



ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017



MISSION



The Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life supports academic research, teaching, and scholarship on the study of religion, culture, and social difference at Columbia University. In addition, it convenes academic conferences, public forums, and collaborative programming to support and extend academic and scholarly understanding of these topics, and to disseminate and distribute such new understandings to broader publics and communities.

The Institute actively supports scholarship, teaching and public programming across the Faculty of Arts and Sciences as well as in the University more broadly under the auspices and oversight of the Department of Religion.

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It has been a great honor and pleasure to take on the directorship of IRCPL, starting in July of 2016. IRCPL has been significantly restructured, with a new set of by-laws and a new Faculty Advisory Committee that reflects closer ties between IRCPL and the Department of Religion, while retaining representation from several other departments. With the help of a hard-working staff, IRCPL has encouraged active participation by faculty, students, and visiting scholars in new programming and research through a series of open competitions and outreach across a range of disciplines.

I envision one of IRCPL's key roles to be the creation of new scholarly partnerships for developing and disseminating research on the evolving relationships among religion, governance, public discourse, and everyday life in various world regions. With the rise of new political forces such as populism and the role of new media in shaping religious, social, and political movements, IRCPL focuses critical attention on how state policies and political discourses have shaped phenomena that have come to be called "religious" as the modern global order has emerged. In a world where secularism and religion are often thought to be pitted against each other, both policy makers and scholars have tried to promote "religious freedom," "toleration," and "democratic values." Moving beyond any simple advocacy of liberal values, IRCPL creates an environment for examining the institutions that reproduce this conceptual grid and aims to develop programs that consider the sometimes unexpected effects of public discourses and the relations of power that are implicitly reproduced and naturalized through the use of these concepts.



We also seek to draw attention to forms of religious practice that may have been misconstrued when placed within this prevailing framework by promoting research on local knowledge and perspectives. New IRCPL projects consider how experts, including scholars, not only shape media representations and government action, but may also shape local articulations of religious difference and the forms, identities, and activities of religious movements themselves.

Thanks to the initiative of faculty, visiting scholars, and PhD students, the Institute held several workshops, conferences, public lectures and other events during the past year. K. Soraya Batmanghelichi, our postdoctoral fellow, and other IRCPL staff organized a series of workshops on Muslim sexualities (also

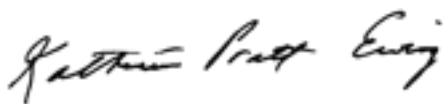
supported by the Center for the Study of Religion and Sexuality, which is based at IRCPL), as well as the workshop “Surveillance and the Mosque.” Faculty-organized conferences included: “A History of Difference: Piety and Space in Early Modern West Asia.” The conference “Religion II: Dynamics, Processes, and Change” was a conference designed to showcase the work of our visiting scholars, and the year-long dissertation writing workshop. The dissertation workshop, which is organized and run by PhD candidates from the Department of Religion, will continue next year and aims to bring together an interdisciplinary group of doctoral students working on a variety of religion-related topics.

We also held two public lecture series in conjunction with the Department of Religion titled: “Religion and Sexuality” and “Religion and Public Life,” and a number of stand-alone lectures. IRCPL works closely with other institutes and departments, such as the Middle East Institute, the South Asia Institute, and the Institute for African Studies, to co-sponsor additional events and activities.

This year, IRCPL has received three grants to help support Institute initiatives. Supported by a grant from the Luce/ACLS Program in Religion, Journalism & International Affairs (RJIA), the project “Everyday Life, Historical Memory and the Public Square,” with Alexander Stille of the Journalism School, is bringing together a network of local scholars and researchers in 3 countries of Northwest Africa—Morocco, Senegal, and Mauritania—to carry out oral and life history research as a basis for examining religious change as it is understood by local actors in the region, with a particular emphasis on building ties with universities in the three countries. As part of the RJIA program IRCPL will also host 3 RJIA faculty fellows during the 2017-18 academic year and a workshop for all RJIA fellows.

A grant from the President’s Global Innovation Fund supports the project “Populism and Dissent: Ethical and Religious Dimensions,” which will include a lecture series and several workshops to examine populist movements in the US, Europe, and the MENA region, focusing on the role of religious and ethical claims in mobilizing a politically powerful electorate in the name of populist goals. Thanks to an Arts & Sciences Catalyst grant, the project “Mapping the Sacred: Preserving Life-Giving Ecosystems,” will gather scholars for a workshop in India to facilitate knowledge exchange and discourse on indigenous-led forest conservation, with the goal of developing a future multi-regional project. IRCPL is also collaborating with Columbia’s Global Centers on the project “Pluralism in Emergencies,” to think critically about pluralism as a technology of power that organizes people in emergencies, often in terms of religious difference.

I look forward to another year of a full schedule of these and other projects, including the ongoing book series with Columbia University Press, several faculty-initiated conferences, continued support of the dissertation-writing workshop, and our public lecture series.



Katherine Pratt Ewing
Director of the Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life
Professor of Religion



2016-2017 FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Gil Anidjar, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Religion

Courtney Bender, Chair and Professor, Department of Religion

Michael Como, Toshi Fukami Associate Professor of Shinto Studies, Departments of Religion and East Asian Languages and Cultures

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Katherine Pratt Ewing, Professor, Department of Religion and the South Asia Institute

Michael Schudson, Professor, Graduate School of Journalism and Department of Sociology

Jack Snyder, Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of In-

IRCPL STAFF

Katherine Pratt Ewing, Director

Walid Hammam, Associate Director

Joymala Hajra, Manager Design and Communication

Zachary Hendrickson, Program Assistant



2016-2017 VISITING SCHOLARS

Sami Al-Daghistani is a Visiting Scholar at the IRCPL whose research focuses on the intellectual history of Islamic economic thought, contemporary Islamic economics, and the Islamization process. Sami obtained a BA in both Sociology and Comparative Literature from the University of Ljubljana. He studied Islamic Studies and Arabic and is a double-PhD candidate at the universities of Leiden and Münster, and a lecturer at Leiden Islam Academie. Sami has published numerous articles on Islamic economics, the intellectual history of Islam, and Islamic law. He has edited two volumes on the Second Gulf War in Iraq (2010), and on Middle Eastern culture and politics (2013). He has recently published two book translations from Arabic into Slovene – Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* and Ibn Battuta's *Rihla*. Sami's monograph on al-Ghazali's economic philosophy is forthcoming in 2017.

