

LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
COMMUNICATION ARTS

# CONNECTIONs

ISSUE 3 2018-2019



[#ReinventCommunication](#)



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WE SAY IT'S STORYTELLING

# #REINVENT COMMUNICATION

B.A. in Television & Film - Minor in Audiovisual Production



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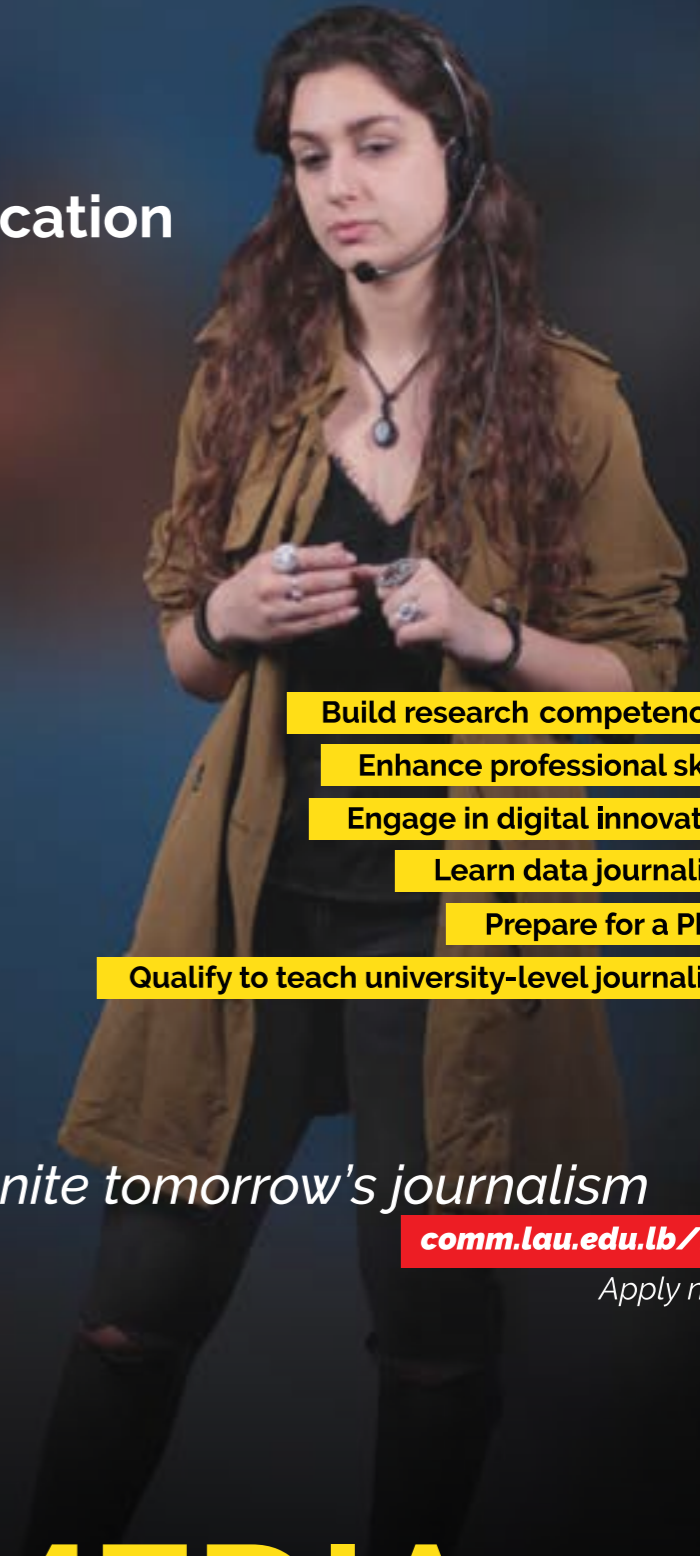
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Sally Farhat  
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Sara Khouwayer  
Maguie Hamzeh  
Zaynab Raya  
Jana Barakat  
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Wael Salem Halawi

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# President's Message



## Happy 50th Anniversary to the LAU Department of Communication Arts

"What do you think of the arts," asked a faculty member in 2004, during my interview for the position of President of LAU.

"We need the arts to keep us civilized and human," was my answer.

The faculty and staff, assembled for the interview, approved of my answer with a warm round of applause. Their response was not surprising for, in preparation for the interview, I had read extensively about LAU's commitment to the arts throughout its evolution.

Every time I read a new issue of CONNECTIONS magazine, I marvel at the many enriching innovations the Department of Communication Arts has brought to multimedia journalism, dance, music, communication arts, theater, and film and television. Moreover, the active social engagement the department has established with the community has been exemplary; and the community has responded to that engagement by attending, in large numbers, to the department's many outstanding productions. Further, its involvement in social media and its engagement with the community, in particular through its #ReinventCommunication, has been well received throughout the country.

Now more than ever, we need the arts not only to keep us civilized, but also human and humane. We live in a complex and globalized world that is increasingly driven by technological advances. We need to graduate students who fully understand and participate in the fourth industrial revolution, but we also need to graduate educated people, people who are human and humane, with true feelings and ability to enjoy the enriching gifts of the arts.

In LAU's dynamic educational context, communication, performing, studio, theater and critical arts provide a humanistic education that fosters a desire for knowledge, cultivates the skills for lifelong learning, and crosses the borders between the university and the community. Through the creativity and expressivity that the arts entail, individuals enrich their lives and the lives of others.

Moreover, learning any of the arts entails rigorous discipline. Commitment, focus, and hard work are essential. That discipline extends beyond the context of art to an individual's entire life.

Last, the arts at LAU teach us to explore the world around us, its systems of power and cultures, thus to examine events and ideas, and ultimately to understand why people think and act in certain ways. They teach us to be critical, to question, and to look beyond generalizations and assumptions, both about ourselves and about others.

In short, the arts at LAU are important in that they engage the expressive and performative aesthetics of human communication, music, theater, the visual arts, to provide pleasure, and grant opportunities to examine critically culture, self, and society, so as to live an informed life.

On behalf of the entire LAU family, I salute the Department of Communication Arts, administration, faculty, staff, and alumni, and congratulate them all on their remarkable achievements during the past fifty years. I look forward to reading the new issue of CONNECTIONS, and to the innovations the Department of Communication Arts has in store for us for the next 50 years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph G. Jabbra". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Dr. Joseph G. Jabbra**

President

Lebanese American University

# Dean's Message



## **Art, Communication, Revolution: LAU commemorates, celebrates and looks forward**

This op-ed is set against a backdrop of economic, political and social upheaval – a time of unrest for the majority of the Lebanese population where old mantras are revived and new ones emerge on the streets of major cities. Popular chants reverberate through city squares where strangers gather spontaneously night after night. Homemade slogans expressing political views are carved onto pieces of cardboard. Citizen journalists film and edit short videos featuring fellow protestors. Children are dressed up to model nationalistic views, and the elderly lend their weighty presence to the spirit of dissent.

Art is all around us – all the time. Art beckons us to reflect, to feel and to engage. In times of revolution, raw artistic expression becomes a mode of spontaneous significance – untamed, and ungoverned, at once personal and collective.

When art emerges from the real experiences of millions of vocal protestors, it moves us. And it engages us at the most instinctual, human levels. A popular chant: “Yalle We’ef ‘al balcon, nzal nehna shaabak hon” (you who are standing on the balcony, come down and join, we here are your people); a heartfelt slogan: “Al tareek mukfal, li siyanat al watan” (Road Closed for National Maintenance); the visual and audible recording of millions of people flying the national flag and singing the national anthem; all these artistic expressions communicate with us.

And when art reaches out to us, it behoves us to watch, to listen, to think, to feel – to act.

For the past 50 years the Lebanese American University has been shaping the field of communication arts in all its manifestations: journalism, performing arts, television and film productions. Our faculty and our students participate intellectually and physically in our country’s social, cultural, political and economic realities. Our mission has always been focused on enabling the most talented and creative youth to develop the critical mindset that is needed to engage with our increasingly fraught, complex and globalized world. At 50 years of being in the vanguard of communication and of art education in Lebanon, we take pride in the achievements of our alumni and we celebrate the radical interventions that our faculty have contributed to the continually evolving fields of communication arts.

It was Leo Tolstoy who first noted the powerful capacity of art to bring strangers together through its “infectiousness” and, as Susan Sontag later confirmed, by creating a “form of consciousness” between people. The communication arts are arguably in a constant state of revolution – an infectious revolution that feeds on the creativity and zeal of young people who reinvent the arts of communication through their resilience, their disruptive thinking and their ingenious responses to contemporary challenges. For the past 50 years our faculty and students have produced films, written, directed and performed dramas, engaged in social activism and participated in forms of consciousness-raising that engaged the public in productive dialogue, bringing people together in the spirit of artistic communication, to debate, to feel and to act.

This celebratory edition of Connections Magazine marks 50 years of communication arts at LAU. It commemorates, celebrates and looks forward towards a future that is certain to bring numerous challenges to our country and to its academic institutions, but it will also be a future where communication arts and all its disciplines will play an essential role in enabling us to engage constructively, creatively and resiliently with every opportunity.

## **Dr. Cathia Jenainati**

Dean  
School of Arts and Sciences

# Chairperson's Message



## **Reflecting on the Department of Communication Arts' 50 years**

What a glorious feeling it is to be part of this venerable department at the eve of its Golden Jubilee.

Reflecting back on 50 years of communication arts at LAU, one can only express gratitude and indebtedness to the many women and men who carried the department to this present day.

Starting as a small “communication-drama major” in 1970, the department now boasts four BA programs (communication, multimedia journalism, performing arts, and television and film), six minors, a host of study abroad programs, and for the first time in its history venturing into graduate studies, a Master’s in Multimedia JJournalism.

Just a few years ago, “the department mainly produced artistic performances and films,” according to a former dean. Today, communication arts faculty produce top-notch scientific research and attract sizable grants that rival in quality and quantity top departments at LAU, while our artistic output continues to broaden, expand, and stack up international awards.

Our students lead the way in all communication arts industries and specialties in Lebanon and the region, and many of them give back generously to their alma mater. They are the backbone of everything we do and the reason we celebrate our 50th anniversary next year.

And despite the gloomy circumstances that have enveloped Lebanon and the region, this half century of history reminds us that our beloved Department of Communication Arts has survived wars, invasions, and financial crises, and its students, staff, and faculty have been at the heart of this country’s rebuilding and rebirth—and spearheading its latest revival.

Perhaps it is fitting that the Lebanese uprising and economic crisis coincide with the start of our 50th anniversary preparations, if only to remind us of all the sacrifices and struggles this department has recorded in its glorious history, and the difficulties it has surmounted throughout the years.

Despite it all, communication arts at LAU survived, endured, and prospered.

As we lay the blueprints for the next 50 years of communication arts at LAU, we feel a grave responsibility to carry this legacy forth and steer this ship away from yet another storm and into the vast seas of communicative arts and sciences.

Despite it all, we will continue to #ReinventCommunication for yet another 50 years, and more.

## **Dr. Jad Melki**

Chairperson  
Department of Communication Arts

# Contents

CURRENT ISSUE 03 #ReinventCommunication

## DEGREES AND PROGRAMS

**16** 4 BAs / 5 Minors  
MA in Multimedia Journalism  
Study Abroad

## 50th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

**22** LAU Comm Arts department:  
Explaining the major shift  
FOB: Shy but love communication?  
From Reinventing Communication to  
Redefining Beauty  
FOB: The less you speak the more  
you Communicate  
How removing professionals from  
LAU film sets increased quality

## EVENTS

**32** Festival NEXT  
MDLAB 2019  
Salzburg  
Workshops

**44** Birds of September  
Taa Sakeena  
IWCS: Rite of Spring  
IWCS: Imagine Workshop & Concert  
Series  
IWCS: Christmas Carols  
International Dance Day Festival  
Did you know?  
IWCS: IMAGINE Summer Arts Camp

## STUDENTS

**60** Performing Arts Senior Projects  
Journalism Capstones  
Communication Capstones  
PFA Capstones  
TV/Film Capstones

**72** Campus Stories  
Social Issues  
FOB: Exams

**74** Student Diaries  
Salzburg  
Bel Hawa Sawa

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

**77** UNESCO 2019 Forum on Education for  
Sustainable Development and Global  
Citizenship

**78** Student Profiles  
Youssef Dghaidi  
Daily Question  
Meet the Students Behind the Topics  
in Magazine Class

**82** Student Awards  
Samir Kawas  
Ghada Youssef and Lama Hatoum  
Firas Itani  
Weam Al Dakheel

**84** Featured Alumni  
Awad Awad

## FACULTY AND STAFF

**88** Faculty Awards  
Joseph Khalifeh  
Seba Ali  
Soleiman Al Hajj

**90** New Faculty Q & A  
Gretchen King  
Soleiman Al Hajj

**94** Featured Faculty  
Joseph Khalifeh

**96** Faculty Activities  
Artistic Performances and  
Productions  
Research Conferences  
Lectures and Presentations  
Film Screenings and Festivals  
Workshops

**100** Staff Activities  
Fouad Anka  
Samer Beyhum

**102** Featured Staff  
Samer Beyhum



# Degrees & Programs



# 4 BAs and 5 Minors

## Multimedia Journalism

Bachelor of Arts and Minor

## Creative and Journalistic Writing

Minor

The BA prepares students for careers in print, broadcast, and multimedia news, offers courses at the forefront of the field and equips students for graduate studies.

The minor in Multimedia Journalism offers students the opportunity to learn basic journalism and theories in as few as two semesters.



## Television & Film

Bachelor of Art

## Audiovisual Production

Minor

The BA in Television and Film offers practical skills and conceptual knowledge and prepares students for work in the various production, creative, and managerial professions.

The Minor in Audiovisual Production introduces students to the profession of audio, video and film production and provides media production competencies.



## Performing Arts

Bachelor of Arts and Minor

The BA covers a wide range of skills, including acting, voice training, body movement, writing, technical skills, and crafting with lights. The program also prepares students for graduate studies.

The Minor in Performing Arts offers students basic skills and competencies in dance, music, and theater.



## Communication

Bachelor of Art

## Advertising & Public Relations

Minor

The BA in Communication covers three areas: Advertising and Public Relations, Social and Political Communication, and Interpersonal and Organizational Communication.

The Minor in Advertising and Public Relations introduces students to the role of communication in society and teaches them the main concepts, methods, and approaches used in the advertising and public relations professions.



# MA in Multimedia Journalism

## Multimedia Journalism

Master of Arts



The MA in Multimedia Journalism covers multimedia journalism, digital innovation, and media research and teaching. It offers both a research and a professional track. During the first year, students in both tracks take common courses, and based on their emphasis, proceed accordingly the following year.

Students in the professional track take additional professional courses and culminate with a journalistic project and professional internship. Those in the research track attend theoretical and research-oriented courses and conclude with a thesis and a research apprenticeship. Both tracks are required to complete a teaching apprenticeship that qualifies them to teach university-level media courses.

## Pursue Your MA in Multimedia Journalism for all the Right Reasons

By Fatima Al Mahmoud

Graduating is always accompanied with a sense of pride and accomplishment, but what follows is the pressure of planning out the next step. Should you pursue an MA degree immediately? Or should you immerse yourself in the job market first? Can you do both at the same time?

No matter what your next step will be, here are five reasons why you should pursue an MA in Multimedia Journalism at LAU.

### 1. Explore the horizons of your career path

A two-year program, the MA introduces all students to digital innovation and media research during their first year. Based on their emphasis, students then choose either a professional or research track and proceed accordingly.

### 2. Work on research, teaching, and digital production with your faculty

Aside from the significant tuition reductions, the graduate assistantships offered by the MA also provide students with an enriching working experience alongside their professors.

### 3. Qualify to teach university-level journalism

Opt for the teaching apprenticeship and get the chance to collaborate with the Department of Education for a co-taught course in media pedagogy.

### 4. Build a strong grounding in media research and theory

While Arab media remains an understudied field, the existing research on it comes from outside the region. By following the research track of the MA, you can regain control of the narrative and become one of the leading research scholars, after having built a strong media research grounding and a network of media professionals.

### 5. Reinvent communication

Once a communication arts student, always a pioneer on a mission to reinvent communication. Everything you learn and everything you give back to the department is part of your calling to help reinvent communication.

# Study Abroad



## Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change

- Salzburg, Austria

The Salzburg Academy is a three-week summer program in Salzburg, Austria, open to graduate and undergraduate students from all majors. Students discuss pressing global issues, produce multimedia modules, and engage in research and debates with 75 students and 15 faculty from across the globe, while exploring the exquisite Austrian nature and culture and Mozart's birthplace, Salzburg.



## The Danish School of Media and Journalism

- Aarhus, Denmark

At DMJX, one of the leading schools of journalism and media in Europe, students learn news reporting and digital media storytelling skills through hands-on courses with world-class instructors and professionals. They produce news stories, including documentaries and features, along with acquiring technical and editing skills, studying risk reporting, and expand their views on world politics in a culturally-rich setting.



## Stockton University

- New Jersey, USA

Stockton University offers three different programs for students with an interest in performing arts: BA in Dance with emphasis in Dance Performance, Dance Studio Operations, Dance Arts Administration, Dance Pre-Movement Sciences, Dance Theater/Dance, and Dance Pre-Physical Therapy Dance; a BA in Music with emphasis in Instrumental and Vocal Music Studies; and a BA in Theater with emphasis in Theater Administration, Theater Performance, and Theater Design and Production. The school fosters students' creativity as it aims at raising awareness on the importance of arts. Studying arts develops students' critical thinking skills and allows them to function better in a team.



## Hogeschool University of Applied Sciences

- Utrecht, The Netherlands

LAU's study abroad program has a newly establish exchange agreement with HU of Applied Sciences where students from both universities trade places for an entire semester. The exchange is part of the intensive "Europe in the World" program, where 24 students come together to report on topics that include culture and identity in Europe, its relationship with developing countries, and development of the European Union, among others. The university's campus, Utrecht Science Park, is located on the outskirts of Utrecht, in the center of The Netherlands.



**50th**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
**SPECIAL**

# LAU's Department of Communication Arts: Explaining the Major Shift

by Rana Tabbara

The Department of Communication Arts at LAU launched in 1972, making LAU the second department to embark in the communications field right after the Lebanese University. Although it started as a pioneer program among similar departments in private universities around Lebanon, the department had to overcome several obstacles in order to become what it is today.

According to the Chairperson Jad Melki, PhD, Lebanese and regional communication arts programs posed as competition to LAU's program in the past 20 years. On a larger scale, the media industry and communication technologies faced major challenges, internal disputes persisted in Lebanon and curricular stagnations were evident.

"All these factors held back many communication arts programs in general and challenged the department's historical position in particular," clarified Melki. "However, this position of national leadership and regional pre-eminence can be regained in three to four years and ultimately extend to achieve global influence in five to six years."

Inspired by LAU's emblem, the Phoenicians who contributed to the world by reinventing the alphabets, the Department of Communication Arts aims to become the vessel of passionate minds that seek to explore, defy, create, and reinvent the art vocation and discipline of communication.

The leadership thus adopted new ways to reinvent their education and came up with four major tenants: theory and practice, critical inquiry, creativity, and research. The tenants aim to develop civically engaged and informed citizens, who are able to reflect on local and universal issues. Through them the department also strives to graduate scholars, art makers, and professionals in the field.

## Theory and Practice

A study published in Journalism and Media about media studies in Lebanon exhibits how universities across the country adopt either a purely theoretical framework or a practical one that relies on locally focused issues with no international edge. According to the study, universities mainly focus on either Arabic or English languages when it comes to news writing and reporting, which is considered exclusive.

Taking the prior into consideration, the Department of Communication Arts at LAU made sure in its new curricula to balance both languages and give them equal importance in writing and reporting.

Being one of the tenants, theory, which is understanding human knowledge, is important to the department but needs to be complemented by actual field experience. This is why to get their degrees students are required to take an internship course and do a capstone project.

## Critical Inquiry

To help students become self-sufficient, the leadership of the department believes that critical inquiry is crucial.

"At the end of the day it is not my goal to teach a student how to use adobe premiere because in the next few years adobe could be outdated. My goal is to have the student be able to learn it himself with very minimal guidance," remarked Melki. "I'll give them the basics and then they will need to advance themselves."

Critical thinking is taught through contextualizing everything within politics, culture, economy, technology and others. Student should be able to deconstruct any image they get, sound they hear, and message they receive. Students should also be able to see the message within a very complex

context. What are the political pressures that led to the creation of this message, what are the economic factors that led to the construction of this message, and what other technological aspects were used.

## Creativity

Given the space they need to create productions, films, multimedia features and campaigns, students are able to broaden their horizon and get creative.

Some works of creativity include: Casino El Ons, most packed play for the year 2018 by the department; Brine, a student and alumni production that received the highest number of awards from the department itself and other film festivals; Chat City, the first live streaming done solely by journalism students at LAU; and Maram's public relations campaign that won the best community service award at the School of Arts and Sciences fair.

According to communication undergraduate, Dima Fayad, the Department of Communication Arts pushed the Maram PR group to produce a campaign that earned its buzz on campus.

"To encourage us the department gave our team all the resources we needed to conduct a well-established campaign," said Fayad gratefully. "We had the space we needed to do a panel and a booth, the tech support we asked for, and our finances were also covered by the department."

More to that, Samer Beyhum, TV/Film studio technician at the department, explained that the university makes sure to always keep its students updated with the technological advancements. New auxiliaries are made available whenever possible and current ones include; an editing lab, a Mac lab, DSLR cameras, 360 technology, lights and sound equipment, an amphitheater, and a studio.

These technological innovations and utilities were not always available throughout the department's history. During alumnus Rakan Mayasi's visit to LAU's Department of Communication Arts he mentioned: "When I was at LAU our mentors gave us all the space to play with the humble equipment."

"However, looking at the equipment existing now, they are beyond humble and I'm even shocked with the cameras sitting on the shelves, they are much better," said Mayasi with pride.

## Research

Besides the fact that some LAU Communication Arts faculty members are published researchers, and besides that the media research methods course offered is a core course in the department, students are encouraged to contribute in faculty research and/or conduct their own.

Now an alumna, Fatima Al-Mahmoud was one of the students who worked with Assistant Professor of Multimedia Journalism Claudia Kozman, PhD, in her research studies.

