**Table of Contents:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Introductory Statement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Student Demand</td>
<td>1–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Benefits to the University, College, Department, Students and Community</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Resource Implications</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Consultations</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Provisions for the Program Assessment</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Bulletin Description for the Minor</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Name</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Program Scope</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Curriculum Proposal</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. List of Appendices</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROPOSAL FOR MINOR IN
ARAB AND MUSLIM ETHNICITIES AND DIASPORAS STUDIES

October 2014

College: Ethnic Studies
Program: Race and Resistance Studies (RRS)
Contact Person: Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, Ph.D.

I. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Initiative (hereafter cited as AMED) in the College of Ethnic Studies proposes a new interdisciplinary minor in Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies within the College of Ethnic Studies (CoES). The AMED Minor will focus on Arab and Muslim communities at home, in their ancestral homelands as well as in other Arab and Muslim diasporas, including non-Arab ethnicities in Arab majority communities and non-Muslim religious minorities in Muslim majority communities. Thus the Minor is U.S. grounded and transnationally tempered. Arab and Muslim diasporic communities have long been the target of cultural and political misunderstanding, discrimination, and misrepresentation. Although these communities have been present in the U.S (and other Western Diasporas around the world), for centuries, the current political U.S. and global context (“war on terror”, Islamophobia, threats against Iran, continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands, etc.) has pushed them to the forefront of media and governmental attention. Consequently, this negative portrayal has also generated a strong need for nuanced knowledge and understanding about Arab and Muslim communities, on the SFSU campus and the public at large, with the proviso that while they (Arabs and Muslims) are distinct communities with diverse identities and historical narratives, this particular historical moment necessitates their examination within one inter- and multi-disciplinary field of study.

III. STUDENT DEMAND

There has been significant interest in the minor program. The AMED Minor will attract students interested in studying Arab and Muslim communities through a critical Ethnic Studies lens to SFSU and allow us to become as competitive as other campuses in this expanding and exciting field. Thus far AMED courses have been the subject of much interest from students obtaining degrees in International Relations, Anthropology, Sociology and Sexuality Studies, Political Science, Women and Gender Studies, Journalism, Art, Raza, Asian American Studies, and Middle East and Islamic Studies at SFSU as well as international students who spend a semester abroad at SFSU. Beyond SFSU, faculty and students from University of California Berkeley’s Ethnic Studies Program have expressed interest in collaboration with AMED and are eager to take a similar academic model back to their own campus.

Members from student organizations such as BSU, GUPS, LFS, MeCHa, MSA, MWSA, PACE, and the Women’s Center have expressed their support for the AMED minor as have students in Africana, Latino/a, Asian American, American Indian Studies, Race and Resistance Studies within
the College of Ethnic Studies and across campus in International Relations, Cinema, Sociology, Middle East and Islamic Studies, and Women and Gender Studies.

In the 2013 and 2014 spring semesters, surveys to assess the interest and demand for a minor in AMED studies were conducted across various Ethnic Studies departmental courses whose students represented a broad range of majors, class standing, races, classes, sexualities, and genders. An overwhelming percentage (90.1%) of 482 SFSU students surveyed, responded “Yes” to the question “Do you think a minor in Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies is an important educational option for students at San Francisco State University.” When asked “The AMED minor requires the completion of 15 units, would you consider obtaining a minor in AMED if it were available at SFSU?” 227 respondents answered “Yes” or “Maybe” (or 21.8% and 39% respectively), to the question.”