Ibrahim Bechroui is a graduate student from the French Institute of Geopolitics of the University of Paris 8. After a research project in 2012 on "Issues and Representations around the United States Foreign Policy in Morocco," he spent time as a visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Democracy, Toleration, and Religion at Columbia University and led field research on the surveillance of Muslim communities by the New York Police Department. He is presently a Fulbright grantee working on his PhD dissertation, titled Geopolitical approach of counter-terrorism strategies of the New York Police Department: a multiscale analysis.

Bahar Tabakoglu is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the New School For Social Research. In her current dissertation, tentatively titled Social Constituents of Religious Politics: Islamist Labor Unionism in Turkey and Hindu Labor Unionism in India, she examines labor unionism in Turkey and India with an eye to filling the gap in the literature on religious politics by analyzing its social constituents, the working class component in particular. Her research interests lie at the intersection of political sociology, sociology of religion, sociology of labor, modern Turkey, and India. Her research and teaching interests extend as well to modern social movements, civil society and state theory, classical sociological theory, modern social

thought, and research methods. Her dissertation has won the support of various grants and fellowships from the New School For Social Research and she has been a student fellow at the India China Institute of the New School since 2011.

Sirine Mechbal is a French graduate student in American Studies at the University of La Sorbonne in Paris. She has a Master's Degree in American Studies; She was a visiting student at Columbia for the Spring 2013 semester, during which she conducted field research for her Master's thesis, which focused on Muslim communities in New York and their institutional presence. Currently, she is working on her PhD dissertation, dealing with street vendors in New York and their relationship to community organizing, with a specific focus on Egyptian and Mexican vendors. Although it's considered American studies in France, her work is quite multidisciplinary (sociology, labor studies, immigration studies, etc.). Sirine has taught at La Sorbonne. She is currently working on her dissertation, tentatively titled: "Vendor Power? Solidarity and collective organizing among New York City's Egyptian and Mexican street vendors."

Kazuisa Fujimoto is a Professor of Philosophy at Waseda University, the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences (School of Culture, Media and Society). His research focuses on the relationship between advanced technology, media, and philosophy, ideology, and culture (including contemporary subculture). Fujimoto studied at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de Paris (France) from 1995 to 1998 under Jacques Derrida. He has translated a great number of books by Derrida into Japanese, including *Margins of Philosophy*, *Dissemination*, *Psyche*, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, etc.). He aims to create a total philosophy which integrates different fields of theories (physics, mathematics, biology, psychology, cognitive science, sociology, and arts) from the viewpoint of complex systems and information. For this purpose, he is engaged in researching the structures of three types of thinking and their relationship: sign, image, and body. His research also extends to comparative studies between Western philosophy and Japanese philosophy, Asian pop cultures, and Japanese subculture.

POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH SCHOLAR

K. Soraya Batmanghelichi is a women's activist and feminist scholar. She is an associate faculty member at the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research and has lectured at Leiden University in the Netherlands and the W.E.B. DuBois Scholars Institute, held at Princeton University. In 2013, Soraya earned her PhD in Middle Eastern Studies from Columbia University, where she also completed two Master's degrees in Human Rights and Middle Eastern Studies. Her research focuses on contemporary women's movements, sexuality and gendered public space in the modern Middle East, and her recent publications on sexuality, government morality, cyberfeminism and women's activism in Iran can be found in the *Journal of Anthropology of the Middle East*, *Gender and Sexualities within Muslim Cultures*, and *Feminist Media Histories Journal*.

2017-18 IRCPL GRADUATE FELLOWS

The IRCPL Graduate Fellowship is awarded each Spring to assist students with expenses directly related to research, including travel, lodging, and materials during the Fall or Summer semester. Upon returning from their travel, students will issue reports on the results of their research. Information on how to apply for an IRCPL Fellowship can be found on our website.

Allison DeWitt is a PhD candidate in the Department of Italian and the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. Her dissertation analyzes the use of geography in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, specifically focused on representations of the Islamic world. It will be accompanied by a digital map to be hosted on Columbia's Digital Dante site, for which she is an assistant editor. Her interests also include representations of Muslim women in literature, the gendered dimensions of spatiality and visualizations of literary geography. She holds a B.A. from New York University in German and Italian Literatures and an M.A. and M.Phil in Italian from Columbia.

Sarina Kuersteiner is a PhD student in medieval history at Columbia University's Department of History. Her research focuses on the increasingly important role of notaries in the administration of public and private life in the medieval Mediterranean. Combining literary and legal sources, she an-

alyzes how ideas about spirituality, gender, family, social order, and the body itself worked together in the self-fashioning of medieval notaries to produce a system of thought and action in which men, through their reason, bodily awareness, and self control, acted as crucial servants of the common good. Sarina earned her BA from the University of Zurich (Switzerland) and her MA in German Literature and General History from Zurich, having spent her first year of the MA program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Ling-Wei Kung is a Ph.D. student in Chinese and Tibetan history. His research interests center on international legal practices and global economic exchanges between modern China and Inner Asia during the 18th-20th centuries. He is also more broadly interested in the roles of Inner Asian peoples, especially Tibetans, Mongolians, and Uyghurs, in the competitions between the Qing, British and Russian Empires. He is currently working on a research project entitled "Between Religion and Power: Buddhists and Muslims in the Yadong Customs of Tibet, 1889-1914." By paying attention to the roles of Tibetan Buddhists and South Asian Muslims on the borderlands between Tibet and India, this project shows that the diverse religious traditions in Tibet are important to rediscovering the globalization of modern China and the transnational networks in the Zomia region. In so doing, he

primarily works with Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan documents, along with Chinese materials. Ling-Wei received a B.A. in History from National Taiwan University (2012), and his M.A. in Tibetan Studies from Columbia University (2015). Before coming to New York City, he studied Chinese and Inner Asian history, as well as Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan for two years at Renmin and Peking Universities in Beijing.

