



Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies

islamicstudies.gmu.edu



PHOTO BY EVAN CANTWELL



The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies (AVACGIS), founded in 2009, is a multidisciplinary research center devoted to public scholarship. The center is situated at the heart of the dynamic and innovative campus of George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, outside of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

Its strategic location allows the center to draw on unparalleled resources to advance its mission in the areas of research, public education, and building professional opportunities for current and future scholars of Islamic studies. Through conferences, workshops, lectures, and outreach activities, the center engages one of the most diverse campus and community populations in the nation.

"For more than a decade, the Ali Vural Ak Center has served as an institutional pioneer in promoting a global approach to the study of Islam. From public history to academic discussions and digitizing manuscripts, its activities traverse the past and present of Islam's many worldwide milieus."

— Professor Nile Green, University of California, Los Angeles, author of *Global Islam: A Very Short Introduction*

MISSION

The mission of AVACGIS is to advance a sound and nuanced understanding of Muslim societies and the Islamic faith, its role in world history, and its current trajectory as a diverse, global, and constantly evolving religious tradition.

AVACGIS supports research, interdisciplinary academic programs, and community outreach. By providing educational and research opportunities for students, faculty, and visiting scholars, it is helping to develop 21st-century leaders with a sophisticated understanding of the complex dynamics that shape Muslim communities worldwide.



About Our Founding Donor

The center is named in honor of its founding donor, Ali Vural Ak, a leading business figure and entrepreneur from

Turkey with a diverse range of interests in the services and sporting industries.

OUR DIRECTORS



Peter Mandaville
Director

Peter Mandaville is a professor of government and politics at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government. He is also a nonresident senior fellow in foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution and a senior research fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. Other affiliations have included American University, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Pew Research Center, and the United States Institute of Peace. His government experience includes service as a member of the U.S. secretary of state's policy planning staff (2011–12) and as a senior advisor in the U.S. Department of State's Office of Religion and Global Affairs (2015–16).

He is the author of, among other titles, *Islam and Politics* (Routledge, 2007; 3rd edition, 2020), a broad global overview of Islamic social and political movements, and *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (Routledge, 2001), a study of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. He is the editor or coeditor of several volumes of essays in the fields of international relations and Islamic studies, including *Wahhabism and the World* (Oxford University Press, 2021) and *Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks* (Columbia University Press, 2012). He has contributed to publications such as *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *Washington Post*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Guardian*.

He has also consulted widely for government, media, and nongovernmental organizations on contemporary Muslim world affairs and has testified before the U.S. Congress on political Islam. His work has been supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Henry Luce Foundation.



Hüseyin Yılmaz
Research Director

Hüseyin Yılmaz is an associate professor of history at George Mason University and specializes in the cultural and intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire. He received his PhD in 2005 from Harvard University in history and Middle Eastern studies. He formerly taught at the University of South Florida and Stanford University, and his previous fellowships have included the American Research Institute in Turkey and the Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften in Vienna. He has published numerous articles and book chapters on such topics as constitutionalism, imperial ideology, historiography, and cultural geography. His book, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought*, was published by Princeton University Press in 2018.

OUR FACULTY



Maria Dakake

*Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Director, Undergraduate Programs, Middle
East and Islamic Studies*

Maria Massi Dakake holds an MA (1998) and PhD (2000) in Near Eastern studies from Princeton University and is currently an associate professor of religious studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. She is the director of undergraduate programs for the interdisciplinary Middle East and Islamic Studies Program at Mason, and a founding member and former codirector of AVACGIS.

Her research interests and publications lie in the fields of Islamic intellectual history, with a particular interest in Qur'anic studies, Shi'ite and Sufi mystical traditions, and women's religious experiences. She is associate editor and coauthor of *The Study Qur'an* (HarperOne, 2015), and author of *The Charismatic Community: Shi'ite Identity in Early Islam* (SUNY Press, 2008). She has recently completed work on the *Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, edited with Daniel Madigan and George Archer (forthcoming September 2021). She is currently working on two projects: a monograph on the Islamic interface with religious studies theory (*Toward an Islamic Theory of Religion*) and a study of the Qur'an commentary of the 20th-century Iranian female scholar Nusrat Amin.



Benjamin Gatling

*Associate Professor of English
Director, Folklore Program*

Benjamin Gatling holds a PhD and MA in Near Eastern languages and cultures from the Ohio State University and a BA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research interests include oral narrative, performance, the ethnography of communication, Persianate oral traditions, and Islam in Central Asia. His first book, *Expressions of Sufi Culture in Tajikistan*, was published with the University of Wisconsin Press in 2018. His current book project considers the experiences of Afghan refugees and migrants in the United States.