According to the Al-Mahmoud, it is essential that media students get introduced to research, as it helps solidify their work and grant them a more credible background in what they plan to do.

"Working with Dr. Kozman on research helped me identify and expand on an interest I had already discovered during the Media Research Methods class," described Al-Mahmoud. "It helped me envision where I see myself headed with respect to my graduate studies and career in general."

## Reinvent Communication

For a long time, media education wasn't innovating. It was common to teach the students how to write for a newspaper or how to broadcast for radio and TV. But that was about all.

Sticking to tradition is important in many fields of education such as architecture, history, and psychology, but in the media sticking to traditional methods is trapping the students in the past. Very few of the younger generation read newspapers, or turn

on the TV at home. The media industry has moved forward, and so should universities.

"We came and said we are not going to settle for traditional education, we are going to be ahead of the curve by not only waiting to deal with what is happening around the world but trying to be ahead of it through inventing it," Melki said. "The best way to figure out what's going to happen in the future is to invent it."

Through balancing theory, research, critical thinking, professional practice, creativity and managing the reputation of LAU as a top university, students can take advantage of all of that and place themselves ahead of any competition in the region and in many cases any competition in the world.

*"During my education, I had the opportunity to be taught by professors who give their students the space they need to explore and experiment with material and projects. The most effective piece of information I learned at LAU was that if you want to become a good filmmaker you should train on all the positions within the field; from sound to lights, camera, editing, scriptwriting and directing."*

- Rakan Mayasi

*"The teaching approach endorsed by the department allowed us to become leaders but not any type of leaders, we are leaders of change," said Al Dakheel, when asked about the background to her success story. "From what I hear, they are still holding and even improving their legacy."*

*"My educational experience in LAU has impacted my life in so many ways. LAU is a piece of me and has contributed in shaping the person I am today."*

- Weam Al Dakheel



Besides being famous Arabs, what do these three renowned figures have in common? To answer that, let's have a glimpse at their background and get to know them.

Weam Al Dakheel graduated from LAU with a degree in Communication Arts with an emphasis in Journalism. In September 2018, Dakheel became the first woman to anchor prime time news in Saudi Arabia's television. In a country undergoing transformation by granting women seats at the table, Al Dakheel earned her station in the forefront of female empowerment. Later in December, the Saudi-Arabian broadcaster was recognized as the Media Personality of the Year by Enterprise Agility Awards 2018.

Al Dakheel attributes her success to the quality of education she received from LAU's Communication Arts Department.

"My educational experience in LAU has impacted my life in so many ways," recalled Al Dakheel. "LAU is a piece of me and has contributed in shaping the person I am today."



Rakan Mayasi graduated from LAU with a degree in Communication Arts with an emphasis in TV and Film. Mayasi wrote and directed three independent short films in which his previous short *Roubama* was selected for Locarno Film Festival and his latest short *Bonbone* had its world premiere at the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival. *Bonbone* led success to the inspired Palestinian filmmaker, as it won the Golden Egg for Best Short Film in Kusrendorf Festival.

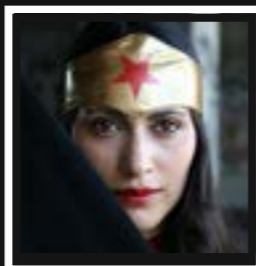
According to the award-winning director, it takes practice and experimentation to become a good filmmaker.

"During my education, I had the opportunity to be taught by professors who give their students the space they need to explore and experiment with material and projects," acknowledged Mayasi. "The most effective piece of information I learned at LAU was that if you want to become a good filmmaker you should train on all the positions within the field; from sound to lights, camera, editing, scriptwriting and directing."



Also a Communication Arts graduate from LAU, Rana Alamuddin excelled in acting to become a familiar face in Hollywood. The Lebanese alumna starred in a soap opera titled *The Young and the Restless*, and acted in movies such as; *Bosta*, *Recycling Flo*, *CSI: Miami* and *Sex and the City 2*.

Alamuddin is also a cultural ambassador to Levantine Cultural Center, a foundation based in LA that aims to shatter Middle Eastern stereotypes in the US through arts and media. The Hollywood actress has also started a blog in 2018 to voice out women's thoughts on the journey of self-realization in the Arab region.



That is right; the three media pioneers share the same educational background. They evidently hold a degree identical to yours if you graduated from LAU Communication Arts' program prior to 2016, but a degree analogous to it if you are a registered student or an alumnus/alumna who graduated 2017 and after.

With the launch of Strategic Plan 2017-2022, students now have the opportunity to choose among four majors instead of having to sign up to one program.

While many acknowledge that the major shift happened for the "greater good," some do not know what factors brought up the shift and how it affect the quality of education.

# From Reinventing Communication to Redefining Beauty

by Jana Barakat

She spends hours in front of the mirror staring at herself from head to toe.

"Only if I were thinner, taller, beautiful, and attractive," she whispers to herself.

She paints herself with makeup, wears heels that ache her feet to death, and clothes herself with layers of corset until she believes that she is within the standards that allow her to be part of the beauty pageant contest.

Not anymore.

Lebanon's beauty contest "Miss Lebanon 2018," collaborated with the Lebanese American University's various departments to advance the contest.

LAU played a role in altering the traditional standards of beauty contest and to slightly shift its focus away from physical appearance.

The Department of Communication Arts had one goal throughout the process: to redefine beauty.

Standing on stage, going live on TV, and being in front of a panel of professionals for the first time, are the main reasons behind Miss Lebanon contestants' confusion and nervousness during the contest. The Department of Communication Arts intervened to empower the participants.

The contestants were trained by the department's faculty and students on how to represent themselves in the right way.

Assistant Professor of Dance and Associate Chair of the department Nadra Assaf, PhD, explained that "the body is not the brain's car," rather the brain and the body are connected, and one cannot function without the other.

An intelligent body is a body that stands firm and is alert to everything that is happening in the surrounding. "You should be in control of your body," Assaf explained as she stood up and



laid her back at the door to show how standing with your shoulders straight and head up helps you stand your height.

Aside from learning how to stand with confidence, pageants were trained to answer questions through three different stages.

In the first stage, participants worked in pairs. Each contestant asked her partner one of 25 questions.

The second stage was more serious. Pageants were taken to the TV Studio. This allowed them to experience camera pressure. They had three questions to answer.

The final stage involved a panel. Participants stood in front of the faculty members, who acted as panelists and posed random questions for each of them.

Aside from building their self-confidence, Melki said that the process of preparing participants on how to present themselves and communicate aids in breaking the stereotype present in people's minds about pageants.

Aside from their role in training, the LAU community discussed with MTV Lebanon, the TV station that was hosting the show in 2018, the possibility of either eliminating the bathing suit

section or at least, having the question section before.

"Redefining beauty is a form of looking beyond the physicality of a woman's body," as Lina AbiRafeh, PhD, executive director of the Arab Institute for Women (AiW), said.

The contestants, however, had a different opinion on the subject believing that the bathing suit section to be part of gender equality.

Chloe Abi Zeid, a contestant and a current LAU student, emphasized that "if it's fine for Mr. Lebanon's contestants to walk in a swimsuit, why wouldn't this be fine for Miss Lebanon's contestants? Wouldn't this be promoting gender inequality?"

The AiW gave lectures on the subject. The team challenged these preconceived ideas and trained the contestant to be aware of gender inequality.

"Taking on the beauty industry is a feminist undertaking," AbiRafeh said. Some of the participants weren't aware of inequalities present in the Lebanese society between men and women as AbiRafeh stated, but they were influenced by what they learned in the training session. Others have been feminists and had an idea about gender inequality.

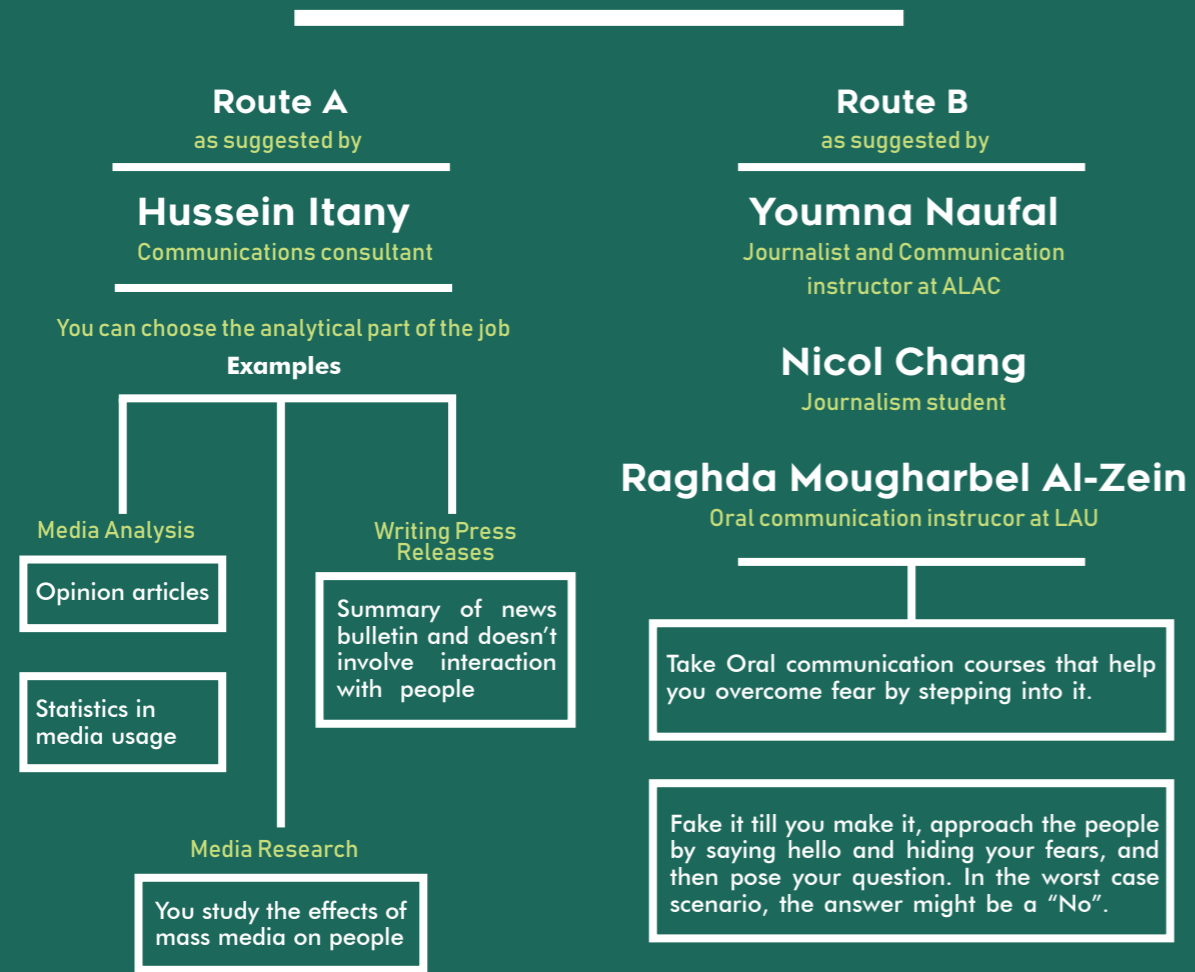
# Shy but Love Communication? We Have a Solution!

by Jana Barakat

You're backstage and about to stand in front of an audience. You're shivering and sweating, thinking whether you are prepared enough and ready to approach people with your questions or not. While many dark thoughts visit your head, you start to ask: "How and when will I overcome my shyness?"

Interviewing, stage frights, and over-thinking when interacting with people might scare students away from the "communication" arts department. Communication experts however, believe shyness is just a virtual wall that can be broken, and the fact that shyness and communication majors don't intertwine is just another myth.

If you are not convinced yet, here are some routes that exhibit how you can work in communication and still survive:



Shyness shouldn't be considered as an obstacle that prevents you from having an education in the communication arts field. Instead, you should challenge yourself and break those walls to succeed. As Chang states in her article "if you're passionate about communication, then pursue that to the best of your ability, whether you're the loudest in the room, or the one escaping the noise."

# The Less you Speak, the More you Communicate!

by Maria Al Khoury

Students are speaking with fluency and self-confidence, adding freedom and a sense of humor to their conversations. They are communicating with people around them as if there are no barriers. Then, all of a sudden, they face a block...a situation where they feel unable to catch up or understand.

Why does this happen? Because they were not listening well. They put all the effort on talking, forgetting that communication is not only about speaking.

Effective communication depends on factors that go beyond speaking, such as using non-verbal communication and the ability to listen to others.

According to communication specialists, these factors can make for a better communicator.

Family communication consultant Dr. Khaled Nasser believes 70 to 80 percent of the understanding in communication is nonverbal and not verbal. What makes one a good communicator? It's being a good listener, Nasser says.

"And the base of being a good listener," he adds, "is putting yourself in the other person's shoes."

Here are some tips from A and B to help you better navigate the communication process, as suggested by communication instructors at LAU, Dr. Raed Mohsen and Dr. Khaled Nasser.

## Your communication can also be non-verbal

- Use correct facial expression
- Maintain eye contact
- Be confident
- Be aware of appearance and looks
- Use body language and correct body posture
- Be natural and be yourself

## Good Listening makes for a great communicator!

How can one be a good listener?

- Ask questions
- Pay attention
- Don't prepare responses
- Mentally paraphrase what the other person is saying to stay focused
- Don't jump to conclusions
- Look at the other person and show respect

# Removing Professionals from LAU: How Film Sets Improved in Quality

by Steffen Neupert

What looks like something out of an amusement park is being set up at LAU. A black set of steel tracks is placed on wooden wedges, and on top of it is an elaborate cart with two small chairs and a camera. While passing students do their best not to trip over the rails, two boys are trying to position the camera just right, pointing it towards a nervously giggling girl. In a few moments she is going to walk along the rail, followed by the cart, in order to create a smooth flowing shot of her. This represents behind the scenes from an LAU movie production set. But, had this been just three years ago, you might not have found any giggling first-time actresses or students tinkering with high-end camera equipment.

Back then, insecurity, a scarcity of equipment, and a lack of technical training pushed LAU's film students to spend hundreds or even thousands of dollars on hiring both professional crews and camera equipment for their assignments.

Now, however, after a combined faculty effort, that tendency is all but gone – and rather paradoxically, removing professionals from LAU film sets has dramatically improved the quality of productions.

According to Sarah Kaskas, MFA, assistant professor of film at the Department of Communication Arts at LAU, the better films are a result of more creative freedom. Even though students often achieved good technical value from paying for the production

of their films, the hired cameramen, sound technicians, and actors often dominated film sets, impairing the directing students' creativity.

"The esthetics could be good with the outside crews, but I also had students who paid a lot of money and came back with something that wasn't very attractive," she explained. "And not spending money on an outside crew improves your own creativity of how the story is presented in terms of story-telling."

Iyad Tchelebi, LAU television and film alumnus, explained that students also realize that the former norm of them paying to produce projects was problematic. He agrees that the high prices paid for professionals were no guarantee for quality of content.

"People used to pay around 500 dollars to hire crew because they wanted the best they could afford. But because of bad directing, the films weren't even that good," he said.

## Equipment, Training, and Confidence

Kaskas believes that the tendency for her students to seek professional help was rooted in them feeling that they did not have enough hands-on experience in handling film equipment – getting the right shot from the right angle with the right lighting.

"It was mostly a matter of insecurity from the students' side. They thought the professionals might know more and have more creative input as well," she said.

According to Jad Melki, PhD, chairperson of the Department of Communication Arts at LAU, students had good reason to feel insecure. He says that the department was suffering from a severe lack of technical training, lack of trust between students, and a lack of equipment. But as he and other LAU faculty started to combat those problems, the results were almost instant.

"When we started this process about three years ago, we had just one film-student who won an award," Melki explained. "The year after we had a handful, and last year we had more than ten students who won awards."

## Reforming the Department of Communication Arts

A few years ago, all of this changed as faculty and staff realized the severity of the problem and decided to act – both investing in new equipment, intensifying training in cinematography, and pushing students to work with each other on their film sets.

"The biggest move we did was to create an equipment and facilities committee, consisting of faculty, key staff, and students. We created a list of about a million dollars' worth of equipment, prioritized it, divided it over several years, and started buying it," Melki said.

By now, LAU boasts an impressive stock of cinematic cameras, dollies, professional light, sound equipment, and powerful editing stations – all available for students to use for their film projects free of charge. But the new, expensive equipment was worth nothing. If students did not know how to use it.

Until two years ago, all cinematographic training had been incorporated into other courses where it slowly eroded because it competed for attention with more artistic parts of the curriculum. This problem, however, was solved by the implementation of mandatory workshops outside of class, specifically teaching all the technical skills needed in filmmaking.

"Everything just fell on top of each other," Kaskas said. "We got the new equipment, and we couldn't just give them to students who couldn't use them. Therefore, we created boot camps that also gave them more confidence, and they passed that on to other students."

The initiative was a success, and according to Samer Beyhum, TV/film studio technician in the Department of Communication Arts, it dramatically increased the technical abilities of students – even pushing them ahead of older and more experienced film makers.

"One of the things the boot camps do is that the students are thrown directly into the swimming pool of fire. Now we have students in their second semester who know as much technically as our seniors, even though they don't have as much experience," he said.

Buying the new equipment came with a need to make sure that it is properly taken care of. According to Beyhum, that led to a new rule in the department, further nudging students to work with each other instead of professionals on their projects in order to take advantage of the available gear.

"If you want to use the heavy equipment we have, you have to ensure that the main crew you have are LAU students, who are qualified to use them," Beyhum said.

## Better Films and Better Learning

The boot camps, the new rules and the ambitious investments gave students the tools and skills they

needed, but also helped create a sense of community. According to Melki, students now realize the pool of skills available amongst their colleagues and help each other with their projects.

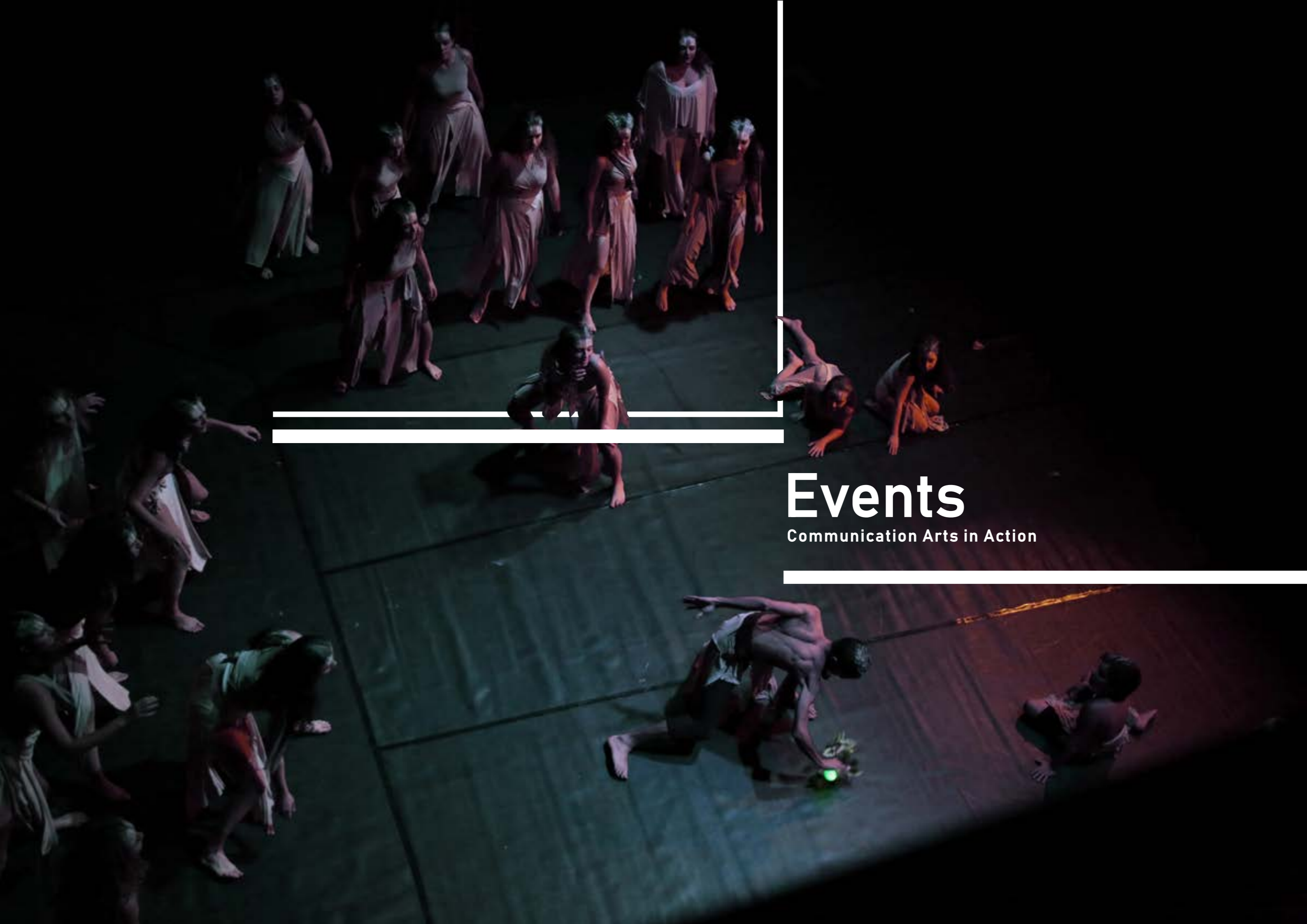
"Now the students know what they are doing, and they know that they can rely on each other for different aspects of the process. It is a sense of confidence, and students have colleagues they know they can trust," Melki explained.

The improvement of both quality and community have not missed the attention of students themselves. Iyad Tchelebi has also noticed a change, not only in the availability of gear but also, in the dynamic of how students cooperate.

"We have way more equipment now. We were able to shoot better quality in terms of film, people want to work together, and the scripts are improving. I think it is because of the program. The more workshops we do, the more students are pushed to improve," he said.

According to Kaskas, the more skilled, better equipped and more cooperative students are not only producing better films on a much slimmer budget, they are also better, more active and more curious learners.

