



Dear Woolf Friends,

Inspiring the next generation – the emerging leaders of the future – is fundamental to our work. Our students are encouraged to write journal articles, participate in conferences and develop transferable skills for the 21st century. In preparing students for their future, we engage them in thinking critically and communicating effectively. Who knows – we may be nurturing the next UK Prime Minister or US President! Whichever path our students pursue, I hope our encouragement and mentoring allows them to become effective leaders be it in their communities, neighbourhoods or further afield.

William Kessler (1927-2019) was a great supporter of the work of the Woolf Institute and an inspiration to our Founder Director, Dr Ed Kessler. His incredible generosity – together with his wife, Joanna's – knew no bounds and during his lifetime, the Willie and Jo Kessler Masters Studentship was established for students enrolled on the University of Cambridge MPhil in Middle Eastern Studies: Muslim-Jewish Relations. Students who met him were bowled over by his enthusiasm for their particular areas of study, prompting exciting discussion and debate. The students were immensely appreciative of the time he took to converse with them.

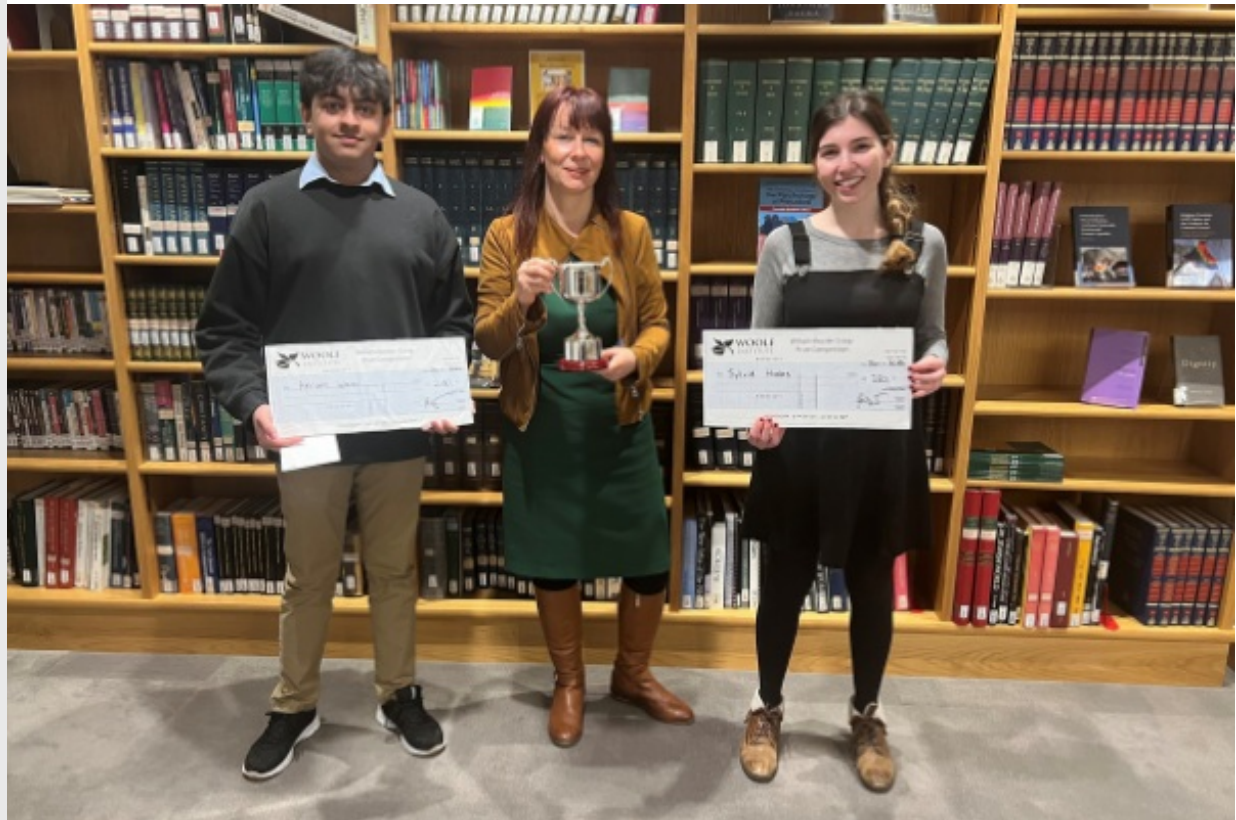
To honour his legacy, the Kessler family inaugurated the William Kessler Essay Prize Competition in 2020 enabling the Woolf Institute to nurture and encourage emerging leaders from different faith communities. At the award ceremony – held on Wednesday 26 January 2022 in-person at the Woolf Institute – short presentations were delivered by the five shortlisted candidates. 'How lucky we are,' I thought to myself, 'that these are our emerging global leaders'. Each candidate excelled in sharing thought-provoking insights based on their essay submissions. I was certainly happy not to have been tasked with selecting the winner!

Presented with a cheque for £250 were joint-winners Sylvie Hodes (University of Cambridge) and Akram Nazir (University of Birmingham). Sylvie wrote on 'Lessons from the Past: How Interfaith Work Can Benefit from Historical Research' whilst Akram focused on 'Diversity of Faith is our Birthright – A Modern British Perspective'. You can read their essays on the [Woolf Institute Blog](#).

The Woolf Institute team is delighted to have the opportunity to remember and honour William Kessler who always believed in the Woolf Institute's vision and in the students who hold so much promise for all our futures.