Firat Kurt is a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University. Focusing on the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, his current research explores the conjunction of financial capitalism, mass mobilization, and political Islam. By paying close attention to personal histories, daily capacities, emerging hopes, and inter-generational grievances of the party members and sympathizers, his dissertation investigates how material and financial changes facilitate and can even promote a popular knowledge that religiously informed authoritarian politics, embodied by the AKP in Turkey, are the only solutions for the predicaments of late capitalism.

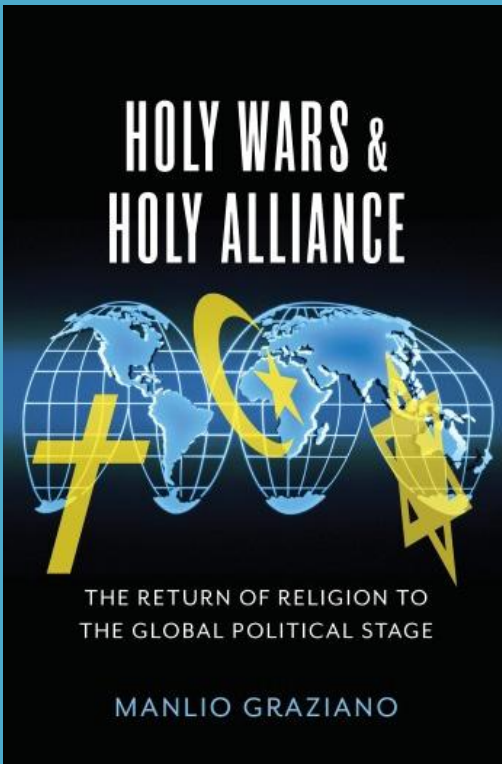
Rohini Shukla is an MA student at the Department of Religion, Columbia University. She holds a BA from Fergusson College; a post-graduate degree from Savitribai Phule University, and a MA in philosophy from Manipal Center for Philosophy and Humanities. Her research interests are religions in South Asia, theories of secularism, ethnomusicology, Indian philosophy, gender, and Marathi literature.

Arthur Zárate is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at Columbia University. His current project is an intellectual biography of Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917-1996)—a classically trained Egyptian Muslim scholar, reformer, and one-time leading intellectual of the Muslim Brotherhood. Drawing upon a rich corpus of writings Ghazali published in mid-twentieth century Egypt, it traces the modern historical genealogies of classical Islamic techniques of ethical self-constitution—techniques that remain central to the political projects of various Islamic reform movements today. It focuses specifically on how Ghazali not only drew upon the works of pre-modern Muslim ethicists to craft his theories of subject formation, but also texts written by American spiritualists, self-help pioneers, and metaphysicians.

2016-17 IRCPL RESEARCH SCHOLARS

M Winters is a South Asian Studies Master's student at Columbia University focusing on agrarian development in Bangladesh. Their academic interests include anthropological analysis of climate change adaptation, gender equity, and development-induced displacement. Currently Matthew is working on an upcoming publication related to agricultural livelihood adaptation in southwest Bangladesh.

Kevin Louis Witkow received a Master's Degree from the Religion Department at Columbia University in 2016. His interests include the anthropology of religion and secularism, Islam, the anthropology of Morocco, and Palestine/Israel. During his time in the Religion Department, his work focused on secularism and the politics of history writing in Palestinian nationalist thought. At IRCPL Kevin is the project manager of the ACLS/Luce Project "Life History in Morocco, Senegal, and Mauritania: Everyday Life, Historical Memory, and the Public Square". He coordinates ongoing research in Northwest Africa and is developing a nascent network of scholars across the region interested in recent histories of the political, social, and religious.

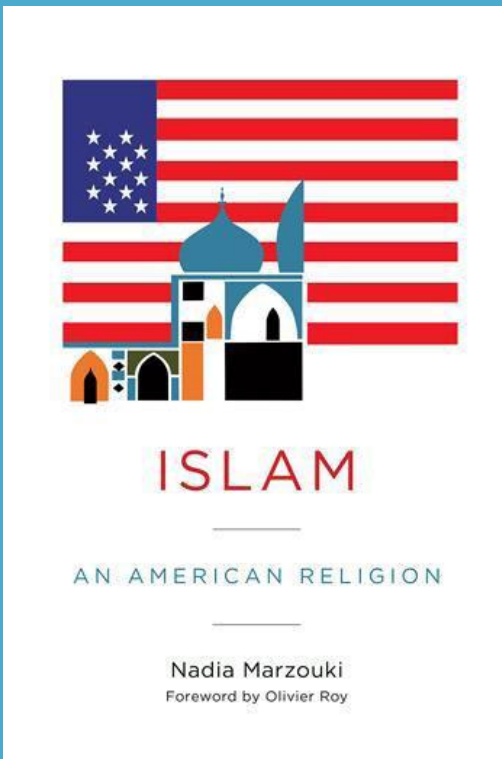


Holy Wars and Holy Alliance: The Return of Religion to the Global Political Stage

Manlio Graziano

Columbia University Press

Holy Wars and Holy Alliance explores the nation-state's current crisis in order to better understand the religious resurgence's implications for geopolitics. Manlio Graziano looks at how the Catholic Church promotes dialogue and action linking world religions, and examines how it has used its material, financial, and institutional strength to gain power and increase its profile in present-day international politics. Challenging the idea that modernity is tied to progress and secularization, Graziano documents the "return" or the "revenge" of God in all facets of life. He shows that tolerance, pluralism, democracy, and science have not triumphed as once predicted. To fully grasp the destabilizing dynamics at work today, he argues, we must appreciate the nature of religious struggles and political holy wars now unfolding across the international stage.



