OVERVIEW
The Center has continued to provide high quality academic programming to the campus community, scholars, students of Islamic studies in broader academia, and the public at large. Given the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, over the past year and a half the Center has made impressive strides on multiple fronts, most notably in public engagement, research development, and fundraising.

With respect to public engagement, the Center organized a webinar on “Covid-19 & Muslim Religiosity,” which generated robust participation from scholars and graduate students across the United States and internationally, inspiring and spawning a number of related initiatives. AVACIS also launched four new streams of thematic audio programming as the Maydan Podcast family, and in doing so established the first academic podcast devoted to Islamic Studies. The Center worked with the Arab Studies Institute (ASI) to develop a module on Islam for the Middle East Studies Pedagogy Initiative (MESPI). This tool will provide instructors around the country with vetted, high-quality readings and multimedia resources on various aspects of Islam that can be incorporated into their syllabi. The Center’s main digital Islamic Studies publishing platform, the Maydan, continued to grow both in diversity of content and reach, continuing to consolidate its position as one of the most comprehensive hubs of scholarly exchange in the field.

On the research and research development front, AVACGIS was successful in its application to the John Templeton Foundation to create a new, multi-year project on “Islamic Moral Theology in Conversation with the Future.” The Center also successfully advanced to the second round of consideration for a major grant from the Henry Luce Foundation for a proposed project on “Black American Muslim Internationalism” (award decision pending). AVACGIS applied to the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) for support to build out the After Malcolm digital archive but was unsuccessful.

In terms of fundraising, AVACGIS successfully negotiated a repurposing of gift funds from the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) to create a $1.6 million endowment to support an annual conference and lecture series at AVACGIS. Progress was made on the development of additional stewardship level gifts. Finally, the Center made progress on several of the goals relating to internal structure and organization outlined in its most recent re-chartering document. More specifically, the Core Faculty has been expanded to represent additional CHSS department and programs, and a virtual faculty research colloquium held in December 2020 helped to begin identifying potential themes for collaborative faculty research going forward.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

1. THE MAYDAN
The Maydan is an online publication of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University, offering expert analysis on a wide variety of issues in the field of
Islamic Studies for academic and public audiences alike. It serves as a resource hub and a platform for informed conversation, featuring original articles and visual media from diverse perspectives. In a field where online publications addressing the broader field of religious studies and curated in an academic setting are becoming fewer in number, Maydan has filled an important gap.

**Maydan Audience**
Since its inception in 2016, Maydan has established itself as a unique site of publication and conversation about Islamic Studies with a readership of nearly 400,000. Maydan's reach is global: 30% of its readers hail from the US, 16% from South Asia, and 9% each from Turkey and the United Kingdom.

**The Maydan Podcast**
In March, 2021 the Maydan launched the Maydan Podcast, with dedicated themes around Islamic Studies and related fields. The Maydan Podcast is made possible by generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation. Maydan Podcast consists of four thematic streams exploring Islamic Studies through race, gender & law, knowledge production, and the Muslim periphery: History Speaks, Islam on the Edges, Knowledge and its Producers and On the Square. See https://themaydan.com/podcast/

**2. COVID-19 AND MUSLIM RELIGIOSITY: AN AVACGIS WEBINAR SERIES**
The Center organized a webinar series that explored the impact of Covid-19 on various dimensions of Muslim religious life in global perspective. Each webinar featured a leading scholar whose work is exploring the intersection of Islam and the global pandemic with a view to exploring Covid-19’s impact on Muslim thought, theology, law, observance, and religious authority. This timely series draw a lot of attention online and the participation was high including international scholars from around the world. See https://islamicstudiescenter.gmu.edu/events/11063

**June 16, 2020**

**June 30, 2020**

**July 14, 2020**

**July 28, 2020**
August 11, 2020
Shabana Mir (American Islamic College, Chicago), "Everything has changed but we can’t: Muslim religious responses to Covid-19"

August 25, 2020
Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad (West Chester University of Pennsylvania & Muslim Wellness Foundation), "Holding on to the Light of Faith: Black Muslims Coping with Covid-19, Social Unrest & Racial Violence"

September 8, 2020
Gary R. Bunt (University of Wales Trinity Saint David), "The 'Allah Algorithm': Interpreting Islamic Influencers' Online Responses to Covid-19"

September 22, 2020
Andrea Stanton (Denver University), "Lived Islam and Covid-19: Belief, Piety, Practice, and the Digital Turn"

