

# Laure Assaf | Assistant Professor

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## Research and Teaching Interests

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**Areas:** Middle East, Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, United Arab Emirates

**Keywords:** Urbanity; Youth; Sociability; Migration; Citizenship; Hierarchies; Social Change

**Disciplines:** Anthropology; Urban Studies

## Academic Employment

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<b>Assistant Professor of Arab Crossroads Studies and Anthropology</b> <i>New York University Abu Dhabi</i>	2018-present
<b>Postdoctoral Teaching and Research Fellow in Anthropology (ATER)</b> <i>School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), Paris</i>	2016-2018
<b>Doctoral Teaching Fellow in Anthropology</b> <i>Paris-Nanterre University</i>	2010-2013
<b>Adjunct Lecturer in French</b> <i>Northwestern University (Evanston, IL)</i>	2008-2009
<b>Elève normalienne</b> <i>École Normale Supérieure de la rue d'Ulm, Paris</i>	2005-2010

## Education

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<b>PhD in Anthropology</b> <i>Paris Nanterre University</i>	2017
Title: <i>Arab youths of Abu Dhabi. Status categories, urban sociability and the shaping of subjectivities in the United Arab Emirates.</i>	
<b>Masters of Anthropology</b> <i>Paris Nanterre University</i>	2009
<b>Bachelor of Arabic (Modern Standard)</b> <i>National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO), Paris</i>	2014
<b>Bachelor of Anthropology</b> <i>Paris Nanterre University</i>	2006

## Publications

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### Book (in preparation).....

- (1) Assaf, Laure. *Post-Oil Generations. Hierarchy, Space, and Belonging in Abu Dhabi* (Tentative title).

### Peer-reviewed articles.....

- (2) Assaf, Laure. 2020. "'Bienvenue dans le futur'. Images performatives du développement urbain aux Émirats arabes unis", *Les Cahiers d'EMAM*, Issue 33. <http://journals.openedition.org/emam/3122>.
- (3) Assaf, Laure. 2020. "'Abu Dhabi is my sweet home'. Arab youths, interstitial spaces and the building of a cosmopolitan locality", *City*, Vol. 24, Issue 5-6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2020.1837562>.
- (4) Thiollet, Hélène, and Laure Assaf. 2020. "Cosmopolitanism in Exclusionary Contexts". *Population, Space, and Place*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2358>.
- (5) Assaf, Laure. 2017. "Le shopping mall comme moment urbain: transformations des espaces marchands et pratiques citadines aux Émirats arabes unis". *Ateliers d'Anthropologie*, 44. <http://journals.openedition.org/ateliers/10413>.
- (6) Assaf, Laure. 2013. "La Corniche d'Abu Dhabi : espace public et intimités à ciel ouvert". *Arabian Humanities*, 2. <http://cy.revues.org/2625>.
- (7) Assaf, Laure. 2013. "Espaces vécus et imaginés des rencontres amoureuses aux Émirats arabes unis". *EchoGéo*, 25. <http://echogeo.revues.org/13538>.

### Edited volumes.....

- (8) Assaf, Laure, and Delphine Pagès El-Karoui. 2022. "Unpacking Urban Diversity in the Gulf. Transnational Trajectories and Cosmopolitan Rhetorics", *Journal of Arabian Studies*.
- (9) Assaf, Laure, Mariangela Gasparotto, and Marion Slitine. 2022. "Demain, le printemps. Pratiques d'imagination et d'anticipation dans le monde arabe", *Horizons Maghrébins*.
- (10) Assaf, Laure, and Clémence Montagne. 2019. "Urban Images and Imaginaries: Introduction", *Arabian Humanities*, 11. <https://journals.openedition.org/cy/4137>.
- (11) Assaf, Laure, and Sylvaine Camelin. 2017. "Shopping malls: l'avènement de la modernité ?", *Ateliers d'Anthropologie*, 44. <http://journals.openedition.org/ateliers/10365>.

### Book chapters.....

- (12) Thiollet, Hélène, and Laure Assaf. 2021. "Migrant Cosmopolitanism in Emirati and Saudi Cities: Practices and Belonging in Exclusionary Contexts". In Lejeune C., Pagès-El Karoui D., Schmoll C. & Thiollet H. (eds.), *Migration, Urbanity and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World*. Springer.
- (13) Assaf, Laure. 2020. "Abu Dhabi". In Florin B., Madoeuf A., Sanmartin O. & Stadnicki R. (eds.), *Abécédaire de la ville au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient*. Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais de l'Université de Tours.

