

For Immediate Release



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Kamal Salibi's legacy commemorated **with lecture and book launch at AUB**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) held the annual memorial lecture commemorating the legacy of late Professor Emeritus Kamal Salibi (1929-2011). It was presented this year by Dr. Şevket Pamuk, professor of economics and economic history at Bogaziçi (Bosphorus) University in Istanbul. The lecture was preceded by the launch of *In the House of Understanding: Histories in Memory of Kamal S. Salibi*, a book featuring leading historians and offering a series of articles related to Salibi's work.

“The legacy of Kamal Salibi lives on with the wealth of contributions he has left us with; we, his friends, colleagues, and students, wanted to keep this legacy alive and honor Dr. Salibi as a professor, researcher, friend, and mentor,” Dr. Abdulrahim Abu-Husayn, director of the Center for Arts and Humanities, told us.

Hosted by the Center for Arts and Humanities and the Department of History and Archaeology at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, this year's memorial lecture was entitled “Plagues and the History of the Middle East.” In his lecture, Dr. Şevket Pamuk spoke about the role of plagues in the history of the Middle East, a subject that has increasingly been studied only recently, with the rise of interest in the role of plagues in other regions of the world.

“There is a lot to be learned about these endemics, especially their longer term consequences,” said Dr. Pamuk. “Historiography related to the Middle East has focused on demographic, medical, and intellectual history but there has been very little on the social and economic histories of these episodes. This is an opportunity to talk about the Middle East in a global context. I hope that thinking about these endemics will provide some new insight to the history of our region. Professor Salibi had wide ranging interests and was very much interested in different periods so I hope this will be a little tribute to his memory and to his work.”

The lecture focused on the impact of what was named the Justinian Plague that began in the 6th century, just before the rise of Islam, and kept re-appearing until the 9th century. Dr. Pamuk also spoke about the Black Death which first appeared in the 14th century and kept recurring in the Middle East until the 19th century. He gave examples for the impact of the two plagues and their consequences, particularly the economic and social history aspects of the Middle East, with some examples from political history.

Şevket Pamuk is an economic historian of the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, and Europe and has published many books. He was professor and chair for contemporary Turkish studies at the London School of Economics (2008-2013); president of European Historical Economics Society (2003-05); president of Asian Historical Economics Society (2012-14); co-editor of European Review of Economic History (2012-15); and is a member of Academia Europea and Science Academy, Istanbul.

Launched at the event, *In the House of Understanding: Histories in Memory of Kamal S. Salibi*, holds a series of articles by leading local and international historians tackling subjects and areas related to the work of Salibi and the fields he has contributed to expanding, ranging from Lebanese history, to Biblical studies, Islamic studies, and beyond.

“Kamal Salibi is primarily renowned for his monumental contributions to the history of Lebanon; yet, his scholarly legacy extends well beyond Lebanon to topics that span the Middle East from biblical to contemporary times,” Dr. Makram Rabah, history professor and organizer of the annual event as Dr. Salibi’s former student, told us. “This collection of papers, written in Dr. Salibi’s honor and memory, similarly cover a range of subjects that touch upon his own interests – aspects of ancient, medieval, and modern Arabic/Islamic and Middle Eastern history, literature, and art.”

During the launch, former students and friends spoke about Kamal Salibi the mentor and his impact on their personal lives and thought, as well as his contribution to several fields.

“Dr. Salibi has had a tremendous effect on the region as a whole and particularly AUB, as an educator and an influencer. AUB has always been part of him,” Dr. Makram Rabah told us. “He lived and died here and his life is a reflection of AUB history: the evolution of AUB, the many ideas of AUB, Arab nationalism versus Lebanese particularity, his call for diversity, his approach to teaching a way of thinking and how to acquire knowledge, and his ability to change and re-examine his earlier assumptions. This is at the crux of what we teach at AUB. This is the liberal arts education which AUB stands for. This is what Kamal Salibi is.”

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 Ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

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 130 programs leading to 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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