

Melinda Marie Cohoon

PhD Candidate in Near and Middle Eastern Studies
Expertise in Game Studies, Iranian Studies, and Social Media

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. Candidate in Interdisciplinary Near and Middle Eastern Studies 2017–Expected 2023
University of Washington (UW), Seattle, WA

M.A. in International Studies-Middle East 2015–2017
University of Washington (UW), Seattle, WA
[Thesis](#)

B.A. in History and Urban Honors 2011–2014
Portland State University (PSU), Portland, OR
Magna Cum Laude
[Honors Thesis](#) & [McNair Scholars Publication](#)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Social Media and Game Studies Fieldwork, Virtual Research Summer 2020–Present

- Designed an ethnographic dissertation study on Iranian gamers using frameworks of empathy and compassion, which I was interviewed for at the UW by the [graduate school](#) and [the NMES program](#)
- Researching legal ramifications, censorship, and sanctions that impact citizens access to the internet fully, including social media, in Iran through the lens of Iranian domestic and US foreign politics
- Interviewing and observing 30+ Iranian participants across social media and gamer platforms
- Collecting tweets, subreddits, hashtags, memes, gifs, with currently more than 15,000 relevant data points
- Delivered a White Paper to the SSRC's Social Data Initiative on Iran and the alt-right spread of misinformation and the Capitol Riot entitled "[The 2020 US Elections Post-GamerGate: Political Discourse among Iranian and Iranian-American Gamers on Social Media](#)" (forthcoming in 2022)
- Produced an article on Iranian gamers and cyberspace censorship (under review)
- Presented initial findings at 3 national/international conferences and an invited TALK
- Triangulating data from Twitter, Twitch, 4Chan, Instagram, Reddit, and online games to create co-occurrence models for sentiment analysis with a policy paper output goal
- Maintaining a virtual presence through competitive gaming, and as a researcher, on *World of Warcraft*, a massive multiplayer online game

Digital Iran (DI) Project, Project Manager & Liaison, Virtual Research Summer 2020

- Funded by a Simpson Center Digital Humanities Fellowship for 2 PhD students and 1 undergraduate research assistant
- [Researched](#) the pressures of state and non-state actors, US foreign policy, and Iranian government local laws impact on video game content
- Collaborated and led a project team with remote technology such as Zoom meetings, Twitch live-streaming, and YouTube private vlogging for technical and creative skill-building
- Built an 80+ follower base on [DI Twitch channel](#) and 70+ followers on Twitter in under two months
- Streamed on Twitch for over 100 hours amounting to nearly 10,000 unique live chat messages and 1,198 live viewers over the course of three months
- Created engaging digital media content on a [WordPress blog](#) and [Twitter](#) for a range of audiences, including but not limited to 20+ age groups, academics, and gamers

- [Mentored](#) the DI project's undergraduate research assistant on digital technology, research, and grant writing, resulting in their Fulbright Award for 2020-2021, and their acceptance to Berkeley's German Studies PhD Program with competitive funding
- [Published the peer-reviewed article](#) that discusses the DI project goals, Iranian social media and game industry, and video game content
- Produced an article on discourse and metadata analysis of Iranian video games, and co-wrote an article on DI project management, live streaming, and pedagogy (under review)
- Presented at 3 national/international conferences and an invited TALK
- [Invited Talk + honorarium](#) at the Kevorkian Center, NYU (delayed)
- Awarded [finalist title](#) for the Diversity & Inclusion in Esports Category during The*gameHERs awards, for content creation and streaming on DI channel, while also advocating for women and LGBTQIA+.

PROFESSIONAL & TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Gorton Leaders Program, Mentor, Slade Gorton Policy Center, Seattle, WA	Winter 2022–Present
Suzzallo Library Central Circulation, Student Staff, UW	Spring 2018–Present
Simpson Center Grant for HSTCMP 590, Graduate Assistant, UW	Summer 2021
HSTAFM 162: History of the Islamic World, Reader/Grader, UW	Spring 2021–Summer 2021
JSIS 202: Cultural Interactions in an Interdependent World, TA, UW	Spring 2019
HSTAFM 163: History of the Modern Middle East, TA, UW	Winter 2019
JSIS 544: Reading Seminar on Middle East Studies, RA, UW	Autumn 2018
Digital Humanities Training, DHSI, UVic, BC, Canada	Summer 2018 & Summer 2019
Arabic Translator for the Department of History, Graduate Assistant, UW	Winter 2017–Spring 2017
Gorton Leaders Programs, Fellow, Slade Gorton Policy Center, Seattle, WA	Winter 2016–Spring 2016