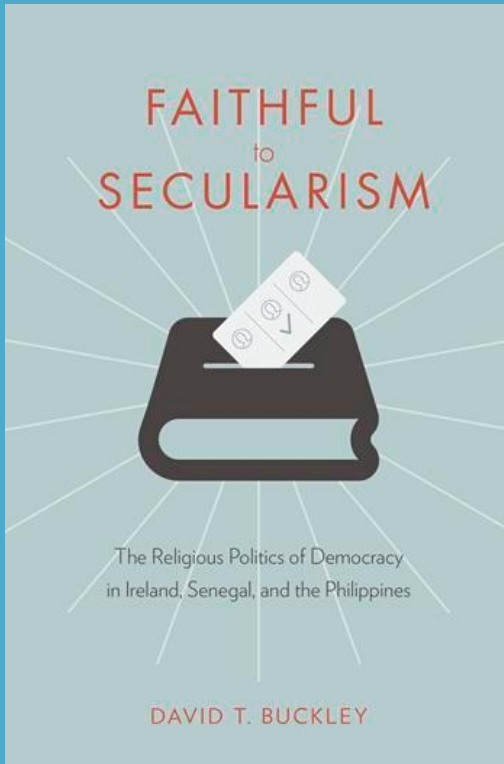
Islam: An American Religion

Nadia Marzouki

Columbia University Press

Islam: An American Religion demonstrates how Islam as formed in the United States has become an American religion in a double sense—first through the strategies of recognition adopted by Muslims and second through the performance of Islam as a faith.

Nadia Marzouki investigates how Islam has become so contentious in American politics. Focusing on the period from 2008 to 2013, she revisits the uproar over the construction of mosques, legal disputes around the prohibition of Islamic law, and the overseas promotion of religious freedom. She argues that public controversies over Islam in the United States primarily reflect the American public's profound divisions and ambivalence toward freedom of speech and the legitimacy of liberal secular democracy.

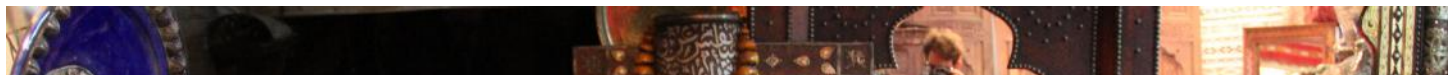


Faithful to Secularism: The Religious Politics of Democracy in Ireland, Senegal, and the Philippines

David T. Buckley
Columbia University Press

In *Faithful to Secularism*, David T. Buckley argues that political institutions that encourage an active role for public religion are a key part in explaining this variation. He develops the concept of “benevolent secularism” to describe institutions that combine a basic division of religion and state with extensive room for participation of religious actors in public life. Buckley shows how religious and secular actors build credibility and shared norms over time, and explains how such coalitions can endure challenges from both religious revivals and periods of anticlericalism. *Faithful to Secularism* tests this institutional theory in Ireland, Senegal, and the Philippines, using a blend of archival, interview, and public opinion data. These case studies illustrate how even countries with an active religious majority can become and remain faithful to secularism.





ORAL HISTORY PROJECT - EVERYDAY LIFE, HISTORICAL MEMORY, AND THE PUBLIC SQUARE



Funded by the Henry R. Luce ACLS Program in Religion, Journalism & International Affairs
Principal Investigators: Katherine Pratt Ewing and Alexander Stille

IRCPL's "Everyday Life, Historical Memory, and the Public Square" project is interdisciplinary and draws upon oral history, anthropology and ethnography, religious studies, and journalism. In January of 2017, IRCPL brought together researchers from Mauritania, Senegal, and Morocco to participate in an ethnographic methodology training workshop. Following the workshop, researchers began the process of collecting extended, in-depth, and fine-grained life history narratives over the course of numerous conversations and interviews in their home countries. In the interviews, the researchers focus on how individuals live and experience the movements of history and the forms of socio-religious change that help to frame and give meaning to this experience. Crossing traditional regional boundaries between the Maghreb and West Africa, the project prioritizes ordinary people in the "northwest" region to think about the ways in which personal narratives allow for a different, critical reflection upon history, socio-religious change, and contemporary politics.

By focusing on life histories, the project aims to complicate the ways in which scholars map religious trends, practices, and beliefs onto complicated social and historical phenomena. Life histories provide a context within which the complexities of the religious emerge within the complexity of social life itself. With this in mind, the project seeks to approach indirectly the questions posed about the boundaries of different Islamic traditions to investigate the layered, complex, and opaque ways in which people enact and experience Islam.

Broadly speaking, the project is interested in socio-religious change in the region as a means to better understand the landscapes of contemporary Islam. Given this interest, the project is experimental and displaces this object of inquiry (Islam) and focuses instead on life history, following anthropologists who have used life history as a research methodology. Methodologically, this opens a flexible and adaptive dialogic space responsive to the contents and context of the two (or more) participants. We pose the possibilities contained within personal history narratives as fertile sites for understanding contemporary Islam and socio-religious change. The play among critical scholarship, journalism, and popular discourse animates the project and helps to articulate its goal to shed light on the complexities of Islam in this region.