Nathaniel Greenberg

*Associate Professor of Arabic, Department
of Modern and Classical Languages*

A comparatist by training with a background in modern Arabic literature, Nathaniel Greenberg's books include *The Aesthetic of Revolution in the Film and Literature of Naguib Mahfouz (1952–1967)* (Lexington, 2014), *Islamists of the Maghreb* (coauthor, Routledge, 2018), and *How Information Warfare Shaped the Arab Spring: The Politics of Narrative in Tunisia and Egypt* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019). Greenberg's research and training have been supported by the Center for Humanities Research (CHR) at

George Mason University, the Critical Language Scholarship fund, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is currently at work on a new book concerning the history of protest media in Egypt and Iraq.

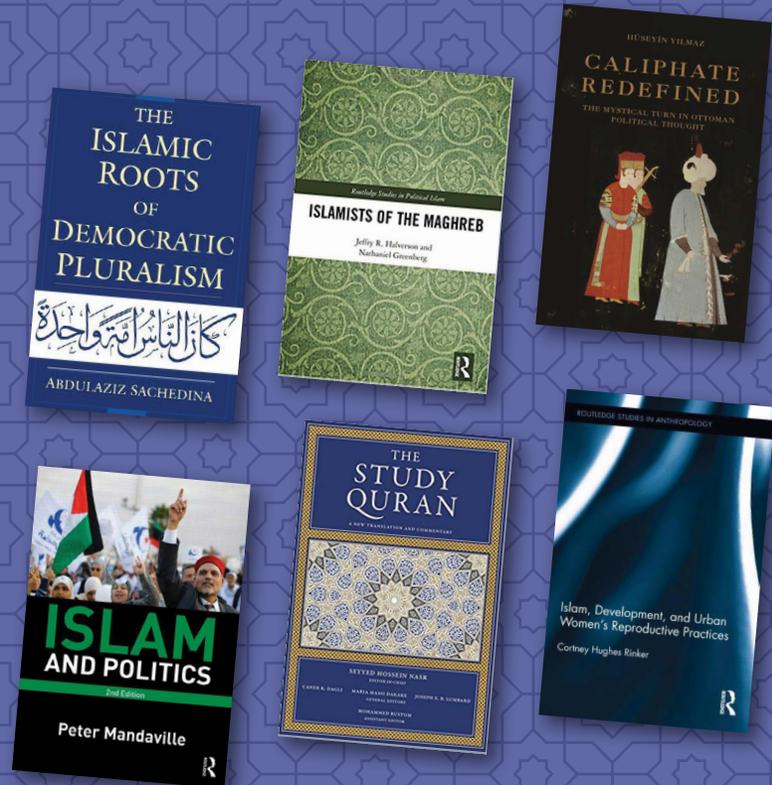


Bassam Haddad
*Associate Professor, Schar School of
Policy and Government*
*Director, Middle East and Islamic
Studies Program*

Bassam Haddad is the author of *Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience* (Stanford University Press, 2011) and coeditor of *A Critical Political Economy of the Middle East* (Stanford University Press, 2021). He is also cofounder and editor of the *Jadaliyya* e-zine and executive director of the Arab Studies Institute. He serves as founding editor of the *Arab Studies Journal* and the Knowledge Production Project.

Haddad co-produced and directed the award-winning documentary film *About Baghdad* and directs the acclaimed series *Arabs and Terrorism*. He serves on the board of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences and is executive producer of *Status Audio* magazine and director of the Middle East Studies Pedagogy Initiative (MESPI). Haddad received MESA's Jere L. Bacharach Service Award in 2017 for his service to the profession. He is currently working on a second book on Syria titled *Understanding the Syrian Tragedy: Regime, Opposition, Outsiders* (forthcoming, Stanford University Press).

BOOKS BY OUR FACULTY



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Professor Abdulaziz Sachedina, whose career spans more than three decades of scholarly work, is a major figure in contemporary Islamic thought. His pioneering excavations of classical Islamic sources in relation to major contemporary themes, such as democracy, human rights, and biomedical ethics, have established him as a scholar of truly international standing. He is routinely cited as being one of the most influential Muslim thinkers alive today, and his work has inspired scholars, practitioners, and the broader public alike.

“The academic study of Islam has to cross geographical boundaries to become a global conversation that involves scholars and practitioners who are in search of new epistemology and practical guidance to influence the course of modern history toward [the] building of bridges of understanding and cooperation in peace building and human development. The Ali Vural Ak Center provides that opportunity in the context of [George Mason University], an institution with a global vision to work with peoples of all nations to improve human life.”

