

For Immediate Release



AUB launches digital media literacy program for Arab world

Beirut, Lebanon- 28/08/2013 - The American University of Beirut has inaugurated a new media and digital literacy academy that is tailored to the Arab world and aims to promote, vitalize, and advance digital media literacy education in the region.

A joint initiative between the AUB Media Studies Program and the Regional External Programs, the three-week Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB), is sponsored by the Open Society Foundations, a US-based grant-making operation that promotes democratic governance and social reform and was founded by philanthropist George Soros.

The academy will be held annually and will be mainly open to professors and students from the Arab world.

This inaugural year hosted 50 media professors and students from universities in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria.

Jad Melki and May Farah, both assistant professors at AUB's Media Studies program, co-chaired the 2013 academy, and Lubna Maaliki, an AUB alumna, served as the academy's director.

"Digital media literacy has become a staple of education all around the world, except in the Arab region," said Melki, also the director of the Media Studies Program at AUB. "We hope to bridge this gap, particularly since media literacy is very important to help solve many of the social and cultural problems we face in the region."

Melki added that media literacy is an international academic movement whose aim is to empower citizens with critical thinking skills so they could understand how media affect their lives and their societies. "It can also help turn citizens into critical consumers and producers of media so they could actively participate in national and global dialogues using digital media. They can then act as responsible global citizens and civic participants in their cultures."

The three-week annual academy, conducted in Arabic, brings pioneering instructors and professionals to teach advanced digital and media literacy concepts and debate skills to young Arab university instructors and graduate students, who will eventually spread the knowledge to their institutions and countries.

International speakers and trainers included Renee Hobbs from the University of Rhode Island, Ahmad Al Rawi from Erasmus University, Susan Moeller from the University of Maryland, Paul Mihailidis from Emerson College, Moses Shumow from Florida International University, and Stephen Salyer, president of the Salzburg Global Seminar.

MDLAB will also act as an incubator of innovative ideas and a hub for a network of regional universities and media educators. We hope that faculty members participating in the academy will carry back the knowledge and curricula to their universities, schools, and countries, while students simultaneously benefit from the teaching and training.

MDLAB was conceived by the Media Studies program after several years of success in teaching media and digital literacy courses, engaging in related study abroad programs, such as the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, and organizing public lectures and conferences on this issue, including the 2011 conference of the Arab-US Association for Communication Educators at AUB.

MDLAB's launch coincides with the launch of a new BA in Media and Communication at AUB. The Media Studies Program now offers a BA, an MA, and a Diploma in Media Studies, and will continue to expand its offering and scholarship.

For more information, visit MDLAB's web site: www.aub.edu.lb/mdlab and read more about the Media Studies Program at AUB: 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 8,000 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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