October 7, 2020
Marcia Hermansen (Loyola University Chicago), "American Muslim Negotiations of Authority in the Time of Coronavirus"

October 21, 2020
Cortney Hughes Rinker (George Mason University), “‘Not only are we already here, you’re all Muslim. Salam Brother.’: The Islamic Nature of the New Normal in Covid-19 and Exposing the Conflation of Religion, Race, and Culture”

November 4, 2020
Anna Piela (Northwestern University) & Joanna Krotofil (Jagiellonian University), “I’ve discovered I love to pray alone”: Women’s approaches to practising Islam during the Covid-19 pandemic

November 17, 2020

December 2, 2020
Nancy Khalil (University of Michigan), “US Imams and Efforts to Prevent a Professional Epidemic in a Pandemic”

3. SPONSORED EVENTS AS PART OF THE ANNUAL FALL FOR THE BOOK FESTIVAL
The Center partnered with the Fall for the Book Festival (FFtB) since the Center’s inception in 2010. In November 20, 2020 the Center hosted the Fourth Annual Book Review Colloquium as a virtual event on Zoom as part of the festival’s online program during the pandemic.
Fourth Annual Book Review Colloquium
Twelve graduate students from multiple disciplines and universities across the world reviewed the most recent publications in the broader field of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. This meeting, the only one of its kind, brought together graduate students, expert scholars, and readers for a critical conversation on major recent publications in the field. This year’s colloquium featured three panels reviewing twelve books.

Panel 1 | Politics, Jurisprudence and Law | Discussant: Peter Mandaville (George Mason University)

Panel 2 | Texts, Theology and Ethics | Discussant: Maria Dakake (George Mason University)
Owais Manzoor Dar, Jamia Millia Islamia | Book Under Review: Muslim Qur’anic Interpretations Today: Media, Genealogies and Interpretive Communities (Equinox, 2019) by Johanna Pink.

Panel 3 | Middle East History & Political Islam | Discussant: Cengiz Sisman (University of Houston)


4. AVACGIS LECTURES & CAMPUS PROGRAMS
Each academic year, the Center invites national and international scholars and experts to give presentations on their areas of expertise for the Mason campus and surrounding NOVA community. The Center also organizes a Visiting Scholar Presentation during each scholar’s final semester at GMU.

- Younus Mirza, (Georgetown University & Shenandoah University), “The Sacrifice: The Story of Abraham’s/Ibrahim’s Sacrifice and Its Relevance Today”, February 24, 2020, Student Union I

- Christopher Taylor, (AVACGIS, GMU) AVACGIS Visiting Scholar Presentation: “The Transformation of Islamic Charity: From Alms to New Public Voluntarism in India”, April 16, 2020, Virtual Event

- Zaid Adhami (Williams College, Department of Religion), AVACGIS Visiting Scholar Presentation: “To Reform or Decolonize the Mind? Islamophobia, American Muslims, and the Dilemmas of Double Consciousness”, April 30, 2020, Virtual Event

- Sherine Hamdy (University of California Irvine, Department of Anthropology), "Our Bodies Belong to God: Organ Transplants, Islam, and the Struggle for Human Dignity in Egypt", September 23, 2020, Virtual Event

- Muhsin al-Musawi (Columbia University, Classical and Modern Arabic Literature, Comparative and Cultural Studies), "How has the Arabian Nights Sustained a Reputation?", September 29, 2020, Virtual Event

- Hussein Rashid (Colombia University, Department of Religion), “Making the US: Muslims, Race, and Class”, November 10, 2020, Virtual Event

- Darryl Li (University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology), “The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity”, November 18, 2020, Virtual Event
• Youssef Chouhoud (Christopher Newport University, Department of Political Science), “American Muslim Voters: Also not a Monolith”, February 25, 2021, Virtual Event

• Saadia Yacoob (Williams College, Department of Religion), AVACGIS Visiting Scholar Presentation: "Who is the legal person in Islamic law?”, April 7, 2021, Virtual Event

• Laura Jones (Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK at Cardiff University), "Ramadan in Lockdown: Personal Reflection and Communal Activities", April 21, 2021, Virtual Event


• Nur Sobers-Khan (MIT, Aga Khan Documentation Center), “Mass-producing the cosmos: visuality and divination from manuscript to lithograph in 19th-century South Asia”, May 19, 2021, Virtual Event

5. AVACGIS FACULTY TALK SERIES

The Center features the recent research of AVACGIS faculty each semester. The series was widely attended by Center faculty and students from the M.A. program in Middle East and Islamic Studies (MEIS), and drew attendees from additional undergraduate and graduate programs in the College. The online participation was also diverse with many international attendees from around the world for public presentations. Many of the series were organized as a closed Center event per request from the Center faculty. Therefore, these talks were instrumental for faculty to discuss research projects and exchange ideas in a more comfortable and collegial environment and provide feedback to the presenting faculty.