— **Abdulaziz Sachedina**, IIIT Chair of Islamic Studies



PHOTO BY AVACCIS



Sumaiya Hamdani
Associate Professor, Department of History and Art History

Sumaiya Hamdani teaches courses on Islamic, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian history, the history of Shi'ism, and women in Islam. Her research on these subjects has been published in numerous journals, and most recently her research has focused on the construction of identity in Muslim minority communities in South Asia during the colonial and post-colonial periods. She founded and was director of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Program at George Mason University from 2003 to 2008. Hamdani is the author of *Between Revolution and State: The Construction of Fatimid Legitimacy* (I. B. Tauris, 2006).



Cortney Hughes Rinker
*Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
 Director, Global Affairs Program*

Cortney Hughes Rinker holds a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Irvine. Her most recent book, *Actively Dying: The Creation of Muslim Identities through End-of-Life Care in the United States*, was published in 2021. Her first book, published in 2013, focuses on reproductive health care, Islam, and development policy in Morocco, with fieldwork conducted primarily in the capital of Rabat. Hughes Rinker has started a new project in Morocco, with ethnographic fieldwork in Rabat and Marrakech, on palliative care and pain management during terminal and chronic illnesses, with special attention to the use of prescription opioids.



PHOTO BY RON AIRA

"It has been a great honor for me to learn from and work with the many excellent scholars and mentors [the center] brings together during my time in the MEIS Program, and my ongoing engagement with the community continues to play a critical role in my development as a scholar."

— **Alexander Hayes**, MA Middle East and Islamic Studies '20

Hayes is an MA candidate in contemporary Islamic thought at Hamad bin Khalifa University in Doha, Qatar, and a program assistant in the Middle East and Islamic Studies (MEIS) Program at George Mason University.



Yasemin İpek
Assistant Professor, Global Affairs Program

Yasemin İpek received her PhD in anthropology from Stanford University and a second doctoral degree from the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University. Her current book manuscript, *Crisiswork: Everyday Activism, Ethics, and Class Mobility in Lebanon*, examines how the Syrian war has transformed civil society, activism, and belonging in Lebanon. For her new research project, she studies transnational Muslim humanitarianism in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. She has recently published in *Cultural Anthropology* and in a book volume in Turkish titled *State, Society, and Identity in Lebanon*. Her new articles are forthcoming in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* and *The Muslim World*. She has recently been awarded a fall 2021 Center for Humanities Research residential fellowship at Mason to work on her book manuscript on Lebanon.



Abdulaziz Sachedina
*IIIT Chair in Islamic Studies Professor,
Department of Religious Studies*

Abdulaziz Sachedina, who has studied in India, Iraq, Iran, and Canada, obtained his PhD from the University of Toronto. He has been conducting research and writing in the fields of Islamic law, ethics, and theology (Sunni and Shi'ite) for more than three decades. In the past 15 years, he has concentrated on social and political ethics, including interfaith and intrafaith relations, Islamic biomedical ethics, and Islam and human rights.

Sachedina's publications include *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Theory and Application*, *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights* (Oxford University Press, September 2009), and *Islamic Ethics: Fundamental Aspects of Human Conduct* (Oxford University Press, September 2021), in addition to numerous articles in academic journals.



Ahmet Selim Tekelioğlu
*Research Fellow and Editor-in-Chief,
Maydan*

Ahmet Selim Tekelioğlu holds a PhD in political science from Boston University. His research focuses on the American religious landscape, Islam in America, urban Black Muslim communities, and Islamic transnationalism. From 2013 to 2015, Tekelioğlu directed the Los Angeles leg of the Public Ethics and Citizenship in Plural Societies Project with the Contending Modernities Program at the University of Notre Dame. His recent publications include chapters on American Muslim political activism and American Muslims' debates on engagement with law enforcement agencies and countering violent extremism programs.

AFFILIATE FACULTY

In addition to its core faculty, the center draws on a broad network of faculty, across the university's schools and colleges, whose work deals to varying degrees with aspects of Islamic studies. These scholars help to deepen the center's considerable well of disciplinary and regional expertise.



Shaul Bakhash
Robinson Professor Emeritus of History

Shaul Bakhash specializes in the history of the Middle East, with particular interest in the history of Iran and modern Islamic political thought. He teaches courses on Iranian history, Iraqi history, and authoritarianism in various historical contexts. He is the author of *Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution* and *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy, and Reform under the Qajars, 1858–1896*.



Ahsan Butt
Associate Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government

Ahsan Butt teaches courses on international relations theory, with an emphasis on the dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism, international security, and the politics of South Asia. His recent research focuses on the social and political mobilization of Islamist parties in Pakistan.