IV. BENEFITS TO THE UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, DEPARTMENT, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY

The Minor in Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies will be the one and only academic program of its kind in the U.S. and throughout the world. In particular, the AMED Minor will be a concrete way through which critical knowledge by and about Arab and Muslim Communities will be disseminated. The AMED Minor offers students the knowledge and skills to overcome the varied forms of oppression they face and to become better equipped to serve their communities by contextualizing the racialization experiences and histories of Arabs and Muslim in the United States and globally, and by linking it to the experiences of marginalization and histories of other Indigenous communities, communities of color and marginalized communities. The AMED Minor will provide training to students interested in pursuing careers in the social justice non-profit sector by cultivating a culture of tolerance and acceptance for Arabs, Muslims, and other Indigenous communities of color across campus and in their respective communities. The AMED Minor intends to prepare students for other broader career choices, including health providers, culturally-aware educators, librarians with expertise in Arab and Muslim communities’ collections, and youth councilors, among other fields.

V. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Faculty/Staff:

Courses will be offered consistently: the tenured faculty member teaches a 3-3 load that includes the two required courses [6 units] as well as four electives [12 units]. In addition, AMED’s two affiliated faculty teach five elective courses [15 units] between them per year. Moreover, the College of Ethnic Studies is committed to staffing two additional tenure-track faculty lines that will bolster the program. Finally, most AMED courses, have been (or are on their way to be) approved for GE, many of AMED courses form the core of SFSU curriculum, thus improving their chances of being offered regularly through tenured/tenure-track faculty or augments in GE.

1 Tabulated Survey Results, including details for each class/event in which surveys were conducted, can be found as Appendix C. Typed out Student comments from Surveys organized by course can be found as Appendix D.

2 Programs in Arab American Studies and Islamic studies have proliferated on U.S. campuses and around the world., especially since 9/11/2001 However, the AMED minor will be the only program that is framed within a justice-centered Ethnic Studies perspective and that studies both Arab and Muslim communities as well as non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities in Arab or Muslim- majority communities at home and in their Diasporas.
AMED has one tenured faculty member in the College of Ethnic Studies and a number of others from Women and Gender Studies and Foreign Languages and Literatures Departments, in addition to adjunct professors whose expertise covers a range of fields and disciplines, such as Sociology, Palestine Studies, Cultural Studies, Critical Race Theory, Post-Colonial Studies, Social Movements, Transnational Feminisms, and Gender and Sexuality Studies. We have frequently been able to fund lecturers to teach other core courses on a semester-by-semester basis. Some of our core courses are cross-listed with and taught by faculty from other departments, such as Arabic Language and Women and Gender Studies. AMED also has two offices, one for the senior scholar and another shared by student assistants and visiting professors.

AMED Faculty come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, and are therefore able to fulfill AMED’s mandate of providing innovative and cutting edge research that accounts for the lived experiences of diverse Arab and Muslim communities, a commitment to teaching excellence, and an indivisible sense of justice in the U.S., the Americas, and transnationally. Faculty are expected to be grounded in their communities’ struggles for justice from colonialism, imperialism, and gender-based oppression. The AMED minor is designed in such a way so as to give students the opportunity to fulfill GE requirements and the opportunity to elect, with approval from the program chair, non-AMED courses in other disciplines across campus to fulfill the requirements for the minor.

**Physical and Technical Resources Provision:**

AMED has sufficient physical and technical resources in place, including two multi-use printers, three computers, one large-format scanner for digitizing archival materials, digital videos, still camera and voice recorders.

**VI. CONSULTATIONS**

Invitations were extended to Bay Area scholars at UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UCSF, Stanford University, Santa Clara University, San Jose State University, City College of San Francisco, and Mills College, amongst others. Letters of support from colleagues and friends invited to AMED curriculum meetings also expressed their excitement over the creation of such a program and their interest in future collaborations with AMED:

**Scholars – San Francisco Bay Area**

1. Kinneret Alexander, Instructor, Inter-Disciplinary Studies, City College of San Francisco
2. Dr. Keith Feldman, Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley
3. Ilaria Giglio, Doctoral Candidate – Geography, UC Berkeley
4. Dr. Shoaib Kamil, Computer Science, MIT (formerly UC Berkeley)
5. Dr. Julia Oparah, Professor and Chair, Ethnic Studies, Mills College
6. Dr. Samia Shoman, AMED, SFSU