TECHNICAL SKILLS & LANGUAGES

Project Management, Digital Research Project Consulting & Mentorship

Programs, Tools, & Platforms: Omeka Classic, OmekaS, Neatline, Docker, WordPress, Canvas, Alma Library Management System, Scalar, Visual Code Studio, Excel, CSV, Atlas.Ti, NVivo, XMedia Recode, Open Broadcasting System, Streamlabs, Audacity, Twitch.TV

Languages, Scripts, & Subsets: JavaScript (D3) | CSS | JSON | HTML Basic

Research Methods: Participant-Observation | Textual and Discourse Analysis | Interviews | Virtual Ethnography | Web Scraping and Data Mining using Python, HAR, and R | Data Visualization | Metadata

Persian & Arabic: Advanced reading, speaking, and writing

French: Intermediate reading, speaking, and writing

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Journal Article: “Politics of the Everyday: Iranian Gamers and Cyberspace Censorship,” Under Review.

Journal Article co-authored with van Kooten, Kayla: “Digital Iran: Project Management and Live Streaming as Critical Digital Pedagogy,” Under Review.

Journal Article: “The Digital Borderlands: (Counter)Discourse and Metadata Analysis of Iranian Video Games,” Under Review.

Journal Article: “Thinking with bell hooks and Paulo Freire: A Syllabus for the Digital Middle East,” Accepted.

Journal Article: “Digital Iran: Soft Power and Affect in Video Games,” *Interdisciplinary Digital Engagement in Arts & Humanities*, vol 2(1), September 2021. DOI: 10.21428/f1f23564.3d7610e0.

Book Review: “Paulo Lemos Horta’s *Marvellous Thieves: Secret Authors of the Arabian Nights*,” *Review of Middle East Studies*, vol. 53(2), December 2019. DOI: 10.1017/rms.2019.47.

Journal Article: “The British-American Imperial Agenda in Iraq: The Oil and Railway line from Kirkuk to Haifa, 1920-1932,” *PSU McNair Scholars Online Journal*, vol. 9, 2015. DOI: 10.15760/mcnair.2015.30.

MEDIA & IMPACT

Blog post: “Prince of Persia and Queering the Near East,” *Digital Iran: Anticolonial and Imperial Narratives of Iran in Video Games*, October 12, 2020. <http://digitaliranproject.com/prince-of-persia-and-queering-the-near-east/>.

Newsletter: “Near and Middle Eastern Studies Students Present a Virtual Panel at the 2020 Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting,” *Middle East Center Newsletter*, Fall 2020. <https://jsis.washington.edu/mideast/news/newsletter/2020-fall-newsletter/>.

Blog post: “Battlefield 3: The Affective Dimensions of a Virtual Middle East,” *Digital Iran: Anticolonial and Imperial Narratives of Iran in Video Games*, August 2, 2020. <http://digitaliranproject.com/battlefield-3-the-affective-dimensions-of-a-virtual-middle-east/>.

Blog post with Rahbar, Victoria: “Reading and Playing Right to Left: Preserving Japanese Comics and Iranian Video Games,” *Near Eastern Languages & Civilization*, June 29, 2020. <https://nelc.washington.edu/news/2020/06/29/reading-and-playing-right-left-preserving-japanese-comics-and-iranian-video-games>.

Newsletter: “An Interview with Journalist and Iran Specialist Barbara Slavin,” *Middle East Center Newsletter*, Fall 2019. <https://jsis.washington.edu/mideast/news/newsletter/fall-2019/>.

