



INTELLECTUAL ENCOUNTERS OF THE ISLAMICATE WORLD

Digitization meets Internationalization:  
eTeaching and eLearning scenarios in the MA  
Intellectual Encounters of the Islamicate World  
at Freie Universität Berlin



# The MA program in short

## Subject

- Intellectual History of the Arab-spoken world in the Middle Ages
- Knowledge-transfer as well as the manifold and deep interconnections between Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- Strongly interdisciplinary and research-oriented approach



Polyglot (Ethiopian, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Armenian), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

# The MA program in short

## Structure

- English-spoken, one year
- Blended learning:
  - Synchronic online lectures (80%)
  - Three in-class meetings (20%)
- Max. 20 students mainly from Israel and Palestine and other countries
- International guest lecturers
- Tutors and student mentors



# Intellectual encounters back then ...

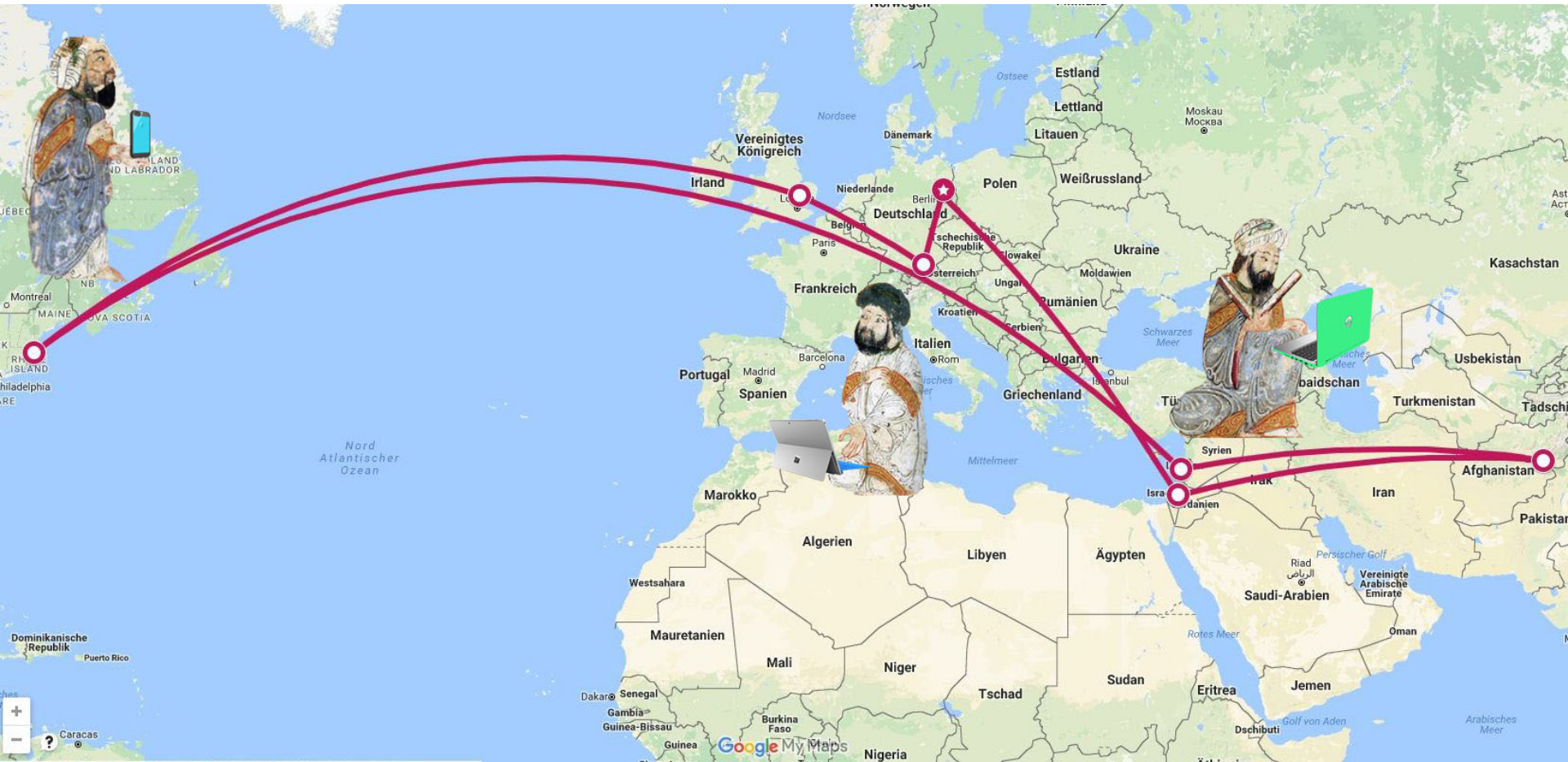


Scholars at an Abbasid library, from the Maqamat of al-Hariri by Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, Baghdad, 1237 AD