"Students are realizing that there is a lot of talent in them and that they can work to their full potential on their own. They're actually learning more this way. There is an extra initiative among the students to learn how to do stuff, and I think that is a beautiful thing," she said.



# Events

Communication Arts in Action



# Festival NEXT 2019: A Reinvented Experience

by Sally Farhat and Rana Tabbara

A different vibe cloaked LAU's Beirut campus between March 19 and March 22. Crowds glided from one event to another, while music symphonies traveled the vacuum. Welcome to Festival NEXT 2019.

The Department of Communication Arts at LAU hosted the third edition of Festival NEXT.

Bringing together more than 30 students from different majors within the department, the aim of the event was to connect all strands of communication in a multidisciplinary fiesta.

#Scanthecode campaign was launched to engage LAU students, faculty and staff from inside and outside the department. The ultimate goal was to globalize the LAU world and bring all of its people together. "LAU gave me so much, and it was time to give back," Awad Awad, LAU alumnus and artistic director of Festival NEXT, said. "The festival

brought the department's students together. Their unity reinvented this year's incorporated events and invited people from all over the campus and the outside world to stop and check what the department is up to."

In collaboration with the Arab Institute for Women and the Alumni Relations Office at LAU, the Beirut campus was transformed into a stage for art expression. Workshops, plays, performances, and screenings were dispersed over a five-day period, ensuring that anyone and everyone can participate.

"Although I am a political science student, I enjoy events related to art and Festival NEXT was a great platform for all kinds of arts," Joelle Oneissi, political science student at LAU, said. "It was a week full of energy and positive vibes all around the campus. The festival reminded me of how crucial it is to integrate arts in our lives."

The interdisciplinary annual space for innovative, avant-garde, and experimental performing and communicative arts honored in its opening ceremony the Grand Dame of Theater Nidal Al Achkar.

"I would like to thank the president of LAU Joseph Jabbara who decided to honor me this year. I would also like to thank all of the people who contributed to this honor," Al Achkar said.

The honoring incorporated the screening of *A Workshop and Five Tales with Nidal Al Achkar*, a film written and directed by Sabine El Chamaa in collaboration with Nidal Al Achkar and Lina Abyad. The screening was followed by a play titled *Tawlifet Nidal*, directed by Awad and Amr Selim.

"On behalf of my colleagues at LAU, on behalf of the school of arts and sciences, on behalf of the deans, I'd like to express our most sincere wishes to Nidal," said Dr. Jabbara. "She is a

'cultural provocateur' by excellence, she worked hard with John Linwood who had an incredible influence as well as on her life. She is the grand dame of the Lebanese theater. She is the legendary Nidal Al Achkar."

Prior to the honorary ceremony, attendees witnessed the launch of CONNECTIONS' second edition. The launch included writing workshops, food sponsors and vendors, along with live performances, a fashion show, and a web TV produced by the team for Festival NEXT.

"We broke the stereotype of the arts students being 'lazy people that do nothing,' we showed them that we are unstoppable," said Yasmeen Sakka, TV and Film alumna and model in the fashion show. "The festival made me want to get involved more in the department, and I realized that even people from other departments were interested."

Concluding its first day with an Homage to the Rahbani Brothers, directed by Joseph Khalifeh, Festival NEXT's following days were as vibrant. Starting at 10 a.m. and ending at 10

p.m., the 12-hour events provided students the opportunity to experiment with diverse forms of performing arts or learn new topics through the presented workshops.

"I attended Festival NEXT because it had a well-organized schedule and covered a variety of topics," Raneem Diab, international affairs and legal studies student at LAU, said. "One event following the other, Festival NEXT exceeded my expectations, and it was more than worth it."

The festival also included three political shows that heated up the day with mind-stimulating debates.

"Politics is your life. One has to see it the good way and try to see what could be proposed specifically coming from youth like you," said Misbah Al-Ahdab, former Lebanese MP and Festival NEXT's guest speaker. "Bravo for the festival, these political discussions are important especially in universities. I always give priority to sit with youth and debate with them because it is important. The festival provided this platform for the discussion, I congratulate them."

Tribute to Communication Arts alumna Maya Mikdashi, PhD, who is an assistant professor in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University.

Mikdashi was honored with the Alumni Award, which falls this year under the theme of "Pioneers in Communication Arts."

"I take this award as an opportunity to keep forwarding the values of arts, how we think, and how we practice life," Mikdashi said in her speech.

Building on the history of LAU's International University Theater Festival and continuing its legacy, the Department of Communication Arts reinvented Festival NEXT. The festival aims to encompass all strands of communication and connect the department and university with Lebanese and Arab schools, universities, performing artists and communication professionals. Festival NEXT is a visionary fusion and artistic outlet that offers opportunities to students and pre-professionals to work with established artists through workshops, lectures, productions, and performances.

*"LAU gave me so much, and it was time to give back. The festival brought the department's students together. Their unity reinvented this year's incorporated events and invited people from all over the campus and the outside world to stop and check what the department is up to."*

- Awad Awad



# Testimonials

## Ghaida Hreiby

Communication student at LAU  
Social Media Team for Festival NEXT

The experience of working in Festival Next is priceless. It was very eye opening to me and it made me realize how dynamic the communication arts department can be. In only one week, we were able to celebrate all kinds of arts and gather students from different majors at LAU. It was one of the best experiences I encountered.

## Brianna Matzke

Assistant Professor of Music  
at Wilmington College  
Pianist in The Rite of Spring

It's fantastic, I've been so impressed with how this festival has all been created, and I'm impressed that it's so diverse with not only artistic disciplines and the viewpoints that are presented there but diverse in terms of gender and religion and nationality.

## Nadra Assaf, PhD

Assistant Professor & Associate Chair  
at the Department of Communication  
Arts at LAU  
Co-Initiator of the First Edition of Festival NEXT

I think Festival NEXT this year in its third edition has so far been the best. As somebody who was the initiator of the first edition with Amr Selim, I can say that this year really has outdone all of our expectations so I'm really happy and I'm extremely proud of all our students because I think if it wasn't for them we wouldn't be here.

## Melissa Samaha

Television & Film student at LAU  
Technician for the Live Stream and Content  
Creator for CONNECTIONS

Festival NEXT gave me the chance to work on my skills and develop them. It allows me to work with others and build more connections.

## Raissa Frangie

Television & Film student at LAU  
Live Crew for CONNECTIONS TV

It's a great opportunity to be able to be engaged in this festival because it's an experience that will help me grow and learn a lot.

## Yasmine Darwish

Business student at LAU  
Photographer at Festival NEXT

I've always been into videography and photography and this festival gives me the chance to work in both of these areas.

## Pascale Jallouf

Performing Arts student at LAU  
Performer of Toute Toute Ma Khilsit El Hatoute

Festival NEXT is a great platform for us to showcase our art. It doesn't limit us in the form of our art or content. It's open to new ideas, expressions, and to delivering messages.

## Leen Alkhatib

Marketing student at LAU  
Attendant of Festival NEXT

I believe that Festival NEXT is one of the most prominent and outstanding initiatives that LAU has implemented throughout the year. It's such a golden and eye-opening opportunity to witness a splendid wide range of artistic works done by the innovative Communication Arts department at LAU, varying between musical concerts, theatrical plays, discussion panels and much more. I can't but state that this event was such a success to the department, LAU students, and the university as a whole. Entertainment, knowledge, and networking were all fruitful outcomes of the festival.

## Celine Fattouh

Psychology student at LAU  
Attendant of Festival NEXT

A well-organized, fun and exciting event. As a first year LAU student, I got to explore lots of things through this festival, which hosted people from different fields to tackle social, economic and political issues. About the fun part, I was surprised by the shows that took place and were played by youth in general, and students in particular. Moreover, what I enjoyed the most was the shows which discussed many issues from our daily lives.

## Chris Harris, PhD

Associate Professor of Communication  
at Nevada State College  
Lecturer at Festival NEXT

I very much enjoyed the festival events I attended. It was cool to see how you guys think about media and art in your culture/nation. Also loved seeing students that I had the privilege of working with at Salzburg doing their thing and enjoying the fruits of their labor. I gave a brief presentation in Dr. Claudia Kozman's class. But my role was really just an observer in terms of the festival. Was an awesome experience and I feel very fortunate that I was able to attend.

## Abu Hashem Al Moussawi

Graduate student at LAU  
The Host of the Talk Show

The LAU community is split according to majors, and this festival helped different students from different majors unite at the fine arts tent. We started seeing business students at the fine arts building because they are interested in the festival, and we saw fine arts students at the BB area inviting students to the festival.

## Abdullah Malaeb

Political Science and International  
Affairs student at LAU  
Actor for Tawlifet Nidal

The festival was one of its kind. It allowed LAU students to open up to various cultures, debatable topics, and respected Lebanese personnel. My experience has allowed me to notice the importance of honoring the legacy of great people such as Nidal Al Ashkar who transcended the theater into a platform that empowers people, challenges politicians, and engages the youth in different societal battles that we should address.

# Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut: Returns with a New Focus

by Maria Al Khoury

Aiming to pave the way for media professionals to disseminate media and digital literacy knowledge in the MENA region, the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB) returned in its 7th edition with a new mission.

With guidance of faculty members from LAU, media and education professionals, along with ministry representatives from different Arab and non-Arab countries, spent 10 days learning about media and digital literacy. Among them, faculty participants undertook additional training focused on media pedagogy, which included syllabus and curricula development.

By the end of the two-week training, participating faculty took home their own syllabi that they developed during the program.

"The academy works with local individuals, local experts, and local academics to help them develop what they believe would best serve their own communities and societies," said Jad Melki, director of MDLAB, associate professor of journalism and media studies, and chairperson of the Department of Communication Arts.

According to Hend Abdelmotagally, assistant lecturer at Cairo University and participant at MDLAB, the syllabus tells students what they need to know and provides them with grading breakdowns to keep them in the know about details, allowing them to prioritize what needs to be focused on.

"It is a waste of students' efforts without the rubrics," she said. "This training evolves both the learning and the teaching of media."

Originally two universities, today, more than 50 universities and dozens of schools offer media literacy courses or incorporate media literacy modules into their curricula as a result of MDLAB.

Melki described the process as a "setting for different opinions and knowledge."

According to him, it is like "a dialogue where participants and LAU faculty, altogether put efforts to change and benefit the society."

During summer 2019, MDLAB brought together 84 faculty, students, journalists, and activists from around the world to build expertise in media literacy; empower women, the marginalized, and the youth; combat fake news and media terrorism; and spread digital security in one intensive week.

The sessions featured guest speakers, such as Daniel Drennan ElAwar from Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Tanja Mayer from Free Berlin University, Kouross Esmaeli from the American University of Beirut, along with others.

"It is enriching that we have all these professionals in one place because it helps me to get to know points of view that are not Bulgarian or German or European," said Ina Georgiva, journalism and media studies student at the Free University of Berlin.

Under the patronage of the Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon Emmanuelle Lamoureux and British Ambassador to Lebanon Chris Rampling, and in the presence of the Executive Director of the Samir Kassir Foundation Ayman Mhanna, the opening ceremony entailed a panel discussion on the role of media digital literacy in promoting press freedom and social justice.

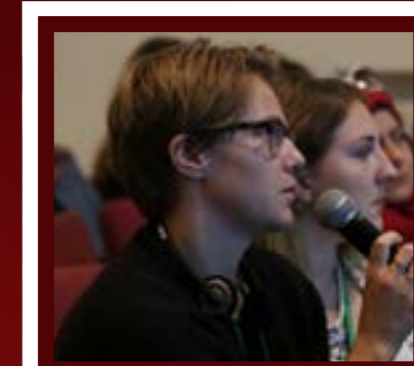
"Digital literacy is extremely important at a time when we see oppressed freedoms, as well as media literacy, which is famous for protecting communities and flourishing societies," Lamoureux said. "We, as a country [Canada], believe that media expression is essential for the protection of democratic societies and human rights."

The academy hosted lectures on the communication design of modern terrorism (ISIS media strategy) on its fourth day and a panel discussion on media, minorities, and the marginalized on its sixth day. Additionally, a chamber music concert from Boston took place on the academy's fifth day.

Alongside lectures and panels, the student participants worked on their final projects while the faculty participants worked on their curricula.

MDLAB concluded on June 24 with presentations of projects and distribution of certificates.

Run by faculty, staff and students, this academy is organized by LAU's Institute of Media Research and Training (IMRT) and sponsored by the Bosch Foundation, Deutsche Welle Academy, the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD, the European Union, and UNESCO. The European Union funded and UNESCO implemented "Youth Empowerment" project represents a timely response to promoting the safe and ethical use of media and the internet. The project works to advance Media Information Literacy (MIL) as a holistic response to fostering the informed use, consumption and production of media and internet among youth in Jordan. This initiative is being carried out in partnership with the Minister of State for Media Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the media community and civil society in Jordan.



*"I am really excited to be here because I think that the topic of media literacy is very important in the Arab world context. It is also enriching that we have all these professionals and different perspectives in one place because it helps me to get to know points of view that are not Bulgarian or German or European."*

- Ina Georgiva



# Salzburg Academy: Revealing an Experience

by Mira Kobeissi

If you've ever met any student who has previously participated in the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, then you've probably heard them say: "If only I could, I would do it all over again."

While stories about the academy's unforgettable moments became known for those who haven't experienced Salzburg yet, the concept of the three-week program remains vague.

The Salzburg Academy was first initiated when Nazi authorities used the Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg as a summer residence and guesthouse during the war.

In 1945, it was returned to the Reinhardt estate, and in the summer of 1947, Helene Thimig offered Clemens Heller, a Harvard graduate and the visionary founder of Salzburg Global Seminar, Schloss Leopoldskron as a place for him to execute his vision.

In 1959, Heller, with two fellow Harvard students Scott Elledge and Richard Campbell, initiated Salzburg Global Seminar in Schloss Leopoldskron.

The seminar expanded over the years and in 2007, The Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change was launched. The academy builds digital literacies and engagement around critical challenges for society. Its annual program connects aspiring students from across disciplines to produce multimedia tools and reframe curricula and research.

The program expands the boundaries of learning and student engagement through a design process. Media literacy is approached critically, each year with a new theme.

Participating faculty begin brainstorming themes one year prior to the academy.

"I take their invitations and build out a list of prospective concepts," said Paul Mihailidis, PhD, faculty chair and director of Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change. "I share

*"The academy will help you diversify by meeting new people from all around the world and learn from successful people. Your mind will grow while still being able to enjoy yourself in one of the most beautiful cities in the world."*

- Mustafa Wehbe

this with our faculty in fall and through dialog and deliberation we settle on one general concept area."

From there, the directing team of the media academy develops a concept note to design the program for the next summer program. Preparation takes about six months and covers subjects including fake news, terrorism, gender, and democracy.

"Scholars will be exposed to all different beliefs, political, religious, national, and ideological backgrounds," said Jad Melki, PhD, a faculty member at the academy. "This vibrant environment will not only give them a different perspective, but will also be an asset for them in the future."

Additionally, the seminar increases the social and political awareness of students and helps them interpret fellow participants from a cultural perspective, whether professionally or personally through the human library, an initiative led by Roman Gerodimos, PhD, associate professor of global current affairs at the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University.

The human library is considered one of the most significant experiences that the program offers.

The concept of the human library is as follows: A faculty member or a student chooses to be a book; the rest are readers. The process starts with the reader checking out a book of his/her choice. He or she then sits with the chosen book (person) for 15 to 30 minutes and listens to their story. The stories often bear a lot of weight. Some topics are vibrant, while others are gloomier. Nonetheless, all are influential.

"I was a book and narrating my story made me relate to readers on different levels," said Wehbe. "After the human library, I learned that sharing your story with someone strengthens the bond and breaks down barriers."

Aside from the program's content and initiatives, the setting of the seminar and its cultural qualities is one of the main components that amplify the experience of the participants. The Schloss Leopoldskron was one of the main locations where the movie "The Sound of Music" was originally shot.

"The setting is important because students are going to be sleeping there, studying there, eating there, and going around on campus," said Melki. "Schloss will be their second home for roughly three weeks."

*"I found that Salzburg has a very interesting movement of feminism and queer rights. There was a large group of women that I got to meet there, and they were involved in activism, it was a nice experience to go to their protests and meetings."*

- Ghida Ladkani



# Workshops on Campus

## Performing Arts Workshops

### Creative Writing Workshop

Conducted by Milia Ayache, actress, writer and director  
October 1, 2018

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, the workshop focused on exercises about how people can find ways to communicate or tell a story through inner feelings and deep thoughts. After doing the exercises for three hours, everyone wrote stories and creative ideas that were exchanged later on and used to create more stories.

### Theatrical Makeup Workshop

Conducted by Tiffany Moujaes  
October 12, 2018

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, this workshop showed the techniques behind theater makeup, and covered the basics of creating a character suitable for stage, and transforming faces from 20 years old to 50 years old. The participants learned the ways and then applied them on each other.

### Creative Dance Workshop

Conducted by Chadi Zein, director  
October 8, 2018

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, attendees worked with Chadi Zein on different techniques and levels of dance through many energetic and creative exercises. At the end of the workshop, each group created stories along with the choreography, and performed the dances professionally.



### Piano Masterclass

Conducted by Kaiyin Huang, DMA  
October 27, 2018

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, a piano masterclass in LAU Byblos for pianists from LAU and the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music with the artist in residence, Kaiyin Huang. She also gave a talk about creative ways of marketing yourself and fundraising for events successfully. Huang told powerful stories about herself and shared with her class tips on raising money through arts.

### Theater Masterclass and Workshop

April 6, 2019

A masterclass with Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley about theater and its different levels of organization in performance and the elementary features of theater's cultural development.

### Performance Technique Workshop

Conducted by Junaid Sarrieddeen and Layale Chaker  
February 8, 2019

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, the performance technique workshop focused on theater practitioners and musicians. Its content was centralized on techniques of cross-disciplinary collaborations and creative practices across their mediums. Junaid Sarrieddeen; an actor, dramaturge, and founding member of Zoukak Theatre Company and Layale Chaker, a violinist and composer, conducted this workshop where they introduced participants to the tools of scene building and the ways of integrating music into it.

LAU and non-LAU students had the chance to create a sketch by combining human made sounds and a scene composed of their own understanding of power in the three-hour session, which also contained some recorded material of the artists own experiences.

At the end of the workshop, Sarrieddeen and Chaker grouped attendees in a circle and asked them to express their feelings towards the session. Students said that they built new relations and learned new things that will help them in their work field later on.

### Musical Theater Workshop

Conducted by Dalia Farid  
February 4, 2019

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, Dalia Farid, an Egyptian musical theater performer, held an interactive workshop at LAU from 5:00 p.m. till 8:00 p.m. 35 participants were present, from different backgrounds and majors, in the workshop which included singing, acting, and dancing.

Throughout the workshop, the participants had the opportunity to open up through their performances. They had a series of exercises where they told stories by expressing their thoughts and feelings on stage using their acting and dancing skills. Art was also included as a creative way to communicate. At the end of the workshop, some students chose to sing in order to express themselves.

### Acting Workshop

Conducted by Omar Abi Azar, theater director and founding member of Zoukak Theatre Company  
October 19, 2018

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, groups created fictional stories and narratives and then related them to personal memories and feelings. This workshop focused on being serious in whatever you do or feel or say. The main goal was to know that whatever someone does is important and real.



### Vocal Masterclass

Conducted by Christine Moore, Soprano  
November 27, 2018

As part of Imagine Workshop & Concert Series, the masterclass offered an opportunity for singers of different levels to enhance their creativity and skills in performance by receiving guidance and critique from Moore. The masterclass also covered topics about performance that encourage creative approaches to singing.



## TV/Film Workshops

### Distribution for Short Films

Conducted by Darine Hotait  
September 19, 2018

Hotait, a Lebanese-American fiction writer and director, helped the students in proceeding the various ways for distributing short films. Hotait explained swiftly the process which started by understanding how to package the short film to be ready for distribution. This was followed by teaching the students the importance of creating a successful festival strategy. Of course, knowing if the film a student directed, wrote, and acted is successful, is also an element of importance that Hotait enlightened the students about. Students were also introduced to the venues for licensing and acquisition and how to get licensed for VOD platforms and TV networks.

### Editing Short Format

Conducted by Nabil Mehchi  
November 10 till November 17, 2018.

Since every language has its own grammar, editing is also a language and creativity is one of its grammar rules. Creative editing is one of the things that push a film from very good to excellent. That's why this workshop focused on the many editing strategies that help enhance short music and commercial videos. The students were required to edit a 30-45 second commercial or music video edited and directed previously by Mehchi using the concepts that were introduced in the workshop. On the last day of the workshop, the students' work was screened and graded based on the editing skills.

## Journalism Workshops

### Artificial Intelligence and Journalism

Conducted by Lukasz Krol  
December 4, 2018

This workshop was mainly a journalism training program that introduced the connection between artificial intelligence and journalism. It trained the journalists through e-learning classes in three different languages (Arabic, English, and Russian) and in-person workshops that instructed journalists from Lebanon and different regions on diverse topics such as: disinformation, open data, multimedia journalism, conflict-sensitive reporting, and financial sustainability



# Events

Communication Arts on Stage

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# Birds of September: Lina Abyad Turns Pale Blue to Fiery Red

by Jad Fawaz

The lights dimmed, an air of malaise cloaked Irwin Hall Auditorium, a young man twirled against a vast spot of red paint contrasting the blue wall. He reached out to his criminal lover and covered her with the color of murder. The scene was an act of passion and a reaction to patriarchy in the Lebanese countryside during the 1960s.

Welcome to Lina Abyad's craft.

Following Emily Nasrallah's passing, Abyad paid tribute to her iconic novel *The Birds of September*, a story that touches on misogyny and migration through a theatrical depiction.

Nasrallah was a former journalist and novelist brought up in the small village of Kfeir. She was considered

a feminist in her hometown. Just like the saying "develop from the negative" goes, Nasrallah observed women's mistreatment in the village, absorbed it, and allowed it to fuel the trailblazing advocate she was to then express her frustration through writing.

The novel is modest and humorous in nature, but also tragic. However, Abyad chose to address it through a different lens.

"It's not as dark as I made it. Emily Nasrallah's writing is very pastel, the cover of her book is light and there's this woman looking back at her village," described Abyad.

"I'm not a pastel person to begin with, so I took what she wrote and made it more violent."

