

AYA LABANIEH

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EDUCATION AND WORK

- Fall 2026–: **Global Postdoctoral Scholar**, Northwestern University in Qatar’s Institute for Advanced Study of the Global South.
- 2025–2026: **Joint Appointment, Research Fellow**, EUME and SYRASP at the Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin, and **Research Affiliate** of Columbia University’s Narrative Intelligence Lab.
- 2019–2025: **Columbia University, Ph.D.** from the Department of English and Comparative Literature.
 - Dissertation, “One Thousand and One Nightmares: Colonial Conspiracies and Their Afterlives in Modern Middle Eastern Media,” under the direction of Bruce Robbins, Joseph Slaughter, & Rebecca Johnson.
 - Certification from the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society (ICLS).
 - 2022–2023: Research affiliation with Project DREAM: Drafting and Enacting Revolutions in the Arab Mediterranean at Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany.
- 2023–2024: **The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art**, Research Associate of Community Engagement and Public Programming.
- Fall 2020–present: **Journal of Arabic Literature**, Assistant Editor.
- 2019–2021: **Columbia University, MPhil** in English and Comparative Literature.
- 2018–2019: **Columbia University, MA** in English and Comparative Literature.
- 2014–2018: **University of California Irvine, Triple BA** in Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and French Language and Literature. Graduated summa cum laude. 4.0 GPA.

PEER-REVIEWED SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

- Under review, “Collaborator Literature: Ghassan Kanafani, Cold War Politics, and the Dark Underbelly of Resistance.”
- Under review, “Nefarious Solidarities: Manosphere Islam, Deviant Sexuality, and the Increasing Diversity of the Digital Far Right.”
- “Treachery and Translation: The Allegiances of the Hebrew Language and Jewish Identity in Emile Habibi’s Palestine and al-Tahir Wattar’s Algeria.” *Poetics Today*, forthcoming.
- “Fantasies of White Genocide: Conspiracy Theory, Reproductive Anxiety, and Self-Help in the Online Manosphere.” *Journal of Medical Humanities*, (2025): 1–22.
- “Dystopian Technologies in the Science Fiction of *Palestine+100* and *Iraq+100*.” In *Global Science Fiction*, edited by Gary Westfahl, McFarland Publishers, (2025): 147–156.

- “‘Cauldron of Conspiracy’: Conspiratorial Tropes as Modes of Critique in Ḥabībī’s *The Pessoptimist* and Sa’adāwī’s *Frankenstein in Baghdad*.” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 55:4 (2024): 401–427.
- “Monstrosity, Masturbation, and Motherhood: Assia Djebar’s *Fantasia* and the Fight Over Algeria’s Feminized Body.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 42:2 (2023): 237–80.
- “Can the Subaltern Laugh? Humour, Translatability, and the Inequalities of World Literature.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 58:6 (2022): 869–82.

PEDAGOGY & SERVICE PUBLICATIONS

- “*Gilgamesh* and Postcolonial Pedagogy.” Book chapter, *Approaches to Teaching Gilgamesh*, edited by David Damrosch and Sophus Helle, Modern Language Association, forthcoming.
- With Sarah Graff. “From Poetry to Pedagogy: Platforming Exilic Voices in the Museum.” Book chapter, *Teaching About the Ancient World in Museums: Pedagogies in Practice*, edited by Jen Thum, Carl Walsh, and Lisa Haney, Routledge, forthcoming.
- “Science Fiction, Rational Enchantment, and Arabic Literature.” *MOSF Journal of Science Fiction*, 4:2 (2021): Middle Eastern Science Fiction Special Issue. [\[Link\]](#)
- “Traveling Underpants: A Book Review of May Hawas’ *Politicizing World Literature*.” *Politics/Letters*. 2019. [\[Link\]](#)

PUBLIC & CREATIVE WRITING

- Poetry anthology with Sophus Helle (eds.), *Born in Babylon: Middle Eastern Poetry on Diaspora and Antiquity*. Wesleyan University Press, forthcoming.
- “Cynical Uses of Suffering: Gaza, Antisemitism, & the New Digital Right.” Article, *TRAF0 Blog for Transregional Research*, joint platform of the Forum Transregionale Studien and Max Weber Foundation. 2026. [\[Link\]](#)
- Short story, “Our Cousins, the Jinn.” *em-dash*, Spring Issue 2025.
- Creative nonfiction, “Damascene Dream.” *The Common*, Summer 2025 Dispatches. [\[Link\]](#)
- Essay, “No Nut November: Power, Masculinity, and the Ancient Roots of Anti-Masturbation,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 2023. [\[Link\]](#)
- Essay, “Global Conspiracy Without a Globe? On Earth Shapes, Vaccines, and Conspiratorial Thinking in the West,” *Culturico Magazine*, 2022. [\[Link\]](#)
- Essay, “Was There No Room for the Queer Individual in Arab History?” *Aeon Magazine*, 2021. [\[Link\]](#) Essay featured on *Apple News* and *Deutsche Welle*. [\[Link\]](#)
- English translations of selected Arabic poems by Qays Ibn Al-Mullawah. *Ancient Exchanges*, 2021. [\[Link\]](#)

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2024-2025: **Preceptor Teaching Award in Literature Humanities**, Columbia University. Through student and faculty nomination, I was selected as the best instructor of the entire Literature Humanities program for the academic year.