- (14) Assaf, Laure. 2018. "Who is the Right One? The Meanings of (Marital) Love in the United Arab Emirates". In Fortier C., Kreil A. & Maffi I. (eds.), *Reinventing Love? Gender, Intimacy and Romance in the Arab World*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- (15) Assaf, Laure. 2018. "'Voir le futur, créer le futur'. Les Émirats arabes unis face à la fin du pétrole". In Andrieu C. & S. Houdart (eds.), *La Composition du temps. Prédications, événements, narrations historiques*. Paris: Editions de Boccard.
- (16) Assaf, Laure. 2014. "The Internet and Youth in the United Arab Emirates". In Al-Zoghby M. and B. Baskan (eds.), *State-Society Relations in the Arab Gulf States*. Berlin: Gerlach Press.
- (17) Assaf, Laure. 2013. "Autour d'un café : sociabilité des jeunes à Abou Dhabi". In Bonnefoy L. and M. Catusse (eds.), *Jeunesses arabes. Du Maroc au Yémen : loisirs, cultures et politique*. Paris: La Découverte.

## **Awards and Grants**

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NYUAD Arts and Humanities Divisional Research and Creative Initiative Grant.	2019
Prix de thèse PSL en Sciences Sociales (Dissertation Award), Paris Sciences et Lettres.	2018
Prix Michel Seurat (Doctoral research award), CNRS	2013
Fieldwork Grant (6 months), French Center for Archeology and Social Sciences (CEFAS)	2011

## **Teaching activities**

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### **Undergraduate courses**.....

At New York University Abu Dhabi:

- { Social Research and Public Policy Capstone seminar (2 semesters)
- { Gulf Urban Societies (3 semesters)
- { Youth in the Middle East (4 semesters)
- { Anthropology and the Arab World (2 semesters)

At Paris Nanterre University:

- { Textes Fondamentaux [Core Readings in Anthropology] (4 semesters)
- { Introduction à l'ethnologie (2 semesters)
- { Nature-Culture (1 semester)
- { La Cuisine des anthropologues (1 semester)

Adjunct courses:

- { Introduction à l'anthropologie, MANUSASTRA Summer school (Cambodia)
- { Domaines de l'anthropologie, MANUSASTRA Summer school (Cambodia)
- { Anthropologie des espaces domestiques, Ecole Nationale d'Architecture de Versailles (2 semesters)

### **Graduate courses**.....

At the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), Paris:

- { Le sujet et la ville dans le monde arabe. Une anthropologie du Golfe (2 semesters)
- { Écrire l'anthropologie: du terrain au texte (4 semesters)
- { Anthropologie des religions (1 semester)

Doctoral seminars (co-organized):

- { Secrets de terrain (Fieldwork secrets), Paris Sorbonne University, 2 years
- { Lectures d'actualité en anthropologie (Current Readings in Anthropology), École Normale Supérieure, 2 years

### **Capstones supervised (NYUAD).....**

Elaf Saleh, *Visual Narratives and Written Testimonies by Syrian Refugee Artists and Syrian Refugees*, 2021.

Maitha AlQemzi, *Minorities Within a Minority: The Masking and Projecting of Half Emiratis' Ethnicities*, Social Research and Public Policy, 2021.

Amna AlShamsi, *Perception of Drug Use in the United Arab Emirates*, Social Research and Public Policy, 2021.

Nabil Haskanbancha, *Analyzing Religious Sermons to Understand Moderate Islam in the UAE*, Social Research and Public Policy, 2021.

Kevin Mokhtar, *Public Spaces in a Pandemic*, Social Research and Public Policy, 2020.

Lí'er Qiu, *Visitors' Experience and Perception in the Louvre Abu Dhabi*, Social Research and Public Policy, 2020.

Ji Young Kim, *Never kâfi: Understanding Emirati Youth Subculture Development in Abu Dhabi Specialty Cafes*, Arab Crossroads Studies, 2020.

