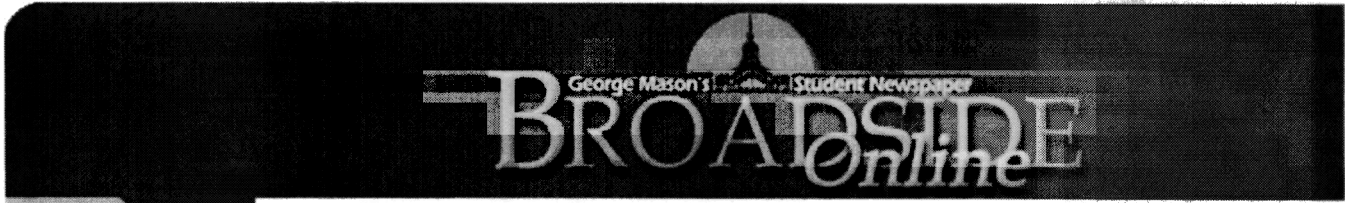


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05/05/2003 Issue

News

Main Menu

- Front Page
- News
- Opinion
- Style
- Sports
- Video Clips
- Archives
- Classifieds
- Place an Ad
- Staff List
- Email Us
- GMU Home Page
- Masonhoops.com
- Mason Gazette
- Today @ Mason
- Check GMU Email
- Grades and Schedule

Search



Innovation

Al-Jazeera Facilitates Discussion
 By Aimee Jo Nuccio and David Manning
 Broadside Staff Writers

As tensions grow closer to war between the United States and Iraq, George Mason University and the University of Bagdad are attempting to create a dialogue between students of the rival nations. Approximately 20-25 students will participate in the town-hall style discussion with students from the University of Baghdad. The discussion will be broadcast live on the Al-Jazeera cable network. In order for students to participate in the discussion, they must submit a brief statement, including a sample question, to the Center for Global Education.

Students will be selected based on diversity of opinions and backgrounds, according to Julie Ryan-Silva of the Center for Global Education. "We don't want everyone just to agree, we want it to be an interesting exchange." The students will not be limited to asking the questions that they submit as a sample. The 2-hour long program "Open Dialogue," hosted by Al-Jazeera's Ghassan Bin-Jeddo, will broadcast live to millions of viewers in the Arab world. The monthly show features "different people representing different viewpoints from around the world" and discusses "hot topics" of the time, said Al-Jazeera's Imad Musa. "There is no political agenda here," said Yehuda Luckacs, Director for the Center for Global Education. "We are simply opening a space to enable young people to be able to talk to one another."

"The goal is to allow for both sides to see faces, for the Iraqi students to see American faces and for American faces to see Iraqi faces and to hear different viewpoints about the crises that are facing our countries," said Ryan-Silva. "I think a dialogue like this, if both viewpoints are expressed, is fine," says Board of Visitors Representative Jack Herry. "One of the problems I had when [Robert Fisk] came on board, the timing was bad; he spoke right after Sept. 11. There was no one to give the other viewpoint. I certainly think that if a dialogue like this is balanced and both sides are expressed, it's going to be helpful."

Security concerns for the controversial event are being addressed. "We will make whatever extra security arrangements we need," said George Mason University Chief of Police Michael Lynch. "We don't know [if] a couple of dozen or a couple of hundred [people are expected] but when we get that information, we will make arrangements and make sure that everything goes well. That's our interest, to make sure that everything goes well." The broadcast is tentatively scheduled for 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Saturday in Harris Theater. Al-Jazeera is a 24-hour cable news network that broadcasts in Arabic around the world. The network gained notoriety with its broadcasts of statements from Osama bin Laden.

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