

Robert Olson was born in North Dakota. He attended Bemidji University where he graduated Magna cum Laude in 1963. He attended Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana from where he received his MA in 1967 and his Ph.D in Middle Eastern History in 1973. He taught at Clemson University from 1972-73 and taught Middle Eastern History and Politics at the University of Kentucky from 1973 until his retirement in 2010. He was promoted to full professor in 1984,

Olson and his colleague, Michael Gunter, of Tennessee Technical University are the principal co-founders of Kurdish Studies the United States. Olson and Gunter are the authors of 25 books, 11 edited books, 300 scholarly articles and 425 book reviews. Olson's major books are *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations 1718-1743*; *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925*; *Turkey's Relations with Iran, 1979-2004*; *The Kurdistan Question and Turkish Iranian Relations : From World War I to 2000*; *Blood Beliefs and Ballots: The Management of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey 2007-2009*; *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s*, *The Goat and the Butcher: Nationalism and State Formation in Kurdish-Iraq Since the Iraqi War*. He was also the author of 75 referred research articles and 60 edited articles.

Professor Olson was one of only three Middle Eastern historians who wrote books dealing with four centuries -18th, 19th, 20th and 21st and four different countries-Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. He was also one of only a handful of Middle East scholars who also had five books translated into five foreign languages -Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish and French.

Professor Olson was also an op-ed writer for *Today's Zaman*, an English language newspaper in Istanbul Turkey in which he published 130 op-eds before it was closed down in March of 2016. He also wrote for loblog.com one of the outstanding blogs dealing with U.S. and Middle East foreign policy. In addition he was a regular contributor to The Lexington Herald Leader in Lexington Kentucky.

In addition to his academic grants, Bob was selected as University Research professor in 1996; Albert D and Elizabeth H. Kirwan Memorial Prize University Professor in 1999; Arts and Sciences Distinguished professor 2000-2001. He was awarded the "Life Achievement Award in recognition of Exceptional Contributions to the Field of Kurdish Studies' by the Kurdish Studies Association of the Middle East Studies Association in 2015.

In 2016 Professor Olson was the recipient of a Festschrift, *Kurdish Issues : Essays in Honor of Robert W. Olson* in which 13 distinguished international scholars contributed; a major high point in Bob's life. The Festschrift was edited Michael Gunter and published by Mazda Publications.