The novel narrates the story of three women oppressed by their families and closely followed a young man's journey to freedom trailing the steps he had set for himself to live as a liberated expat abroad. The themes that emerged were those of women harassed for committing the act of love, the love of men or of education, and the idea of arranged marriage in respect to a social class.

"I know Emily very well, she was a modest person able to have harmony with people of all backgrounds and ages," said former friend of Nasrallah Amal Abou Assaly. "Emily loved the countryside and its people, but she didn't like their ways."

Amid a sequence of intense melancholy, the performance cuts off to feature moments of pretense improvisation. Abyad or one of the actors would intervene with members of the cast and delightfully suggest ideas mid-performance. This directing tactic made the audience presume that they were attending the rehearsals as opposed to a finalized performance. These sequences were inspired by the preparations leading up to the play. Through those, the cast expressed the ideas they produced during their rehearsals.

"These interventions actually happened during the rehearsals in a three- to four-week period. Nothing was contrived, literally every word that was mentioned during the play was actually expressed by cast members during the rehearsals," explained cast member Yassin Abboud. "We just combined them on set and put them as they were during the play."

"Reading the story again made me smile, because it brought back so many memories. Emily let us have these conversations on set," he continued.

The cast's interventions added gleeful irony to the play, which was also considered as anti-theater by some audience members as it allowed the performers to switch to their real-life characters and stray away from traditional countryside dialect. Abyad's "cut!" mid-performance constantly reminded the audience that this is a story written nearly five decades ago, but still resonates today.

"This technique has been used before for the purpose of giving the illusion that the audience is watching a rehearsal rather than a finalized play," said cast member Alaa Itani. "Lina wanted to experiment with this method because although the story was released in 1962 it still applies today."

The improvisation was also explained through the stage setting, which was inspired by traditional Lebanese folklore and consisted of only a worn out ladder and over a dozen of straw-benched chairs where the actors would sit at opposing sides of the stage while other members of the cast were acting.

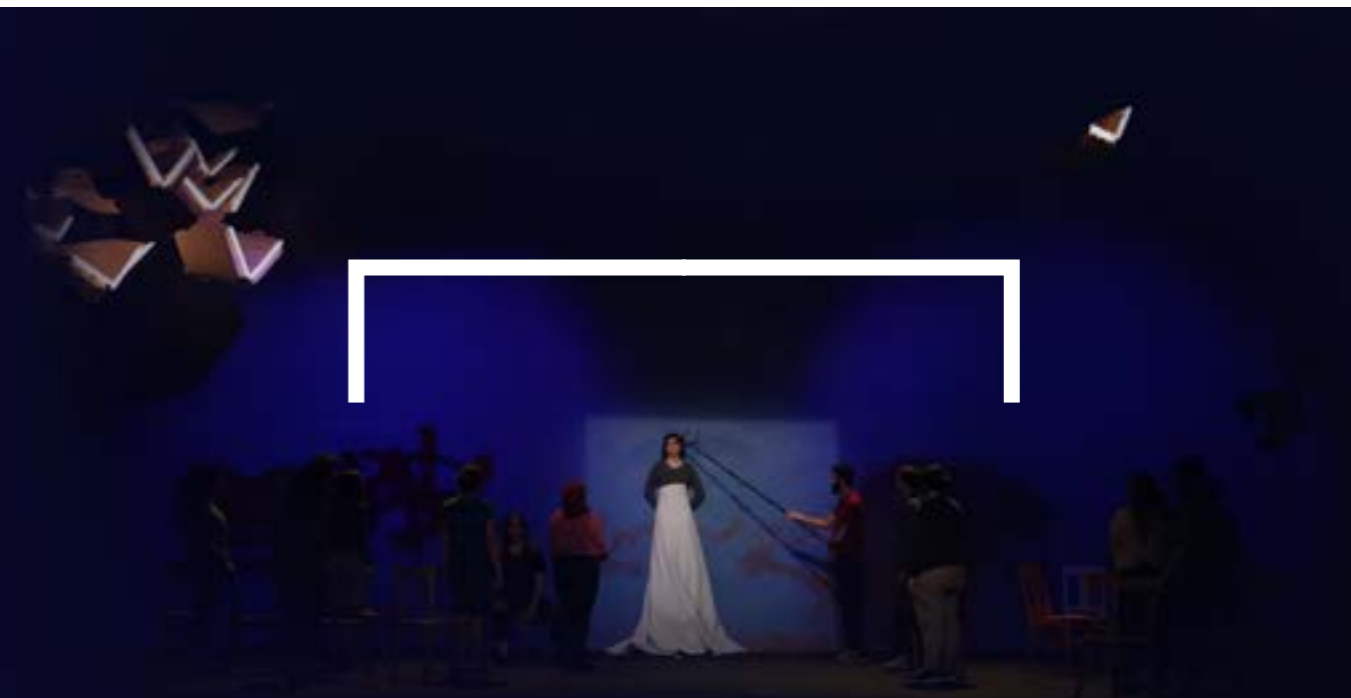
"I'm very happy with the outcome, but I felt a lot of pressure because Emily Nasrallah's family were attending," said Abyad. "There's also pressure because you want to be true to yourself, not only to the story."

There were several other scenes that incorporated dynamic performance

techniques and reassured the audience of Abyad's wit and dark nature. The director took it upon herself to bring Nasrallah's magic to Beirut before she appropriately closed the show in Kfeir. The ending of the performance too was unexpected and events took new dimensions: some anecdotes ended on a happy note and others on a sad tone. The performance "Oh"-ed the audience in Irwin Hall Auditorium, and "Ah"-ed the residents of Kfeir.

*"I'm very happy with the outcome, but I felt a lot of pressure because Emily Nasrallah's family were attending. There's also pressure because you want to be true to yourself, not only to the story."*

- Lina Abyad



# Taa Sakena: The Twelve Tales of Women's Struggles

by Rana Tabbara

A minimalist theatrical production with no set designs or lavish costumes recreated and retold 12 stories of different Egyptian women dealing with depression and mental illness to explore the society's attitude towards mental health in relation to women.

These morbid tales travelled to Lebanon and landed at LAU not to put tears in the eyes of the audiences but to expose them to the true colors of women's struggles in the Arab world. How did the audience react? With a standing ovation.

As part of its aim to commit to education, empowerment, and equality for women and girls, the Arab Institute for Women collaborated with the Department of Communication Arts to host the Egyptian play, *Taa Sakena*.

The performance was directed by Nada Sabet and produced by Noon Creative Enterprise, an organization that works through performing arts to develop a civil society with a focus on children, youth, and women.

"Taa Sakena," translates to "The quiet letter taa." In Arabic, "taa" is a term that refers to a feminine past tense verb and is used to end female addressing words. Since "taa" signifies women in merely grammar, this play aims to give women and their struggles the significance needed in their communities.

According to Sabet, the quiet part of the title refers to a number of issues: the silencing of women, the silence on issues of mental illness and disabilities, and the lack of a proper language and approach to discuss these problems.

"The title fits the mood of the performance, in which the suffering women are forced into silence while everyone else feels free to talk about them however they please," said Norma Khalaf, one of the audience members.

*"The title fits the mood of the performance, in which the suffering women are forced into silence while everyone else feels free to talk about them however they please."*

- Norma Khalaf

*Taa Sakena* follows the stories of 12 women who participated in a theater workshop conducted by Noon Creative Enterprise at the Abbasiya Psychiatric Hospital in Egypt. Sabet explains that the women were not checked in at the hospital, but were there to accompany children who were receiving treatment.

Sabet emphasized that the workshop was never considered as therapy, but rather "a tool to help women find support in other women dealing with similar situations."

Throughout the workshop, the 12 women were able to share their personal experiences with mental illness and disability, giving Noon Creative Enterprise and Sabet the permission to portray their stories on stage and inspire other women in different societies.

These stories were performed by three actresses, Abeer Soliman, Mona Al Shimy, and Mona Soliman. The play

is plotless and non-linear, it focuses on retelling the women's stories in a realistic yet highly artistic way. The three actresses take on many different roles that encompass the experiences of the women, providing perspective to the different aspects of a woman's life.

Throughout the performance, the audience witnessed the three actresses play the parts of the women themselves, who are mothers, employees, aunts or sisters. The actresses also play the roles of the women's children, school teachers, disapproving families, inner thoughts and fears, and the voices of society.

In one of the scenes, the mother's character stands speaking to the audience about her intellectually challenged son's experience at school, while the two other actresses quietly act the parts of the son and his teacher in the background, illustrating her words.

*"The most important thing was that the play paid proper respect to the women and their stories. The goal of the performance is to actually listen to the women, thus the theater is a perfect place for this sort of goal, as audiences will be able to see themselves in the performance and relate to the characters in different ways."*

- Mona Al Shimy

"The most important thing was that the play paid proper respect to the women and their stories," emphasized Al Shimy. "The goal of the performance is to actually listen to the women, thus the theater is a perfect place for this sort of goal, as audiences will be able to see themselves in the performance and relate to the characters in different ways."

Following the play was a panel discussion that included Associate Professor of Education Ahmad Oueini; Associate Professor of Theater Lina Abyad; Project Manager at Catharsis-Lebanese Center for Drama Therapy Lama Daccache; and the moderator and Assistant Professor of Music Amr Selim.

The panelists discussed mental health and the use of drama to highlight gender issues. They also gave their different perspectives in education, psychology, social work, and performing arts to find solutions to the issues of silenced women, mental illnesses, disabilities and society's judgment of the prior.

According to the Executive Director of the Arab Institute for Women Lina Abirafeh, the idea of assembling a panel is that it gives credibility to the issues at hand and shows how these problems need a real robust response. "Mental health needs a multisectoral response, it needs a lot of people, it needs a drama therapy expert, a drama teacher, a play writer, a psychiatrist, an education specialist, a communication expert, a women's studies expert and there could be a hundred more," said Abirafeh with a plea.





# IWCS's the Rite of Spring: A Residency to Empower

by Maria Al Khoury and Jad Fawaz

Under the theme of gender equality and social justice, the Imagine Workshop and Concert Series (IWCS), headed by its Artistic Director and Assistant Professor of Music Seba Ali, DMA, concluded its Fall 2018 residency with a dance performance titled *the Rite of Spring*.

Originally choreographed by Vaslav Nijinsky, the Russian ballet performance was first premiered in 1913 at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. When it was first presented, however, it received a great backlash. More than a 100 years later, the performance remains relevant in today's world and is considered "an explosion in the history of art."

The ballet performance revolves around the concept of "sacrifice", and it depicts the divide in obligations between the two sexes. The elder men demanded one young woman

to sacrifice herself for the protection of the rest of the tribe. As a female obligation, she complies. In the piece, women were whisking lightly around the stage, while men were stomping tall and brazen.

The point behind the female sacrifice was to end the suffering these civilizations witnessed during the winter so that they can reach spring, but the tribe never did. Women from various cultures and backgrounds have to suffer similarly in today's world, no matter how progressive their society might seem.

IWCS succeeded at reviving this century-old orchestral ballet performance at LAU's Irwin Hall Auditorium. Some of the dancers in the performance were LAU students and some others were from Al Sarab Dance School. As soon as the dancers started moving swiftly on stage, music

which was played by Brianne Matzke, PhD, engulfed the space.

Today, highly achieved women from the art world walk the same path as the women depicted in the performance. This path entails overcoming difficulties related to gender and patriarchal restrictions.

Following the *Rite of Spring* performance, the residency ended its activities with a panel discussion titled "Gender in Art." The panel built on the same theme: gender equality and social justice in arts.

Moderated by Managing Director at Sharq.org Reem Maghribi, the panel included the resident writer, singer, and actress Kaiyin Huang, along with choir director Milia Ayache, the *Rite of Spring* choreographer and dancer Yasmina Sabbah, and architect Christel Farah as panelists.



Ayache deemed the road female artists walk as difficult. She explained that they know that from the start, but they follow it diligently regardless of their obstacles.

Artists are trying to change how women are viewed. Sabbah explained that in order to change society and get better results on gender in arts issues, artists should reinvent the way they "transmit the message."

The panelists also gave advice to the audience from their personal experiences.

Sabbah told the audience with enthusiasm, "create your own opportunities and do what you want to do."

"When you see a star shine on stage, it doesn't matter whether he or she is a male or a female, we just appreciate that art," Huang said.

The panel was followed by staged poetry performed by LAU students and supervised by Lecturer of Theater at LAU Aliya Khalidi, PhD.

*"It's never complete when we do our production and work with our students and faculty and audience, it gets complete when we go outside campus and do these outreaches and reach to people who can't come to us."*

- Seba Ali

## Ending with an Outreach "on a High Note"

Besides raising awareness on gender equality through the ballet performance and panel discussion, IWCS featured community service and outreach activities in its fall 2018 residency.

"It's never complete when we do our production and work with our students and faculty and audience," Ali said. "It gets complete when we go outside campus and do these outreaches and reach people who can't come to us."

*"We don't have the language yet to say how complex women are."*

- Roy Farhat



# IWCS: Music on the Track of Bringing People Together

by Jana Barakat and Zaynab Raya

The humongous church was crowded with people, some were lucky enough to get seated, while others stood for the sake of the concert. It was not their feet that felt numb throughout the couple of hours of the art convening, but rather their ears as they sensed the rhythmic music make its way into the minds, and then the souls of the individuals.

A colossal silence reigned over the place and the music was the only noise one could hear.

Cello, violins, and a piano played in unison, enchanting all who tuned their ears to the orchestra into a world of notes, tunes, and melodies. It was a symphony to remember.

No, this is not a scene from a musical movie, this is the annual Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra concert held at St. Joseph Church in Achrafieh, Beirut. This year, and for the first time, the church's orchestra collaborated with the Lebanese American University's Department of Communication Arts to "Reinvent Communication" as part of the Imagine Workshop and Concert Series.

Part of the audience consisted of LAU students who either went to the concert as part of their western music course, or to support Assistant Professor of Music at LAU and Director of IWCS Seba Ali, DMA, who was the pianist of the night.

The moment Ali bowed to the audience to welcome them, LAU students unintentionally felt that they had to stand and salute her.

"I didn't pay attention to that actually," Ali laughed, surprised. "That would've been so nice to witness, but unfortunately I didn't see it."

As a music professor, Ali believes that attending such concerts is crucial, especially that this generation is unaware of the classical types of music.

Ali also linked the importance of the concert to reinventing communication, the Department of Communication Arts' motto.

*"It's a language with notes as letters and beats and harmony as words, music is a really sophisticated language that speaks things we can't find words for."*

- Seba Ali

"It is vital for us to be civilized and communicate with everyone in the environment," Ali explained, agreeing with the President of LAU Joseph Jabbra's statement about the vitality of music as a way of communication. Ali and Jabbra both stated that this collaboration between LAU and the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra is essential because the young people in the Lebanese society are "in need of education in culture, symbolized by music."

According to Ali, besides consisting of notes and having a well-organized symphony to relieve people, music also enhances communication skills.

"It's a language with notes as letters and beats and harmony as words. Music is a really sophisticated language that speaks things we can't find words for," said Ali.

For a person who has never attended a concert before, Hiba Hallak, a student taking a western music class at LAU, spoke her thoughts about how classical music, in its historical form, is still enjoyable even in the midst of pop-culture music era.

"It was my first time attending a concert, and I don't regret it," Hallak said. "You can feel the music within you."

"We still talk about the concert up till today. It was great," Hallak said.

Another proof to what music is capable of doing was the "Carnival of the Animals," a concert that took place a day after the Philharmonic Orchestra as part of IWCS.

This second art convening was held at LAU's Irwin Hall Auditorium, and acted as an outreach to kids with needs. The concert opened with a choir of kids with needs from the Step Together Organization. These children stood together chanting to the melody, filling hearts with warmth, and drawing smiles on faces.

Step Together is a non-profit organization that started as a kindergarten in 1974. Today it has around 210 students, children and adults with special needs.

"Our education is based on arts, music, and painting and for special needs students this is very healing," said Founder of Step Together Reem Mouwad.

She explained that the purpose of doing such an event was to show that special needs students have the right to be part of big events, especially cultural and artistic ones.

"There's something very special about watching this choir. It makes you see how music enables everyone to communicate," Mouwad said.

The second part of the carnival was made for the children and not by them.

Children were told stories about animals of the wild through music. As the narrator of the story was asking them questions, they excitedly threw their hands in the air to answer.

Not only the children enjoyed the stories told about the animals, but the adult parents and participants did as well. They were able to understand the symbolic representation each animal held and cognitively related them to the human society.

Music is food for the soul. If there is a message to convey these days, then arts and music is the resort.

IWCS is a program that aims to enrich the LAU community with high quality performances from international professional guests, who either give workshops or perform in front of a diverse audience. This is to introduce the LAU community to historical, classical, and modern arts in the form of music as communication.



# Christmas Carols: An Autism-Friendly Concert with a Hint of Christmas Magic

by Sarah Kaskas

As the choir jingled in harmony with the classical Christmas tunes, the kids dashed between the Christmas trees and ornaments, overwhelmed with the joyous spirit lingering at every corner. There was no one ambience during the Christmas Carols concert, for the tenor changed as the chants shuffled and resonated in the open air, spreading the holiday joy.

Held in Safadi Fine Arts Building at the Lebanese American University, the concert was put on as part of the Imagine Workshop and Concert Series (IWCS) outreach initiative. It marked the second event of its kind to reach out to individuals with autism.

Artistic Director of IWCS and Assistant Professor of Music at LAU Seba Ali, DMA, chose Christmas Carols as a theme for the sole purpose that it incorporates music. According to her, music facilitates communicating one's feelings and emotions.

Starting off with a heartfelt greeting, Ali introduced the nature of the event and its main purpose. She then pointed out that this event is a sensory-friendly concert where guests can eat, move around, and express themselves without any kind of restriction.

Ali then happily welcomed Soprano Christine Moore, PhD, who came all the way from New York to assemble a group of local singers from and outside LAU. Another salute was also addressed to Reem Deeb, PhD, the director of the children's choir from Keys'n Cords Music Academy and music professor at LAU.

The audience was composed of members from the Autism Awareness Association, the Lebanese Autism Society, the LAU community, and other interested passersby.

"A lot of places such as playgrounds and whatnots are not autism-friendly so, this is mainly for me a purpose to

spread autism awareness and offer a high caliber concert for individuals with autism," said Ali. "The Imagine outreach strives to reach out to as many diverse communities and spread awareness about people who are not granted their rights."

Individuals with autism are infrequently represented or supported in the Lebanese society. This encouraged Ali to signify them through the Christmas

*"I think Christmas music is very soulful, it helps a person go out of their shell. Music is an international language that appeals to everyone, autistic and non-autistic."*

- Soprano Christine Moore



Carols event that gave them the opportunity to communicate and interact. To a great deal, this event resembled Ali's first autism-friendly concert that was held on February 16, 2017.

However, this year's performance took place outdoors to give the audience the opportunity to intermingle not only with humans, but also with the cats.

"The open air was also able to fulfill the aim of getting the kids to play hide and seek, run wherever they want, and enjoy the music from whichever seat they were placed on," explained Ali. The choir consisted of Deeb, who also gave a solo performance with Ali as the pianist.

The concert included performances done by 16 singers from and outside LAU, along with a children's choir consisting of students from Keys n'Cords. They sang very popular Christmas songs such as Jingle Bells, Fa La La, and Holy Night.

*"Children with autism react well to music, there are autistic children who couldn't speak during the first concert done in February but managed to utter a few words after it. This encouraged us, as choir participants, to contribute in the making of this second one of its kind event."*

- Souleima Yamout

"I think Christmas music is very soulful, it helps a person go out of their shell," said Moore. "Music is an international language that appeals to everyone, autistic and non-autistic."

Parents were comforted and at ease as they hummed to the songs and danced with their children.

"My son loves music so, I sought to bring him here to watch the concert," said Sonia Ashou, a parent of a child with autism. "He enjoyed it and was even humming along with the singers."

Autism-friendly events are very important to us."

"Children with autism react well to music. There are autistic children who couldn't speak during the first concert done in February, but managed to utter a few words after it," said Souleima Yamout, choir participant and education student at LAU. "This encouraged us, as choir participants, to contribute in the making of this second one of its kind event."

Leila Mnekbi, computer science student at LAU and participant in the choir, said that society usually thinks of autistic people as "disturbing" individuals who cannot go to non-sensory-friendly events. That's why, she believed it is fundamental to create more likewise events that reinforce the autism spectrum's representation and image in our society.

The choir's participants were all more than happy to be part of this concert as they sang at the top of their lungs, embodying the Christmas energy.

*"A lot of places such as playgrounds and whatnots are not autism-friendly so, this is mainly for me a purpose to spread autism awareness and offer a high caliber concert for individuals with autism. The Imagine outreach strives to reach out to as many diverse communities and spread awareness about people who are not granted their rights."*

- Seba Ali



# International Dance Day Festival 2019: Dance, Don't Pay!

by Sarah El Khouwayer and Sandra Abdelbaki

With feet smoothly touching the ground, hands looming in the air, and bodies physically speaking, dancers embraced their talents in the International Dance Day Festival (IDDFL) 2019.

With 33 instructors and 721 participants, IDDFL kicked off this year in its 9th edition led by Nadra Assaf, PhD, of the Department of Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University.

The week, extended between April 5 and April 12, was packed with various workshops conducted by professional dancers. The festival offered both dancers and artists a great chance to express their passion and enhance their dancing skills for no fee, not even a lira.

The festival gathered both local and international dancers and dance artists such as Rain Ross, Mathew Henley, Beau Hancock, Christy McNeil, Jessie Levey, and Victoria Hunter.

Over the eight-day festival, 89 workshops, six exhibitions, and a bunch of lectures tackling different topics about dancing, took place. Participating dancers included students from LAU, middle and high-school students from across Lebanon, and choreographers invited from the US.

Dancers from different backgrounds united to do the thing they do best: convey their passion through dance.

"It took us one full week of practice and hard work, but it was an amazing experience. We truly enjoyed ourselves

dancing," said Jana Abu Sleiman, one of the dancers in the festival.

"The experience was quite challenging, but it was beautiful, especially that it was a buildup experience starting from an abstract title and ending with beautiful dance performances," said Roy Farhat, another participant in the festival.

According to Farhat, dance is something sacred and valuable.