**International and US Scholars**

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4 See Appendix F for Letters of support from SFBA, International and US Scholars and Community Organizations
4 See Appendix F for Letters of support from SFBA, International and US Scholars and Community Organizations
1. Rayan Al-Amine, Lecturer, Middle East Studies, Lebanese American University; 
   Program Manager, Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut
2. Dr. Samar Habib, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
3. Dr. Laura Khoury, Professor, Sociology, Birzeit University (Palestine)
4. Dr. Yi-Chun Tricia Lin, Chair, National Women’s Studies Association; Director and
   Professor, Women’s Studies, Southern Connecticut State University

**Community Organizations and Partners**
1. The Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA)
2. Arab Cultural and Community Center - Fuad Ateyeh, past President
3. Arab Film Festival (AFF) - Dr. Jess Ghannam, President
4. Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) - Lily Haskell, Program Director
5. Buena Vista United Methodist Church - Rev. Michael Yoshii
6. Council on American Islamic Relations – Bay Area (CAIR) - Zahra Biloo, Executive
   Director
7. Freedom Archives - Claude Marks, Executive Director
8. Interfaith Peace Builders (IFPB) - Jacob Pace, Communications and Advocacy
   Coordinator
9. International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) - Sara Kershnar and Mich Levy,
   International Co-Coordinators
10. Middle East Children’s Alliance - Ziad Abbas, Associate Director

The AMED minor was vetted at the departmental and college level and is fully supported by Ethnic
STudies Dean Kenneth Monteiro. University Librarian, Linda Bowles-Adarkwa has also expressed
support for AMED in a letter.5

The AMED Minor Proposal was circulated among various departments and programs at SFSU6
with overlapping curricular and intellectual interests and approaches. Many expressed excitement
and support for the AMED minor to complement curriculum offered by their departments and
programs and highlighted the value of an AMED minor to SFSU students. We have received
letters of support from:

1. Anthropology, Dr. James Quesada, Chair
2. Counseling, Dr. Graciela Orozco, Chair
3. Foreign Languages and Literatures, Dr. Mohammad Salama, Chair
4. International Relations, Dr. Sophie Clavier, Chair
5. Journalism, Dr. Cristina Azocar, Chair
6. Middle East and Islamic Studies Program, Dr. Lucia Volk, Co-Director
7. Sociology and Sexuality Studies, Dr. Edward J. McCaughan, Chair
8. Women and Gender Studies, Dr. Deborah Cohler, Chair

**VII. PROVISIONS FOR THE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

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5 See Appendix G for a letter of support from SFSU Librarian Linda Bowles-Adarkwa
6 See Appendix H for letters of support from SFSU Departments and Programs
7 See Appendix I for 2-year plan of course offerings and Appendix J for AMED Minor Courses Descriptions
The minor in Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas falls within the purview of the University’s Mission to provide curricula reflective of all dimensions of human diversity. The program will conduct regular assessment and implement adjustments to ensure that the learning objectives listed below are met. We will revise the minor degree appropriately to reflect any changes to graduation requirements made by the university. Students minoring in AMED Studies will be required to complete e-portfolios in which they compile one signature assignment in each of the three elective courses. Combined, the three signature assignments will allow AMED faculty to assess the extent to which Program Learning Objectives have been met:

I. Students will obtain a firm grasp of critical race, colonial, diaspora and transnational theories as they pertain to Arab and Muslim communities according to the following criteria:

