

Haifa Mahabir, PhD
Palestine Studies | Political Theory | Socio-Legal Theory

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Independent Researcher

Research Profile

My research investigates how imperial law and settler-colonial governance transform the foundations of sovereignty, legality, and political personhood. Working within postcolonial studies, political theory, and socio-legal analysis, I examine how colonial regimes normalised exceptional forms of power—embedding emergency, racialisation, and bureaucratic domination into the ordinary structures of modern governance.

My doctoral studies re-examined the concept of the *state of exception* through the prism of Palestine, read against the historical lens of empire. This research demonstrates how colonial legal frameworks institutionalised permanent exception as a foundational mode of rule. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, Edward Said, and Giorgio Agamben, the work traces the imperial origins of contemporary regimes of sovereignty and state violence.

My current research extends this work through a comparative study of Ireland and Palestine, examining how Britain's earliest colony functioned as a laboratory for exceptional law, paramilitary policing, and colonial bureaucracy. Legal measures first entrenched in Ireland—such as administrative detention, counterinsurgency policing, and the erosion of legal rights—were later exported to imperial territories including Mandate Palestine, where they helped shape the legal architecture of the Israeli state. At the same time, the project traces the reciprocal circulation of anti-colonial strategies between Irish and Palestinian movements, illuminating how both imperial control and resistance travelled across colonial worlds.

Education

PhD in Postcolonial Studies (Dec 2025)

Doctoral Thesis: [*The Holy Waste Land: A Theoretical Discourse on Palestine and the Settler-Colonial State of Inceptional Exception*](#)

Awarding Institution: University of Kent at Canterbury

School of Humanities; Centres for the Global Study of Empire and Colonial-Postcolonial Studies

Supervisor: [Dr Bashir Abu-Manneh](#)

External Examiner: [Dr Robert Spencer](#) (University of Manchester)

Internal Examiner: [Dr Maria Ridda](#)

Fields/Keywords: Palestine Studies, Israel Studies, Zionism, Settler-Colonial Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Postcolonial Theory, Political Theory, Socio-Legal Theory, Legal Theory, Historiography of Empire, Political Theology, Classical Political Thought, Medieval Political Thought

BA in Political Science and International Relations (May 2011)

State University of New York at New Paltz

Concentration: Political Theory

BA in English and Creative Writing (May 2007)

State University of New York at New Paltz

Concentration: Creative Writing of Literary Nonfiction

Certificate in Creative Nonfiction and Literary Fictions (Jul 2008)

Paris American Academy, France

Professional Examinations

New York State Unified Court System

Court Assistant Competitive Examination — Successful Candidate (2026)

Eligible for appointment to the New York State Courts

Selected Publications

Monograph-in-development

Haifa Mahabir, *The Holy Waste Land: Palestine and the Settler-Colonial State of Inceptional Exception* (doctoral monograph under editorial review with Bloomsbury Academic)

A theoretical study of how Zionist statecraft institutionalises permanent emergency, racialised exclusion, and bureaucratic domination as foundational logics of governance. Engaging the political thought of Hannah Arendt, Edward Said, and Giorgio Agamben, the book re-examines the state of exception through the lens of imperial legal inheritance.

Articles in peer-reviewed journals

- Haifa Mahabir, 'The State of Inceptional Exception: Colonial Emergency and the Juridical Formation of Israeli Sovereignty', *Social & Legal Studies* (under review)

Book Reviews in peer-reviewed journals

- Haifa Mahabir, '[Unsettling the World: Edward Said and Political Theory](#)', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2023), pp. 108–112

Online publications

- Haifa Mahabir, '[Frank Herbert's Dune and Orientalism](#)', *Munitions of the Mind* (2022).
- Haifa Mahabir, '[Professor Rashid Khalidi and The Hundred Years' War on Palestine](#)', *English Research* (2020).