"To me, dance is a ritual. You dance in your movement, you dance in your lifestyle, you dance in anything you do in life," Farhat added.

While many believe that this dance festival was a combination of dancers from different sectors, Associate Chair of the Department of Communication

Arts and the Director of the IDDFL Nadra Assaf, PhD, believes quite the opposite.

"I know other professionals in the field might not agree with me mainly because they look at dance as having many styles and each style as a sector, but I believe dance is dance," she said. "It is a language with the same alphabet (the body) and even though there might be several languages that use that alphabet, they all have something in common."

Not only was this year's festival a beautiful experience to the participants, but also to Assaf.

"I found this year's IDDFL to be the best one yet," she said. "I believe it is always a great achievement when you can watch an event improve year after year. What we do not want is to drop a level or move backwards."

If she had the chance to describe the festival in one sentence, Assaf would choose "sharing, caring, and freedom of expression."

According to her, the festival received great feedback from the Lebanese dance community and from the international guests.

IDDFL brought the dance community together, aiming to express this international language in unison. The festival was open and free to public, it was also inclusive and covered various dancing styles like contemporary dance, hip hop, salsa, and break dance.

Since the 4th year, artists have tried to have the festival work around certain themes. This year's theme was the "Rituals of Being" and all performances were choreographed under this theme.

In addition to dance, IDDFL focuses on multiple forms of physical activity. The varied program includes gymnastics, yoga, and different types of athletic activities that help strengthen the body. It also offers workshops on Spanish and Oriental dance, dabkeh, wide jazz, improvisation, character dance, and creative movement.

Exploring collaboration between visual specialists, architects and writers, and combining dancing with other art forms, the program offers an arrangement of lectures on harm anticipation.

The closing of the festival took place in Irwin Hall Auditorium at LAU Beirut on Friday, April 12. The gala started with a speech from Chair of the Department of Communication Arts Jad Melki, PhD.

"Why do we dance? For entertainment? Sure. But dance is much more than fun," he said in his opening words. "The Department of Communication Arts at LAU continues to be committed to reinvent dance and by that to reinvent communication."

In her speech, Assaf then thanked the university administration and everyone who supported the festival throughout the years.

Six different dances were displayed: *Changed By the Waves*, choreographed by Rain Ross in collaboration with the dancers; *Echoes*, choreographed by Mathew Henley; *Prelude*, choreographed by Beau Hancock; *Shoufni*, choreographed by Jessie Levey; *Compulsions*, choreographed by Christy McNeil Chand in collaboration with the dancers; and *Silent Disco: Rituals of VH*, choreographed by Assaf, Ross, Hancock, Henley, McNeil-Chand, and Levey.

The auditorium, that day, buzzed with students, parents, and people who have interest in dance and arts. Even individuals with no interest in dance were drawn to attend and formed opinions around the dance performances.

"I liked all the performances, they were pretty amazing," said Arnest Ghorayyeb, one of the attendees. "I usually don't watch contemporary dance, but watching the dancers' movement was captivating."

An explosion of emotions took place on stage. Dancers were moving effortlessly. Their facial expressions were a mix of confusion and loss at some moments, joy and happiness at others.

As they moved swiftly, all eyes were on them waiting impatiently for their next movement. But suddenly the music stopped, and the lights were turned on again. Next thing, the audience is applauding.

The festival came to an end and the dancers left the stage, but their passion and energy still lingers waiting for next year's festival to ignite again.

*"The experience was quite challenging, but it was beautiful, especially that it was a buildup experience starting from an abstract title and ending with beautiful dance performances. To me, dance is a ritual. You dance in your movement, you dance in your lifestyle, you dance in anything you do in life."*

- Roy Farhat





## 10 QUESTIONS WITH NADRA ASSAF

Passionate about dancing, and outspoken about gender, Nadra Assaf, assistant professor of dance and associate chair of the Department of Communication Arts, is one of our own faculty members.

She comes from a Lebanese father and a Native American mother. Assaf received her MFA in dance from Sarah Lawrence College. After having studied abroad for 10 years, she came back to Lebanon to start her own dance academy in 1991 and become a professor at LAU. For her, the dance academy is her second-best creation, after her son.

**Q: Is Nadra a morning or an evening person?**

Morning, without any doubt. The minute the light comes out I want to be up, khalas.

**Q: What is your morning routine?**

I have a cup of coffee, tea, or water...or all three. Then I spend 20 to 30 minutes exercising, or stretching.

**Q: What is your favorite course to teach at LAU?**

Oddly enough, it would be the Fundamentals of Oral Communications (COM 203). That's because I get to interact with students from all different majors in the university. I always find that appealing.

**Q: Your dance performances always have exotic titles. What is your favorite title?**

"I Matter" has always been my favorite title, and it still is my favorite piece. Right now, it would have to be "Public Conflict, Private Scars." That title means a lot to me and my dance partner.

**Q: What is the best experience you have in the dance field?**

It was actually a double experience. It was working with Marcel Khalifeh and working with Ziad Rahbani, because when I was little that was my dream. It's a dream come true.

**Q: What is your worst childhood memory?**

It was losing my youngest brother, he was 4-years-old and I was 16. I lost him... but then I found him, thank goodness.

**Q: Which faculty do you think should dance?**

Jad Melki. Without a shadow of a doubt. He keeps telling me what a good dabke dancer he is, so he needs to show me.

**Q: What's your favorite song?**

"Nothing Compares 2U" by Sinéad O'Connor.

**Q: What are your other hobbies?**

I was a marathon runner for many years, I ran eight marathons in my life. I am also an avid reader, because that's how I do nothing, I pick up a book and I read. I love it.

**Q: Describe your dance school in one sentence.**

My life, my family.

# Imagine Summer Arts Camp: All You Need to Learn About Arts

by Ahmad Karakira, Sarah Kaskas, and Maguie Hamzeh

Kids, adolescents, and adults are now one username and password away from accessing the online world. Art has become normative and is thus, taken for granted; people can now binge-watch series in one day or less without necessarily feeling taken by the stress, hard work, and long process artists undergo to produce the final product.

But would we appreciate their work more if we were “in the artist’s shoe”? For the third year in a row, Imagine Summer Arts Camp (ISAC) at LAU has transformed the typical education and summer camp norms into a unique multidisciplinary arts hub.

Combining music, dance, theater, and acting, the one of a kind summer camp introduced campers to the stressful life of artists.

After experiencing the reality of preparing for a show, a choir performance, and a Disney musical simulation, kids and parents became more understanding of the seriousness of art.

“Choir and singing always builds strong human and team bonds. The students were able to sing with better technique and projection, maintain harmony as well as proper presentation,” said Yasmina Sabbah, music instructor at LAU and ISAC. Sabbah added that all students were involved in all disciplines and were challenged to work on different skills outside their comfort zone.

## Education and Arts

The art activities ISAC provides bridge the gap in our education system, especially when it comes to art. The Director of ISAC and Assistant Professor of Music at the Lebanese American University Amr Selim, PhD, believes that schools limit learners with the specific subjects they learn about, which stands in the way of allowing them to master other skills. “The system forces us to memorize and just get better in one field or advance only one skill,” Selim explained.

ISAC made sure that the little campers take their time to learn what it’s like to communicate in the language of art, better known as humanity.

“They learned not only arts, but traits like humanity, compassion, connecting together, and most importantly, discipline,” said Sarah Fadel, dance lecturer at ISAC.

A first time ISAC camper Leyla Fakih, was amazed by the learning process that was presented to her.

“The other camps that I went to have different subjects. Here, we have a certain topic that we can progressively work on every day. We present arts like it’s a story,” she said.

## It Is All About the Process

“You’d be surprised on how much the world can change if we think with an artist’s perspective,” said Selim.

*“Choir and singing always builds strong human and team bonds. The students were able to sing with better technique and projection, maintain harmony as well as proper presentation.”*

- Yasmina Sabbah

According to Selim, this year’s niche is about focusing on the learning process, not the product. “When you don’t make the learner in front of you pressured with the result, they do better,” he explained.

Magicians never reveal their tricks, but Selim exclusively did, and here’s how the process works. For three continuous weeks and for one hour per each class only, experienced faculty are there to guide the campers towards creating their very own shows, musicals, dances, and plays through connecting what they have learned in different classes.

This one of a kind strategy has shown success in one of the acting classes supervised by LAU alumnus and ISAC faculty member Awad Awad.

In his class, each camper was asked to write a monologue that expresses an emotion. The combination of these monologues was then turned into a 10-minute play.

“They produced an amazing show that would probably take others a year or maybe a semester to pull out,” Selim said enthusiastically. “It’s because we

focus on the process.” Although the camp was only for three weeks, the change in the campers’ attitudes was remarkable. ISAC was not only teaching arts and building new skills, but also boosting their self-confidence and teaching them how artists work professionally.

## Additions to the Camp

ISAC’s special addition this summer is the filmmaking class under the supervision of LAU staff Samer Beyhum, where campers experiment scriptwriting, camera operation, location scouting, editing, and even composing their film music.

The campers were not the only benefiting entity, LAU Communication Arts students also made family and gained experience.

Dima Fayad, first-time student assistant at ISAC believes that she “learned how to be fun by dealing with all these kids.”

“We created a connection with every single one of them and they taught us as much as we taught them,” Fayad said.

Rawane Itani and Ghaidaa Hreiby, assistants and social media managers at ISAC, ran a PR campaign to promote the summer camp two months ahead with posters and social media posts to make sure that everyone hears and talks about it.

“We worked really hard for exposure, which added to our communication skills,” said Itani. “When we saw that our campers developed a maturity towards producing all kinds of art, we felt proud of their potential and our hard work,” continued Hreiby.

ISAC’s three-year journey has not yet come to an end. Communication arts students and assistants at ISAC have already started planning surprises for ISAC 2020.

“It is not too early to start planning for ISAC 2020,” said Selim. “New disciplines such as sports, photography, and graphic design might be included in the camp’s upcoming versions.” With that being said, who knows? ISAC might have some future little stars in the making!





**Students**

# Student Senior Projects

## Journalism Capstones

## Communication Capstones



### “Fashion: The Silent Industry”

Written by  
Carla Richa

Supervised by  
Dr. Claudia Kozman

Fashion has always had a huge impact on society and our lives both positively and negatively. But a lot of people tend to disregard that. I decided to focus on how it has always been a silent industry, from starting movements to reigniting world problems. I mostly focused on the economy and the environment and how fashion didn't always have a positive role in them. This is how the idea of sustainable fashion arose, treating the issue of millions of underpaid and unsafe workers, as well as giving Earth a breath of air.



### “Aleppo Citadel: Destruction and Reconstruction”

Written by  
Sanaa Eter

Supervised by  
Dr. Claudia Kozman

This capstone is a documentary on Aleppo Citadel's area post war scenes. The documentary shows what has the 8-year war done to one of the oldest citadels in the world and how this affected the citizens. It also highlights the Madineh Souk area that surrounds the citadel, which was brutally destroyed during the war. The Souk is composed of various shops in long streets that sell different products (such as silk, fabric, grains, and spices) to all over Syria. The shop owners, who are sincerely attached to their places, tell their stories and show us how they're rebuilding their shops thus, bringing life back to the Citadel Area.



### “Let's Ask About the Underdogs: The Case of Female Athletes in Lebanon”

Written by  
Rana Tabbara and Ahmad Karakira

Supervised by  
Dr. Claudia Kozman

An in-depth multimedia feature that examines the situation and development of women's sports in Lebanon, with an emphasis on football and basketball among many. The article serves as a comparison between the success achieved by women in individual sports and in group sports and its reasons, as well as a comparison between women's football and basketball and that of men's, through their participation, achievements, and results. It also highlights the root causes and the barriers that are preventing women sports from developing in Lebanon and suggests solutions based on research, in-depth interviews, and data gathered from sports people with reference to other studies and articles.



### “الليطاني يستغيث؟ ومن المغيث؟”

Written by  
Mira Kobeissi and Rimi Younes

Supervised by  
Jihad Mallah

This paper gives a proper enlightenment on the problem of Litani River. It also provides an overall review of the status of its water quality in perspective on simultaneous urbanization. It clarifies the recent efforts of wastewater management and the future points of view fundamental for the coordinated administration of the problem. Urbanization rates in Lebanon have surpassed the administration limits of substantial urban areas. Water quality disintegration of streams and groundwater assets is one of the primary dangers to water maintainability in urban created zones. The Litani River displays a case of the impact of urbanization on water quality in Lebanon. The paper also shows how the media reacted to the problem and worked on covering it.



### “Role of Music Education in Promoting Levantine Music”

Written by  
Sally Farhat

Supervised by  
Dr. Jad Melki

This study examined the role of music education in promoting Middle Eastern music. To examine the above, a between-subjects post-test-only quasi experiment was conducted. One-hundred twenty-seven LAU students took part in the research. Those were divided into two groups. The experiment evaluated the relationship between music education and students' perception of Middle Eastern music and whether students' music education would make them listen more to Middle Eastern music in comparison to students who have never taken Middle Eastern music courses. It also tested whether it increases their interest in the subject. The findings suggest that music education only relates to the way students perceive the relationship they have with Middle Eastern music, but not their general view on the music genre. Finally, the results show a significant relationship between music education and students' music preferences. Accordingly, it is recommended for universities to start incorporating into their curricula more courses in Middle Eastern music.



### “I Also Have a Right”

Written by  
Rawan Al Sheikh

Supervised by  
Dr. Gretchen King

Lebanon lacks a civil code that regulates personal status matters. The country has instead 15 separate personal status laws for the country's different religious communities that regulate these issues (HRW, 2015). “I Also Have a Right” is a lobbying campaign that aims to advocate the members of the Lebanese Parliament (MPs) to create a civil personal status law that would guarantee that the citizens are treated equally and to raise awareness about how laws regarding custody is paternal and patriarchal. Journalists from different affiliated TV stations were asked to cover the social experiments used for the campaign. Street surveys and video and audio interviews were conducted in different countries in Lebanon. Some samples for Billboard displays were created with the campaign's Hashtag. The campaign's lobbying goal was to diminish the stereotypical patriarchal law and give mothers the right to decide if they want to process their custody issues under civil or secular law, without being obliged to any patriarchal yielding.



# Student Senior Projects

## Performing Arts Capstones

## Television and Film Capstones



### “توتة توتة ما خلصت الحوتة”

Written and directed by  
**Baskal Jallouf**  
Supervised by  
**Dr. Amr Selim**

This musical production tackles the Syrian war and its chaotic consequences on the Arab youth in general and the Syrian upcoming generation more specifically. It is told in a journey plot that starts with the near past and travels to the far past to dwell on childhood memories. It then dramatically touches on the vague future brought to these youthful generations as the act wraps up. The script is based on a true story and the songs used are taken from folkloric Syrian tunes.



### “Boy Meets Girl”

Directed by  
**Christopher El Zoummar**  
Supervised by  
**Dr. Lina Abyad**

Follow Sam and Katie as they go through the trials and tribulations of love at the tender age of five in this hilarious and sweet take on young romance. From the decision to check the "yes" box on their boyfriend/girlfriend contracts to more serious conversations about past nap partners, Sam and Katie find themselves entering into a genuine relationship, all in the midst of worrying about the spelling bee, selling Girl Scout cookies, and figuring out what they want to be when they grow up.



### “في انتظار جودو”

Directed by  
**Tala Nachar**  
Supervised by  
**Dr. Lina Abyad**

There is only one scene throughout both acts. Two men are waiting on a country road by a tree for Godot. This is a simulation of a play by Samuel Becker in which two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, wait for the arrival of someone named Godot who never arrives. While waiting, they engage in a variety of discussions and encounter three other characters. Waiting for Godot is Beckett's translation of his own original French-language play, En attendant Godot, and is subtitled in English only “a tragicomedy in two acts.”



### “Rabbit Ears”

Directed by  
**Iyad Tchelebi**  
Edited by  
**Lynn El Jbeily**  
Produced by  
**Nour Nassar**  
Supervised by  
**Sarah Kaskas**

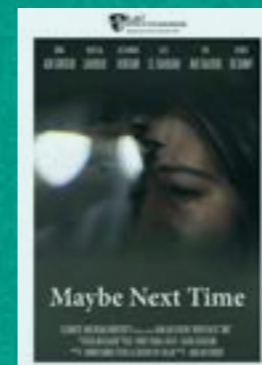
Ghady, a curious kid, sneaks into an old man's house to find a rabbit. His weird behavior leads him to discover a deep secret.



### “Jabbara”

Directed by  
**Samir Kawas**  
Produced by  
**Rita Chouefati**  
Supervised by  
**Sarah Kaskas**

The monsters don't live under your bed, they rot inside your head. This story revolves around a teenage girl Lina, whose envious mother Salma seeks revenge on her. Lina struggles to withstand any and every haunting memory of her putrid mother and seeks safety in the sanctuary that she's built herself in her mind. But Lina is challenged when Salma's hateful pusher her over the edge and drives her to make a life-changing decision.



### “Maybe Next Time”

Directed by  
**Jana Abi Ghosn**  
Produced by  
**Samir Kawas, Feras Al-Sheikh and Joy Salah**  
Supervised by  
**Tony Farjallah**

Jana parks her car, collects the papers that have fallen from her CV and heads to the building where a casting is being done. While she's there, she starts hearing the people around her having conversations related to wanting to become famous and how little they care about the true essence of acting. Jana tries to distract herself by reading and memorizing her lines but she keeps being distracted by things she never thought actually happened in castings. Two hours have passed and still no one called her to come in and audition. The intern in the agency then comes in and tells them that they are done casting for the day and they have found the person they wanted.



## “Telwin”

*Directed by*  
**Pia El Khoury**  
*Produced by*  
**Jana Abi Ghosn**  
*Director of Photography:*  
**Taline Bedikian**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

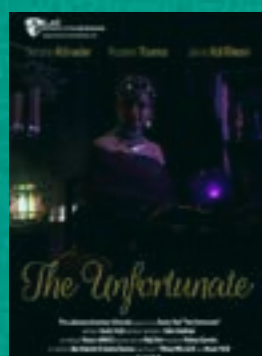
Lara, a 20 year old girl, wakes up the day after with a mixture of both – discomfort and independence. The former results in her trying to avoid her “conservative” mother while the latter makes her change her daily habits. Through these actions, her mom notices the change. The confrontation between these two strong opposing characters takes place over the course of coloring Easter eggs, and so her mom states a “solution” to the issue while Lara ignores the imposition and walks away as she embraces her freedom.



## “Asphodel”

*Directed by*  
**Mabelle C. Abbas**  
*Produced by*  
**Rita Choueifati**  
*Supervised by*  
**Tony Farjallah**

If this day was to be my last, I’d live my future in my past. This is the story of how a few seconds can alter people’s lives altogether. The morning of his engagement day surprise, a man rushes through the preparations. On the other hand, the woman is going through her day as if it’s another normal day. All this ends, however, at the cemetery, sitting at the tomb of her fiancé that never got to pop the question, for he was in such a rush, he never saw a car coming. His best day turned out to be her worst.



## “The Unfortunate”

*Directed by*  
**Roody Madi**  
*Produced by*  
**Melissa Samaha**  
*Director of Photographer by*  
**Taline Bedikian**  
*Supervised by*  
**Omar Moujaes**

Two best friends, Sara and Yara discover that a fortune teller is exercising sorcery on campus. They decide to go and find out why Sara’s parents are fighting at home. Going through a fantasy journey, Sara finds an unfortunate answer.



## “Elka”

*Directed by*  
**Youssef Dghaidy**  
*Produced by*  
**Yara Adada**  
*Edited by*  
**Rouba Tamim**  
*Supervised by*  
**Sarah Kaskas**

A short thriller film about Sahar, an established painter who is holding her new art gallery, but discovers she is pregnant from her bad husband. On her decision to focus on her career and abort the baby, interesting incidents start to pop up in her life leading to her confusion. Yet she saves her baby from another killer, and she finds out that her art paintings are the reason behind the change in her decision.



## “Ella”

*Directed by*  
**Rita R Abidaoud**  
*Produced by*  
**Peter Hillmi, Sabrina Bouris and Pia El Khoury**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

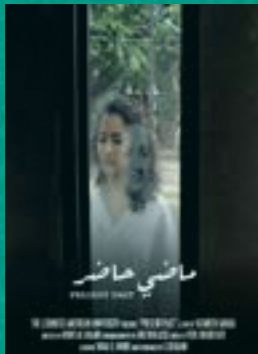
Ella decides to flee the country with her boyfriend to get away from all her personal problems. She plans on meeting him at a run-down motel amidst a terrible storm. Soon after she arrives at the motel, she begins to notice that something strange is going on in her room as it comes to life and her stay proves to have unforeseen consequences.



## “You’ve Got To Have Luck”

*Directed by*  
**Majed Zein**  
*Produced by*  
**Nour S. Al Halabi**  
*Supervised by*  
**Sara Kaskas**

A psychological thriller that follows the story of Nora, a deaf married woman, whose day is twisted when a criminal escaping jail breaks into her house and threatens her. This short film is a project produced in the Filmmaking class.



## “Present Past”

*Written by*  
**Yasmeen Sakka**

*Directed by*  
**Nour Al Halabi**  
*Cinematography by*  
**Jad Bou Assy**  
*Edited by*  
**Rita Choueifati**  
*Supervised by*  
**Sara Kaskas**

“Present Past” is a fiction documentary that brings back Baher, a young teenage girl, to Beit Beirut, the primary witness of the Lebanese civil war. As she enters, she revives a mirage of real stories from the war until she realizes through her journey that she is trapped inside the museum and calling for a way out.



## “Nasseeb”

*Directed and written by*  
**Joy Salah**

*Produced by*  
**Joey Badr**  
*Director of Photography*  
**Mikaella Aramouni**  
*Edited by*  
**Samir Kawas**  
*Production Design by*  
**Alex El Dahdah**  
*Supervised by*  
**Sara Kaskas**

Rachelle has a very bad history with her previous partner and everyone knows that especially her two best friends Maria and Rola. One day while they were chit chatting, Rachelle informs them she has someone new in her life called Joseph, Rola then decides to invite the couple to a small dinner at her place to meet the guy and introduce him to the rest of the friend group. Rachelle and Joseph arrive at the dinner and throughout the whole night a situation unfolds that puts her love life to the test.