1. Understand and critically analyze the complexities and overlapping categories of “Arab” and “Muslim” and why we bring them together into one area of study at this particular historical moment.
2. Identify the existence of and expound on the lived experiences of non-Arab ethnic communities in the Arab world (and its diasporas), such as Kurds, Amazigh, Armenians, Roma, Greek, and others.
3. Identify the existence and locations of and expound on the lived experiences of non-Muslims in Muslim-majority communities such as other monotheistic (Christianity and Judaism) and non-monotheistic (Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Baha’i, etc.) religions as well as non-religious communities and individuals.
4. Critically analyze the historical legacies of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism on Arab and Muslim communities, beyond superficial stereotypes and shallow knowledge acquired from TV sound-bites and biased mainstream media by:
   i. Obtaining a deeper understanding of AMED critique of hegemonic models of ethnicities that reinforce American exceptionalism and insisting instead on recognizing the indigenous communities as the natives of these lands;
   ii. Obtaining a deep understanding of the indivisibility of justice, in general, and in Arab and Muslim communities, in particular, by conceptually understanding that Islamophobia, Orientalism and anti-Arab discrimination are not instances of exceptionalism, but rather integral parts of the U.S. and global systemic racial and ethnic power structures; and
   iii. Viewing racial and ethnic discrimination as intricately linked to other structural inequalities on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, religion, age, ability, citizenship, to name a few.

II. Students will be prepared for careers in advocacy, community service, and the non-profit sector by:

1. Cultivating a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to principles of social and political justice through the academic program.
2. Perusing of opportunities to put theory into praxis through community service learning and internships.
3. Closely working with scholar/activist mentors to create foci on issues of most interest to them.
III. Students interested in pursuing graduate studies will be trained in rigorous research and writing skills through research proposal development, oral class presentations, etc.

In addition to internships and mentoring of student extracurricular activities on- and off-campus through which the last two objectives will be assessed, class assignments are designed to assess the first two class learning objectives. For example, students maybe be asked to write weekly journals to reflect on what they learn in class; critical memos to engage the material and sharpen their writing skills, or research papers to connect what they learn in the classroom with the experiences of Arab and Muslim communities in the SF Bay Area. Through continuous engagement, students are challenged over the use of stereotypes and generalizations until they become used to be specific regarding the communities they discuss or when Arabs and Muslims are interchangeably used or when the same “they” is used to refer to all brown and Black people. Students are also challenged to not prioritize justice for their own communities (however they define their communities) over justice for all. Class readings are designed so as not to ghettoize certain social justice struggles so that readings on gender and sexual justice, for instance, are not only assigned in one specific week but are spread throughout the syllabus thus making it difficult for students to draw simple and easy assumptions.

VIII. BULLETIN DESCRIPTION FOR THE MINOR

A. Name

Minor in Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies

Rabab Abdulhadi, Associate Professor, Race and Resistance Studies

Mohammed Salama, Associate Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Evren Savci, Assistant Professor, Women and Gender Studies

B. Program Scope

AMED is a multidisciplinary program that provides undergraduate student with a justice-centered analysis in which gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, citizenship, age, ability, and other structural inequalities are integral to the study of Arab and Muslim communities. The program will address the context in which these groups have existed and continue to develop in the current socio-political climate. This program is designed to bring together a wide range of areas including Arab/Middle East/Global Studies, Race/Ethnic Studies, and Critical Cultural Studies. Curricular focus areas will include: History, Identity, Politics; Pop, Culture, Literature, Art, Creativity, Activism; Gender, Sexuality, Race; Immigration and Citizenship; Comparative Studies with other Communities. AMED provides students with a non-traditional perspective on national and transnational positioning and resistances of Arab and Muslim communities.

C. Curriculum Proposal
The minor consists of 15 unit credits of study. Only one third of the credits or no more than two courses can be taken on the basis of credit/no credit. Students must maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average in minor courses. We have deliberately designed the AMED minor so as to enable students to simultaneously complete the minor requirements as well as their General Education requirements. Written declaration of the pursuit of the minor is not necessary prior to enrollment in any of its required or elective courses.