Leslie Dwyer
Associate Professor of Conflict Analysis and Anthropology, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution

Leslie Dwyer teaches courses on the theories of conflict resolution, ethnography and conflict, and post-conflict contexts, as well as courses on advanced research methodology. Her research focuses on issues of post-conflict social life and transitional justice in Indonesia.



Hatim El-Hibri
Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies, Department of English

Hatim El-Hibri's research and teaching interests focus on global and transnational media, visual culture, Lebanon and the Middle East, urban studies, and critical theory. His first book, *Visions of Beirut: The Urban Life of Media Infrastructure*, is available from Duke University Press. His second book explores the genealogy of the "Arab street" and the media historical conditions and urban contestations that have defined it in the 20th and 21st centuries. This project is informed by two secondary lines of research—the place of televisuality and its affect in contemporary politics and its racializations, and the history of regionality in media industries.



Susan Hirsch

Professor of Conflict Analysis and Anthropology, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution

Susan Hirsch teaches courses on conflict analysis, law and justice in conflict, and theories of conflict resolution. Her research interests include the debates over justice as a response to acts of terrorism, controversies over Islamic law in the post-9/11 era, and new forms of global justice. She is the author of *In the Moment of Greatest Calamity: Terrorism, Grief, and a Victim's Quest for Justice*.



Eric McGlinchey

Associate Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government

Eric McGlinchey teaches courses on the government and politics of Central Asia, political science, and comparative politics. His research focuses on these subjects with an emphasis on social mobilization, political Islam, and Central Asian regime change. Most recently, he has been researching the dynamics of social protest in Central Asia. He is the author of *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

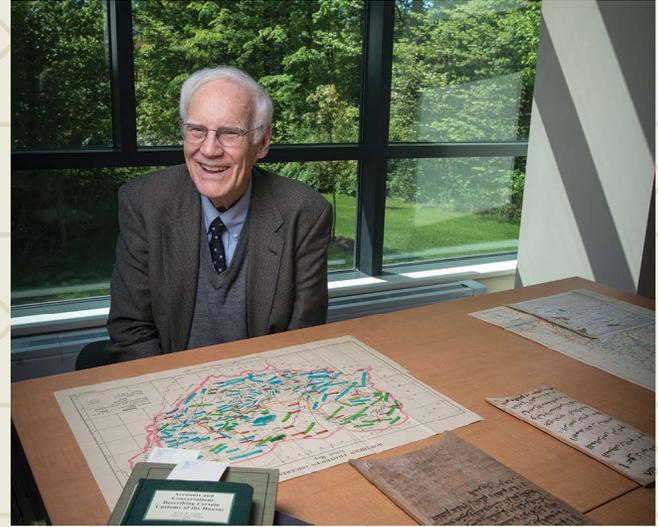


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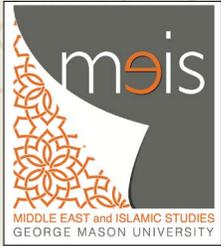
John N. Paden

Robinson Professor Emeritus of International Studies

John Paden teaches courses on globalization, culture and technology, and comparative politics. His research is primarily focused on Nigeria's political environment, examining Islam's role in both civic engagement and conflict management. He is the author of *Faith and Politics in Nigeria: Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* and *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Mason's College of Humanities and Social Sciences offers two programs of study in Islamic Studies:



MA in Middle East and Islamic Studies

The interdisciplinary **MA in Middle East and Islamic Studies (MEIS)** introduces students to the major issues and debates in the study of the Middle East, Islam, and Muslim societies. Students study historical and contemporary topics—as well as theory and methodology—from both regional and global perspectives.

The goal of this program is to situate the study of the Middle East and Islam within a globalized world. Accordingly, the curriculum covers topics of recent scholarly significance including the Arab uprisings and transitions in the Middle East, new media, political Islam, the political economy of the Middle East, the relationship between “resource wars” and the “war on terrorism,” new diasporas and transnational Muslim communities in the West, and the changed geopolitical environments of Muslim and Middle Eastern countries. This interdisciplinary graduate degree prepares students for a variety of postgraduate opportunities in academia, government, and an expanding job market for people with regional subject matter expertise.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

“[M]y time spent in the program gave me the tools I needed to look at the region with a critical eye. Not only did I learn facts about a wide range of topics in the Middle East—from the political economy of Syria to colonial histories, to Islamist movements in the region, and more—but I also learned how to look at both the history of and knowledge production on the Middle East analytically. As a PhD student now, I draw on the foundations of what I learned in my MA and attribute a good deal of my success to my training there.”