Sara AlShimmari, *Perspectives on Marriage and Gender Roles Through the Lens of Youth from Abu Dhabi*, Social Research and Public Policy, 2019.

Alena Mikhalkovitch, *Perceptions and Practices of Emirati visitors at Louvre Abu Dhabi*, Arab Crossroads Studies, 2019.

## **Service**

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### **At New York University Abu Dhabi.....**

#### **IRB / REC Board Member**

*Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Research Ethics Committee (REC)* 2019-present  
Review of high risk human subjects protocols and/or Abu Dhabi-based biomedical or health related research; consultation on research in the UAE.

#### **Member of the Recruitment Committee**

*SRPP Job Search* 2021

#### **Member of the HRF Internal Review Committee**

*NYUAD Humanities Research Fellowship* 2019-21  
Review of around 150-170 Fellowship applications; mentorship of a Junior Fellow.

**ACS Lecture Series Coordinator**

*Arab Crossroads Studies Luncheon Lecture Series*

2019-20

Organization of 18 lectures throughout the academic year (including online lectures).

**Service to the field**.....

**Member of the Administrative Committee**

*Cercle des Chercheurs sur le Moyen-Orient (CCMO)*

2020-present

Co-organization of the Annual Conference of the CCMO.

**Member of the Editorial Board**

*Terrain* (French peer-reviewed journal in Anthropology and Humanities)

2017-present

**Peer Reviewer**

*American Ethnologist; International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society; 2018-present Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies; Arabian Humanities; Journal of Arabian Studies; Hawwa; Echogéo; Les Cahiers d'EMAM*

**Selected Talks and Conferences**

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(See Annex for the full list)

**As Convenor**.....

2021. International Conference "Culture Made in Arabia", New York University Abu Dhabi, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, French Center for Archeology and Social Sciences (CEFAS). Co-Organizer.

2020. Panel "Ordinary Diversity and Social Hierarchies in the Contemporary Arab Gulf", *MESA Annual Meeting*. Organizer and Chair.

2017. International symposium "Cosmopolitanism Revisited. Comparative Perspectives on Urban Diversity from the Gulf and Beyond", INALCO; CEVIPOF, Paris. Co-Organizer.

2017. Panel "Demain, le printemps: des quotidiens entre vies rêvées et mondes imaginaires", *2e Congrès du GIS Moyen-Orient et Mondes musulmans*, Paris. Co-Organizer.

2014. International conference "Shopping Malls: The Advent of Modernity?", Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative, Paris Nanterre University. Co-Organizer.

2014 & 2015. "Journée des jeunes chercheurs sur la région du Golfe" (Network for Young Researchers on the Gulf Region), Paris Nanterre University. Co-Organizer.

**As Invited Speaker**.....

2019. "Negotiating Moral and Religious Norms in a Highly Diverse City: An Ethnography of the Arab Youths of Abu Dhabi". Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin.

2019. "Second-generation Arab youths and the ambivalence of belonging in a Gulf city". CUNY Graduate Center, New York.

2017. "Around a cup of coffee: Youth sociality, consumption and social change in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)". MINPAKU, Center for Modern Middle East Studies, Osaka.

2017. "Unimagined Community: Ethnography of the Arab Youth in Abu Dhabi". Paris Sorbonne

University Abu Dhabi / CEFAS.

### **Conference Papers**.....

2021. "Peut-on parler de classes moyennes aux Émirats arabes unis ?", *4e Congrès du GIS Moyen Orient et Mondes Musulmans*, Panel "Classes moyennes, classements sociaux et classifications savantes dans le monde arabe". Online.
2021. "Se découvrir migrant à Abou Dhabi (Émirats arabes unis)", *4e Congrès du GIS Moyen Orient et Mondes Musulmans*, Panel "Jeunes, jeunesses et migrations". Online.
2021. "From Hairdo to Internet Meme. The cultural fortunes of the *gamboo3a*", Conference *Culture Made in Arabia*, NYUAD / SUAD / CEFREPA. Online.
2020. "Rethinking the Segregated City: The Territories and Sociabilities of Alcohol in Abu Dhabi". *MESA Annual Meeting*, Online.
2019. "Nostalgia for the recent past: Abu Dhabi's urban heritage and generational belongings". *Gulf Research Meeting*, Cambridge.
2019. "Building a Cosmopolitan Locality in Abu Dhabi: An Ethnography of the Arab Youth". Conference "Questioning Urban Diversity in the Persian Gulf and Beyond", Princeton University.

