



**University of Guelph  
Department of History**

**MA Thesis Defence**

**Student:** Nour Newman

**Date:** July 31, 2024

**Time:** 1:00pm – 3:00pm

**Place:** Virtual (contact  
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**“Forgotten Paradise: Damascus Water Engineering and  
Management from Antiquity to the End of the Umayyad Period.”**

**Abstract**

Damascus is renowned as one of the oldest capitals in the world, with a history spanning over three millennia and continuous habitation. Damascus has been under the control of various powers throughout history, including the Persians (539-333 BCE), Greeks (333-64 BCE), Romans (64 BCE-395 CE) and Byzantines (395-635 CE). Early Arab Muslims conquered the city in 635 CE and ruled until 662 CE, when the Arab Muslim Umayyad dynasty (ca. 662-750 CE) established its Caliphate and ruled from Damascus as its capital. Despite this, there has been little comprehensive analysis of the city's ancient water systems. Numerous studies have been conducted on ancient water systems; however, Damascus has received little attention. The lack of historical records and archaeological findings within the old city of Damascus poses many challenges for researchers. This thesis research aims to illustrate the history of water engineering and management in Damascus from the prehistoric era to the end of the Umayyad state. The research seeks to answer the following questions: how did the scarcity of historical records and archaeological discoveries affect our understanding of water management in Damascus during the Umayyad era? What water technologies and management practices were developed by the inhabitants of Greater Syria and Damascus before the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate, and how did these innovations contribute to the city's later prosperity? Is it possible to identify with certainty the origins and the contributors to the development of Damascene water infrastructure and maintenance practices? Additionally, how crucial was water supply and management to the Umayyads? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the technological and infrastructural developments that supported one of the world's longest-continuously inhabited cities.

**Advisor:**

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