—**Kylie Broderick**, MA Middle East and Islamic Studies '17

Broderick is a PhD student in the history department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

“My learning experience has been nurtured through a set of well-developed lectures taught by the best professors at George Mason University.”

—**Raouia Briki**, MA Middle East and Islamic Studies '15

After completing an MA in Middle East and Islamic Studies at Mason, Briki went on to work at the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), a leading democracy support organization in Washington, D.C., and now works as a human rights campaigner in her native Tunisia with Amnesty International.



PHOTOS BY AVAGGIS

Undergraduate Minor in Islamic Studies

The minor in Islamic Studies is designed for students interested in the societies, cultures, history, and politics of the Islamic world. It offers students the opportunity to study the many societies that have significant Muslim populations. These societies are not just in the Middle East. They stretch from North Africa to Southeast Asia and beyond. They include Europe as well as North America. Students in Islamic Studies are strongly encouraged to study abroad in one of the many programs offered by Mason's Center for Global Education in Morocco, Jordan, or Turkey. The exposure and interactions of such experiences greatly enhance the learning in the classroom. Study-abroad courses can be as short as a week or as long as a semester.



PHOTO BY EVAN CANTWELL

MAYDAN: ENGAGING ACADEMIC PUBLICS AND BEYOND

In 2016, AVACGIS launched *Maydan* (themaydan.com), a new and unique digital publishing platform. The site offers expert analysis on a wide variety of issues in the field of Islamic studies for academic and public audiences alike, and it serves as a resource hub and a platform for informed conversation, featuring original articles and visual media from diverse perspectives.

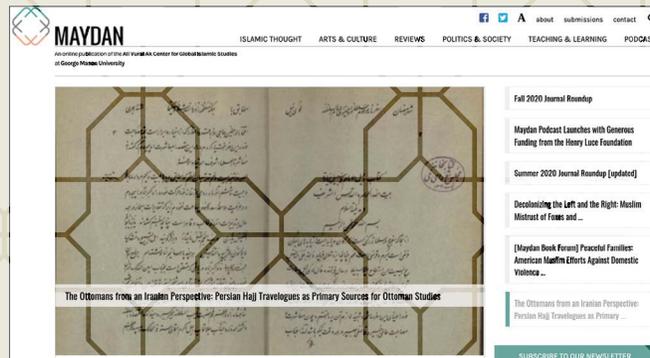
In response to a growing need for a broadly focused online resource for academic scholarship and critique, *Maydan* offers its readers multidisciplinary perspectives on the historical, intellectual, and global patterns and developments influencing the Muslim world. While drawing on the expertise of the scholars and faculty associated with AVACGIS, *Maydan* aims to widen academic and public discourse, stimulate intra- and interdisciplinary debate, and inspire researchers from all levels to undertake new projects and engage with new issues. Since its launch, *Maydan* has developed a global following, becoming a go-to resource for academic and nonacademic audiences alike.

Maydan Podcast

Building on the success of *Maydan*, and thanks to a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, AVACGIS launched the *Maydan* Podcast (themaydan.com/podcast), a family of four streams focused on key themes in Islamic studies and related fields. Under the editorial leadership of AVACGIS and *Maydan*, the podcasts are produced in partnership with leading scholars and centers around the United States.



Islam on the Edges, hosted by Ermin Sinanovic from the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World at Shenandoah University, visits the geographic and intellectual peripheries of the Muslim world. *On the Square*, hosted by Su'ad Abdul Khabeer from the University of Michigan and Sapelo Square, offers honest conversations on race and Islam in the Americas. In *Knowledge and Its Producers*, curator N. A. Mansour from Princeton University talks to those at the forefront of knowledge production about Islam and Muslims who often work outside typical structures of power and authority. And in *History Speaks*, host Saadia Yacoub from Williams College places the Islamic intellectual tradition in context through conversations with leading scholars on gender, law, and theology.



RESEARCH

At the heart of the center's work is a wide range of research projects that reflect our faculty's diverse interests and innovative scholarship. In the spirit of Islam's rich intellectual traditions, these projects are avowedly multidisciplinary and explore a wide range of topics—historical and contemporary—relating to Islam and Muslim societies around the world. The outcomes of our research work are equally diverse and include academic books and journal articles, curriculum and teaching resources for schoolteachers, online publications, and policy briefings and recommendations, as well as written work intended for a broader public audience.

