

Bio:

Nour El Rayes is assistant professor of Ethnomusicology at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. She is a specialist of popular music in the Arab world and is interested more broadly in the ways that performance and sound engage our relationships to time, focusing especially on modes of futurity and their attendant affective dimensions. Her forthcoming book *Other Futures: Promises of the Alternative in Lebanese Popular Music*, an ethnography of alternative music in Lebanon, explores how music has been critical to the project of realizing particular aspirations or hopes for non-violent futures. El Rayes holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology with a designated emphasis in New Media from the University of California, Berkeley.

El Rayes has presented her research at meetings of the Society for Ethnomusicology, the American Anthropological Association, the Middle East Studies Association, the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, and the International Council for Traditional Music. Her work has been published in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, and is forthcoming in *Popular Music*. El Rayes' work has been supported by the American Council of Learned Societies and the Berkeley Center for Middle Eastern Studies. In addition to her research, El Rayes has been a percussionist in a number Arabic music ensembles.

Abstract:

In the face of an increasingly dystopian Lebanon, speculative thinking has become both a basic survival tactic and a site of imaginative future-work for the country's artists, musicians, and revolutionaries. Alternative music, in particular, has played a key role in conceptualizing futures for Lebanon that resist common narratives of cyclical suffering and eternal warfare. In this presentation, I focus on two musical projects inspired by the history of Beirut's built environment, looking at the relationship between sound, architecture, and futurity in post-rock band KOZO's 2019 album *Tokyo Metabolist Project* and singer-songwriter Mayssa Jallad's solo project, *Marja'*. Drawing inspiration from radically different sources, these musical projects both grapple with the legacy of the 1975-1991 civil wars through the history of Beirut's postwar reconstruction, asking what might now be different had rebuilding efforts prioritized social reconciliation over financial gain.