NELC MA Graduate Bret Windhauser

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Bret Windhauser is the second of two master's students graduating from the Near Eastern Languages and Civilization Department. As a NELC student, Windhauser studied Arabic, modern Turkish, Ottoman Turkish, Hebrew, and Ge'ez. He additionally used a BA in French as his research language. In Spring Quarter of 2020, Windhauser successfully defended his thesis entitled "Pushing Borders: Smuggling Against Policy in Israel/Palestine." His thesis investigated SIM card and food smuggling networks that operate between Israel and Palestine. He argues that the vast range of smuggling networks in the region delegitimizes Israel's strict stance on border security. He also presents the Israeli and Palestinian economies as closely intertwined, despite government policies that attempt to present separate economies. Smugglers often fill the gap in markets when governments make the legal acquisition of a certain product illegal.

Outside of his classes, Windhauser served as a teaching assistant and research assistant for the Near Eastern Languages and Civilization Department. He assisted with NELC’s Gateway to the Near East course and multiple classes on the ancient Near East. In total, Windhauser taught classes to over 600 students in two years.

During his time as a NELC student, Windhauser was named the Mickey Sreebny Memorial Scholar and an Israeli Studies Graduate Research Fellow through the Stroum Center of Jewish Studies. The Stroum Center also awarded Windhauser an Opportunity Grant to conduct research in Israel which was unfortunately canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Windhauser will continue to work with the NELC Department by assisting with the Svoboda Diaries digital project.
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