Books and edited volumes

Haifa Mahabir, ed., [In Search Of: A Collection of Creative Nonfiction](#) (Coddhill/SUNY Press, 2011).

Co-authored and edited this interdisciplinary anthology in collaboration with multi-platinum recording artist Brandon Boyd. The volume brought together professional, academic, and student

voices in creative nonfiction, and was adopted into English and Creative Writing curricula across multiple SUNY campuses. Proceeds supported the Creative Writing programme at SUNY New Paltz, reflecting a model of literary collaboration, editorial leadership, and arts-based public engagement.

Dennis Doherty, *Fugitive*, ed. Haifa Mahabir (Codhill Press, 2007).

Edited the poetry manuscript for publication; also undertook proofreading and book design/layout in Adobe InDesign, and produced the cover and author photography.

Book Sections

- Haifa Mahabir, 'In the House of War', in *In Search Of: A Collection of Creative Nonfiction*, ed. by Haifa Mahabir (New Paltz, NY: Codhill/SUNY Press, 2011), pp. 42-47.
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Grants and Fellowships

2027 research fellowship applications (British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Research Ireland Fellowship) — as appropriate, once outcomes are known.

British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellowship — Shortlisted (2026)

Postgraduate Research (PGR) Community Fund, University of Kent (2022)

Awarded funding to co-organise the School of English Summer Literary Festival, supporting postgraduate-led interdisciplinary programming, creative engagement, and academic community building.

Research Grant for Faculty/Postgraduate Collaboration, University of Kent (2020)

Awarded in support of a public research event co-organised with Dr Bashir Abu-Manneh: *In Conversation with Professor Rashid Khalidi on The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*.

Creative Writing Fellow, New York Foundation for the Arts & New York State Council on the Arts (2018)

Selected through a highly competitive statewide process recognising emerging writers of exceptional promise.

Academic Year Undergraduate Research Experience Scholarship, SUNY New Paltz (2011)

Awarded in support of conference participation at the New England Political Science Association.

Campus Auxiliary Services Internship Stipend, SUNY New Paltz (2010)

Awarded for research and fieldwork with the Embassy of the State of Palestine, Pretoria, South Africa.

Grant Assessment and Peer Review

Creative Writing Fellowships (Fiction) Grants Panellist,

New York Foundation for the Arts & New York State Council on the Arts (2021)

Served on the statewide fiction review panel, assessing applications and selecting fellows on the basis of literary merit, originality, and contribution to the field.

Connecticut Office of the Arts Fellowships, Grants Panellist (2018)

Served on the fellowship review panel, evaluating applications and contributing to funding recommendations based on artistic merit and the programme's selection criteria.

Public Talks, Panels, and Conferences**University of Kent, School of Law (Spring 2026)**

[Humanity at a Crossroads Symposium](#), Programme Contributor and Speaker

From Archive to Influence: Rediscovering Edward Said's T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, commemorating Edward Said's 1985 lectures at Kent that formed the basis for his book, *Culture and Imperialism*

Delivered Talks:

- *On T.S. Eliot, Spiritual Decay, and the Legacies of Empire*, a conversation with Professor [Wadie E. Said](#) (University of Colorado Law School) on his father's intellectual inheritance
- *Constructing the Other: Dehumanisation as Political Strategy*
- *The 'Boomerang Effect': Imperial Afterlives in the Contemporary West*

University of Warwick, School of English and Comparative Literature (Deferred due to international travel commitments; to be rescheduled)

Broken Subjects and the Afterlives of Exception: Ireland as a Colonial Laboratory from Empire to Mandate Palestine

University of Warwick, Palestinian Literature and Culture Reading Group (Deferred due to international travel commitments; to be rescheduled)

Edward Said's After the Last Sky

Canterbury & District Association of Women Graduates (Autumn 2023)

Exiles in the City: Edward Said and Hannah Arendt in Counterpoint

London School of Economics (Spring 2020)