• Hatim El-Hibri (GMU, Film and Media Studies), "Another Future was Possible: The Before/After Image and Beirut's Postwar Construction”, March 3, 2021, Virtual Event

• Cortney Hughes Rinker (GMU, Global Affairs Program & Department of Sociology and Anthropology), “The Structure of Pain: The Impacts of Knowledge, Policy, and Religion on Prescription Opioids in Morocco”, April 14, 2021, Virtual Event

• Sumaiya Hamdani (GMU, Department of History), "Surviving the State: Tayyibi Ismaili Shii Communal Identity in India”, April 28, 2021, Virtual Event

Films & Cultural Events

Concert and Conversation with Children of Adam Band: Jazz, Blues and the African American Muslim Experience. Co-sponsored with African and African American Studies at GMU and GMU Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education – Friday, February 14, 2021, Johnson Center, Atrium
6. ONGOING RESEARCH PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

After Malcolm Digital Archive Project
In spring 2019, the Center acquired and re-launched the After-Malcolm Project, initially developed at Georgia Tech University. The project is a digital database of publications and private archives of African-American Muslim communities, open to public and researchers. Setting up a digital humanities and oral history project that will document the breadth and diversity of American Muslim communities, with a particular focus on the mid-Atlantic region and southern United States. Whereas much of the current discussion of Muslims in the U.S. focused on refugees and recent immigrants, the purpose of this project will be to document and showcase the American Muslim experience across several centuries and to explain how major periods and events throughout American history were experienced by and shaped Muslim communities of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. AVACGIS is actively seeking sponsored program support to develop the After Malcolm initiative. Proposals have been submitted to the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) and the Henry Luce Foundation, and grant programs from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, and the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) have been identified as future fundraising targets. Going forward, AVACGIS plans to incorporate the ‘After Malcolm’ project into a larger umbrella initiative on Islam in America. See https://aftermalcolm.com/

Muslim Atlantic Project
The development of a major new research project on ‘Contextualizing Islam in Europe and North America’ that will explore and engage efforts by Muslim intellectuals, scholars, and thinkers who have been working to create approaches to and interpretations of Islam that grow out of the lived experience of Muslims in the West. This initiative will have a particular focus on the emergence and evolution of new spaces of ‘transatlantic Islam,’ in which Muslim communities in the U.S., Canada and Europe are increasingly dealing with—and working in common to address—common concerns and life issues. As a first step, in partnership with the King’s College London (KCL) and with the support of the British Council’s “Bridging Voices’ program,” the Center is co-sponsoring a two-year research project on “The Muslim Atlantic: Exploring Transnational between Muslims in the US and Europe.” This project examines the history, development, and current state of intellectual and religious exchange between Muslim communities on both sides of the Atlantic. With race, gender, and security as its core themes, the project will provide an understanding of how the evolving public discourse around minority communities in both settings has given rise to historically distinct yet increasingly overlapping experiences for American and European Muslims. During 2020, the project published its second and final report, held a workshop in London, and organized a capstone webinar. See http://www.muslimatlantic.com

Middle East Studies Pedagogical Initiative (MESPI) Islam Module
The project brings together resources from a number of supporting partner institutions and scholars to develop a comprehensive digital repository of pedagogical material in order to facilitate and improve the quality of teaching courses on the Middle East and Islam. The Center has committed to be the principal developer of the section on Islam and already hired a program
coordinator to lead the progress of the project. The digital repository aims to be a one-stop hub for course developing and lecture planning across all academic disciplines, geographic divisions, historical periods, and thematic units. In addition to providing extensive resources, it will also facilitate conversation, review, exchange, and feedback among educators. From late 2020 through summer 2021, the Center coordinated a Faculty Advisory Committee to identify the readings and resources that will populate the MESPI Islam database.