- 2023: **Summer Research Award**, Columbia University.
- 2022–2023: **Dissertation Research Travel Grant**, Columbia University.
- 2021–2022: Awarded the **Lead Teaching Fellowship** for the English and Comparative Literature Department by Columbia University’s Center for Teaching and Learning.
- 2021–2023: **Public Humanities Fellowship**, Heyman Center for the Humanities, Columbia University.
- 2020–2021: **Institute for Comparative Literature and Society (ICLS) Prospectus Award**
- 2018–2024: **Marjorie Hope Nicolson Doctoral Fellowship**, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University.
- 2018: **School of Humanities Undergraduate Honors Program Senior Thesis Prize**, University of California Irvine.
- 2016–2017: **Comparative Literature Department Extraordinary Performance Award**, University of California Irvine.

PUBLIC HUMANITIES PROJECTS

- 2023–2024: **The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art**, Research Associate of Community Engagement and Public Programming.
After conducting more than 50 interviews with community stakeholders, scholars, artists, activists, and curators, I organized a new strategy for the department’s community engagement with West Asian and African diasporas. I then drafted a proposal that helped secure 1 million USD in funding from the Carnegie Foundation.
- 2022–2023: **GATE: From Babylon to Berlin**, Curator and Project Manager.
As the basis for the forthcoming poetry anthology with WUP, I organized an event at Berlin’s Pergamon Museum that brought together migrant poets to reflect on exile and excavation, the displacement of peoples and the movement of antiquities from the Middle East to Europe. The event was covered by [Tagesspiegel](#).
- 2021–2022: **Zip Code Memory Project**, Project Fellow and Assistant Curator.
The project sought to memorialize the impact of Covid-19 on black and brown neighborhoods in New York City. I organized creative workshops in these neighborhoods and served as assistant curator on the project’s final exhibition, Imagine Repair, covered by the [New York Times](#).
- 2021–2024: **In Sacred Spaces**, Project Collaborator.
Funded by Humanities NY, this digital-humanities podcasting project focused on unearthing the forgotten histories of social justice activism in Harlem’s Black churches and their intersection with Black queer spaces in New York, particularly the Ballroom scene. [\[Link\]](#)

SELECTED TALKS AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

- “From Colonial Subjects to Surveilled Citizens: Depictions of the Regime Informant in the Cultural Memory of Baathist Syria and Iraq.” Invited talk at the EUME research program’s Berliner Seminars at the Forum Transregional Studien, 2026.
- “Nefarious Solidarities: Islam, Gender, and the Digital Far-Right.” Invited talk for the Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, “Birthing the Nation,” at Pennsylvania State University, 2025.

- “Aliens in Palestine: The Conspiracy Trope of the Collaborator in Cold War Middle Eastern Literature & Media.” Invited job talk at the American University of Paris, 2025.
- “The Great Replacement: Conspiracy Theory, Reproductive Anxiety, and Self-Help in the Alt-Right Manosphere.” Invited talk at Columbia University’s Center for Science and Society, 2023.
- “Public Humanities in a Museum Context: Forging Bonds Between Institutions, Antiquities, and Diaspora Communities.” Lecture at The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, 2024.
- Interviewed as expert on conspiracy theories for the French docu-series *La Fabrique du mensonge* (“The Factory of Lies”) by production companies Babel Doc and Together, aired on France TV, 2024. [[Link](#)]
- Interviewed as expert on conspiracy theories for *The Gadfly* magazine, 2024. [[Link](#)]
- “Rainbows Over Rubble: Pinkwashing As a Strategy to Peel Queer Communities from Politics.” Lecture and discussion at “Queer Palestinian Solidarity” teach-in at Columbia Law School, 2024.
- “Feminism and Settler-Colonialism: The Intersectional Dimensions of the Palestinian National Struggle.” Guest lecture at Sarah Ohmer’s “Intersectional Feminisms” course, Barnard College, 2023.
- “Public Humanities, Ethnography, and Oral History: The Case Study of the Zip Code Memory Project.” Guest lecture at Arden Hegele’s “Climate and Pandemic” course, Columbia University, 2023.
- “On the Ethics of Public Humanities.” Guest lecture at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Public Humanities Initiative practicum, 2022.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Certifications and Fellowships

- 2024–2025: **Preceptor Teaching Award in Literature Humanities**, Columbia University (also listed under “Grants & Awards”).
- 2021–2022: **Lead Teaching Fellowship** at Columbia University’s Center for Teaching and Learning. In addition to recognizing my pedagogical excellence, the fellowship entailed designing pedagogy events for my Department. Events were on topics such as fostering classroom community, building media literacy, balancing multiple teaching modalities and learning styles, and navigating the rise of ChatGPT.
- 2018–2022: **Teaching Development Program Certification**, Columbia University, Center for Teaching and Learning.
- 2016–2017: **Master Tutor Certification**, College Reading and Learning Association, International Tutor Training Program.

Courses

- Fall 2024–Spring 2025: **“Literature Humanities: Masterpieces of Western Literature.” Instructor of Record, Columbia University.** Survey course of the ancient and Western literary

classics, from *Gilgamesh* to Toni Morrison, structured around the theme “The Human and the Non-Human.”

- Fall 2023: **“Intersectional Feminisms.”** Teaching assistant and section leader for Prof. Sarah Ohmer, Barnard College.
- Fall 2020–Spring 2022: **“Essays in Law and Justice.” Instructor of Record for four semesters, Columbia University.** Course on rhetoric, composition, and the contemporary essay, introducing students to essays on justice, resistance, and “writing back” to power.
- Spring 2020: **“Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.”** Teaching assistant for Prof. Liza Knapp, Columbia University.
- Fall 2019: **“Shakespeare.”** Teaching assistant and section leader for Prof. Lauren Robertson, Columbia University.
- Spring 2018: **“Modernism & the Poverty of Language.”** Student instructor. Undergraduate course on literary limitations and linguistic ruptures, drawing on modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, T.S. Eliot, and Sadegh Hedayat.