Islamic Moral Theology in Conversation with the Future

Courtesy of a 2021 grant to AVACGIS from the John Templeton Foundation, this initiative will bring together Muslim scholars and thinkers from around the world to explore the relevance of Islamic moral theology to issues facing the Muslim community and humankind globally. It will explore how Muslim conceptions of virtue can contribute to a broader, cross-cultural conversation about human ethical challenges in the 21st century—from income inequality and unsustainable consumerism; to virtual platforms that enhance, but sometimes also distort, our human connections; to the need to create spaces that better connect us with our local communities.

The project will explore how Islamic moral theology should be rethought and reimagined in light of the way human beings live and relate to one another in the modern world. By bringing together innovative work around these issues, the project aims to generate

a synergistic stream of work that incubates future-looking perspectives on human moral agency and accountability considering new developments in science, technology, and culture.

In undertaking this work, the Ali Vural Ak Center will draw on its extensive global network of scholars, public intellectuals, and community leaders to broaden the conversations begun by the project and will utilize its *Maydan* platform to disseminate project outputs to wider communities. The project will produce various publications targeted to academic audiences as well as broader publics, including online roundtables, pedagogical resources, and a special issue of a prominent, mainstream journal in the fields of religious ethics or moral philosophy to transcend Islamic studies and create new bridges to mainstream philosophical discussions.

Beyond Golden Age and Decline: The Legacy of Muslim Societies in Global Modernity, 1300-1900

Project Participants	Bridging Cultures Bookshelf	Forum Issues & Resources	Forum Presentations
<p>Beyond Golden Age and Decline: Muslim Societies in Global Modernity, 1300-1900 is a project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the Bridging Cultures Initiative on the Muslim World and the Humanities. The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University hosted two events in partnership with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. A Scholar Forum was convened from March 16 to 20, 2012 at George Mason University. Starting more than 20 specialists on the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empire representing various disciplines, together with five prominent world historians. The scholars discussed prevailing paradigms in their fields and highlighted their own recent research and its contributions by a book talk at those fields. World historians placed the region in the perspective of changing global narratives of the early modern period and</p>			

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Bridging Cultures Bookshelf Muslim Journeys

BOOKSHELF THEMES RESOURCES ABOUT

EXPLORE THE MUSLIM JOURNEYS BOOKSHELF

Welcome to the "Muslim Journeys" website, offering resources for exploring new and diverse perspectives on the people, places, histories, beliefs, and cultures of Muslims in the United States and around the world. Start your journey by choosing a theme or a book.

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CONVERSATION TOOLKIT

Beyond Golden Age and Decline

With a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the center first put itself on the map of Islamic studies scholarship by convening a major conference, "Beyond Golden Age and Decline: The Legacies of Muslim Societies in Global Modernity, 1300–1900." AVACGIS brought together more than 30 national and international scholars of Islamic and world history to engage and critically reassess commonly accepted readings of Islamic history between the 14th and 20th centuries—an era described as one of general decline for Muslim societies in contrast to the preceding Islamic Golden Age. Focusing on the history of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires, speakers brought to light recent scholarship on this misunderstood era in Muslim history and debunked widely perpetuated myths within academia and among the public.

Muslim Journeys Bookshelf

The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media collaborated to design and develop website content in support of the National Endowment for the Humanities' Muslim Journeys Bookshelf under the auspices of its Bridging Cultures program. The Bookshelf is a set of more than 25 books and documentaries that were selected for distribution to 1,000 public libraries, academic libraries, and state humanities councils nationwide in an effort to familiarize the public with the diverse people, places, history, faith, and cultures of Muslims in America and around the globe. The project's website (bridgingcultures-muslimjourneys.org) acts as a comprehensive guide to the Bookshelf, including thematic grouping of the books, profiles of the books and authors, additional primary sources related to the texts, and bibliographies for further reading on its diverse subject matter.



Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean

A World History Curriculum Project for Educators

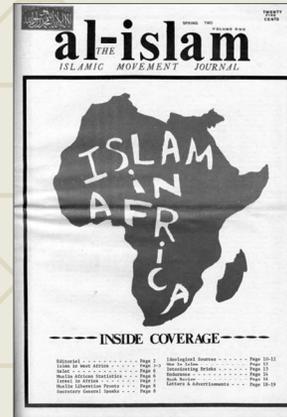
Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean

The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies, with a grant from the British Council and Social Science Research Council's Our Shared Past initiative, assembled a group of distinguished Mediterranean historians with a select team of experienced world history curriculum developers. Working in close collaboration, this group of specialists has created a set of resources for teaching the role of the Mediterranean as a commercial and cultural ecosystem in past eras, as well as lesson materials on the present and prospects for the future. These resources are available to secondary school teachers throughout the United States and worldwide through the Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean (mediterraneansharedpast.org) website.