## “Dabbous”

*Directed by*  
**Feras El Sheikh**  
*Produced by*  
**Joelle Ghaddar**  
*Cinematography by*  
**Farah Abdelsater**  
*Edited by*  
**Dima Hijazi**  
*Supervised by*  
**Tony Farjallah**

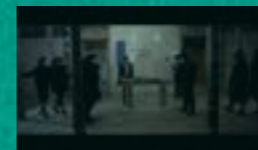
There is a sad truth about our community. Honor crimes still exist and on a wider scale than they should be. In poor and overpopulated areas, limited freedom is given for women and the traditional mentality still persists. This short film gives women a voice and moves the public opinion to stop this brutality. The plot revolves around May and her daughter who live in a small apartment, where a supermarket keeper called Youssef rapes the mother in her kitchen.



## “Behind the Tree”

*Directed by*  
**Emilio Mounsef**  
*Cinematography by*  
**Khaled Abi Joumaa**  
*Continuity by*  
**Lynn Sukkar**  
*Line production by*  
**Yara Tabchy**  
*Production Coordination by*  
**Raissa Frangie**  
*Supervised by*  
**Omar Moujaes**

Rola, a 40-year-old woman, embarks on a journey into her old village. After 10 years of illegal departure because of the strict rules of the system that forces adoption, she reconciles with her younger brother Nader. Through her journey she aims to convince her brother to leave the village to save his unborn child. However, her brother is sincerely attached to the village to leave.



## “Mother Art”

*Written and Directed by*  
**Rahaf Jammal**  
*Produced by*  
**Iyad Tchelebi**  
*Director of Photography by*  
**Karl Bourjeily**  
*Art Direction by*  
**Louna Karamah**  
*Edited by*  
**Samir Kawwas**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

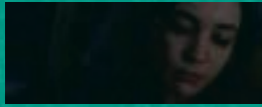
Farouk XX is an artist who collects and preserves the corpses of his dead family members, showcasing them in an exhibition. He disagrees with his manager, who is pushing him to add new elements to the exhibition in order to avoid losing fans. On a very special day, a dedicated fan enters the museum and causes a change of plan.



## “November/ تشرين”

*Directed and produced by*  
**Dana Younes**  
*Director of Photography*  
**Khaled Abi Jomaa**  
*Edited by*  
**Samir Kawas**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

A man goes through a severe depression and experiences a meaningless life after his girlfriend abandons him out of nowhere. He lives in a battle among his thoughts and his emotions, until when his thoughts lead him to an Ice cream shop where he finds a purpose to live.



## “A System of Reckoning”

*Directed by*  
**Louna Karameh**  
*Produced by*  
**Sabrina Bouri**  
*Assistant Producer by*  
**Dana Younes**  
*Assistant Director by*  
**Iyad Tchaleb**  
*Director of Photography by*  
**Kourken Papazian**  
*Editing by*  
**Kareem Fayad**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

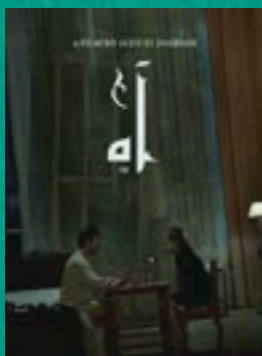
A young girl who plans every second of her life has decided she was going to die on April 26. She goes through all the preparations of her funeral and place of death. When her plan doesn't work during the first trial, she faces reality for the first time in years. The morning after, she goes back to her delusion and postpones her death to the next year.



## "ترب"

*Directed by*  
**Rachid Hneineh**  
*Produced by*  
**Rayan Zrein**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

A small family spends their days petrified by the father. When death knocks on this family's door the powerful father is put to his eternal rest. The beleaguered family tries to sustain the house as it gets destroyed and shattered, until the young daughter uses her only source of endurance to save the family.



## “AH”

*Written and directed by*  
**Alex El Dahdah**  
*Produced by*  
**Roody Madi and Alex El Dahdah**  
*Cinematography by*  
**Taline Bedikian**  
*Edited by*  
**Rita Abi Daoud and Alex El Dahdah**  
*Supervised by*  
**Sara Kaskas**

Malek, a young man born into a Lebanese feudalist family, is living a secret love story with the man of his dreams. Facing fierce opposition from the matriarch landowner of the family, Malek strives to hold onto his own identity. Her disapproval and determination to maintain “our dynasty” effectively destroys the relationship. The hopes, fears, longings and desires of Malek and his lover unfold in a surrealist tale of frustrated love.



## “Saved by The Bell”

*Directed by*  
**Kourken Papazian**  
*Cinematography by*  
**Karim El Ali**  
*Edited by*  
**Adam Jammal**  
*Produced by*  
**Nathalie Maalouf and Noha Miari**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

In a small Armenian village in Lebanon, there lives Shavarsh. His son from abroad sent him a letter asking Shavarsh to live with him in the US, and since then he's been facing a dilemma of whether to leave or stay in the village. He has not told the others about this. One day, Shavarsh finds an abandoned bell, and takes it home. The film unfolds the absurd events created by the presence of the bell. Will the bell help Shavarsh decide?



## “Allegro”

*Directed and written by*  
**Karl Bou-Rjeily**  
*Produced by*  
**Ghada Youssef**  
*Cinematography by*  
**Jad Misri**  
*Edited by*  
**Adam Jammal**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

An experimental short film about the journey of three music students towards the freedom for their creativity. After being fed up from the forced rhythm upon them, they finally unite in their rebellion and stand against the oppression of the system.



## “Light Fingers”

*Directed, written and produced by*  
**Carina Ashkar**  
*Edited by*  
**Jad Misri and Carina Ashkar**  
*Director of Photography by*  
**Jad Misri**  
*Supervised by*  
**Dr. Sabine El Chamaa**

While Omar is in the apartment unpacking all the furniture, Sahar is at the corner supermarket of their new town, getting accused of shoplifting. She gets back to the apartment and does not have a conversation about it with Omar. They barely share a few words while unpacking. Omar eventually leaves the apartment to close off a deal that leads us to understand the reason why they had to move out of their old town.

## Social Issues Captured in Art: Comm Arts students start a Micro Level change

by Zaynab Raya

*“Pascal’s concert was life changing and took me to places. I am one of the people who encourage LAU to keep on graduating such brilliant minds who will one day make a change.”*

- Saad Abbas

Many communication arts students at LAU have used their academic knowledge as an opportunity to instigate resilience and raise awareness about social issues. Resistance through art has been their mission.

Rachid Hneineh, a TV and film student, directed a theater production titled *Aazimet Lsenet* to reflect on the struggles of women in society. The performance was made of two sets of characters: one set represented the modern society, and the other portrayed the traditional society. Each framed the lives of women from the day they are born, until the day they become mothers.

Growing up in a conservative family with a single boy and four girls, Hneineh was taught to be the “man of the house.”

He explained that he disliked the way his parents treated his younger sisters. His siblings’ misfortunes of living in a misogynistic society triggered the idea of his script.

“I just felt the urge to say one thing out loud,” he stated. “Stop treating women as if they are objects.”

Hneineh also pinpointed another struggle women face. This time, the struggle was inspired by his mother, who like other women, was forced to wear the veil.

“When I asked her why she couldn’t take her own decision and remove it, her answer was ‘people’s tongues’ [literal translation of ‘Lsenet Lnes’ in English],” said Hneineh. “That’s where the title of my play came from.”

Aside from women rights and gender discrimination, Pascale Jallouf, a performing arts graduate, was inspired by another issue for her production; her source of inspiration was war.

Jallouf grew up in Syria and experienced “events that no child should ever experience.”

War changed her life in many ways, and so she reflected that in her concert *Toute Toute ma Kholsit el Hattoute*.

Jallouf’s performance has served as a relief to her emotions like never before.

“Honestly, I felt good,” she said. “I didn’t expect the audience to relate this much, we just all shared the same energy and emotion.”

“I believe in art therapy. I think that tackling a problem and discussing it through a production can be a healing process,” she added.

The audience members left the concert with teary eyes and hands closed in fists.

Another performing arts graduate, Tala Nashar, has also succeeded in directing a few productions as a student, which reflected on many controversial social issues.

A play titled *Huis Clos*, presented the strong relationship between love and hell, while *Entezar Awdat Joudo*, was another performance that tackled existential crisis by combining philosophy with art. She also participated in other productions.

Ayoubi had the most impact on me, she explained. “It talked about a Palestinian woman, where the audience doesn’t just learn about her throughout the journey, but also gets to know more about the injustice Palestine suffers.”

Nashar’s journey at LAU taught her how to inspire others and affect change through communication arts. She believes that the best way to make a change is through reaching out to people.

“Picking such a domain is the start of our revolution,” she said.

Lina Abyad, performing arts professor at LAU, believes that the best part about this journey is that “it is a give and take,” one grabs a certain situation and creates art out of it.

“I think our students are ready for great achievements,” said Abyad. “I’m sure they are aware that art is a tool for the transformation of society.”

*“I believe in art therapy, I think that tackling a problem and discussing it through a production can be a healing process.”*

- Pascale Jallouf

## Prep for Your Exams the Right Way!

by Mohamed Shour

“How will I pass this exam!?” you say while downing your energy drink. You light up a cigarette to help cope with the stress and crack open every chips bag in sight.

Next morning comes. You failed your exam.

“I don’t see what I did wrong!”

Read everything above again. Still don’t see it?

Scientific research has shown that things deemed normal on a daily basis can have adverse effects on the brain in the long run and, in turn, academic performance takes a huge blow. So, if you would like to know what you’re doing wrong, keep reading.

### Smoking

Your deep sigh somehow made its way through the screen – you’ve heard it all before. But, long-term smoking in adolescents actually affects the brain to hinder academic performance and makes you more susceptible to psychiatric disorders.

A study by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam showed that the prefrontal cortex development is vulnerable to psychoactive substances like nicotine which hinders

the development of the brain cells.

**Solution:** Stop smoking. Easier said than done, but it’s the only way according to Assistant Professor of Nutrition at LAU Lama Mattar, PhD. “Completely cut down on smoking. The nervous system regeneration is extremely difficult and there’s no going back after cell damage,” Mattar said.

### Energy Drinks

According to a study conducted by the University of Pretoria, caffeine in energy drinks causes deficits in learning and overall perceptual memory. It can also elevate levels of anxiety which in turn, directly affects focus while studying.

**Solution:** Mattar explained that a good replacement would be green tea.

“The body needs caffeine, but they have to choose what type of beverage has better outcomes,” she said. “Green tea also has a lot of antioxidants, which are good for the body.”

### High Sugar Foods & Drinks

Everyone has a sweet tooth, but the ingestion of sugary products is often overdone. A study by the University

of California showed that increased glucose levels was linked to the faster ageing of brain cells and therefore, cognitive and memory deficiencies. **Solution:** Consuming fruits can have a positive effect because they have lower sugar levels, and are overall healthier for the body, explained Mattar.

“Instead of snacking on overly sugary products, you can wrap any form of nuts in a tissue and put it in your pocket,” she said.

### Processed Foods

Processed foods are criminally high in salt, which comes as a surprise to many people. According to a study by the Weill Cornell Medicine, elevated levels of salt intake leads to cognitive impairment and issues with focus.

**Solution:** To counteract the sodium, eat more fruits.

“Fruits are rich in potassium and they counter-balance the sodium in processed foods,” Mattar said. Mattar also stated that making something fresh at home, with fresh ingredients, promises you at least half the amount of sodium.



# Student Diaries

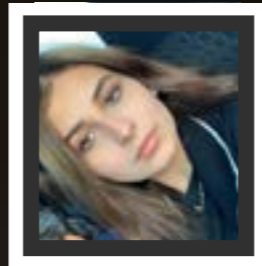
## Reflections on Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change Seminar 2019

by Jana Barakat

**Lynn Soueid**

*Majoring in communication and minoring in advertising and public relations*

A diversity bubble filled with relentless efforts and pure love. On this trip, I've met people who reside in my mind forever; they carry pieces of my heart with them wherever they go. From an educational approach, I was in rooms filled with students and professors who widened my perspective of the world politically, socially, and economically. I could not have asked for a smarter group of people to be with. On a social level, I am still in awe of the kindness of people whose intentions are not less than pure. They seemed like a breath of fresh air in a world that seemed so sad lately. I am forever grateful and beyond appreciative. This experience was one for the books. Salzburg, you hold all of my questions and secrets.



**Ayah Ghandour**

*Majoring in TV and film*

The seminar was a lifetime experience and I was lucky enough to be involved in it. I came to Salzburg not knowing what to expect, with the nerves and excitement of living with people having high academic backgrounds. It was much more than that. It created the lessons, experiences, and friends of a lifetime. We attended several lectures, panels, and participated in numerous activities. My heart is full of joy, appreciation, and gratitude. It's unbelievable just how beautiful souls and minds I met from all over the world were in one place, the Schloss Leopoldskron. I travelled the world in three weeks by staying in one spot!



**Farah Ismail**

*Majoring in interdisciplinary gender studies*

Mother, director, student, hard worker, roommate, friend, leader... Being part of the Salzburg Global Seminar was an exile where I found peace, good friends, a lot of knowledge, and most importantly, myself.



**Jana Barakat**

*Majoring in multimedia journalism*

This might sound cliché, but I literally visited 13 countries in three weeks and in one place! Listening to people talking different languages, getting to know more about their cultures, and learning from their experience is Salzburg Global Seminar in a nutshell. I never expected that saying goodbye to this place would be so hard and missing it would hurt this much! Salzburg, thank you for a lifetime experience.



**Maya Estephan**

*Majoring in psychology*

I went into the Salzburg experience with an open heart and mind. I was ready to meet people from different backgrounds and cultures while learning more about the cost of disbelief. I got out of it with more than I imagined, I connected with people from across the world, made valuable friendships, and learned about different conflicts from different parts of the world. The only downside to this experience was the goodbyes and that says a lot.



**Sarah Nassif**

*Majoring in communication*

I thought I knew how people on the other side of the world live, I thought I knew how they think and act, and I was sure they knew nothing about us and had the wrong impression about Lebanon. I had it all wrong. Turns out we know nothing about each other; the media shapes us with wrong beliefs. After living with 74 participants from 13 different countries, I found myself responsible for conveying the truth and contributing into making a change. Eighteen days full of experience, love, and engagement taught me the value of a united diverse world. Salzburg was an unforgettable experience that is hard to put in words. Truly, it is a learning opportunity not to miss.



**Youssef Ghanem**

*Majoring in computer engineering*

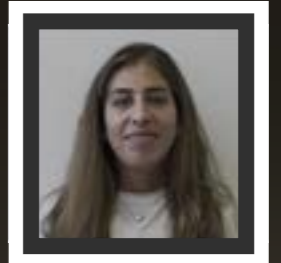
When I applied to this program, I thought it would be just like any other semester abroad and that I would get over it within three weeks. However, I didn't realize how big of an impact it would have on my life. It required hard work and it was very tiring but the bonds I made with other participants from all around the world are unbreakable and I made friends for life. This was truly a very fun and unforgettable experience that has changed my life for the better and I recommend everyone to try and apply for this program.



**Tara Beckdache**

*Majoring in communication*

Going to the Salzburg Global Seminar was one of the best experiences I've had. I was culturally exposed to people from all around the world and I was able to learn through real life experience. I am glad and grateful for these best three weeks of my life.



**Nour Kazoun**

*Majoring in TV and film*

Salzburg Global Seminar is a life changing experience. I met over 100 people from different cultures where we lived, ate, learned and partied together for three weeks in an incredible schloss. Our main purpose was to challenge the cost of disbelief in a digital age. I learned how the media had changed the way we consume news and therefore, changed my view of reading the media and started to notice any bias wordings and imagery.



# Bil Hawa Sawa: A Student-Run Online/ Offline Campaign

by Ghaidaa Hreiby

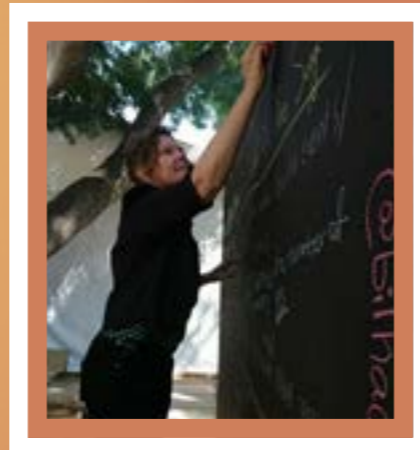
“Bil Hawa Sawa” is a student campaign that aims to raise awareness on mental health issues among LAU students and improve the university’s counseling services. Sponsored by the disability hub and under the guidance of Assistant Professor of Communication and Multimedia Journalism Gretchen King, four communication arts students joined their efforts to launch an online and offline campaign under the hashtags #BilHawaSawa and #Relatable during Festival NEXT. The mental health campaign called students to freely express their opinion and invited them to enter the conversation through several activities that include, but are not limited to: circulating infographics, chalking around the Beirut campus grounds, and collecting concerns and suggestions regarding the current counseling services at LAU.



## Salam Halila

Majoring in communication and minoring in photography

I loved being part of this campaign as I got to implement a lot of what I learned from my communication courses as well as work on an important topic that is not usually addressed, which is mental health. It was interesting to see how many people engaged with our campaign and pushed us to advocate for better mental health services as it is very much needed at LAU.



## Ameena Ali

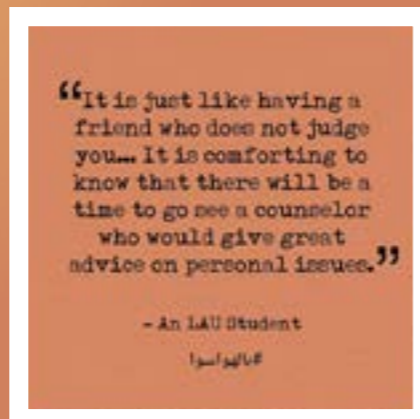
Majoring in communication

It was a challenging yet, a very illuminating experience to work on the visuals of the campaign, talk about the importance of removing the stigma around counseling, and presenting the results of our findings and solutions to the Dean of Students. I loved using the skills I have learned from my major to implement a social campaign that is important to me.

## Ghiwa Al Ayyass

Majoring in performing arts and minoring in advertising and public relations

It was a fruitful experience not only because of the PR experience I got from the campaign, but it was also an opportunity to meet students and counselors. We were also able to explain the importance of mental health and the services that our university offers to its people.



# Student Activities

## Sally Farhat

Pursuing an MA in Multimedia Journalism

Location: Hanoi, Vietnam

July 2019

Sally Farhat represented the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut in the UNESCO 2019 Forum on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. She was a panelist in “Plenary Town Hall: Delivering the facts-Is this possible and how?” This plenary focused on particular challenges related to cognitive learning in ESD and GCED– that is, how to deliver facts in a post-truth era.

Every two years, UNESCO brings together stakeholder groups and experts from both areas at the UNESCO Forum on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. The forum aims to support synergies between ESD and GCED, and foster a holistic approach to Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education and the Education 2030 Agenda.

The forum presented how the three learning dimensions of ESD and GCED (cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural) are reflected in curricula at early childhood, primary and secondary education levels and exchange innovative and promising approaches on how to address gaps and fully harness the potential of the three domains of learning at the three levels of school education in order to support sustainable development and global citizenship.



# Student Profiles

## Youssef Dghaidy: A Day Dreamer With a Goal

by Jana Barakat

He had a childhood just like anyone else. Played around, colored, and finished building some puzzles. However, he had something deep inside that he always wanted to bring out to gain everyone's scrutiny. There was always this shy little boy at school who tried to keep his distance, but this boy turned out to be the outstanding one in his family and among his friends.

His friends might be as talented as him, but he has a story.

Youssef Dghaidy, a TV and film student at LAU, was only 15 years old when he first bought a DSLR camera. With zero experience, but strong enthusiasm, thrill, and innocence, Dghaidy managed to write and shoot his first film with his school friends and his beloved older sister. And this was just the beginning.

Armed with a small camera, he created his own studio in a small corner of his house that lies in the Beqaa, West of Lebanon. Dghaidy shot video clips with his dearest sister Hiba.

"We used to have a lot of fun, I used to sing and do acting scenes that fit the song's story, and it was so funny," Hiba said, while grinning from ear to ear flashing back all the childhood memories.

Dghaidy also recalled these memories where he used to spend weekends just to do things he relished.

"I wasn't the kind of kid who had a lot of friends. I used to spend weekends at home either shooting or watching videos," he said.

At that time, he was only 11 years old, directing, filming, and editing with an output that surpasses his age.

At 15 years old, he was ready to shoot his film, he recalled while rubbing his jeans with excitement, smiling, and delicately narrating the story.

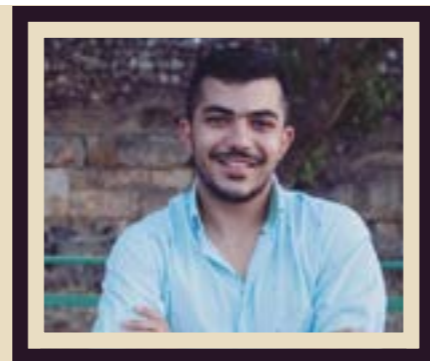
It was 2014, and Lebanon was under bomb attacks. Dghaidy was influenced by these tragic events and by the Lebanese Director Nadine Labaki's *Where Do We Go Now* film and so, his first movie was born. The film was about the war in Lebanon and its effect on people. There were three main actors and each had a story: three girls, one had a malformation caused by a bomb, the second was a traitor, and the last one worked as a domestic worker for a living. Dghaidy had a feeling that this short movie was different. He insisted to screen his film at his school's festival after his English teacher patted his shoulder and told him: "You have a future, and I want to get you on TV."

Students and teachers were fascinated by his work.

"He found God's gift to him," Dghaidy's school Principal Christine Rayyis, PhD, said. For her, this was obvious through the passion that he had in his eyes and the way he was describing his work.

Soon things started to get more serious; Dghaidy was now on TV doing an interview about his first film. Dghaidy's courage got him applying to the Dubai Film Festival after the success he accomplished at school. He was only invited to watch the festival because his film wasn't nominated. This gave him motivation to continue and to pick TV and film as a major.