VISITING SCHOLAR PROGRAM
The Center has continued to contribute to the global mission of the college through its robust visiting scholar J-1 program, and hosting/organizing vital educational exchange programs and delegations. Most remarkably, the Center directs an active visiting J-1 scholar program in collaboration with the Office of International Program and Services. During the 2020-21 period, the Center sponsored five visiting scholars. The Center faculty were actively involved in directing research projects and scholars gave presentations to the campus community at the conclusion of their residency with the Center.

• Chris Anzalone, McGill University
  Research topic: “Jihadi Insurgencies”
  Residency: August 2019 – September 2020
  Academic Advisor: Sumayya Hamdani

• Chris Taylor, Boston University
  Research Topic: “Islamic Charities”
  Academic Advisor: Cortney Hughes Rinker

• Zaid Adhami, Williams College.
  Academic Advisor: Peter Mandaville
  Residency: January 2020– May 2020

• Saadia Yacoob, Williams College.
  Research Topic: “Reading Gender in Early Islamic Law”
  Academic Advisor: Peter Mandaville
  Residency: January 2020– May 2020

• Isil Acehan, John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies, Bologna, Italy
  Research Topic: “Migration of Ottoman Muslims to the US in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries”
  Academic Advisor: Huseyin Yilmaz

Graduate Colloquium in Ottoman Studies, September 26, 2020
The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University and the Institute of Middle East and Islamic Countries Studies at Marmara University hosted the second Annual Graduate Colloquium in Ottoman Studies online on September 26, 2020. The Colloquium was motivated by the fact that the explosive growth of interest in Ottoman studies in recent decades has made field-wide exchange of knowledge increasingly challenging and gave rise to studies that are not well-conversant with the broader field. The Colloquium provided a forum for PhD/ABD students to present their theses at an early stage for critical feedback from expert scholars; facilitate engagement and interaction in the broader field of diverse research projects, interests, and approaches; coordinate, and facilitate research and writing.

Session 1

Peyman Eshaghi, Free University of Berlin
“An Unexplored Mine of Wealth: Persian Hajj Travelogues as Productive Primary Sources in the Ottoman Studies.”
Discussant: Nir Shafir (University of California, San Diego)

Ümmügülşüm Kurukol, SOAS, University of London
“Rihla: Interpreting the Islamic city through Muslim Travelers, by revisiting the meaning of travel from the medieval period to early modern times.”
Discussant: Himmet Taşkömür (Harvard University)

Session 2

Duygu Yıldırım, Stanford University
“Exotic in the Orient: Medicinal Sensibility in the Age of Globalization.”
Discussant: Aslıhan Gürbüzel (McGill University)

Maria Pia Ester Cristaldi, Marmara University
“Including new citizens: the education of speech/hearing impaired children in the Late Ottoman Empire.”
Discussant: Seyfi Kenan (Marmara University)

Session 3

Tamer Güven, Istanbul University
“Did the Ottomans Import the Low Wages of the British in the 19th Century? An Examination on Ottoman Textile Factories.”
Discussant: Deniz Kılıçoğlu (The Göttingen Institute for Advanced Study, University of Gottingen)

Semih Gökaltay, University of California
“Well-represented Domains? Reconsidering the Ottoman Participation in the World's Columbian Exposition (1893).”
Discussant: Yaşar Tolga Cora (Boğaziçi University)

Supporting Students: Maydan Intern Program
The Center regularly sponsors interns throughout the year to support the flagship digital online publication, The Maydan. Interns are selected from a competitive national pool. Interns who are students in the Middle East and Islamic Studies M.A. program may receive academic credit.

EXTERNAL FUNDING AWARDS SUBMITTED

Henry Luce Foundation - Religion and Theology program
Topic: The Maydan Podcast
(Leads: Ahmet Tekelioglu and Peter Mandaville)
Result: Successful
Amount: $50,000

Henry Luce Foundation - Special Program: Advancing Public Knowledge on Race, Justice, and Religion in America
Topic: Black American Muslim Internationalism: Genealogies and Trajectories of Race, Religion & Justice
Result: Selected for second round of competition; outcome announced Dec 2021
Amount: $250,000

John Templeton Foundation
Topic: Islamic Moral Theology in Conversation with the Future
Result: Successful (June 2021)
Amount: $234,900

American Council of Learned Societies – Digital Extension Grant
Topic: After Malcolm - A Digital Archive and Public Education Initiative of African American Muslim History in the Post-Civil Rights Period
Result: Unsuccessful
Amount: $150,000