



Produced by the Department of Media Relations & Publications

# Lehman TODAY

[Students](#) [Faculty](#) [Events](#) [Newsroom](#) [Blogs & Columns](#) [Multimedia](#)

[Suggestions](#) [Home](#)

## Book by Lehman Professor Hopes to Set the Record Straight on Women in the Mideast

October 13, 2010



Professor Elhum  
Haghighat-Sordellini

"Women in the Mideast and North Africa are not educated." Untrue—their education level has been steadily rising, all the way up to college.

"Religion is holding women back in those regions." Untrue—it's not religion or even culture, but politics.

In her new book, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Change and Continuity*, (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2010), Lehman Professor Elhum Haghighat-Sordellini challenges those and other myths and misconceptions about women in that area of the world. She is a member of Lehman's sociology faculty and acting chair of the Political

Science Department.

"The education level for both men and women has been improving tremendously, but the education level for women especially has improved so much," she says, noting that this is consistent with worldwide trends.

In 2000, for instance, she points out, 47 percent of all university students in Iran were female. In Jordan, the figure was 51 percent; in Kuwait, 68 percent; in Lebanon, 52 percent; and in Qatar, it was a staggeringly high 73 percent. "It's definitely improving, but there's more work that needs to be done," she says.

According to Professor Haghighat-Sordellini, when women in that region enjoy higher educational attainment and lower mortality rates, fertility rates drop, just as they do among women in the West. The result is better-educated women who live longer and have the time and capabilities for a career. But with unemployment rates excessively high among men and women in MENA countries, few women have any opportunity to join the labor force.

For Professor Haghighat-Sordellini, her book is an attempt to set the record straight with a detailed statistical analysis—her Ph.D., which she earned from the University of Maryland, was in demographics and gender studies. As she states, "The problem facing women in the MENA cannot be simply explained as a result of religion and culture. It is far more intricate."

### Upcoming Events

#### New Symphony Orchestra Seeks Members

August 7, 2014 - September 2, 2014

#### Annual Golf Classic

September 19, 2014  
11:30 AM — 8:30 PM

#### Danny Rivera: Obsession

September 20, 2014  
8:00 PM — 10:30 PM

[MORE...](#)