### **Academic affiliations**

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- { Associate Researcher at the French Center for Archeology and Social Sciences (CEFAS), Kuwait
- { Associate Researcher at the Center for Ethnology and Comparative Sociology (LESC, Paris-Nanterre University)
- { Member of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA)
- { Member of the American Anthropological Association (AAA)
- { Member of the Association for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies (AGAPS)

### **Languages**

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**French:** Mother tongue

**English:** Professional fluency

**Modern Standard Arabic:** Advanced

**German, Italian:** Basics

## **Annex: Full list of presentations**

2021. "Peut-on parler de classes moyennes aux Émirats arabes unis ?", *4e Congrès du GIS Moyen Orient et Mondes Musulmans*, Panel "Classes moyennes, classements sociaux et classifications savantes dans le monde arabe". Online.
2021. "Se découvrir migrant à Abou Dhabi (Émirats arabes unis)", *4e Congrès du GIS Moyen Orient et Mondes Musulmans*, Panel "Jeunes, jeunesses et migrations". Online.
2021. "From Hairdo to Internet Meme. The cultural fortunes of the *gamboos*", Conference *Culture Made in Arabia*, NYUAD / SUAD / CEFREPA. Online.
2020. "Post-Oil Generations. Hierarchy, Space, and Belonging in Abu Dhabi" (book proposal workshop), Gender Brown Bag Seminar, NYUAD.
2020. "Rethinking the Segregated City: The Territories and Sociabilities of Alcohol in Abu Dhabi". *MESA Annual Meeting*, Online.
2019. "Urban Diversity, Status and Belonging in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)", Workshop: "Public Spaces in Kuwait and Beyond", CEFAS, Kuwait.
2019. "Nostalgia for the recent past: Abu Dhabi's urban heritage and generational belongings". *Gulf Research Meeting*, Cambridge.
2019. "L'alcool et ses territoires dans la ville émirienne: Régions morales et vies parallèles", 3e Congrès du GIS Moyen Orient, Paris.
2019. "Negotiating Moral and Religious Norms in a Highly Diverse City: An Ethnography of the Arab Youths of Abu Dhabi". Invited Talk, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin.
2019. "Second-generation Arab youths and the ambivalence of belonging in a Gulf city". Invited Talk, CUNY Graduate Center, New York.
2019. "Ségrégation urbaine et anonymat à Abou Dhabi, Émirats arabes unis", Conference paper, Journées d'étude "Anonymats urbains. Ethnographies comparées", Paris Nanterre University.
2019. "Being from Abu Dhabi. Social hierarchies and the making of identity in the United Arab Emirates", SRPP Identity seminar, NYUAD.
2019. "Building a Cosmopolitan Locality in Abu Dhabi: An Ethnography of the Arab Youth". Conference "Questioning Urban Diversity in the Persian Gulf and Beyond", Princeton University.
2019. "The Corniche of Abu Dhabi: Public Space and Outdoor Intimacy". Conference "City Environments around the Globe: A Multidisciplinary Research, Teaching and Exchange Project", NYUAD.
2018. "Objets de mémoire. Ville intime et consommations cosmopolites aux Émirats arabes unis", Seminar presentation, Séminaire Frontières et enfermements dans les mondes arabes et musulmans, EHESS / IISMM.
2018. "'Unfortunately, I love Abu Dhabi'. Ambivalent expressions of belonging among second-generation Arab youths in the United Arab Emirates". *SAMLA Annual Conference*, Birmingham, AL.
2018. "Commercial spaces, spatialized consumptions and urban diversity in Abu Dhabi, UAE". Conference "Circulations and consumptions in the cities of the Middle East. A multidisciplinary

