

For Immediate Release



## **AUB works to increase digital and media literacy across the Arab region**

Beirut, Lebanon- 12/08/2014 - In the midst of the war and conflict that submerges the whole Middle East, a group of media academics, students and professionals from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine are meeting to counter the widespread messages of hate, division and destruction and produce digital narratives of hope and unity.

The second annual Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB), which runs from August 10 to August 23, aims to advance digital and media literacy within the Arab region by training a generation of academics, students and activists to develop locally rooted media literacy curricula and digital platforms.

Speaking about the founding of the academy, Dr. Jad Melki, director of the Media Studies Program at the American University of Beirut, said: “We started the media and digital literacy academy of Beirut because we felt there is a gap in Arab education. Media literacy has become a staple of education across communication programs around the world, except in the Arab region.”

During the two-week academy, which features presentations by leading Arab and international experts, students and academics from the region will have the opportunity to study, engage in, and gain hands-on experience in a variety of subjects and workshops rooted in media and digital literacy.

This year, MDLAB will emphasize the examination of media coverage of human rights violations and sectarian hate speech and its role in fueling the numerous conflicts around the Arab region. Along with daily workshops where participants will analyze different media or create content through the use of various media programs, such as Wordpress, Instagram, audio editing and podcasting, there will be a special session that covers data visualization and an analysis of Twitter feeds.

Sponsored by the Open Society Foundations, Al-Monitor ([www.al-monitor.com](http://www.al-monitor.com)) and DAAD, the 2014 MDLAB will feature renowned international media and digital literacy education experts Dr. Sut Jhally, who will discuss propaganda and media coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Dr. Susan Moeller, who will lecture about the power of images in documenting and framing human right violations, and Dr. Paul Mihailidis, who will cover the relationship between media literacy, civic engagement, and global citizenship. Arab scholars include Dr. Nabil Dajani, who will critique the role of social media in the Arab uprisings, Dr. Irada Zaidan, who will present about the media portrayal of Arab women, and Dr. Abeer Al-Najjar, who will cover biases and limitations of journalism.

Al-Monitor columnists and contributors, including Mushreq Abbas of Iraq, Ali Hashem of Lebanon, as well as Walaa Hussein and Mohannad Sabry of Egypt, will participate in a panel discussing their experiences and challenges of reporting from the field. The panel will be moderated by Marita Kassis, Al-Monitor's Beirut-based managing editor.

Other leading Arab and international experts will cover various topics during the two-week academy, including: media literacy and human rights, media literacy's role in the Arab region, news coverage of human rights violations, Arab media ownership patterns, media portrayal of marginalized communities, media and religion, sectarian hate speech and free speech, and media, gender, sexuality and body image.

The academy runs between August 10 and 23, and is managed by a core team of AUB Media Studies academics, including MDLAB co-chairpersons Dr. Jad Melki and Dr. May Farah, MDLAB director Ms. Lubna Maaliki, and AUB professors Toni Oyry and Dr. Hatem El Hibri.

All lectures and workshops will be held in the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB (IFI Auditorium). The following sessions are open to the public:

- Panel discussion: Reporting from the field - Mushreq Abbas, Ali Hashem, Walaa Hussein, and Mohannad Sabry. Moderated by Marita Kassis Tue, August 12 at 11am.
- Advertising and the End of the World: Dr. Sut Jhally. Wed, August 13 at 11am.
- Portrayal and Objectification of Women (and Men) in the Media: Dr. May Farah and Dr. Irada Zaidan. Thur, August 14 at 9am.
- Propaganda, the Middle East, and Human Rights: Dr. Sut Jhally. Fri, August 15 at 1:30pm.
- Covering and Documenting War, Conflict and Human Rights Violations: Dr. Susan Moeller. Mon, August 18, 2014 at 9am.
- Social Media, Revolution, Privacy and Surveillance in the Digital Age: Dr. Jad Melki and Dr. Nabil Dajani. Tue, August 19 at 9am.
- Digital Media Literacy, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship, Dr. Paul Mihailidis. Tue, August 19 at 11am.
- Participants Present their Final Projects. Fri, August 22 at 11.30am.

MDLAB was launched in summer 2013. It endeavors to promote and develop media and digital literacy education across the Arab region by training Arab media professors and graduate students and building competencies that help them harness the power of digital media and critical thinking.

For more details about the 2014 program and participants, please visit <http://mdlab2014.wordpress.com/>

MDLAB is an initiative of the Media Studies Program at the American University of Beirut [www.aub.edu.lb/mediastudies](http://www.aub.edu.lb/mediastudies)

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## Note to Editors

### About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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