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, & SCHOLARSHIPS

Roshan Institute Fellowship for Excellence in Persian Studies + top off scholarship, UW	2021–2022
Social Data Research and Dissertation Fellowship, Social Science Research Council	2020–2021
Maurice and Lois Schwartz Fellowship, NELC, UW	2020–2021
Roshan Institute Fellowship for Excellence in Persian Studies, UW (x2)	2019–2021
Google Conference Scholarship Program	2021
Digital Forays Lightning Talks Honorarium (delayed), Kevorkian Center, NYU	2021
Diversity & Inclusion in Esports Category (Finalist), #thegameHERSAwards, the*gameHers	2020
Digital Humanities Summer Fellowship for Digital Projects, Simpson Center, UW	2020
Digital Humanities Summer Institute Tuition Scholarship, DHSI, UVic	2020
Graduate Research Cluster Grant, Simpson Center, UW	2019–2020
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Persian (Summer), MEC, UW	2019
Digital Humanities Summer Institute Tuition Scholarship, DHSI, UVic	2019
Digital Humanities Summer Institute Travel Grant, Simpson Center, UW	2019
Carolee Danz Endowed Scholarship (Spring), UW Libraries	2019
Digital Humanities Summer Institute Travel Grant, Simpson Center, UW	2018
Easa A. Bateh Fellowship (Summer), NELC, UW	2018
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Turkish (Summer), GSC, UW (Declined)	2018
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Arabic, MEC, UW	2017–2018
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Arabic (Summer), MEC, UW (Declined)	2017
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Arabic, MEC, UW	2016–2017
Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship, Arabic (Summer), MEC, UW	2016
The Henry M. Jackson Top Scholar Fellowship, UW	2015–2016

Ronald E. McNair Travel Grant, PSU	2014
Ronald E. McNair Research Fellowship Program, PSU	2013–2014
The Diversity Enrichment Scholarship, DMSS, PSU	2013–2014
President’s Equal Access Scholarship, DMSS, PSU	2013–2014

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS

Invited TALK: “Iranian Gamers on Social Media, Twitch, and World of Warcraft,” *Near East 101: Gateway to NELC Digital*, Near Eastern Languages & Civilization, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, November 3, 2021.

Panel Presenter: “Affective Entanglements: Iranian and Iranian American Gamers on Social Media and World of Warcraft,” “STS Alter-ed” Panel, *Good Relations: Practices and Methods in Unequal and Uncertain Worlds*, Society for Social Studies of Science Annual Meeting, October 8, 2021.

Conference Presenter: “Critical Digital Pedagogy and Mentorship: A Syllabus for the Digital Middle East,” *Open/Social/Digital Humanities Pedagogy, Training, and Mentorship*, University of Victoria, BC, CA, June 17, 2021.

Conference Presenter: “Digital Iran Project Management,” *Project Management in the Humanities Virtual Conference*, University of Victoria, BC, CA, June 9, 2021.

Conference Presenter: “Digital Iran: Narratives of (De)colonization in Video Games,” *Digital Humanities Summer Institute Virtual Conference & Colloquium*, University of Victoria, BC, CA, June 7, 2021.

Moderator: “In Conversation with Mana Kia: Persianate Selves,” *Persian Studies Workshop Series Spring 2021* sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern languages and Civilization and Persian and Iranian Studies Program, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, March 9, 2021.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeuM1aETb3U>.

Showcase: “Digital Iran: Narratives of (De)colonization in Video Games,” *Hacking the Academy: Simpson Center Digital Humanities Summer Fellows Showcase*, University of Washington, October 13, 2020.

Invited TALK: “Digital Iran: Anticolonial and Imperial Narratives of Iran in Video Games,” *Society of Scholars Virtual Meeting*, Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, October 7, 2020.

Panel Presenter: “The Affective Entanglement: Iranian Women Gamers Online,” “Ethnographies of the Everyday: Negotiating Iranian Subjectivities through Gender Performance, Music, and Video Games” Panel, *Middle East Studies Association Virtual Conference*, October 6, 2020.

Workshop co-presenter with Rahbar, Victoria: “Reading and Playing Right to Left: Preserving Japanese Comics and Iranian Video Games,” *The Right to Left Virtual Workshop*, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, CA, June 7, 2020.

Conference Presenter: “The Digital Borderlands: Glocalizing Iranian Video Games,” *Digital Humanities Summer Institute Virtual Conference & Colloquium*, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, CA, June 2, 2020.

Workshop lead with Elezovic, Arna, and Apa Pomeshikov, Ayda, “Introduction to Interdisciplinary Ethnographies: Defining Ethnography in Anthropology and Science and Technology Studies,” *Interdisciplinary Ethnographies Workshop Series* sponsored by the Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, December 2, 2019.

Capstone Presenter: “Reimagining History through Digital Cultural Artifacts: A Teaching Method,”
NMES Capstone sponsored by the Walter M. Chapin Simpson Center, University of Washington, Seattle,
WA, May 4, 2018.

Conference Presenter: “The Imperial Frontier: Tribal Dynamics and Oil in Qajar Persia, 1901–1910,”
Graduate Student Conference in Middle East Studies, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, May 19, 2017.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory
Islamicate Digital Humanities Network
Middle East Studies Association
Society for Social Studies of Science