Fred Halliday Symposium

Origins of Exception: Britain's Mandate for Palestine, 1917–1948

University of Kent (Spring 2020)

Co-Chair (with Dr Bashir Abu-Manneh),

[In Conversation with Professor Rashid Khalidi: The Hundred Years' War on Palestine](#)

State University of New York at New Paltz (Spring 2011)

Center for Middle Eastern Dialogue Annual Conference

On Dissent and Revolution: The Arab Spring

New England Political Science Association Annual Conference (Spring 2011)

Islamic Political Thought and the Limits of Liberalism

Teaching and Pedagogical Experience

Academic Outreach Mentor and In-School Outreach Officer, University of Kent Academies Trust (2018–2023)

Alongside my doctoral research, I have developed a sustained record of academic teaching, outreach, and community-based intellectual leadership, leading initiatives that foster inclusion, critical inquiry, and scholarly community.

From 2018 to 2023, I served as Academic Outreach Mentor and In-School Outreach Officer at the University of Kent, mentoring A-Level students across Southeast England toward university preparation. As Postgraduate Subject Expert, I delivered seminars A-Level students on topics including *Migration and Movement* (2023), *What is Justice?* (2022), *Slavery and Racialisation in the US* (2020), *Palestine and Settler-Colonialism* (2020), *Critical Theory* (2020) and *Dissent and Revolution* (2019).

Postgraduate Teacher Training, University of Kent (2020–2021)

Focussed on pedagogical theory, seminar design, and inclusive teaching practice. As part of this programme, I undertook teaching assistant responsibilities on the undergraduate module *EN337: Thinking Through Theory*. In addition to delivering 20 classes (four contact hours per week), I also contributed to curriculum planning, assessment, and seminar facilitation with the module convenor.

Academic Leadership and Community Engagement

Co-Founder and Organiser, Wild Minds Community Project (2021–2025)

Co-developed this nature-based mental health initiative in collaboration with University of Kent Student Support and Wellbeing counsellors, Dr Andres Velarde and Stone Fitzgerald. Designed specifically for postgraduate researchers, the project integrates therapeutic outdoor activities with academic wellbeing support. Responsible for the development and facilitation of ongoing programming that promotes resilience, community building, and emotional sustainability in postgraduate research culture.

Organising Founder and Co-Chair, The Research Salon (2021–2023)

A cross-disciplinary seminar series co-led with Dr Ryan Perry, spotlighting the research and creative work of postgraduate students and academic staff across the School of English and the Division of Arts and Humanities. Developed during the COVID-19 period as an online forum adapted from an earlier in-person PhD Research Seminar (co-founded with Dr Bashir Abu-Manneh), the Salon fostered intellectual community during remote learning and has since expanded through inter-university collaboration across the UK.

Organiser, PhD Board of Students (2019–2020)

Amid university restructuring, I founded and co-chaired the *PhD Board of Students* (2019–2020), advocating for student support and fostering direct communication between our doctoral cohort and faculty leadership. In this role, I represented doctoral researchers at staff and committee meetings and led efforts to defend academic freedom for both staff and researchers.

Applied Research and Policy Engagement

Independent Research and Fieldwork, Palestine (2010–2017)

My years living and working in Palestine formed a distinctive foundation for my subsequent academic research. During this period, I undertook sustained independent research and fieldwork across political, diplomatic, cultural, and community contexts, developing first-hand knowledge of Palestinian political institutions, international diplomacy, colonial governance, and everyday life under occupation. This work included periods of professional and research engagement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Fateh Foreign Relations Commission, and Palestinian cultural and municipal institutions.

Policy Analyst and Political Aide, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) / Fateh Foreign Relations Commission

Worked with the Fateh Foreign Relations Commission, the international relations body of the Palestinian national movement's leading political faction within the PLO, under the guidance of Dr Husam Zomlot (now Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the United Kingdom).