This is when all the clashes between him and his parents started. When he first got the tripod, his father thought that it was just a "teenage hobby" and majoring in this field was not part of the plan. His mother was against filming from the start as it distracted him and affected his academic performance. Just like in any other traditional Lebanese family, he had to major in medicine, law, or engineering. Majors like TV and film "don't make a living." And this is what frustrated Dghaidy the most.



"People still tell me that I'm smart and would have studied medicine. This always devastates me," he said.

Dghaidy applied to LAU only and chose TV and film because he knew what his passion was. He knew it was challenging from the moment his father told him "if you want this, then you have to make something out of it."

He saw this as a bet and was ready to compete. Dghaidy's first semester at LAU shocked him. It was far from what he expected. He stressed out because he had to live alone and he wasn't performing well at university. It was a whole new experience. Days passed until he applied for an internship at Radio Liban. That's when he met his godmother. Amal Nasser, a presenter at Radio Liban, noticed something in Dghaidy that was different and made him stand out: his talent and persistence. Dghaidy heartwarmingly explained that she is the reason he became a part-timer at the radio.

"She believed in me," he said with fondness. Nasser said that she encouraged him because she believed that he had a bright future.

"Youssef is not normal, he's patient and dedicated. I simply found him different from everyone who previously applied to the radio station," Nasser said.

Opportunities started to pop up one after the other. After working at the radio station, Dghaidy had the chance to shoot a TV show with the well-known Lebanese presenter Zaven Kouyoumdjian on Future TV.

Dghaidy knows that he has a lot more work to do. He is only a few steps away from professionalism, but according to him, what's important now is that he satisfied his family.

"I am getting somewhere and I'm winning the bet," Dghaidy said.

## Abo Hashem Al Moussawi: Spreading Positivity at LAU

by Maria Al Khoury

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, he juggles around campus with his phone and neck-mic in his hand, while students gather around him ready to answer his fun, yet creative questions.

Have you figured out who he is yet? That's right. It's Abo Hashem Al Moussawi, also known as the founder of the "Daily Question" page on Instagram.

Al Moussawi graduated from LAU in 2017 with a BA in Accounting. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in law at LAU. What differentiates him from other students, however, is his love for politics.

As a child, Al Moussawi used to eagerly watch newscasts and political shows. When he grew older, he started tackling related topics on his Instagram page. Through his social media platforms, he was able to grow his talent and reap success out of it. In 2017, Al Moussawi founded the "Daily Question" Instagram page. On his interactive platform, he poses questions to LAU students about their opinions on different political and social issues.

When it first launched, the page's concept was very simple.

"I was once hanging out with my friends on campus and started asking them random questions. I shared their answers on my personal account on Snapchat and Instagram," Al Moussawi said.

He explained that it all started with these two questions: "If you had one million dollars what would you do?" and "If you are to be transformed into an animal, which one would you choose to be?"

"After a short period of time, I found that this idea received great admiration from many people," Al Moussawi added.

Over the years, the page rapidly gained over 30,000 followers. LAU students started eagerly waiting for his questions and the "Daily Question" shortly became a weekly routine. One after the other, students stand in front of his phone's camera to record their opinions on the day's topic.

While the page started off customized to LAU students, it then began targeting other university students and the public as well. The page's questions started going viral and, at many times, they've caused controversy among students, which made Al Moussawi even more popular.

"When people see me at malls or other public spaces, they approach me and express their love to me," said Al Moussawi.

Besides being a public figure, Al Moussawi is also known for his spontaneous personality and kind heart.

"On campus, he knows everyone, and everyone knows him," said one of his friends and LAU graduate Lynn Taha. "He is always in action, moving from one area to another, talking to students, and spreading his positive energy."

A close friend of his, Abdullah Malaeb, described Al Moussawi as "the dynamo," referring to how fast he is.

During Festival NEXT 2019, Al Moussawi was approached by the organizers to host a live talk show in which he invited public figures to discuss social and political topics. This being an upgrade, Al Moussawi was able to produce a three-day talk show.

"It showed me my weak and strong points," Al Moussawi said, describing his experience.

Al Moussawi revealed that he is organizing with the dean's office an on campus talk show for the upcoming semesters.

According to the Dean of Students Raed Mohsen, PhD, people do not only like him, but are also proud of him. Mohsen himself is satisfied with Al Moussawi's work and is proud to "have a student like Abo Hashem."





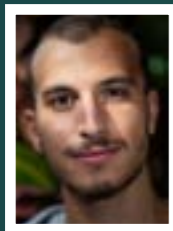
# Student Profiles

## Connect With the Students Behind Issue 3

by Rana Tabbara

For three consecutive years, the Department of Communication Arts at LAU has been publishing its own student magazine, CONNECTIONS. In fall 2018, the department offered a topics course in magazine writing, where 12 students ran a newsroom headed by Assistant Professor of Multimedia Journalism and CONNECTIONS' Editor-in-Chief Claudia Kozman, PhD. Students wrote the articles, created a business plan for that issue, and handled the visuals.

Connect with **the writers:**



**Ahmad Karakira**  
aka Karkar

BA in multimedia journalism

He's a journalist by profession and an athlete at heart. If you're looking for a personal trainer or a nutrition advisor, Ahmad is the guy for you! He adopted a healthy lifestyle in 2016. He joined the track varsity team and hits the pool and the gym regularly.



**Jad Fawaz**  
aka Brownie Queen

BS in economics and minor in multimedia journalism and political science

No one is ever down if Jad is around. You can open your heart to this guy and get all the attention you need, along with the good sweets that your taste buds can handle. The more you're depressed, the more brownies you will get!



**Jana Barakat**  
aka the Facebook Activist

BA in multimedia journalism

Posting political thoughts on her Facebook timeline, Jana is always ready to cause controversy. If you thrive for a debate in the virtual world, Jana's comment section is a safe place to start.



**Maria Khoury**  
aka the Mysterious Photographer

BA in multimedia journalism

Maria is a chill person, who would sit to listen, but not to talk. If you ever find a mysterious photographer in one of the department's events, know it's her.



**Mira Kobeissi**  
aka the Chameleon

BA in multimedia journalism

Mira would sit with any group of people and blend in with them. Whether they are business students, architects, computer science groups, emos, or kids, Mira can find a way to open a conversation with them all.



**Mads Joakim Rimer Rasmussen**  
aka the Desert Tortoise

BA in photojournalism and an exchange student from the Danish School of Media and Journalism

Although he comes from a rather cold land, he wears a jacket if the AC is on in class. Joakim is an award winning student who archived in pictures the life of Chatila refugee children.



**Steffen Neupert**  
aka the Funny one

BA in journalism and an exchange student from the Danish School of Media and Journalism

He might not give that vibe, but Steffen is the one who makes us laugh in class. His sarcasm and sense of humor can make Mona Lisa smile. Steffen is also famous for his taste in GIFs.



**Rana Tabbara**  
aka the Hippie

BA in multimedia journalism

And then there's me!

Connect with **the graphic designer:**



**Bahaa Radwan**  
aka the Talent

BA in television and film

Bahaa is a multi-talented and a multidisciplinary artist. His hobbies include painting, illustrating, playing the guitar, composing music, creating films, and shooting photographs. Bahaa, you intimidate us.

Connect with **the PR/advertisement team:**



**Jena Karam**  
aka the Champ

BA in communication

If you ever want to go out at night, but feel it's too dangerous, give Jena a call. Not only is she a fun companion, but she will also keep you safe from any harm with her MMA skills.



**Mai Al Khouri**  
aka the Bumble Bee

BA in communication

In a beehive of serious working bees, Mai is the one bee that tries to convince her community that honey mustard is way better than plain honey. Whenever you feel miserable, just reach out to Mai and she'll show you how inspirational life can be if you look at it differently.



**Rawane Itani**  
aka the Disney Character

BA in communication

If you go to Blend, you'll spot Rawane singing Disney songs, and sometimes with a chipmunk voice. You'll enjoy it! For Rawane is a professional singer and a guitar player.

# Student Awards

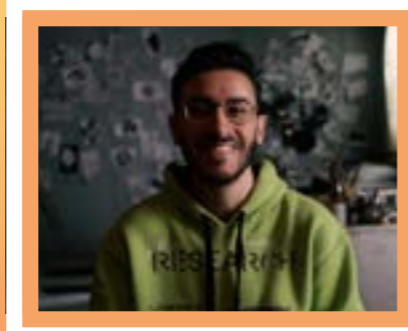
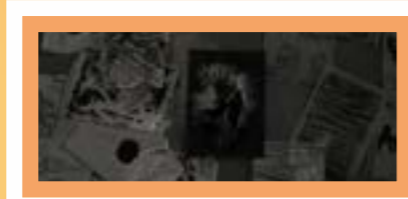
## A Reflection: Samir Kawas' Jabbara Scores Wins

When my film *Jabbara* was still in post-production, I was constantly searching for the possible film festivals that I wanted to submit to. At first, things got out of hand as I totally went overboard and over budget. However, after narrowing my options down and having the film finally complete, *Jabbara's* festival run had begun. I submitted it to several fests, some local and others abroad, not knowing to which it'll get selected and to which it won't. I have to tell you, the worst part about submitting to film festivals is having to anxiously wait for an answer.

Several weeks had passed and then I received an email. *Jabbara's* first selection! I jumped, I screamed, I cried. I was ecstatic about our selection

at the Festigious film festival in Los Angeles. The following few days were stressful as I was eager to see whether or not we would win anything. I woke up one day and I checked my email to find that *Jabbara* had received an honorable mention in the student film category. A few weeks after, *Jabbara* won 2 awards in another film fest: second Best Film of the month and Best Original Score of the month of August in The Monthly Film Festival in Scotland. We were also nominated for Best Actress, Best Editor and Best Cinematography.

It feels great to see something we've all put so much hard work, energy, and time into, succeed. And hopefully, this is only the beginning of many more film selections and award wins.



## Alumni Making Their Way to International Festivals

It's true that some opportunities can start unexpected journeys. *Anagnorisis*, a Capstone project created by Lama Hatoum and Ghada Youssef, met international standards and made its way to Los Angeles Film Awards, during which it received an honorable mention. The film tells the story of a girl who decides to let go of her dead mother, whose soul used to communicate with her through a dance. The film also succeeded in taking part in many international competitions such as the European Cinematography Awards, where it received the "Best Student Film" award.

"It is such a motivation to feel that your film is of interest to audiences both locally and abroad," said Youssef fondly about *Anagnorisis*.



## Firas Itani Takes Sugarcoat to LA

After being awarded best capstone project in 2018, the film *Sugarcoat* directed by Firas Itani, LAU alumni holding a BA in TV and film, made it to the Lebanese Film Festival in Beirut. After the big success that the film was able to achieve in Lebanon, *Sugarcoat* broke the Lebanese frontiers, and was given the privilege to take part in the New FilmMakers Los Angeles Festival, which will take the Lebanese film making industry to the next level.

In only 11 minutes, "the film criticizes the obsession of the people pleaser with propriety in the face of a demanding social structure," said Itani.



## Alumnae Weam Al Dakheel Becomes a Pioneer Journalist



Weam Al Dakheel is a Saudi Arabian journalist and television presenter who proved herself worthy of becoming the pioneer she is today. In September 2018, Al Dakheel appeared on Saudi TV's Channel 1 as the first woman to anchor the evening broadcast news.

Chosen for her competence, Al Dakheel is an example to every woman who has a dream. Al Dakheel graduated in 2011 with a BA in Communication Arts from LAU. She attributes her success to dedication accompanied with passion. "I am aware of my passion and with

awareness comes responsibility," she said. "I just feel my passion, guide it, and work hard to fulfill it with great responsibility. This is my purpose in life, this is who I am."

# Featured Alumni

## Alumnus Awad Awad: Answers his Inner Impulse

by Rana Tabbara

It was 6 p.m. and I was standing somewhere in Ashrafieh looking at the jasmine tree and the green gate that alumnus Awad Awad had described to me. While I stood there, and as the wind hit the jasmynes releasing their aroma, I wondered why someone would refer to a tree or the color of a building's gate to tell me where he or she lived. Then I thought maybe theater directors like Awad are imaginative enough to notice the simplest details. Then again, I was probably overthinking.

Before I could come up with a logical explanation, Awad opened the gate and accompanied me upstairs to his apartment. The first thing my eyes fell on as we got in was a shelf that displayed all of his achievements, from awards to art ornaments.

Awad, however, didn't always live with ornaments and his journey was not always a breath of fresh jasmine air. Some people start from stage one but Awad started from the bottom and now he is here.

"I was born in 1993, as a Palestinian refugee in Ein el Helwi camp," said Awad.

Growing up, he had a passion for arts, as he taught himself how to draw, sew, and do wood crafts. He also engaged himself in theater productions at school, and acted out sketches in family gatherings. After graduating from high school, Awad was able to secure a fully paid scholarship at the Lebanese American University.

Based on his love for the arts, one would assume Awad applied to the Communication Arts program back then, except that he didn't.

"My family never took me seriously as an artist; to them theater was not a career," reminisced Awad. "I was advised to pursue something else, and thus I went into graphic design."

Although he started university on the wrong foot, Awad did not give up on doing the thing he does best. From the first week, he tracked down then chairperson of the Department of Communication Arts and found himself at Mona Knio's office offering her his services.

"Where is the theater?" asked Awad. "I want to work in the theater."

Since then Awad entered the theater and never came back. A w a d A w a d, the theater was calling him ever since. "The first time I met Awad I was working on a set at Gulbenkian theater when he kept repeating 'I'm not a Communication Arts student but I love this theater and I want to work in it.' I remember then looking at him and thinking: what is this newbie doing here?" recalled Annie Tabakian,



communications & journalism lab supervisor at LAU. "I didn't expect to see Awad again. We always hear outside students say that they 'love working in theater' but that's about it we wouldn't see them come back."

"Unlike other students Awad didn't just claim a statement he claimed the stage," added Tabakian.

In the first week of his sophomore year at university, the graphic design undergraduate worked in a play, and as his first year wrapped up he found himself contributing to 30 other plays and conducting his own.

"I remember working on my first production," said Awad. "It was outdoors and I was assembling the set alone while Communication Arts students looked at me and wondered what that alien from graphic design was doing."

Still a graphic design major, Awad was excelling in the Department of

Communication Arts. He shadowed Knio, in all of her play production classes for four semesters without skipping any session.

"At first Awad wasn't our student but we sure loved him like he was one of our own," said Senior Performing Arts Theater Manager, Hala Masri. "He used to work harder than a lot of other students and while everyone called him for help, he used to do his own productions with minimal assistance." "He used to get everything done with his bare hands, his bare magical hands," added Masri.

"When I set theater as my priority, I started failing my graphic design courses, people started advising me to change my major," alleged Awad. "But I didn't really have a choice; my scholarship package didn't cover changing majors, until I decided to take a leap of faith, and proposed a study plan that convinced them to break the rules."

Awad finally got into Communication Arts after three years of trespassing into the major. During his undergraduate years he assisted in eight major productions, contributed to 130 plays and was assigned, at 20 years of age, as a Festival director at Mishkal Festival.

Awad sat back dwelling on his educational experience, talking as if these experiences just happened last night or this morning. He continued telling his stories until reality hit him; he then started throwing out statements such as:

"It is not easy making it in Beirut"  
"It is not easy making it as a theater or an art director"  
"It is not easy making it as a Palestinian in Lebanon"

Then suddenly, a breeze blew and the scent of jasmine came back.

"But I know what I love, I love what I do, and I love me for that," said Awad with a triumphant look on his face.



# Faculty

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# Faculty Awards

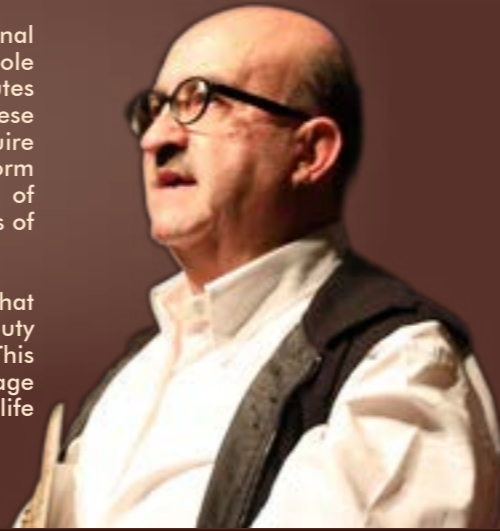
## Joseph Khalife Earns the 2018 Golden Award for Short Films

Composer, Musician in Residence, and Senior instructor of music at LAU Joseph Khalife added to his long musical journey another achievement. After composing for a short film produced as a tribute to the five UNESCO World Heritage sites in Lebanon (Byblos, Tyre, Anjar, Baalbek, and the Valley of Qadisha), he won the 2018 Golden Award for short films at the Tokyo International Awards.

"The importance of this work is that it is a new and universal addition to my music production, which exceeds 1,200 tracks," Khalife said. "This makes me more ambitious and productive."

Before it could reach an international audience, Khalife had to put a whole lot of energy to produce 14 minutes of music. As he described, these 14 minutes did not only require assembling musical notations to form a melody, but also a great deal of "love and adoration for the Cedars of Lebanon."

"The importance of this work is that it tells the world about the beauty of Lebanon through its cedars. This work is part of my Lebanese heritage and my love for this country," Khalife added.



## A Competitive Research Fellowship Awarded to Sleiman El Hajj

Assistant Professor of Creative and Journalistic Writing at LAU, Sleiman El Hajj was awarded the highly competitive and prestigious Visiting Research Fellowship at the University of Oxford's Department of International Development (ODID) for Trinity Term (summer 2019). ODID is a multidisciplinary research department that aims to "challenge assumptions, drawing on multiple disciplines and cross-country comparisons to generate new thinking that is helping to bring about change." During the fellowship, El Hajj completed the legwork for two new studies in progress: his research focused on representations of ageing women in Lebanese Anglophone literature, as well as interstitial spaces

as vectors of home in the Syrian Civil War (2011-present), with a focus on Asperger syndrome and feminist auto-ethnography. In the 2019 QS World Rankings, Oxford was first in English studies and third in development studies, the areas in which El Hajj's research intersects.



## Seba Ali Brings LAU a Prestigious Award Under "Revolution" Category

"Here is to the IMAGINE initiative, Imagine Workshop and Concerts Series, and many more projects that advocate for gender equality and human rights at the Department of Communication Arts," said Assistant Professor of Music Seba Ali, as she received a prestigious international award in Germany.

Ali won the 2019 iphiGenia Gender Design Award as the founder and Director of Imagine Workshop and Concerts Series (IWCS) and organizer of the first gender fluid fashion show in Lebanon and the Arab region during IWCS Fall 2017 residency Reflections on gender equality, social justice, and human rights.

The prestigious award falls under the "Revolution" category, which recognizes an "individual product,

research project, actions or initiatives showing a credible and innovative fusion of gender-sensitivity, and excellent design," the announcement noted.

The jury was impressed by the "equally innovative, courageous and outstanding work," their note continued. "The diversity and commitment were very impressive and accompanied by excellent design."

Seba Ali extends a heartfelt thank you to the founder and chair of iphi along with the jury members for recognizing her work.

"I'm glad I was able to get there, but sad that many from Lebanon weren't able due to the revolution," Ali expressed.

## Double Granted Faculty Seba Ali Plans for her Next Residency

Seba Ali and her colleagues in a multi-university consortium led by University of Derby won a grant of \$75,000 for the GCRF project, Creative Network Plus: Baseline Research and Development Project (BREDEP). She, along with her artistic collaborators Taipei Civic Orchestra and Tunisia88, won another grant of \$100,000, part of which will be used to support their travel to LAU in spring to perform in her upcoming residency.



## Gretchen King



**Position:**  
Assistant Professor,  
Communication and  
Multimedia Journalism

**Program:**  
Multimedia Journalism

**Degree:**  
PhD in Communication  
Studies

**Focus:**  
Alternative and  
community media  
with a focus on  
feminist political  
economy, media  
education and  
polices, journalism  
and critical audience  
studies.

by Jana Barakat

Gretchen King is an award-winning community news and public affairs programming. She occupied the title of News Coordinator at CKUT 90.3 FM for 10 years and has extensive experience in radio. King joined the Department of Communication Arts last year and since then has been contributing to on-campus activities.

**From a researcher to an assistant professor, why choose academia at LAU?**

Teaching does decrease the number of hours you spend on research, but you can continue doing it at LAU as you're teaching; in fact, it is highly encouraged. Now I chose teaching and at LAU specifically, because I personally was interested in working, teaching or learning in the Arab region. This fact explains why I based my doctorate research on a community radio in Jordan. Part of my interest in the Arab region can be attributed to the fact that I was born and raised in North America, although I didn't really desire to live there. Thus, after a husband, kids, and a PhD I co-decided to move to the Middle East.

**Is it always easy to do research and teach at the same time?**

No, and you can see that based on the number of articles that I have piled up and I need to write. Sometimes you have to put research in the back.

**What attracted you to the Middle East knowing how the media portrays it?**

I think, on one level, I learned a long time ago not to trust the media and its portrayal of 'accurate' anything, anywhere, or any point in time. I have been working on mostly Palestinian solidarity activism and activism in Afghanistan and Iraq because of the US and Canadian foreign policy in the region. So being an anti-war, anti-occupation, pro-peace activist, and working on social justice issues means inherently you're working in solidarity with communities not just here, but also communities of refugees and people who have families in this region. For a long time, I worked side by side with people either from this region or in solidarity with social movements from this region and some of that was media war.

**After coming to Lebanon, did you find out that it's true? That it's not safe here?**

Do I think it's not safe? No. But neither is anywhere. I have a perspective of the everyday "war on poor" that happens in Canada and the US that the average person walking on the streets in Lebanon wouldn't think about. For example, the mass suicide rates in Canada among indigenous populations. I also have insights on not just the war on poor, but the criminalization. I know that there are more people in prison in the US than anywhere in the world; I know that women and youth are more in prison in Canada than anywhere else in the world. This is just as

devastating to the society as a bullet and a bomb. Canada and the US do a very good job at not talking about their problems, and that's why it's not evident.

**How hard is it to implement the concepts of critical thinking in classes where students are full of energy yet have a sense of hatred towards colonial countries?**

I think it's a rich opportunity because people have an anti-imperial, anti-colonial framework and that's great. But what's to replace? What's the come-after? Do we need to talk about equality of women and homosexuals? So by having conversations about race, gender, class, and about ability, then we can get students to start to think about how these things are represented or misrepresented in the media, how they should be better represented, and then transfer those lessons to society. I think in classes we focus on critiquing media, but also building societies.

