



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA  
CENTER FOR AFGHANISTAN STUDIES



# AFGHANISTAN IMMERSION SEMINAR

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING FOR SERVICE IN COUNTRY  
HISTORY | CULTURE | LANGUAGE

## AFGHANISTAN IMMERSION SEMINAR

Seminar participants rapidly develop basic language skills, cultural awareness, and a historical understanding of modern Afghanistan. Morning sessions focus on politics, ethnic relations, gender issues, terrorism, and a variety of other topics. Afternoons are devoted to developing practical communication skills in Pashto and Dari, or Afghan Persian. Some evenings feature cultural exchanges with Omaha's Afghan community. The three-week experience prepares both civilian and military personnel for making their time in country more productive.

### ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING

Afghanistan is a vastly diverse country with a rich cultural heritage and complex tribal and ethnic relationships. The region is – and always has been – geostrategically important to the world's major powers. American and other international service personnel can better help Afghans if they more fully understand the country in a broader context.

Knowing that this context is essential, professionals from the U.S. intelligence community, the Foreign Service, non-governmental organizations, and all branches of the U.S. military have attended immersion seminars at UNO. They have departed for Afghanistan with a better understanding of the country and its people, and with more confidence in their ability to communicate with Afghan partners.

### DEPTH OF EXPERIENCE

Founded in 1972, the Center for Afghanistan Studies has continued to be America's primary cultural and scholarly link with Afghanistan. Through war and peace, destitution and reconstruction, the Center and its partners have been on the ground in Afghanistan – printing textbooks, training teachers and journalists, and advising U.S. government officials.

The Center's team members have deep roots in Afghanistan. Many were born and raised there, later working and raising families amid history-making events. Others have spent nearly their entire professional lives studying the country's culture and geography, visiting its cities and villages, and working with Afghans. All are deeply committed to preserving Afghanistan's heritage and developing its economy and civil society.

## SEMINAR TOPICS & ACTIVITIES

- Globalization on the Silk Road – Conquests, Commerce, Ideas, Language, & Culture
- Dari & Pashto Language Instruction
- Language Lab Practice
- Religious Factors in Afghanistan
- Women of Afghanistan & Afghan Culture
- Afghanistan: How Has it Been Ruled?
- The Politics & Perils of the Globalization of Extremist Religion
- Afghanistan, Pakistan, & the Pashtoons

## MEET THE SEMINAR TEAM

### ESMAEL BURHAN

CAS Dari Language Consultant

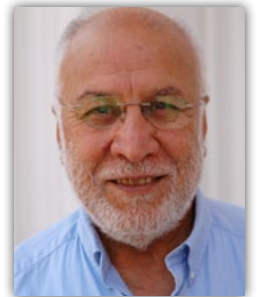
Prior to leaving Afghanistan in 1977, Dr. Burhan taught English as a second language and chaired the English Teacher Training Department at Kabul University. He also served as the Language-Culture Coordinator for the U.S. Peace Corps, preparing volunteers in Kabul and throughout the United States for service in Afghanistan. He first came to Omaha as a Fulbright scholar in 1977. When the Soviet war ensued, he decided to stay at UNO. He co-authored a series of textbooks for U.S. students of Dari and Afghan students of English, including *Dari for Foreigners* (1983) and the *Dari-English Dictionary* (1993). He has taught English as a second language to students of many nationalities. Since 2002, he has been teaching Dari and coordinating Afghanistan Immersion Seminars for both civilian and military personnel.



### ABDUL RAHEEM YASEER

CAS Assistant Director

A professor of English language and literature at Kabul University during the Soviet occupation, Mr. Yaseer escaped Communist rule in 1987, seeking refuge initially in Pakistan. He came to Omaha a year later, where he has managed several multi-million-dollar grant projects over the past 30 years. He has led teacher training, translation, and publishing efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He has also served as the Director of the U.S. Peace Corps Training Program in Afghanistan, and has taught language and cross-cultural communications to departing Peace Corps volunteers in Colorado. In Omaha, he has served as the Ameer, Imam, and as a member of the Executive Committee of the local Islamic Center. Mr. Yaseer speaks English, Dari, Pashto, Arabic, and Urdu.



- Language & Cross-Cultural Experiences
- Research in the Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection at UNO's Criss Library
- Afghanistan History & Culture, 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Medicine in Afghanistan
- Geology of Afghanistan
- Introduction to Geospatial Solutions
- Afghanistan's Past & Present
- The Afghan Army & its Evolving Structure
- Food & Culture Night with Afghan Families

## MEET THE SEMINAR TEAM

### SHER JAN AHMADZAI

CAS Education & Outreach Specialist

Prior to leaving his home country in 2007, Mr. Ahmadzai served in various positions in the Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. He was responsible for managing President Hamid Karzai's daily schedule, and he also compiled profiles of all 249 members of the newly elected Wolesi Jirga in 2005. That work made him intimately familiar with the political dynamics of Afghanistan's lower house, including the members' political affiliations, educational backgrounds, and ethnic relationships. Before the Karzai presidency, Mr. Ahmadzai taught English as a second language in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he spent most of his life as a refugee. His native language is Pashto; he also speaks Dari, Urdu, English, and Hindi.