- Drafted official statements in response to major diplomatic events, including the 2011 release of *The Palestine Papers*, shaping the Commission's immediate media and policy engagement.
- Collaborated on the preparation of Dr Shaath's memoirs, drawing on my training in literary narrative and historical research.
- Accompanied the Palestinian delegation as observer to the United Nations General Assemblies (2011–2012), including Palestine's successful bid for non-member observer state status.

Research Analyst, U.S./Middle East Project of the Council on Foreign Relations (2014–2015, New York: Remote)

Worked under Dr. Henry Siegman with fellows Dr. Tareq Baconi and Dr. Seth Anziska. Contributed analysis on Israel-Palestine policy and regional developments, synthesising interdisciplinary insights for briefings and public communications.

Research Intern, Embassy of the State of Palestine in South Africa (Summers 2009 and 2010, Pretoria, South Africa)

Researched South–South diplomatic history and postcolonial international relations under Ambassador Dr. Ali Halimeh. Supported engagement between Palestinian officials and South Africa's diplomatic corps, with a focus on shared anti-colonial legacies.

Publishing and Editorial Experience

Acting Assistant Editor; previously Editorial Assistant, Pearson Higher Education, New York (2007–2009)

Supported the development and production of higher-education textbooks, working across manuscript preparation, editorial review, author liaison, permissions, and the coordination of materials through the publication process.

Editorial Intern, Penguin/DK Publishing, New York (2007)

Supported editorial development and production across illustrated trade publishing, assisting with manuscript preparation, editorial research, proofreading, and the preparation of materials for publication.

Community Engagement and Early Initiatives**Cultural & Community Engagement Volunteer, Ramallah Municipality, Palestine (2010; 2012–2017)**

Participated in community-based initiatives supporting cultural programming, archival documentation, and public education in collaboration with municipal and regional partners. Work was conducted in connection with broader efforts to preserve and promote Palestinian cultural heritage under the guidance of leading figures in cultural diplomacy.

Volunteer Teaching Assistant in English, Latin Patriarchate School, Birzeit, Palestine (2010; 2012)

Supported classroom instruction in English for secondary school students, with a focus on language development, literary engagement, and academic writing. Contributed to lesson planning and provided one-on-one student support to enhance literacy and critical thinking skills.

Student Chair, Center for Middle Eastern Dialogue, SUNY New Paltz (2009–2011)

Led student programming for the Center, coordinating interdisciplinary events focused on cultural exchange, political dialogue, and scholarly engagement with Middle Eastern history and contemporary issues. Worked closely with faculty and invited speakers to facilitate public discussions and academic forums.

Organiser, Amnesty International Student Chapter, SUNY New Paltz (2009–2011)

Participated in human rights education initiatives and coordinated student-led events focused on global justice, freedom of expression, and the ethics of international advocacy. Contributed to awareness campaigns and campus-wide dialogues that complemented interdisciplinary studies in literature, politics, and culture.

Youth Mentor and Community Service Volunteer, Imbabaze Orphanage, Ruhengeri, Rwanda (2007)

Provided mentorship and educational support to orphaned youth in a post-conflict setting, contributing to community programming rooted in healing, storytelling, and creative expression. This early engagement with global humanitarian work informed a long-standing commitment to postcolonial thought, literary ethics, and cross-cultural understanding.

Awards and Honours**Best Young Writer, Travelers' Tales / Solas House (2008 & 2009)**

Awarded for *The Road from Ruhengeri* (2008) and *The Vision Seekers* (2009), essays selected for their literary merit and contribution to global narrative nonfiction. Recognised for evocative, place-based storytelling and cross-cultural reflection.

Vincent Tomaselli Award for Outstanding Graduating Writer, SUNY New Paltz (2007)

Awarded annually to the most distinguished graduating student in creative writing for exceptional literary promise and achievement.

Phi Sigma Omicron Honor Society, State University of New York

Inducted in recognition of academic excellence and intellectual distinction.

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