PHOTO BY SAMRA HABIB

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND SEXUALITY

The Center for the Study of Religion and Sexuality at The Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life aims to provide forums and resources for the interdisciplinary study of the rapidly evolving and often troubled intersections of religion and sexuality across the world.

In 2017, IRCPL's resident postdoctoral-research fellow Dr. Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi, who specializes in women and gender studies of the modern Middle East, developed and organized three events hoping to stimulate a campus-wide discussion on love and loss from the diverse perspectives of Muslims in the contemporary period. Inspiration for the events stemmed from recent debates on gender and sexuality in Islam, which have typically centered on the shift in attitudes towards gender equity and sexual orientation within contemporary Muslim communities. Given the intricate, intervening forces of neoliberalism, mass migration, global commerce, and the expansion and use of social media technologies, there has been heightened media, academic, and political attention to changing norms and dynamics within Muslim societies. Yet this higher profile has not adequately captured how issues of desire, belonging, identity, intimacy, and queerness were variously understood, experienced, and practiced across diverse Muslim communities. Nor has it illuminated other pertinent discussions about women's pleasure, queer activism, minority rights, and deconstructing Islamic masculinity, and other topics that are already taking place in Muslim contexts. As part of a semester-long initiative exploring gender and sexuality in Islam, IRCPL invited academics, journalists, activists, human rights advocates, faith-based leaders, artists, and others who have contributed to expanding and diversifying knowledge about these subjects to campus in December 2016 and April 2017.

The inaugural event of the series, "A Conversation about Love: Queer & Straight Muslims Talk about Love & Dating," took place in December 2016 at the Italian Academy and offered a forum for the editors and contributors to discuss the popular

book series *Love, Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women* (2012) and *Salaam, Love: American Muslim Men on Love, Sex, and Intimacy* (2014). Co-editors Ayesha Mattu and Nura Maznavi, along with series' contributors John Austin, Haroon Moghul, and Yusef Ramelize, detailed how the project came to fruition, in addition to sharing their own personal stories about sexuality, motherhood, heartbreak, modesty, and more. Ayah Eldosougi '17 from Columbia's School of General Studies helped moderate the well-attended event, which was followed by a lively question-and-answer session.

"A Conversation about Love" was the perfect introduction to IRCPL's series on gender and sexuality among Muslim communities in the United States and abroad. The groundbreaking two-day conference, entitled "Intimacies I & II," took place in April 2017 at Lerner Hall. "Intimacies I" was dedicated to exploring conceptual and empirical understandings of Muslim and/or Islamic sexualities, while "Intimacies II" delved into queer issues in Islam. The conference exhibited the photography of Toronto-based artist Samra Habib whose project, "Just me and Allah: Photographs of Queer Muslims," provided ideational and aesthetic inspiration for its genesis and was prominently displayed throughout the two-day event. The conference also featured journalist and commentator Mona Eltahawy as its keynote speaker. Day One of the conference consisted of panels on "Muslim Sexualities: Exploring Definitions and Concepts" and "Let's talk about Sex: On the Ground Perspectives of Muslim Sexuality," and closed with a roundtable conversation on "Coming out Muslim," featuring a social worker and LGBTQ Muslim students speaking about their expertise and experiences. Day Two highlighted "Queer Social Movements" and "'Variant' Muslims: Gender Ambiguities," and was followed by a student-led roundtable discussion on campus sexual violence and the efforts led by Muslim students and activists to raise awareness among their families and campus communities.

RELIGION & SEXUALITY SERIES

Benjamin Dunning

Christians and Monsters in the History of Sexuality

Dunning is Professor in the Department of Theology at Fordham University. He teaches primarily in the areas of Christianity in Antiquity, critical theory, and gender and sexuality studies. He is also an affiliated faculty member of Fordham's interdisciplinary programs in both Comparative Literature and Women's Studies.

Ali Altaf Mian

Spectral Queerness in South Asian Muslim Orthodoxy

Mian is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at Seattle University. His research interests include Islam in South Asia, Islamic law and ethics, gender and sexuality, feminist theory and practice, Sufism and comparative mysticism, continental philosophy, comparative religion, and theory and method in the study of religion.

Yannik Thiem

Liquid Identities and Bedrocks of Desire: Queer Rituals Under Late Capitalism

Thiem is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Villanova University, and Director of the Doctoral Studies Program in Philosophy. Thiem's research interests include Critical Theory, Social and Political Philosophy, 19th- and 20th-Century German Philosophy, Feminist Theory, and Digital Humanities.

RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE SERIES

Attiya Ahmad – Halal Tourism and the Spoils of War in the Middle East

Recognizing the global importance of tourism, which today accounts for 10% of GDP and 9% of jobs worldwide, Ahmad discussed 'halal tourism' as an alternative to hegemonic forms of tourist practice and infrastructure in the Middle East. This talk examined the recent development of global halal tourism networks and the attempts of actors involved in this emergent sector of Islamic enterprise to map leisure and tourist spaces in relation to Muslim sensibilities, practices, historical imaginaries and belongings.

Ruth Marshall – Evangelical Truth and Apocalyptic Politics

This talk considered how an exploration of evangelical truth and contemporary apocalypticism among evangelicals in the US and Africa can help us think about the current crisis of liberal democracy and the limits of liberal political thought. With an eye to our times of "alternative facts", creeping authoritarianism, new forms of hyper-partisanship and a growing fear of "the end", Marshall discussed how the model of evangelical truth and time has surprising echoes today outside the domain of evangelical Christian practice.

Hussein Rashid – Religion and the Digital Turn

The methods of the Digital Humanities present an opportunity to think about the goals and methods in the Study of Religion. The emergence of these new tools challenges the ways in which we consider academic work, and the premises around which Study of Religion is built. By broadening the scope of what we can do with "religious" material, we can more broadly imagine what religion is.