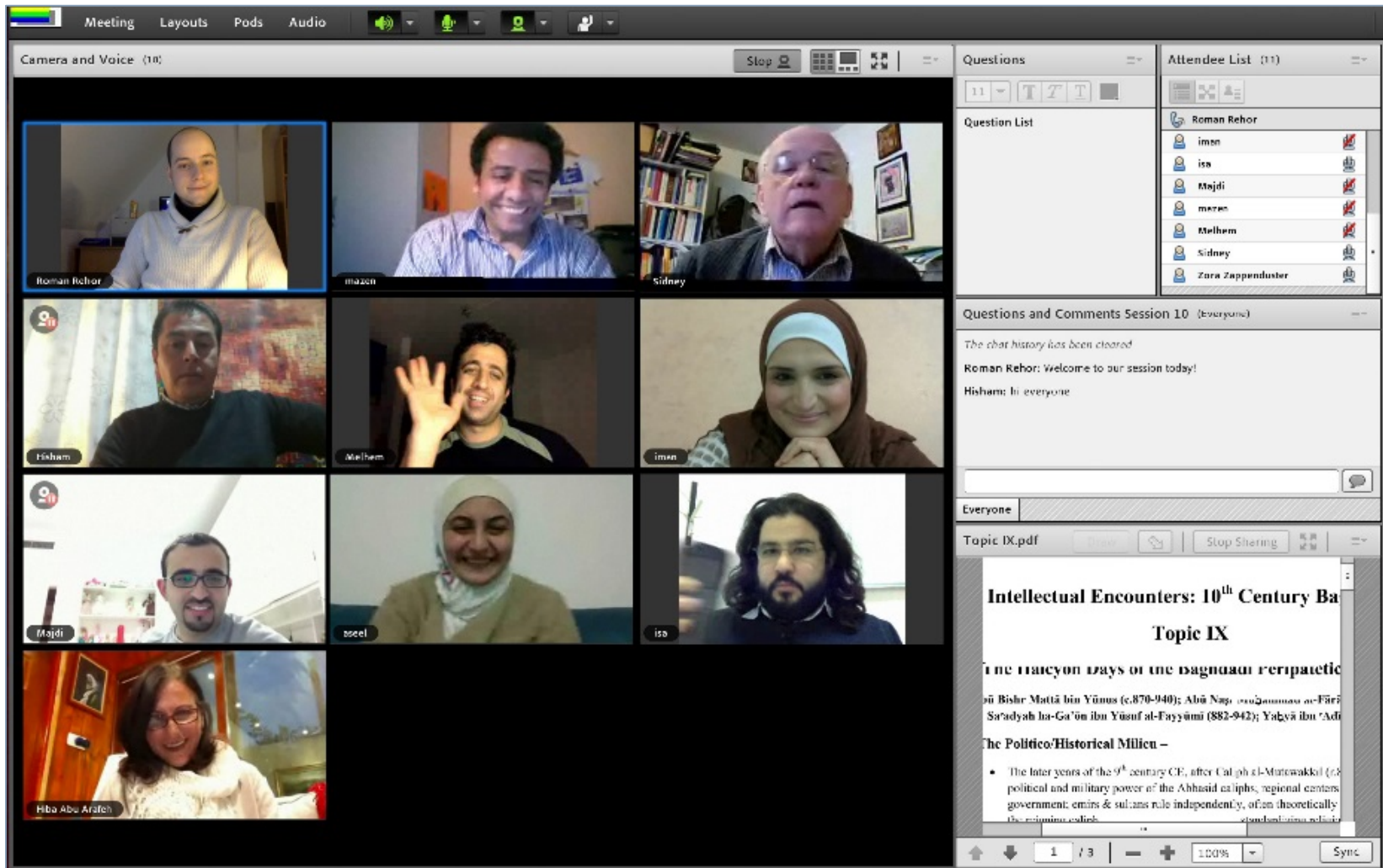
... today ...



# ... across space ...



# ... but in real time



The screenshot displays a Zoom meeting interface. The main window shows a grid of 11 participants in a 3x4 layout (with the last cell empty). The participants are: Roman Rehor, Amazon, Sidney, Hisham, Melhem, iman, Majdi, bseel, isa, and Hiba Abu Arach.

On the right side, there are three panels:

- Questions:** A panel for asking and answering questions.
- Attendee List (11):** A list of participants with their names and status icons.
 

Name	Status
Roman Rehor	Active
iman	Active
isa	Active
Majdi	Active
melhem	Active
Melhem	Active
Sidney	Active
Zara Zappenduster	Active
- Questions and Comments Session 10 (everyone):** A chat window showing a message from Roman Rehor: "Welcome to our session today!" and a response from Hisham: "Hi everyone".

