



DAAM

DIPARTIMENTO ASIA  
AFRICA E MEDITERRANEO

Special Lecture

# Haci Gündüz

Assistant Professor of Arabic Language  
and Literature Macalester College,  
St. Paul, Minnesota

*Discussant*

**Francesca  
Bellino**

University of Naples L'Orientale

## Beyond Decline: Poetry and Literary Culture in Ottoman Damascus

9

June  
2026

15:00

Antisala  
degli Specchi,  
Palazzo  
Corigliano  
Piazza  
San Domenico  
Maggiore, 12



This lecture revisits the history of Ottoman-era Arabic literature, often portrayed as a period of decline, through the case of the sixteenth-century poet Māmāyā al-Rūmī (d. ca. 1577-79), a former Ottoman janissary who became a renowned Arabic poet in Damascus. Drawing on manuscripts and biographical sources, it explores the vibrant, multilingual literary culture of Ottoman Damascus and highlights poetry as a space of sociability, performance, and aesthetic experimentation. Māmāyā's works on urban life, coffeehouses, and pleasure reveal a dynamic literary world deeply connected to early modern Ottoman society, offering a broader reconsideration of how Arabic literary history has been written.