Students will be required to complete six units of required core courses and nine elective units. To fulfill elective requirements, students must choose at least one course [3 units] from each section; two courses [six units] must be upper division [300 or above]. Up to three elective units can be chosen from within or outside the College of Ethnic Studies, upon advisement and approval from program chair. The program of study is composed of:

**Required Core Courses: (6 Units)**

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<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Course Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>RRS 101</td>
<td>Introduction to Arab and Muslim Communities</td>
<td>(AERM, GP, SJ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRS 255</td>
<td>Voices in Exile: Arab and Muslim-Americans’ Civil Liberties</td>
<td>(GP, SJ)</td>
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**Electives: (9 units):**

Must choose one course [3 units] from each section; two courses [6 units] must be upper division of 300 or above.

**Section I: Arab and Muslim Histories, Identities, and Cultures (Humanities track)**

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<tr>
<td>RRS 224</td>
<td>Arab-American History, Community, Activism</td>
<td>(LD – Social Sciences; AERM, GP, SJ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRS 230</td>
<td>Muslims in America: Communities and Institutions</td>
<td>(AERM, SJ)</td>
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<td>RRS 240</td>
<td>All Power to the People: Comparative Freedom Movements of the “Sixties”</td>
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<td>RRS 305</td>
<td>Arab and Arab-American Art and Artists of the Diaspora</td>
<td>(UD-Arts and Hum, AERM, GP)</td>
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<td>RRS 312</td>
<td>Arab and Arab-American Women’s Literary Expressions</td>
<td>(UD-Arts and Hum; AERM, GP, SJ)</td>
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<td>RRS 315</td>
<td>Arab-American Immigration, Society and Culture</td>
<td>(AERM)</td>
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<td>ETHS/Arab 400</td>
<td>Islam and Fiction in English</td>
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<td>RRS 420</td>
<td>Post-Colonial Arab-American Identity: Memory &amp; Resistance</td>
<td>(UD-Social Sciences; AERM, SJ, GP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRS 430</td>
<td>Arab Representation in US Film &amp; Media</td>
<td>(UD-Social Sciences; AERM, GP, SJ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRS 450</td>
<td>Contemporary Arab, North African &amp; Arab-American Literature</td>
<td>(UD-Arts and Humanities; AERM, GP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETHS/ARAB 510</td>
<td>History of Arabic Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETHS/ARAB 511</td>
<td>History of Arabic Literature II: Modern Arabic Literature</td>
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**Section II: Mapping Arab and Muslim Communities: Comparative Ethnicities and Diasporas (Critical Race Track)**

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7 See Appendix I for 2-year plan of course offerings and Appendix J for AMED Minor Courses Descriptions. Overlays and/or Domains of Knowledge in red are in queue of respective GE Committee.
Section III: Gender & Sexuality Studies in Global South: Arab & Muslim Communities

- RRS 260  Introduction to Arab and Arab American Feminisms (GP, SJ)
- RRS 375  Queer Arabs in the US (UD-Social Sciences; SJ)
- WGS 565  Muslim Feminisms (AERM, GP)
- RRS/WGS 566  Gender & Modernity in Arab & Muslim Communities (AERM, GP, SJ)

Additional courses may be considered upon advisement.

Foreign Language Requirement: there will be no foreign language requirement

Community Service Learning: Choose any course listed in the minor with CSL option for 1 – 4 additional units.

IX. LIST OF APPENDICES

- A. Statement on Islamophobia from President Robert A. Corrigan (October 15, 2009)
- B. Testimonies and Letters of support from students who took AMED courses
- C. Results from “Survey of Student Demand in a Proposed New Minor in Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED)”
- D. AMED Minor Survey Comments by course in which they were conducted
- E. Complete list of consulting academic departments and colleges, organizations and individuals
- F. Letters of support from SFBA, International and US Scholars and Community Organizations
- G. Letter of support from SFSU Librarian Linda Bowles-Adarkwa
- H. Letters of support from SFSU Departments and Programs
- I. Roadmap: Two–year course offering
- J. AMED Minor Courses Descriptions