Abstract of

**Crossing Boundaries in Action: The Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center**

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In this presentation, I review the brief history of the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEMEAC). Funded by a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, under its “Crossing Borders” initiative, MEMEAC was officially established at the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY) a week before September 11, 2001. Most recently, we received a Title VI grant from the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program to expand the study of the Middle East and its diasporas at CUNY. Our mission is to transcend the limitations of both area and ethnic studies approaches to the Middle East. Stark, and often arbitrary, geographical boundaries are increasingly irrelevant in this age of globalization (the circulation of goods, services, capital, information, ideas and people) and transnationalism (ties that link people and institutions across national borders). More specifically, MEMEAC’s objective is to connect the “here” (Middle Eastern diaspora communities and rich resources of New York City on the Middle East) with “there” (the Middle East region proper). I analyze the achievements, as well as the shortcomings, of this innovative approach as it is implemented in program development, research projects and outreach activities at MEMEAC. It is hoped that MEMEAC’s experience will inspire and encourage other centers to cross boundaries.