After Malcolm: Islam and the Black Freedom Struggle

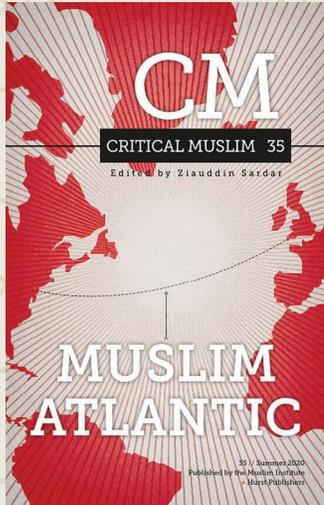
The After Malcolm (aftermalcolm.com) digital archive documents African American Muslim contributions to the struggle for justice in the United States. Much more than just an account of celebrated figures such as Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali, this is a story of

race, religion, and reconciliation central to American history. The After Malcolm digital archive provides a university-based but community-driven platform to digitize original materials and oral histories that can be used for scholarly research and public education. Originally created by a team led by Abbas Barzegar at Georgia State University, the After Malcolm archive has been housed at the Ali Vural Ak Center since 2018. The center is committed to the ongoing expansion and development of the project.

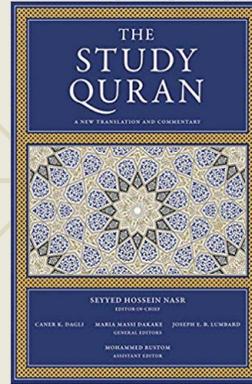


The Muslim Atlantic

With deep social and political polarization in both the United States and Europe—and against a backdrop of rising anti-Muslim sentiment, heightened politics around race, and the #MeToo movement—how are Muslim communities in the United Kingdom and the United States making sense of and responding to renewed debates on gender, race, and securitization? To what extent is it relevant to think of an emerging space of intellectual, cultural, and political exchange—a “Muslim Atlantic”—that encompasses these dialogues and debates?



With support from the British Council's Bridging Voices program, King's College London and the Center for Global Islamic Studies organized a collaborative research and public engagement project (muslimatlantic.com) to explore these themes and questions through research, writing, digital and social media, and other forms of cultural production.



Study Qur'an

The El-Hibri Charitable Foundation of Washington, D.C., awarded the Ali Vural Ak Center a grant to support the *Study Qur'an* project (harperone.com/studyquran), a collective editorial effort to provide a new translation of the Qur'an accessible to the English-speaking public. This English translation aims to take the best from previous English translations of the Qur'an and include commentaries (*tafsir*), known only in Arabic and Persian

until now, from both Sunni and Shi'ite sources. *Tafsir* will run alongside the Qur'anic text and provide readers a key for studying the Qur'an in the same vein as Study Bibles that have assisted readers in the Protestant and Catholic traditions. Legal, philological, philosophical, and mystical commentaries will be included from both Sunni and Shi'ite sources, and the translation will be a first in providing readers a more inclusive vision of the Qur'an. Center faculty member Maria Dakake heads the editorial team of scholars working on this groundbreaking project, to be published by HarperCollins.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

To generate and disseminate new scholarship in the field of Islamic studies, the center holds conferences on a wide range of subjects throughout the academic year that are often linked to larger research projects. The center also sponsors conferences with various departments at George Mason University and other institutions in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Conferences organized by AVACGIS have addressed the following topics and themes:

"Islam, Mobilization, and Social Change: Historical and Comparative Perspectives"
October 2013

"Islam in Africa: Trends and Policy Implications"
March 2013
In partnership with the Center for Strategic and International Studies

"Sectarianism, Identity, and Conflict in Islamic Contexts"
April 2016

"Racism, Racialization, and African American Islam in the Americas"
April 2018

"Islam in China: New Studies and Perspectives"
April 2019

"Islam and Humanitarianism: Interdisciplinary Inquiries on Islamic Forms of Aid"
November 2019

"COVID-19 and Muslim Religiosity: A Webinar Series"
June–December 2020



A WEBINAR SERIES

"The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies is one of today's most important academic centers for the study of Islam. When COVID-19 shut down so many intellectual activities, the center quickly pivoted to provide virtual spaces for academic exchange and learning. Its general orientation is one of making connections across topics and time zones, and I particularly appreciate its role in curating accessible information about Islam and Muslims in projects such as the Muslim Journeys Bookshelf, as well as its attention to the heritage of Muslims in the United States."