At the bottom right, a document titled "Topic IX.pdf" is shared. The document content is as follows:

**Intellectual Encounters: 10<sup>th</sup> Century Baghdad**

**Topic IX**

**The Trucyayn Days of the Bagnuayn Peripatetic**

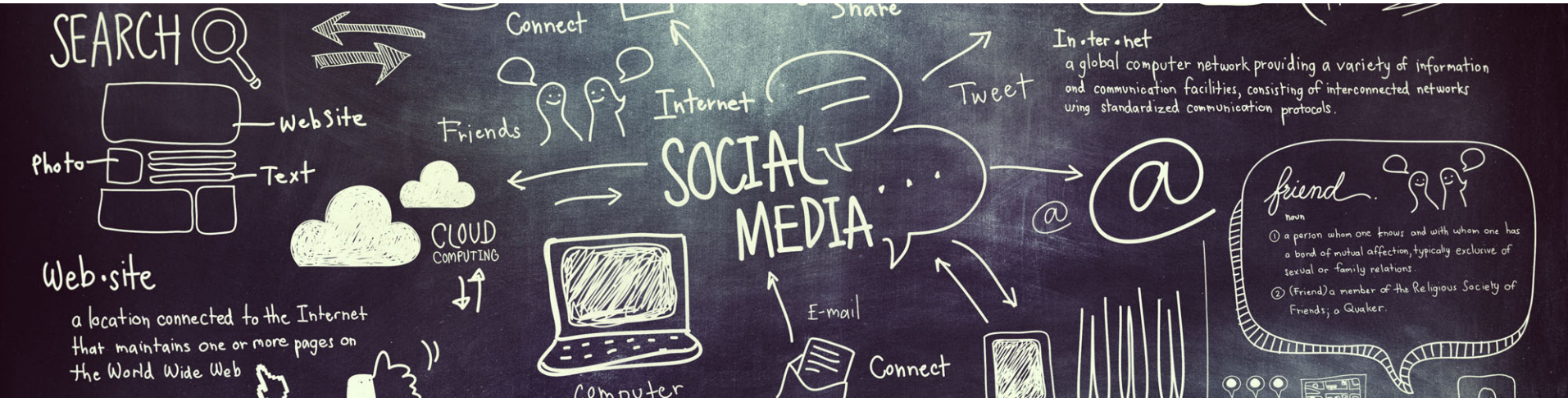
Abū Bishr Mattā bin Yūnus (c.870-940); Abū Naḡm al-Ḥārī; Saʿādīyah al-Gaʿūm ibn Yūnus al-Fayyūmī (882-942); Yaḡyā ibn ʿAdī

**The Politico-Historical Milieu –**

- The later years of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE, after Caliph al-Muwakkil (c. political and military power of the Abbasid caliphs, regional centers government; emirs & sultans rule independently, often theoretically the caliph's ally)



# What defines us



**We are international and intercultural by nature**

**Because we are international, we have to go digital**

**Conditio sine qua non**

# Many methods to meet the challenges



# Adapting eTeaching to an international audience

## Three Examples

Make people **see** each other.

Collaboration is crucial to successful learning outcomes for students  
Visual Feedback is essential for a successful teaching experience

Make things **easy** for people.

Improving accessibility in online tools tears down barriers in teaching

Learning culture individual – **better teaching is universal.**

It's no secret that good didactic methods are seldomly used.

Deficient didactic methods have greater impact in online teaching.

We do a Didactic Methods training for teachers.

# Expectation management

- Challenge: group of international participants that have been socialized in very different social contexts, each one with unquestioned, but highly self-evident cultural backgrounds
- A (successful) eLearning scenario is strongly connected to a (successful) expectation management
- Normative and cognitive expectations

# „Global“ communication network

**Alumni event**

**Intercultural  
Training**

Scholarship reports

Application communication  
(presentations, emails, website,  
brochure, mailings,  
facebook, info leaflets)

Introduction to the  
structure of the MA:  
what, when, how

**Evaluation**

## Reliability

Academic Calendar

Deadline  
management  
for written assignments

**Immediate response  
to requests**

Regular feedback-loops  
between  
teachers, tutors, staff  
(online and in person)

**Regular meetings with  
students during in-class  
sessions**

# Some catch rules of expectation management

1. Don't assume that people know (what they have to do).
2. Keep them in the loop: regular, pro-active and timely flow of information.
3. Be consistent, transparent and approachable.
4. Encourage your participants to communicate directly and immediately.
5. Make use of the word „no“.

# Positive effects

**We are fast and responsive**

**We are embracing diversity**

**We are family friendly**

**We can adapt to a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds**

**We are flexible for cultural differences**

**Diversity is our business**

**We are strongly individualized in our service structure**

**Nanotechnologically Advanced**

# Real people in a real world





# Cat content