Best wishes,

Dr Emma Harris
Director of Studies, Woolf Institute



Essay prize-winning Cambridge University student experiences first-hand the importance of building better Muslim-Jewish relations

Sylvie Hodes, 22, who is studying Hebrew and Arabic at Cambridge University, documented her experiences as a Jewish woman studying at an overseas campus in a 1,500-word essay, and is the joint winner of the 2022 William Kessler Essay Prize Competition run by the Woolf Institute, the world-leading experts on interfaith relations.

Sylvie was presented with her £250 prize alongside the other winner Akram Nazir, 20, who is studying to be a doctor, and whose essay challenged the ideals of how governments can incorporate more religious diversity.

Established in 2020, the Woolf Institute's William Kessler Essay Prize Competition invites UK Undergraduate and Graduate students once a year to submit essays which address a range of topics connected to interfaith. Essays are judged by the Woolf Institute's leading academic staff, all internationally recognised for their expertise in researching and understanding relations between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. Prizes are awarded to two winners.

Sylvie spent six months in Egypt last year studying at the University of Alexandria, and in her essay, explains how her experiences there deepened her understanding of the delicate nature of interfaith relationships.

She says, "There used to be 80,000 Jews in Egypt and now there's just a

handful. Religion is at the forefront of the Egyptian culture, and it would be normal for someone to ask what your name is and then what your religion is. I wanted to write about my experiences in the essay and I was delighted to be selected as a winner.”

Akram Nazir says of his prize-winning essay, “There were so many interesting topics, and I was so shocked to win. Government structure isn’t always inclusive to people of different religions, and I wanted to look at that. It’s an important subject to me and I’m glad the judges were impressed.”

On winning the prize, Sylvie says, “I was surprised. I listened to the other presentations and was shocked that the judges chose mine, but it was great to validate my experiences in Egypt and bring voice to this important issue.”

Paying tribute to all the entries, the Woolf Institute’s Director of Studies Dr Emma Harris says, “As ever, we were impressed with the quality of so many entries, challenging a wide range of topics. It was hard to select a winner, but the judges on the day went with Sylvie and Akram’s entries. William Kessler, the father of Dr Ed Kessler who co-founded the Woolf Institute, was a great supporter of our work. He believed in our vision from day one, encouraging staff and making generous donations including to the capital campaign for our new building. The essay prize competition enables us to continue his legacy and nurture young talent from different faith communities.”

[CLICK HERE TO READ SYLVIE'S ESSAY](#)

[CLICK HERE TO READ AKRAM'S ESSAY](#)

[CLICK HERE TO READ ALL SHORTLISTED ESSAYS](#)

WEBINAR 21 FEBRUARY @17:00

**“ANTISEMITISM AND THE GAZA CONFLICT
IN MAY 2021: WHAT WAS NEW AND WHAT
WAS OLD?”**

**DAVE RICH, DIRECTOR OF POLICY,
COMMUNITY SECURITY TRUST (CST)**



ISGAP-WOOLF WEBINAR SERIES 21 FEBRUARY @17:00

The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) is delighted to inform you of its seminar series as part of the landmark fellowship training programme on critical antisemitism studies, discrimination and human rights in partnership with the Woolf Institute.

The next lecture will be given by Dave Rich, Director of Policy, Community Security Trust (CST).

“Antisemitism and the Gaza Conflict in May 2021: What Was New and What Was Old?”

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

INTERFAITH MIXER 23 FEBRUARY @19:00

People of Faith, Secular Societies: Opportunities? Challenges?



INTERFAITH MIXER: 23 FEBRUARY @19:00

Join us at the Woolf Institute for an engaging discussion around what it means to be a religious person in today's increasingly secular world featuring Dunya Habash, Alissa Symon and Dr Safet HadziMuhamedovic. Sushi will be served following the discussion to encourage further conversation between attendees and the speakers.

This event is jointly hosted by the Woolf Institute and the Cambridge Divinity Society.

For more information please email Dunya Habash at atdh599@cam.ac.uk

WEBINAR: HOW TO TALK ABOUT...



SHEIKH IBRAHIM MOGRA PROF. ROBERT TOMBS MOHAMMED AHMED RICK SOPHER DR ESTHER-MIRIAM WAGNER

24 FEBRUARY @16:00

How to talk about...

the French 'imam charter'

WEBINAR: HOW TO TALK ABOUT... THE FRENCH 'IMAM CHARTER'
2 FEBRUARY @19:00

President Macron's 'imam-charter' has raised debates about the involvement of the State in the appointment of Muslim faith leaders. This webinar will discuss what the 'imam charter' is, talk about present practices concerning imam appointments in the UK, explore the differences in British and French approaches towards religious minority communities and debate needs and obligations of religious communities and of the State.

Panelists: Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra, Prof Robert Tombs, Mohammed Ahmed and Rick Sopher

Chaired by: Dr Esther-Miriam Wagner

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

REFLECTING ON WISDOM AND GREATNESS

Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

WHAT IS WISDOM AND HOW DO WE MEASURE
IT? IT'S DIFFERENT FROM BRILLIANCE BUT
IT'S DIFFICULT TO PIN DOWN...



REFLECTING ON WISDOM AND GREATNESS

What is wisdom and how do we measure it? It's different from brilliance but it's difficult to pin down...

How do we measure what wisdom scientists, religious leaders or politicians have? Sometimes we intuit it without quite knowing why. Sometimes we are wrong to do so. Esther-Miriam Wagner and Tim Stevens bring their wisdom to bear on understanding wisdom...

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THE PODCAST](#)

COMING SOON

Naked Reflections Podcast x The Woolf Institute

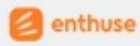
SILENCE

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

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