Matthew Engelke
Expertly Secular

Engelke is a Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the London School of Economics, and co-ordinates the School's Programme for the Study of Religion and Non-Religion. His research focuses in the broadest sense on the connections between religion and culture, primarily in Africa and Britain.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd
Religion and Politics beyond Freedom and Violence

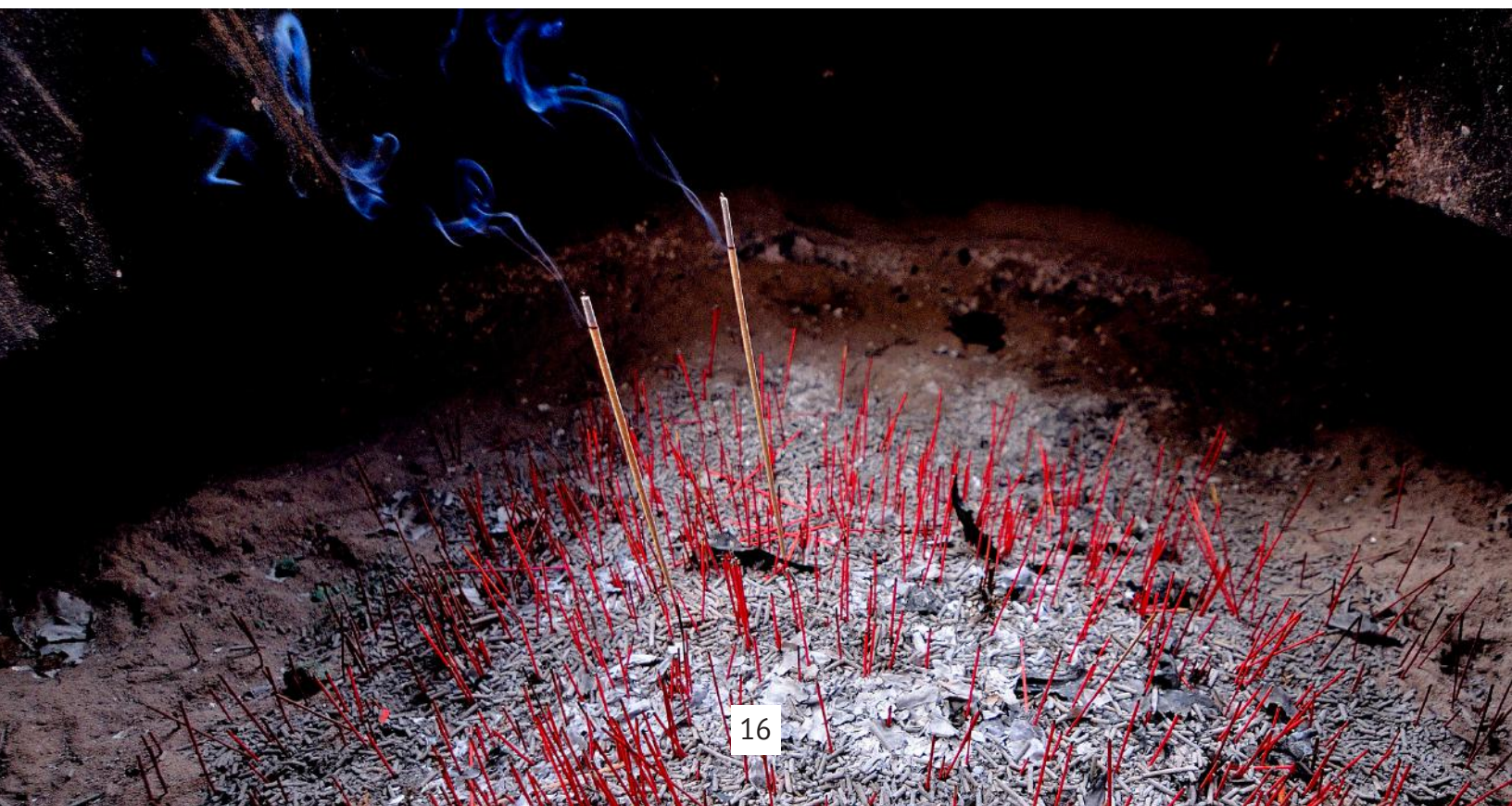
Hurd is Professor of politics at Northwestern University. She teaches and writes on religion and politics, the politics of human rights and the right to religious freedom, the legal governance of religious diversity, US foreign relations, and the international politics of the Middle East.

Webb Keane
Divine Text, Mundane Language: Debating the Qur'an in Jakarta

Keane is the George Herbert Mead Collegiate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, affiliated with the Social-Cultural and the Linguistic subfields in the Anthropology Department, as well as the Interdisciplinary Program in Anthropology and History and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

Christian Lee Novetzke
A Liberal Saint: The Genealogy of a Public Ethics in India

Novetzke is College of Arts and Sciences Term Professor in the South Asia Program, the Comparative Religion Program, and the International Studies Program at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies. He teaches and writes about religion, history, and culture in South Asia, as well as theoretical issues in the study of religion in general and its intersection with historiography.



SPIRIT AND SOUND SERIES

Capoeira: The Music, Movements, and Ritual of the Spirit Circle

This multi-faceted event was bookmarked by capoeira demonstrations from our panelists, local capoeiristas, and (in the closing demonstration) members of the audience. The capoeira circles were led by the panelist and master of the Bonfim/Chicote de Couro Capoeira Group of Rio de Janeiro, Master Fabio Aranha Miranda, marking the first time a Brazilian capoeira master has demonstrated in the United States. Topics explored during the panel included: capoeira's beginnings in Africa, the destruction of historical documentation regarding capoeira's development in Brazil, the hybrid nature of the art form (instrument, song, movement, acrobatics, and ritual), and capoeira's role as a martial art.