—**Edward Curtis IV**, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis



Global Muslim Thought and Society: An Enduring Series of Conferences and Lectures

Thanks to a generous endowment gift from the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in 2020, the Center for Global Islamic Studies organizes an annual conference focused on exploring the contributions of contemporary Muslim thinkers from around the world to address the ethical and practical dimensions of issues likely to affect the future of humankind. These annual convenings also provide an opportunity to explore how classical modes of Islamic scholarship and Islamic tradition inform contemporary Muslim thought and to enable dialogue between different modes of inquiry.

Some of the topics these conferences engage will include race; climate change and Islamic ecological thought; social inequalities and human development; ethical dilemmas of biotechnology; and Islamic perspectives on artificial intelligence, big data, machine learning, and the “algorithmic society,” among others. IIIT’s support has also enabled the creation of a series of annual lectures, named in honor of the Malaysian statesman and scholar Anwar Ibrahim, with a focus on the intersection of Islam and governance.

AVACGIS and the Fall for the Book Festival: Graduate Student Book Review Colloquium on Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Organized in partnership between AVACGIS and Virginia’s annual Fall for the Book Festival, the Graduate Student Book Review Colloquium on Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at George Mason University invites advanced graduate students in the social sciences and humanities to submit reviews on noteworthy books in the field of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. Over the past four years, more than 50 graduate students from the United States and beyond have presented at the book review colloquia, with many subsequently publishing their reviews in *Maydan*.





PHOTO BY AVACGIS

Graduate Colloquium in Ottoman Studies

Motivated by the fact that the explosive growth of interest in Ottoman studies in recent decades has made fieldwide exchange of knowledge increasingly challenging, AVACGIS, in partnership with the Institute of Middle East and Islamic Countries Studies at Marmara University, inaugurated a graduate student colloquium on Ottoman studies in 2019 that brought together expert faculty and advanced PhD students to enable critical feedback from expert scholars; facilitate engagement and interaction in the broader field of diverse research projects, interests, and approaches; and coordinate and facilitate research and writing.

"The Ali Vural Ak Center at George Mason University must be considered one of the nation's foremost centers for the study of global Islam and a pioneer in launching this critical field of inquiry at a time when issues concerning Islam and Muslims frequently dominate global public discourses. With its emphasis on nuanced, scholarly, and multidisciplinary approaches to Islam as a world religion and civilization, the Ali Vural Ak Center has few peers, and in a very short period of time has carved out a distinctive niche for itself in the academic and policy worlds."

—**Asma Afsaruddin**, Indiana University



PHOTO BY AVACGIS

Distinguished Visiting Speakers

Over the past decade, AVACGIS has hosted guest lectures by some of the most distinguished names in the field of Islamic studies from across the full range of academic disciplines. Some of these include

- Juan Cole (University of Michigan), “Sectarianism or Class Conflict? The ISIL Crisis”
- Marcia Hermansen (Loyola University Chicago), “American Muslim Negotiations of Authority in the Time of Coronavirus”
- Jonathan Brown (Georgetown University), “Sharia Law and the Modern World”
- Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (University of Copenhagen), “Islam on TV in the Arab World”
- Omid Safi (Duke University), “Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters”
- Laurence Louër (Sciences-Po Paris), “Shi’a and the State in the Gulf Monarchies”
- Daromir Rudnykyj (University of Victoria), “Debating Islam, Consuming Finance: Islamic Banking, Halal Food, and Religious Authenticity in Contemporary Malaysia”
- Mara Leichtman (Michigan State University), “Conversion of Shi’i Islam and the Transformation of Religious Authority in Senegal”
- Hishami Aidi (Columbia University), “Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture”



- Carrie Wickham (Emory University), “Islamist Movement Change in the Arab World”
- Dietrich Reetz (Free University of Berlin), “COVID-19 and the Missionary Work of the Tablighi Jama’at in South Asia and Beyond”

Visiting Scholars and Doctoral Students

The center welcomes visiting scholars from all academic disciplines and at widely varying career stages whose work focuses primarily on the study of Islam and Muslim societies and communities, past and present. The purpose of the visiting scholars program is to enrich the center’s scholarly culture and community while enabling our academic guests to make substantive progress on a personal research project. AVACGIS has hosted scholars from Turkey, Iran, China, Germany, Canada, South Korea, and across the United States. The center has also provided support to numerous PhD students from multiple colleges and departments at George Mason University whose research includes a focus on Islamic studies.

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ABOUT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

George Mason University is Virginia's largest public research university. Located near Washington, D.C., Mason enrolls 39,000 students from 130 countries and all 50 states. Mason has grown rapidly over the past half-century and is recognized for its innovation and entrepreneurship, remarkable diversity, and commitment to accessibility.



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