**How do you strive to change the mentality of the students?**

I don't come to class being "Oh I want to change people," a successful education to me is successfully teaching students how to critique. I had students tell me things like: "I don't want to think about gay people and that they should keep everything to themselves." These same people would tell me later on that they have become pro-gay rights and that they want to do their projects on sexuality. Other students might come to class with zero political background, and after it they'd start watching the news as they become more critical and understanding of the political agendas.

## Sleiman El Hajj



**Position:**  
Assistant Professor,  
Creative and  
Journalistic Writing

**Program:**  
Multimedia Journalism

**Degree:**  
PhD in Creative  
Writing

**Focus:**  
Combining the creative  
with the critical to  
achieve new meaning  
and insight into the  
different cultural ills  
that undergird daily  
life in Lebanon.

by Fatima Al Mahmoud

With a feverish passion for creating stories and an appetite for books, Sleiman El Hajj, PhD, assistant professor of creative and journalistic writing at the Lebanese American University, turned his passion into a career. El Hajj pursued a BA in English Literature, a BS in Biology, an MA in American Literature, and a PhD in Creative Writing.

**How would you describe your first semester at LAU?**

The experience so far has been an interesting one. I'm teaching different courses like news writing, creative writing, and literature. Each course comes with different expectations and a different audience. I'm relatively still new so you basically "learn as you go" in terms of how things are done.

**You completed a BS in biology and a BA in literature, and your graduate studies were all focused on literature and writing. Why the shift?**

I was 17 years old, I didn't know in which direction I would end up going, so I double majored. It's not that I shifted from one field to another. From the very start, I was doing biology and literature in parallel so, I eventually got a BS in biology and a BA in literature. I was very fortunate in a sense to be able to pursue my personal interest academically. By the end of my BA, I was 21 years old at the time, and I really knew that I was more oriented towards arts and humanities. It was a very fulfilling experience doing two very different fields because it helped contribute to a well-rounded education. The kind of material I was exposed to in my BS did inform my writing now to a certain extent. It puts you in a frame of mind whereby you want to be updated on what's happening in the fields of science and technology. It was an enriching experience overall, and it wasn't a transition. I always like to emphasize that.

**For someone to pursue a career in writing, it's probably a passion that they have. Does that apply to you or would you label it as something else?**

I always knew that, one day, I would pursue a career in writing. I have always been a very avid reader growing up, so I suppose as is the case with other people who feel that way. You reach a point where you tell yourself that I've already read a great deal and now I feel ready to contribute with my own work. That's why, after having studied literature at BA and MA levels, I did not want to do my doctorate in it. I thought I wanted to start working on my own writing. The only way I can do that, to satisfy my personal interest and try to forge a career out of it, was by doing my PhD in creative writing specifically.

**You're currently teaching creative writing and news writing, which are two relatively different courses. How do you approach both classes?**

It's true, they are different, very different modes of writing. But, as we start working on feature writing, more similarities start to emerge because that's when you're

teaching students to work on feature-oriented writing, anecdotal leads, and storytelling which are in common with creative writing. We focus a lot on sensory descriptive modes of writing in fiction writing, which are in common with what we do in soft news feature writing. Having said that, yes, they are different because in one case you're meant to report on facts and instances that actually happened, and you can't really skew that or imagine how you would have wanted it to see that event happen. While in creative writing, that's exactly what we do. We imagine and re-imagine according to our aspirations.

**What was your first piece of writing?**

I always wrote short pieces when I was much younger. They were basically my own, but I never got them published anywhere. My first published piece was a story inspired by the "I Am Not Naked" movement, which I think came about in 2014, when skier Jackie Chamoun was being criticized by Lebanese media for having posed in the nude a few years before that. As a response, someone on social media started a campaign to reclaim the supposed nudity and you had people posing naked with the "I Am Not Naked" slogan under the photo. I took inspiration from that same movement to write a story under the same name, "I Am Not Naked." It was written from the perspective of an Ethiopian housekeeper who witnesses all these people coming to the studio and being photographed nude, without really understanding what's happening. The story explores her fear, her concern about what is happening, and if she will end up being harmed in one way or another. So that's my very first published piece, but it wouldn't be the first I've written. I've even kept an irregular diary as a child.

**What do you think makes someone a writer?**

In order for anyone to be a writer, you must be an avid reader first. We cannot write before having received that art, that material, prior to the act of writing. A lot of students or beginner writers who haven't done enough reading often fall into that trap. We need exposure to solid writing, which teaches us how we can approach our own writing in a way that doesn't replicate what came before. To be a good writer, you also need to be interested in the world around you. You need to keep an eye and an ear for the world around you. Often, so many ideas for stories in fiction are grounded in images you can witness in your daily life.

**Aside from reading and writing, what other interests do you have?**

I'm a very avid theater and classical music fan, and that's something I very much miss about my years overseas. But being at LAU is a good thing in that regard because you're part of an active communication arts department that appreciates theater and music. Other than that, I also love fine dining.

## Joseph Khalife: The Journey of a Music Composer

by Maria Al Khoury

With hope and passion, he was able to deliver his inner-self to the outer world. This is the academic journey of a man who was born to get inspired and inspire.

Full of faith, Joseph Khalife was able to fulfill what was obviously his destiny. Starting from the age of six, his intense emotions and vivid sensations to harmonium triggered him to draw his path to a prosperous music career, which has been practiced with love. Composer and Senior Instructor of music at the Lebanese American University Khalife has managed to mix his love for music and composition with his teaching career thus, transmitting the pulse of music from the heart to each and every student.

Born into a family with no musical background, Khalife pursued a degree in musicology not only to become the composer he is today, but to gratify his calling as well.

Khalife was that person who stood in the front rows at church every time the harmonium played. He felt something within him, as if the music activated a feeling that was never there before.

"My intense feelings drove me to turn my head in the opposite way from the orchestra every time the harmonium played, it was too dramatic for me," said Khalife. "The teacher would warn me every time to look to the front, but my feelings were too strong, I simply couldn't."

Being the passionate person he is, Khalife was expected to join piano classes at his school. Although he did not have a piano, nothing stopped him from practicing and excelling.

"I did not own a piano, so I used to practice by pushing my fingers on the dining table at home, and even with all the noises around me, I used to hear each musical note," Khalife said while doing the exact same description he

narrated. He referred to this act as the "grace that challenges anything."

Moving forward to when he was 18, Khalife went to Milan for the love of classical music just to attend an orchestral performance known as *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky. He was moved with affection and deep love to classical music.

Thirty-Seven years later into his career, Khalife combined composition with teaching. He described his teaching career as "a momentum and sense of youth that gives me life."

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*"I would not skip his class no matter what."*

- Nour Matta

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There is no distinct difference between composition and academic teaching of music for Khalife. When he teaches, he gets inspired from interacting with his students. According to him, his students bring out his creativity as much as he brings out their hard work and compassion.

However, composition to him is to an extent personal. Thus, he waits for the night to come to isolate himself and create music.

"Composition is like a thief, you have to steal from yourself and not let anything interfere," Khalife said.

After taking the introductory class, many students consider playing a musical instrument and some start appreciating Middle Eastern music even more. In his classes, Khalife teaches students how to love making music.

"This course is taken once in a lifetime, so I try to make the best out of it," he said.

At the end of each semester, Khalife gives his students a souvenir. Through the semester, he asks his students to write music lines and then collects them

all to choose beautiful ones randomly and composes a take-home melody for the class. Students love his course, and some change their view about music after taking it.

James Rahme, an industrial engineering student, enjoyed Khalife's class and learned a lot from him.

"He is so optimistic and his classes are so energetic," he said.

According to Nour Matta, a marketing student, Khalife's class is so interesting and personalized.

"I would not skip his class no matter what," she said.

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*"I did not own a piano, so I used to practice by pushing my fingers on the dining table at home, and even with all the noises around me, I used to hear each musical note."*

- Joseph Khalife

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Khalife first started his career in churches. He brought young people and small bands into effect. His first big encounter dates to when he was 21 and met Majida El Roumi. He then worked with Joumana Medawar, who he composed many hymns and songs for. He currently holds more than 1,200 melodies in his library.

People's love for listening to his songs and attending his concerts gives him great enthusiasm for continuing to produce such work.

"My heart is filled with joy whenever I see people's love and when I know that I gave them something they liked and touched their inner feelings," Khalife expressed happily.

Khalife describes music composing as something spiritual. He is willing to always continue composing with this much passion, especially for those in need. Through playing the dining table and practicing no matter what, he was able to achieve all that he wished for. The secret ingredient to a successful career in music is believing that "music is peace and that it springs from the inside of the individual."





# Faculty Activities

## Performances and Productions

Faculty: Nadra Assaf  
Location: Al Madina Theater, Beirut, Lebanon  
July and August 2019

Nadra Assaf successfully choreographed, performed, and directed several productions during the past year. In collaboration with Al Sarab Dance Company, Assaf's *Private Scars Revealed* was the ceremony's open act during the Mishkal Performance Festival. She sparked a wider conversation of how women are treated, and ultimately crossed cultural borders in a performance titled *Public Conflict, Private Scars*.

Faculty: Nadra Assaf  
Location: Byblos, Lebanon  
June 2019

Nadra Assaf directed and performed *Seven to the Seventh: A Global Dance in a Shared Virtual Stage*. In collaboration with Jimmy Bechara, Assaf and Al-Sarab Dance Company journeyed through a structured movement improvisation which touches on the current concerns of spatial ownership and migration. The participating artists highlighted awareness on these issues through a seven-point historical based movement which started at the oldest existing Mosaic in Old Souk, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and ended at one of the oldest religious spaces in Byblos, the UNESCO Cultural Square.

"The aim of the experience was to raise awareness on the historical educational significance of the land [Byblos], being the spot from where the alphabet was launched to the world, as well as its current role of embodying both Lebanese and Syrians," explained Assaf.

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Al-Madina Theater, Beirut, Lebanon.  
September 2018

In collaboration with Al-Sarab Dance Company, Amr Selim produced *Reverberation*, a 20-minutes piece of improvised music and dance during the Mishkal Festival at Al-Madina Theater.

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Hona Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon.  
November 2018

Alongside Silkroad Ensemble and Right To Play, Amr Selim launched Music for Development Project, a series that includes a musical performance, pre-performance talk, and a workshop.

## Research Conferences

Faculty: Gretchen King  
Location: University of Ottawa, Canada  
March 2019

Gretchen King, along with other authors, published a report in the University of Ottawa about the discussions and presentations which took place at the Future of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Broadcasting: Conversation and Convergence gatherings. The report shared over 40 recommendations regarding the CRTC's Policy and the upcoming review process.

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Toronto, Canada  
August 2019

Claudia Kozman presented her research study in the International Communication Division of the Association of Education for Journalism and Mass Communication at its annual conference. The study examined how Lebanese media frame their posts on Twitter and assessed the relationship between frames and newsworthiness.

Faculty: Monika Halkort  
Location: Spain, China and Lebanon  
April, June and July 2019

Monika Halkort participated in a paper presentation at the annual conference of the International Association of Media and Communications Research (IAMCR) to discuss the intersectionality of data relations in humanitarian border regimes. She also participated in another presentation at the Shenzhen Forum 2019, co-sponsored by the Shenzhen University (SZU) and the National Communications Organization (NCA) on the ethical imperatives of geo-spatial intelligence in the Mediterranean Sea and in a keynote lecture presentation at the Digital Earth Symposium organized by Ashkal Alwan and Hivos.

Faculty: Gretchen King  
Location: Ottawa, Canada  
November 2018

In collaboration with the Community Media Advocacy, Gretchen King presented research during the public hearing and submitted final comments for the Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2018-127. The research develops assessment criteria based on the Act, relevant policies, international agreements, data on the portrayal of Indigenous and disabled people in the news. Along with scholarships on multicultural and ethnic broadcasting to uphold the public interest and guarantee fundamental freedoms of protected groups.

## Lectures and Presentations

Faculty: Gretchen King  
Location: Montréal, Canada  
November 2018

Gretchen King facilitated the discussions during a conference organized by TELUQ university. The participatory event titled *Ending Fake News: The Future of Media Education Policies and Practices* brought together educators, researchers, journalists, representatives from governmental and quasi-governmental sectors, non-profit organizations, librarians, activists and students. This community met to exchange knowledge on issues related to media education and, at the end of the discussions and workshops, proposed practical recommendations to strengthen public media education policies and practices.

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Santa Clara University and Center for New Music, San Francisco  
April 2019

Amr Selim gave two lectures about Music in Islam on one hand, and Vocalizing the Horn on another. The first lecture was part of the Global Listening Seminar of the Music Department and it discussed the relationship between music and religious singing, especially Qur'an reciting in Islam. Whereas Vocalizing the Horn, was a hybrid lecture-recital by himself, for performing original and arranged Arabic tunes on the horn. It was followed by a lecture of the theory and performance of Arabic music on the horn.

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Ljubljana and Nova Gorica, Slovenia  
May 2019

Claudia Kozman visited the School of Advanced Social Studies (SASS) in Slovenia, as part of the EU-sponsored Erasmus + faculty exchange program. During her stay in Slovenia, Kozman presented two lectures about Arab media at the university's two campuses in Ljubljana and Nova Gorica. She also participated in the 11th Slovenian Social Science Conference, where she presented a talk about media literacy and social transformations.

Faculty: Monika Halkort  
Location: Spain, China and Lebanon  
February 2019

Monika Halkort took part in a two-day research seminar at the Homeworks Study Program (HWP) of the Lebanese Foundation for Plastic Arts - Ashkal Alwan. The HWP enrolls 10-15 contemporary artists from the Arab world and beyond for a period of 10 months each year. The curriculum consists of research seminars, lectures and practice-based workshops with recognized scholars and art practitioners from around the world. Initially developed to explore free trans-disciplinary, critical models of arts education in Lebanon and the Arab region, the program has since expanded to address geopolitical particularities, and existing social, cultural and environmental challenges affecting the society at large.

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Beirut, Lebanon  
May 2019

As one of the panelists in the discussion titled "Problems & Concerns Media Students Are Facing in University," Kozman talked about the importance of research methods in media and communication education for undergraduates, highlighting the efforts put forth by the Department of Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University to increase awareness about scientific research.

Faculty: Claudia Kozman  
Location: Salzburg, Austria  
July - August 2019

Claudia Kozman was one LAU's two visiting faculty at the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, where she, along with other academics, supervised a group of students as they created and presented their project on how to reimagine journalism. In addition, Kozman presented a talk about conflict in the media and led a study group that focused on what psychology says about people's choice to hear facts.

## Film Screenings

Faculty: Sarah Kaskas  
Location: Egypt, Holland, Italy, and Scotland  
September and November 2018 - April and June 2019

El Gouna Film Festival awarded Sarah Kaskas a finishing fund as part of CineGouna competition for her documentary film, *Underdown*. Her work also had other appearances during different film festivals around the globe, such as in screening competitions in both Edinburgh International Film Festival, and Middle East Now, along with a world premiere in International Documentary Festival Amsterdam.

## Workshops

Faculty: Gretchen King  
Location: Studios, Beirut, Lebanon  
Program: Communication  
November 2018

Gretchen King organized tours in Virgin Radio, Al Jadeed TV, and Sawt Al Shaab Radio for her Media and Society and Communication and Gender students. In Virgin Radio, the students interviewed the general manager about the station's political economy and content, plus went on-air with Sally and Anthony who host the popular morning show. While at Al-Jadeed and Sawt el Shaab, they interviewed staff about the stations' different practices and histories, plus watched live programming from the on-air studios of both stations.

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music, Nelson, NH.  
Program: Performing Arts  
June till July 2019

In the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music, Amr Selim coached three groups of musicians on chamber music works and performed the Brahms Horn Trio for the faculty concert during the Summer Chamber Music Workshop.

Faculty: Amr Selim  
Location: The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik  
Program: Performing Arts  
July till August 2019

Amr Selim led the wind instruments program during YES Academy Lebanon – Summer Program, working with 25 students from Syria and Lebanon. He also worked with the composition-students, led chamber music groups and technique sessions during the workshop.

## Fouad Anka: 10 years of Dedicated Service at LAU

On May 1, 2019, Fouad Anka, senior performing arts theater technician at LAU received two awards during the university's annual staff dinner ceremony.

The Department of Communication Arts' staff received the overall first place award for scoring the highest grade on the English staff course. This optional course is offered during summer for staff members and focuses mostly on English grammar and composing well-structured emails. Staff members are divided into three levels based on their level of proficiency in English. Anka received the highest grade in the highest level course and in overall courses. The 53-year-old theater technician stressed the importance of the course on the professional level.

"The course helped me in writing emails professionally, especially if it was for another department," Anka said.

One award wasn't enough for recognizing Anka's hard work at LAU. He was called again during the dinner to receive a reward for 10 years of dedicated service at the university. The proud father of one showed his pride in working in a friendly and respectful atmosphere he enjoys such as LAU's Department of Communication Arts. "I've lived 10 years in Canada, but I enjoy it here more," Anka revealed. "LAU is a home for everyone."



## Samer Beyhum: Continuous Effort to Empower Refugees

In collaboration with the Center for Lebanese Studies (CLS), Samer Beyhum and other students including Issa Khanji, Tarek Madani, and Karem Monzer, produced more than 30 videos for the University College London RELIEF initiative for Massive Open Online Course Videos. The videos were intended to be part of a MOOC made for individuals and groups who plan to develop their teaching skills and methods while situated in a difficult and harsh environment of a refugee camp.

On another note, Beyhum's documentary *Maram*, which tackles the issues of refugee kid beggars in Beirut, has had continuous recognition from its launch in 2017 up until 2019. In the past year, *Maram* was awarded at the INDIE DOC PRO FILM FESTIVAL in Barcelona and screened during the festival on October 31. In addition, the documentary was selected at the

Dumbo Film Festival out of 390 film submissions from 49 distinct countries, where it was also screened in October. Directed by Beyhum, *Maram* brought many TV and film students together on set to contribute in the making of an award winning production that is recognized by many.



## Samer Beyhum: The Dyslectic Tech-Dragon of the Department of Communication Arts

by Steffen Neupert

Samer Beyhum leans back in his ergonomic office chair and puts his hands behind his head. Around him, jet-black plastic, stainless steel, and tempered glass are humming.

"I've been called a robot," he laughed, and for a few seconds his voice resonated loudly in the brightly lit computer lab, drowning the constant tone of supercharged hardware spinning its fans.

He upgraded the computers himself and the buzzing two-display workstations are specifically built to process heavy duty graphic editing.

"They're monsters!" he proclaimed with a confident smirk.

Dubbed "The Dragon," Beyhum resides in the basement of the Safadi Fine Arts Building at the Lebanese American University. He is a hyper-minded, dyslexic filmmaker, who has won several awards at international film festivals, while at LAU he oversees the daily usage and maintenance of the department's recording and editing equipment.

On paper he is just a part time employee, but as a matter of fact, he spends most of his time in the depths of his computer lab. So, he might be the most-recognized face in the Department of Communication Arts. Every time computers, cameras, and microphones are involved, so is The Dragon.

"I'm probably the only person who will escort the students from the moment they enter the university to the moment they graduate," he laughed again. "I like it here. I find solace and comfort here, and I care a lot about the students and making sure they get the best education possible."

### The Man in Perpetual Motion

Beyhum works fast, and so does his mind.

It is an upside to dyslexia, which has been part of his life since he was born. The condition, which affects about 10 percent of all humans, means that Beyhum has had more difficulties

reading and writing than most, but it also means that his mind is constantly speeding.

In his computer lab, he effortlessly minds several tasks at once. Even when keeping track of the department's equipment while editing a film on one of his "monsters," he still has enough mental capacity to help out students with technical issues - diving into detailed explanations while words roll off his tongue, tightly compressed, yet flawlessly pronounced.

"I have a super hyper-mind that multi tasks like crazy. The best description I have ever had was when a professor called me: the man in perpetual motion," he said, almost hiding a small sense of pride. "I embrace it completely and think of it as my greatest quality. It's what makes me unique and gives me super hero powers!"

He also sleeps significantly less than the average person, getting by with no more than four to six hours of sleep on average. Sleeping more is simply not



an option for Beyhum, even though he has tried everything but sleeping pills, which he refuses to touch.

"I'm too hyper," he explained as he scratched his short silver hair. "Because I'm getting older, I'm trying to push myself to stay longer in bed, even though I'm not sleeping, just to relax a bit. My body is screaming at me."

### Becoming the Dragon

These days, Beyhum has embraced the dyslexia as part of who he is, but that did not come easy to The Tech Dragon. Growing up, it made him stand out from the other kids in school, and as a result he often got bullied.

"I remember in kindergarten, all the other kids were standing on a table throwing rocks at me. I was an easy target, because I didn't fight back. I didn't want to hurt anyone," he recalled. For a short moment his eyes stayed completely still, and the subtle computer noise grew almost deafening.

But at age 14, Beyhum learned how to embrace his atypical mind, and the story of how he did that is, quite fittingly, also the story of how he got his now famous nickname - The Dragon. When a friend of his, with whom he shared an interest in fantasy novels, got fed up with seeing him being bullied, she



decided to invoke some fighting spirit in Beyhum - and thus, his fantastic alias came to be.

"She gave me this speech, and it was very empowering and willful speech. She told me to be a dragon, and the way I saw myself changed. It was a significant moment in my life, and it's still with me today - it's part of my drive. I did a 180-degree flip and went from being very timid to being generally very sure of myself," he said.

As Beyhum recalled how the girl, who is still part of his life today, helped him turn his young life around, he grew silent. Since then, he went on to become a filmmaker and has worked in every step of the production process. Now, several

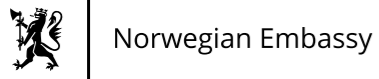
movie festivals and four awards later, he has returned to LAU to pass those skills on to the next generation.

The sound of the computers filled the room in the absence of The Dragon's voice. He sat and pondered for a while, seemingly occupied somewhere in his own thoughts. As he suddenly looked up and broke the silence he filled the room again, drowning the white noise.

"I don't really have any big regrets. I'm generally happy with myself, even though I have to be reminded of that from time to time," he said with a subtle, knowing smile.



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