabic and Islamic science and philosophy at AUB was originally brought forth by former provost Ahmad Dallal, who was Dr. Saliba's first PhD student. The opening of the Farouk Jabre Center for Arabic & Islamic Science and Philosophy was then made possible due to a generous donation by AUB Trustee Emeritus Farouk Kamal Jabre, who has previously expressed his wish that the center would "help the youth of this region regain pride in their heritage." Jabre had explained that he wants to dissipate the misconception that the cultural context of Arabic was not conducive to "scientific thought, rational discourse, or knowledge production," and to encourage bright Arab minds to stay in this region and contribute to science and technology here rather than abroad.

In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Jabre, the event was attended by Minister of National Defense Yacoub Sarraf, former prime ministers Najib Mikati and Tammam Salam, former ministers Ibrahim Chamseddine and Khaled Kabbani, Mrs. May Najib Mikati, Saint-Joseph University Rector Salim Daccache, Lebanese American University President Joseph Jabbra, and Dr. Ahmad Dallal, who is currently dean of Georgetown University in Qatar. Attending from AUB were its President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, Provost Mohamed Harajli, a number of trustees, vice presidents, deans, faculty, and staff; in addition to media and others.

Prior to the lecture, President Khuri spoke about AUB's vision to create a research center to study the contributions of Arabic-Islamic civilization in the global canon of scientific and philosophical scholarship, which has been in the university's DNA since its early beginnings.

"They say that to know who you are, you have to know where you come from," said Khuri. "And so, this message of cultural accomplishment is critical for all of us. The inauguration of the Farouk Jabre Center for Arabic & Islamic Science and Philosophy is a critical step that rekindles hope in all of us who are working to make a better Arab world and empower the best Arab minds to contribute meaningfully in our societies, that the hope for the future remains fresh and bright." Trustee Jabre also spoke at the event. He said, "Professor Saliba will lead the center to implement the vision of fostering vibrant interdisciplinary environment and community which expands the storm of reliable evidence on the Arabic and Islamic scientific and philosophical legacy, guides hypothesis about its broader significance in the recorded history of these fields, and introduces students, scholars, and the general public to Arabic and Islamic contributions to them. The chair and founding director will provide direction and continuity as the center evolves, attracting promising scholars to participate in a mission of research, education, and outreach." He added, "We are all confident that the center will prosper, to become with time an important bridge to a better future in our societies."

Saliba, who has spent half a century studying the history of Arabic and Islamic science and its impact on the modern world, then, delivered an engaging and enlightening lecture explaining "why the history of Arabic and Islamic science and philosophy still matters."

Dr. George Saliba graduated from AUB and UC Berkeley, and taught at Columbia University. His extensive research is summed up in his best-known work *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, a book which has been translated into six languages. Dr. Saliba received the History of Astronomy Prize from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science in 1996. He has also served as Distinguished Senior Scholar at the Kluge Center of the Library of Congress (2005-06), and as a Carnegie Scholar (2009-10).

In his lecture, Saliba spoke about the organic connection between modern science and its Arabic and Islamic predecessor. He also presented proofs that deny the false assumptions that the Arabs merely translated and kept Greco-Roman thought and science, without studying, revising, and sometimes disproving it. He also explained how Islamic and Arab scientists and thought leaders developed and used this science as their civilization evolved and prospered, influencing in its turn civilizations that followed. In addition, Saliba spoke about the strong connection between economy and science throughout history and until modern days, explaining how science has been organized as a business, and how it became an engine to produce capital, where it “no longer seeks Aristotelian certainty,” and is “no longer patronized as an expenditure, rather re-conceptualized as an investment.”

Saliba concluded his lecture saying that the Farouk Jabre Center for Arabic & Islamic Science and Philosophy does not aim to trade in myths and rivalries. “Instead, it intends to generate a fresh vision of cultural history and will undertake the charge of investigating such aspects of Arabic and Islamic civilization where facts replace myths, truth replaces prejudice, and all conclusions are based on objectively verifiable evidence.”

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to 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.

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