LSJ Welcomes New Faculty Member, Rawan Arar

Submitted by Kyla Mayer on November 1, 2019 - 4:19pm

By Hunter Kulik

This fall we welcomed Rawan Arar to join the Law, Societies & Justice community. Beginning Winter Quarter, Professor Arar will start teaching courses on human rights issues and refugee displacement.

Arar started her career in her hometown, as an undergraduate at the University of Texas San Antonio. From there, she pursued a Masters in women's and gender studies at UT Austin. It was at this time that Arar became a rotary scholar which involved travelling to the Middle East and learning about Iraqi refugees. She later completed her PhD in sociology at UC San Diego.

Since her initial fieldwork as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, Arar has been expanding her research on refugee issues, specifically in Jordan. “It was so fascinating to me to explore another culture, another country and a place where I'm from but also didn't grow up, and specifically try to understand how such a small country takes in so many refugees,” Arar shares.

Arar attributes much of her inspiration to her Palestinian, Jordanian, and American background. “It's because of my family background that I can speak Arabic and communicate with people. It's why I was exposed to these issues in a very different way than one might be if you only lived in the U.S."

One of Arar's current projects is to turn her dissertation into a book. According to Arar, “most of the data will come from 175 interviews that I conducted in Jordan, talking not only to Syrian refugees, but also Jordanian citizens as well as United Nations and government officials.” She also completed an ethnography over a four year period which included 16 months of research. Arar is looking forward to sharing this extensive hands on experience with LSJ students as a professor.

“I am really interested in how people access legal protections and the role that the law can play in not only providing support for refugees, but how laws and policies can keep people from accessing rights as well,” she says. These research questions align with topics, such as human rights and the role of the law in expanding rights, which are frequently explored by LSJ students.

Winter Quarter, Arar will lead a seminar about refugee issues that will aim to answer questions about the refugee experience, the reasons people seek asylum, and the dynamics that surround refugees and asylum seekers. Students can expect a global approach to these topics, with emphasis on the Middle East and the influence of international policy.

As a sociologist, Arar emphasizes the importance of what you can learn by interacting with other people and aims to employ this concept in the classroom. “I am really interested in putting people's voices and experiences in conversation with the theories and the ideas of scholars.”

Arar is enthusiastic about sharing her expertise, but also about navigating the questions and curiosities of her students. “I am here to teach but I also believe I have so much to learn from the students.”
“It’s my life’s passions that brought me here,” Arar says. “It’s an honor to be able to share my experiences with people.”