(Un)Covering Religion in India – Rare Spring Ragas on Sitar

The evening featured a recital by Pandit Kushal das and Pandit Ramdas Palsule, world-renowned artists of the sitar and the table, performing rarely heard Spring ragas. In the discussion following the concert, some of the students from Columbia Journalism's Covering Religion Seminar, who had recently returned from a reporting trip in India, engaged with Pandit Kushal Das and his experiences on performing religious and secular music. The students reflected on their own understanding of music's role in Indian society and Indian religiosity.



INDIVIDUAL TALKS

Attiya Ahmad – **Everyday Conversions: Islam, Domestic Work, and South Asian Migrant Women in Kuwait**

In *Everyday Conversions*, Attiya Ahmad examined the widespread but little known phenomenon of migrant domestic workers' Islamic conversions in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf region as a way to think more broadly about emergent transnational forms of gendered subjectivity, affinity, and belonging in our contemporary world.

Alastair Ager – **Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities**

Alastair Ager explored the contradiction between the long history of reliance upon religion and local faith groups in humanitarian work and the fact that modern humanitarian movements are often organized within a secular framework in order to ensure evenhanded and nonpartisan action. Ager and George Rupp discussed the implications of global humanitarianism's conflicts and alliances with religion and secularism.

Michael Barnett – **The Star and the Stripes: A History of the Foreign Policies of American Jews**

Rooted in the understanding of how history shapes a political community's sense of the world, *The Star*

and the Stripes is a bold reading of the past, present, and possible future foreign policies of American Jews.

Andrew Benjamin - **What is Political Theology?**

Benjamin recasts political theology in relation to a modality of destruction and climate change. He explores catastrophe as the *modus operandi* of political theology, which involves the transformation of the world. It envisages another possibility within and for world making; a making that maintains and sustains the world as a locus of potentiality.

Rosemary Corbett – **Making Moderate Islam in America: The History Behind a Contemporary Debate**

Drawing on a decade of research into the community that proposed the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque," Corbett contextualized the current demands for Muslim moderation by describing decades of pressure on religious and racial minorities to conform to dominant American frameworks for race, gender, and political economy.

Robert A. Orsi – **History and Presence**

Robert Orsi elaborated a theory of presence for the study of both contemporary religion and history. *History and Presence* proposes a model for the study



of religion that begins with humans and gods present to each other in the circumstances of everyday life.

Amos Oz – Judas, Imagining a Traitor

Oz discussed his novel, *Judas* in which Shmuel - a young, idealistic student - has abandoned his studies in Jerusalem, taking a live-in job as a companion to a cantankerous old man. But Shmuel quickly becomes obsessed with the taciturn Atalia, a woman of enchanting beauty, who also lives in the house. As the household's tangled, tragic past becomes apparent, so too does the story behind the birth of Israel.

Tariq Ramadan – Muslims and/in the West: Past, Present, and Future

Public intellectual Tariq Ramadan spoke to the increasing scrutiny which Muslims face in the West. The conversation explored how Western political and media attempts to expunge Islam and Muslims from the collective imaginary reminds us of the exclusionary practices that constitute a collective “we” and a confirmation of the ineluctable entanglements between the West and Islam, its age-old “Other.” Tariq Ramadan, Brinkley Messick, Katherine Pratt Ewing, and Hasan Azad looked at the intimate interconnections among Muslims, Islam, and the West.

Kabir Tambar – Declarations of Friendship: Non-violence and the Concept of the Political in the Middle East

In this talk, Tambar asked: what ethical imaginaries underlie these calls for Non-Violence? In what ways are the ethical horizons developed in these calls concordant with or discomfiting for a liberal understanding of human rights? Building on scholarship that has critiqued the anti-political effects of liberalism, Tambar questioned whether that critique suffices for understanding the demands of Non-Violence today.

Todd Weir – A Pre-History of Post-Truth: Evangelical and Liberal Understandings of Worldview in the Cold War Era

Weir discussed how Protestant fundamentalists in the early twentieth century developed the notion of irreconcilability. In his view, they did so not to compromise with secular worldviews, but to dodge the scientific arrows aimed at their own “Christian worldview” by secularists. In his lecture, Weir discussed the politics of worldview in the 1940s and 1950s and asked what relevance they have for our contemporary discussion of post-truth politics.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND WORKSHOPS

Beyond the Hype: “Buddhism and Neuroscience” in a New Key

This workshop brought together a dozen scholars from both the scientific and the social science fields to discuss possible neural correlates of Buddhist meditation, and experiments that have contributed to the current popularity of Mindfulness and derived techniques, such as “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.” The goal of the workshop was to move “beyond the hype” and to engage in a broader and more critical discussion about points of convergence and disagreement found between Buddhist ethics and neuroethics.

A History of Difference: Piety and Space in Early Modern West Asia

This one-day conference brought together scholars working broadly in Ottoman and Mughal pasts to converse, consult, and present what ways of thinking and doing difference are recoverable to us. This workshop took as its objective a grounded history of difference narrated in diverse textual and visual cultures. They aimed to incorporate venues beyond the legal—histories, hagiographies, travel accounts, visual and material culture—into the discussions of the contemporary.

The Origins of Neoliberalism

Dotan Leshem recasts the history of the West from an economic perspective, bringing politics, philosophy, and the economy closer together and revealing the significant role of Christian theology in shaping economic and political thought. By relocating the origins of modernity in Late Antiquity, Leshem argues that we confront the full effect of the neoliberal marketized economy on contemporary societies. He then proposes a new political philosophy that re-secularizes the economy will take shape and transform the human condition.

Religion and the Vote: The Role of Faith in Modern American Elections

This conversation explored the role of religion in

American elections, the interplay of religion and political parties, and the role religion has played in previous elections to allow an analysis of its impact on the 2016 Presidential election. This mix of scholars and journalists explored the numerous ways in which religion and political participation interact during campaigns and in the voting booth.