- approach", IFPO Erbil (Iraqi Kurdistan).
2018. "Shaping the Future. The performative rhetorics of the UAE's urban development", Fifth World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES), Sevilla.
2018. "Becoming a Woman, Becoming an Adult in a Transforming Society: Young Emirati Women in the Face of Social Change", Conference "Varieties of Emirati Womanhood", NYUAD.
2017. "Building a cosmopolitan locality in Abu Dhabi: Ethnography of the Arab youth". Symposium "Migrants in Global Cities", National University of Singapore / USPC, Singapore.
2017. "Around a cup of coffee: Youth sociality, consumption and social change in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)". Invited Talk, MINPAKU, Center for Modern Middle East Studies, Osaka.
2017. "Unimagined Community: Ethnography of the Arab Youth in Abu Dhabi". Invited Talk, Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi / CEFAS.
- 2017 (with H  l  ne Thiollet). "Cosmopolitanism in denial: A comparison between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates", International symposium "Cosmopolitanism Revisited. Comparative Perspectives on Urban Diversity from the Gulf and Beyond", INALCO; CEVIPOF, Paris.
- 2017 (with Sylvaine Camelin). "Shopping malls as cosmopolitan canopies? Reflections on an urban form", International symposium "Cosmopolitanism Revisited. Comparative Perspectives on Urban Diversity from the Gulf and Beyond", INALCO; CEVIPOF, Paris.
2017. "Observer, fa  onner, dominer le futur : les   mirats arabes unis face    la fin du p  trole". Conference "La composition du temps? Pr  dictions,   v  nements, narrations historiques", 14e colloque annuel de la MAE, Paris Nanterre University.
2017. "Mises en sc  ne cosmopolites dans les Emirats arabes unis. Sociabilit  s dans l'espace public", International conference "Villes en repr  sentation : Expressivit  s de l'espace public", Paris Nanterre University / CNRS / Audencia.
2017. "Hi  rarchies citadines et anonymat tactique    Abou Dhabi (  mirats arabes unis)", Seminar presentation, S  minaire "Les fronti  res de la ville", EHESS.
2016. "Jeunesses arabes d'Abou Dhabi (  mirats arabes unis)", Seminar presentation, S  minaire "Questions de migration", Paris-Nanterre University.
2016. "Pratiques sociales, ludiques et culturelles des r  sidents d'Abu Dhabi". International conference "Le Louvre monde. Un lieu, des territoires", Paris-Sorbonne University / Louvre Museum.
2015. "Arab Youth of Abu Dhabi". Seminar presentation, *Euro-Arab Meeting for Young Researchers in Social Sciences*, Knowledge Transfer Project, Bahrain Authority for Culture & Antiquities, Manama.
2015. "Le priv  , le public et l'intime dans la maison   mirienne". Conference paper, *1er Congr  s du GIS Moyen Orient Mondes musulmans*, National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO), Paris.
2015. "Du souk au mall : le march   dans la p  ninsule Arabique". Public conference presentation, *Les Rendez-vous de l'Histoire du monde arabe*, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris.
2014. "Sociabilit  s de la jeunesse   mirienne : entre autonomisation et respects des normes chez les



- jeunes d'Abou Dhabi". Conference paper, Conference "Individus, État et politique dans l'espace méditerranéen : entre islam et sécularisation ?", Université Mundiapolis-Centre Jacques Berque, Casablanca.
2014. "Pratiques d'anonymat et groupes de statut à Abou Dhabi". Conference paper, Symposium "Ces villes-là, Journées hommage à Colette Pétonnet", Paris Nanterre University.
2014. "Abu Dhabi: The Promise of an Exclusive City". Conference paper, *EASA Biennial Conference*, Panel "Building promises: how international, state and local actors collaborate on public construction projects in non-democratic environments", Tallinn.
2014. "Other Voices: Emirati Society Through Young Women's Cultural Productions", Workshop presentation, "Being an Emirati Woman Today: Profiles, Paths and Challenges", Paris Sorbonne University of Abu Dhabi.
2013. "Narratives of Love, Relationships and Marriage Amongst UAE Youth". Conference paper, Symposium "Transgressing the Gulf: Dissidence, Resistance and Potentiality in the GCC States", University of Exeter.
2012. "The Corniche of Abu Dhabi: Public Space and Outdoor Intimacy". Conference paper, "Boom Cities Conference", New York University Abu Dhabi.
2012. "Anthropology of the Emirati City: Youth and Public Space in Abu Dhabi". Conference paper, Gulf Studies Conference, University of Exeter.
2012. "Internet and the Youth in the UAE". Conference paper, *Gulf Research Meeting*, Cambridge.