### THOMAS GOUTTIERRE

UNO Dean of International Studies & Programs, CAS Director

Prior to assuming his present position in 1974, Mr. Gouttierre lived and worked for nearly 10 years in Afghanistan, serving as a Peace Corps volunteer, a Fulbright fellow, Executive Director of the Fulbright Foundation, and Head Coach of the Afghan National Basketball Team. He was also seconded by the U.S. State Department to serve as Senior Political Affairs Officer on the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to Afghanistan in 1996 and 1997. Mr. Gouttierre speaks, reads, and writes Dari, Farsi, and Tajikistani Persian. His publications include numerous articles about Afghanistan society, culture, and politics. He co-authored the two-volume language textbook *Dari for Foreigners* and a bibliography of Persian works in English. He also writes original Dari poetry and serves as an internationally recognized authority on Central Asia's cultures and conflicts, appearing in news articles and broadcasts worldwide.



### JOHN (JACK) SHRODER

CAS Research Coordinator and Professor Emeritus

Dr. Shroder is an internationally renowned authority on geomorphology with unique insights on the geology and geography of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Himalayas. He has served as the Editor in Chief of the Elsevier book series *Developments in Earth Surface Processes* and Editor of the journal *Geomorphology*. He was awarded Fulbright grants for work in Pakistan in 1983 and in Afghanistan in 1978, as well as National Science Foundation and National Geographic Society grants to Nanga Parbat Himalaya in 1995 and to K2 Karakoram Himalaya in 2003. He has also worked on a variety of remote-sensing projects and an Afghanistan atlas project. Through his continuing work in Central Asia, he has learned to navigate both the lands and cultures of Afghanistan and its neighbors.



### SHAISTA WAHAB

Curator of the Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection at UNO

Ms. Wahab maintains the largest collection of research materials on Afghanistan in the United States. Before coming to Omaha in 1981, she worked for the Kabul Public Library and USAID in Afghanistan. In 2003 she helped archive Constitutional Loya Jirga documents and built a library for CLJ delegates. Ms. Wahab also led the Afghan Oral History Project, teaching oral history to Afghan women journalists and collecting video interviews for the 2003 PBS documentary *Afghanistan Unveiled*. She traveled to the country's most remote areas and recorded the personal experiences of Afghan women who lived through the Soviet invasion. Her most recent publications include *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (2010) and *Beginner's Dari* (2006). She speaks English, Dari, and some Pashto.

### DR. WARD CHAMBERS

UNMC Cardiologist, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine

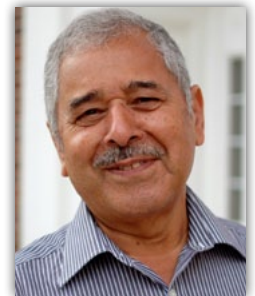
Since 2002, Dr. Chambers has made 15 trips to Afghanistan. He has worked extensively with Kabul Medical University to develop a partnership for students and faculty. He has provided patient care, lectured students, trained medical staff, and presented at World Health Organization seminars. He has also brought KMU faculty to UNMC for training in student education, faculty development, and clinical practice.



### MOHAMMAD BASHEER

CAS Dari Language Consultant

In the late 1960s, Mr. Basheer worked for the Foreign Service Institute in Estes Park, Colorado, and Washington DC. In the early 1970s, he served as the chair of the English Language Department at Kabul University and later as a training coordinator for Afghanistan's Peace Corps office. He then went on to work for the United Nations in Afghanistan, first as an interpreter and then as a logistics manager for the UN Program for Drug Control. In the mid-1980s, Mr. Basheer worked as an interviewer for the U.S. Refugee Program in Islamabad, assisting Afghans as they fled the Soviet war. This experience informed his later research on social and economic adjustment issues of refugees from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Poland, and Romania. Since the late 1980s, he has coordinated many projects for the Center involving visiting students and scholars from Central Asia. Mr. Basheer holds a bachelor's degree in teaching English as a Second Language from Kabul University, and graduate-level credentials in teaching ESL from Indiana University and the Philippine Normal College in Manila. Basheer is fluent in Persian and Dari, as well as Tajiki, Pashto, and English.



### GUEST LECTURERS

To add unique features to every immersion seminar, the Center for Afghanistan Studies calls on guest lecturers as their schedules allow.



PRESIDENT HAMID KARZAI reviews UNO's extensive collection of Afghanistan maps with Geology Professor and Immersion Seminar Lecturer Jack Shroder in the Criss Library. President Karzai's 2005 visit to Omaha gave him an opportunity to meet the team at the Center for Afghanistan Studies and discuss development challenges.

## CONTACT

For information on upcoming immersion seminars or to arrange a custom-designed seminar specifically for your team, contact:

**SHER JAN AHMADZAI**  
Education & Outreach Specialist

[sahmadzai@unomaha.edu](mailto:sahmadzai@unomaha.edu)

[world.unomaha.edu/cas](http://world.unomaha.edu/cas)

1.402.554.2376

## THE CENTER FOR AFGHANISTAN STUDIES

University of Nebraska at Omaha  
6001 Dodge Street  
Omaha, Neb. 68182-0006  
USA

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Omaha

