

Professor Honored by Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Brian Edwards selected as one of 21 “Emerging Leaders” to help Chicago thrive in global era

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EVANSTON, Ill. --- Brian T. Edwards, associate professor of English and comparative literary studies at Northwestern University, has been selected by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs as one of 21 “Emerging Leaders” for its Class of 2015.

The Chicago Council’s Emerging Leaders Program, established in 2008, identifies young leaders making decisions that will equip Chicago to compete and thrive in the global era. Each year a selection committee identifies a new class of approximately 20 leaders in the Chicagoland area to participate in the two-year program.

The Emerging Leaders Class of 2015 will spend the first year of the two-year program examining key global issues that affect the world and Chicago’s global future. They will hear from experts on issues such as the global economy, foreign policy, energy and the environment. In the second year, they will work with Chicago Council staff to define, develop and produce a report on a pressing global challenge.

Previous reports have covered topics including urban food security, immigration and the privatization of infrastructure. Representatives of the group will present their recommendations at a public program at the end of the second year.

Edwards, who was recently appointed director of the University’s new program in Middle East and North African studies, effective Sept. 1, teaches and writes about U.S. literature and culture in its international context, globalization and culture, and contemporary literary and cultural production of North Africa and the Middle East. His fields of interest include American studies, Middle East and North African studies, comparative literature, postcolonial and diaspora studies, film and cultural anthropology.

Edwards said Chicago can be a leader in increasing public understanding about the Middle East and its peoples.

“Chicago is itself a global city in two basic ways: its population is fantastically diverse, composed of generations hailing or descended from multiple nations, with thriving communities of newer arrivals living in diaspora,” Edwards said. “And it is a city where the arts flourish at the highest level and a laboratory for the most innovative creative work. To me, an untapped potential for Chicago is to bring together these two aspects of the global city.”

Edwards is the author of “[Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express](#)” (Duke University Press, 2005), as well as essays and articles in the Chicago Tribune, The Believer, McSweeney’s, Public Culture, Michigan Quarterly Review, Foreign Policy, Bookforum and leading scholarly journals.

Edwards is co-editor, with Dilip Gaonkar, of “[Globalizing American Studies](#)” (University of Chicago Press, 2010), a collection of essays that provides global perspectives on U.S. history and culture. In 2009, he edited a portfolio of new Egyptian writing for the New York literary journal A Public Space.

In 2005, Edwards was named a [Carnegie Scholar](#) as part of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's "Islam Initiative," designed to develop public scholarship on Islam and Muslim societies. As a recipient of a [New Directions Fellowship](#) from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, he pursued training in sociocultural anthropology and Middle East studies at the University of Chicago, as well as advanced Arabic and Persian.

He is currently completing a book called "After the American Century: Ends of Circulation in Casablanca, Cairo and Tehran," which examines the circulation of American cultural products in contemporary North Africa and the Middle East and on the creative work of young Egyptians, Moroccans and Iranians as they engage U.S. culture in the digital age.