The Religion of Karl Ove Knausgaard (Closed Workshop)

The year-by-year translation into English of the first four of Karl Ove Knausgaard’s virtuosic six-volume novel, *Min Kamp* (My Struggle), has become something of a slow-gathering storm.

In its expansiveness, its textures, even in its anti-romanticism, Knausgaard’s is a world at once fully disillusioned and yet thoroughly enchanted. The yield is a weird sort of hieroglyph. It is not full of meaning per se, but—as confession, meditation, psychological self-portrait, and indeed, as ethnography—Knausgaard’s world is certainly full. It presents an irresistible occasion for reflecting on the secular as religion.



Religion II: Dynamics, Processes, and Change (Visiting Scholars' Conference)

IRCPL brought together visiting scholars and fellows to take up the theme of religion from various critical perspectives that engage: democratic processes, states, ideologies, identity-making, gender, social class, kinship, space, and symbols and meaning construction in diverse places such as Canada, France, China, India, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Turkey, and the U.S. The conference aimed to facilitate an active intellectual exchange and provide a comparative understanding of the multi-layered dynamics and processes undergirding religion in societies.

Sex and Transgression as Ways to God in 19th Century Java: Hindu-Muslim

This day-long conference explored the Suluk Lonthang, an example of Javanese Islamic Suluk poetry from the 19th century. Suluk Lonthang exemplifies the relations of sexual transgression and the subversion of gender roles to the status of holy men and women in nineteenth century Java. The scholars discussed a poem which tells the scandalous story of a renegade saint who disrupts the Islamic observance of a Javanese town with his lewd behavior and ridicule of its pious inhabitants, yet is commended as an example by the Muslim narrator.

Surveillance and the Mosque

Last year's turbulent presidential campaign revealed implicit biases about the status and security of Muslims in America and elsewhere. This one-day conference brought together artists, academics, activists, community leaders, lawyers, journalists, targets of surveillance, and those charged with conducting said surveillance. The diversity of the group fostered lively discussion about different aspects of surveillance, such as its methods and strategies, and its role in constructing "good Muslim / bad Muslim" stereotypes.

Televised Redemption: Black Religious Media and Racial Empowerment

This book talk discussed *Televised Redemption* which argues that African American religious media has long played a key role in humanizing the race

by unabashedly claiming that blacks are endowed by God with the same gifts of goodness and reason as whites—if not more—thereby legitimizing black Americans' rights to citizenship. The panelists discussed the institutional structures of white supremacy—slavery, Jim Crow laws, convict leasing,



CO-SPONSORED EVENTS

Conference: Student Activism Conference between New York and Tunisia

Conference: Categories in Trouble: The Politics of Identity in North Africa, 19th – 20th Century

Event: Columbia Muslim Student Association Charity Through Art -Open Mic Fundraiser

Book Talk: Saul Friedländer – *Where Memory Leads: My Life*

Movie Screening: *Radical Grace* by Rebecca Parrish

Panel Discussion: What Rough Beast? Contending with Trumpism

Panel Discussion: The Political Doctrine of Jihad

Panel Discussion: Tunisia and the Question of Secularism

World Leaders Forum: The Historical Compromise Between Civil State and Religion in the Tunisian Post-Revolution

Book Talk: Josef Sorett – *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics*

Book Talk: Akeel Bilgrami- *Beyond the Secular West*

Conference: Imaginal Worlds: Religion in Speculative and Fan Fiction

IRCPL SUPPORTED EVENTS

American Society for the Study of Religion - Annual Conference



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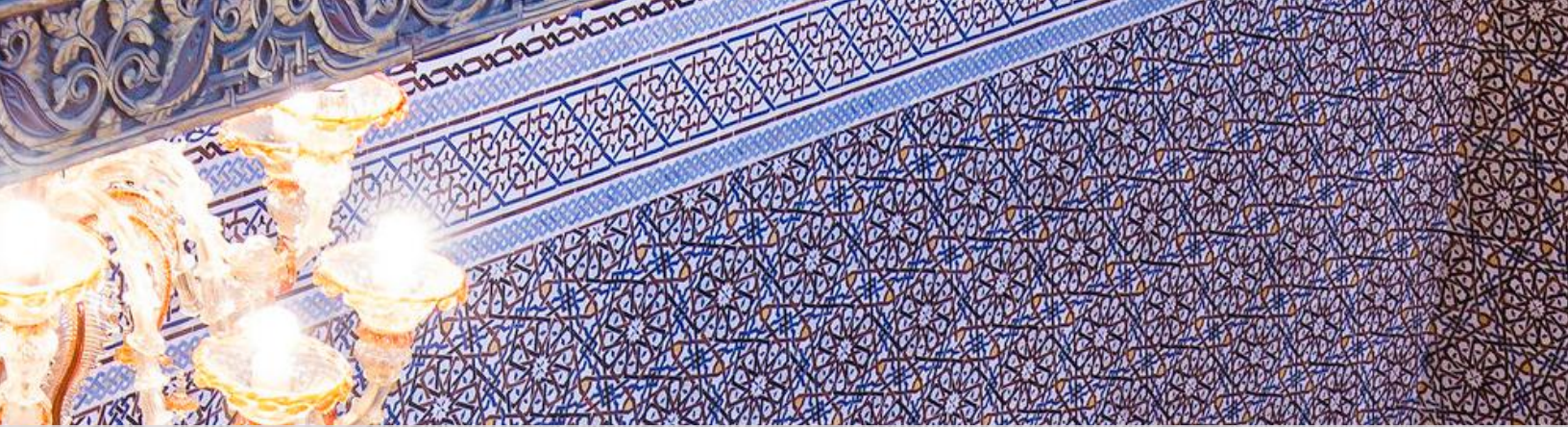
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