The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies was founded through a generous gift from Mr. Ali Vural Ak, businessman and entrepreneur from Istanbul, Turkey, in 2009. The center is situated on the dynamic and innovative campus of George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, outside 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.

“I am very favorably impressed by…the first years of the Ali Vural Ak Center. It has shown unusual dynamism at a time when many older centers are languishing. It has opened up new avenues for study by taking global Islam as a serious topic of study and moving modestly beyond the bounds of the old Middle East area studies formula.”

— Richard Bulliet, Professor of History, Columbia University

Mission

The mission of the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies is to advance a sound and nuanced understanding of Muslim societies and the Islamic faith, Islam’s role in world history, and its current patterns of globalization. The center recognizes that Islam is a universal faith and a world civilization with a global community. Thus, the center provides a global, rather than regional, framework for exploring Islam.

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

About the Donor

Mr. Ali Vural Ak is a leading business figure and entrepreneur in Turkey with a diverse range of interests in the services and sporting industries. He also sponsors a wide range of philanthropic activities in Turkey including cultural events and fair-trade initiatives.
Our Directors

Peter Mandaville

Dr. Mandaville is a professor of International Affairs at George Mason University and also a nonresident senior fellow in foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution. In 2011-12, he served as a member of the Secretary of State’s Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State. He was the founding director of Mason’s Center for Global Studies, and his visiting affiliations have included American University, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Pew Research Center. He is the author of, among other titles, *Islam and Politics* (Routledge, 2007; 2nd edition, 2014), 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 also is co-editor of several volumes of essays in the fields of international relations and Islamic studies, including *Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks* (Columbia University Press, 2012). In addition to his numerous book chapters and journal articles, he has contributed to publications such as Foreignpolicy.com, 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. Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, much of his recent work has focused on the comparative study of religious authority and social movements in the Muslim world, with an emphasis on youth groups, transnational networks, and new media.

Huseyin Yilmaz

Dr. Yilmaz is an assistant professor of history at George Mason University and specializes in the cultural and intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire. He received a 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. He is currently working on a book project examining imageries of the caliphate in the 16th-century Ottoman Empire.
Our Faculty

Maria Dakake
Associate Professor, Chair, Department of Religious Studies
Dr. Dakake teaches courses on Islam and other Near Eastern religious traditions, as well as courses on women in religion. Her research focuses on Islamic theology, Qur’an and hadith, and philosophy with a particular interest in Shi’ite and Sufi traditions and in women’s issues. She currently heads the editorial team working on the Study Qur’an, published by HarperCollins, which will include new English translation and running commentary on the Qur’anic text. Dakake is also the author of The Charismatic Community: Shi’ite Identity in Early Islam (SUNY Press, 2007).

Bassam Haddad
Associate Professor, School of Policy, Government and International Affairs Director, Middle East Studies
Dr. Haddad teaches courses on the government and politics in the Middle East and North Africa, the region’s political economy, and comparative politics. He is founding editor of the Arab Studies Journal, co-founder and editor of Jadaliyya E-zine, and executive director of the Arab Studies Institute. He also is co-producer and director of the award-winning documentary About Baghdad, among other films, and is the author of Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience (Stanford University Press, 2012).
Sumaiya Hamdani  
**Associate Professor, Department of History and Art History**

Dr. 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 a number of 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 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).

Eric McGlinchey  
**Associate Professor, School of Policy, Government and International Affairs**

Dr. McGlinchey teaches courses on the government and politics of Central Asia, political science, and comparative politics. His research focuses on these subjects with 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).

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

Dr. Sachedina is the chair in Islamic Studies at George Mason University, endowed by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). His distinguished career spans more than two decades of research in the fields of Islamic law, ethics, and theology. In the past 10 years, his research has concentrated on social and political ethics, including interfaith and intrafaith relations, Islamic biomedical ethics, and human rights in Islam. He teaches courses on Islamic thought, Sunni and Shi‘ite theology, Islamic law, and contemporary issues in Islam at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. He is the author of *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights, Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Theory and Application, and The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*, among many other titles.
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 broad publics 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 towards, 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.”

—Professor Abdulaziz Sachedina, IIIT Chair of Islamic Studies
Affiliate Faculty

In addition to its core faculty, the center is able to draw on a broader network of faculty across the university’s schools and colleges whose work deals to varying degrees with aspects of Islamic Studies. These scholars help deepen the center’s considerable well of disciplinary and regional expertise.

Amal Amireh
Associate Professor, Department of English
Dr. Amireh teaches courses on Middle Eastern literature, Arab-American authors, and representations of Islam in world literature. Her research on these subjects, with a particular focus on women’s issues, has appeared in numerous journals. She also is the author of The Factory Girl and the Seamstress: Imagining Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction.

Shaul Bakhhash
Robinson Professor of History
Dr. Bakhhash 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.

Lawrence E. Butler
Associate Professor, Department of History and Art History
Dr. Butler teaches courses on Islamic art and architecture, the art history of the Silk Road, Byzantine art, and several other topics in art history. His research focuses primarily on Istanbul’s vast art history, as well as studying the Silk Road connections between the medieval Mediterranean world and East Asia.

Ahsan Butt
Assistant Professor, School of Policy, Government and International Affairs
Dr. Butt teaches courses on international relations theory with 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.

Robert DeCaroli
Associate Professor, Department of History and Art History
Dr. DeCaroli teaches courses on Asian art, specifically the arts of Southeast Asia, India, and China, as well as advanced historiography and methodology courses. His research focuses primarily on the early history of Buddhism and its interactions with popular religious practices in ancient India.
Leslie Dwyer
Assistant Professor of Conflict Analysis and Anthropology, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Dr. Dwyer teaches courses on the theories of conflict resolution, ethnography, and conflict, and postconflict contexts as well as courses on advanced research methodology. Her research focuses on issues of postconflict social life and transitional justice in Indonesia.

Susan Hirsch
Professor of Conflict Analysis and Anthropology, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Dr. 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.*

Cortney Hughes Rinker
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Dr. Hughes Rinker teaches courses on anthropology of the Middle East and advanced ethnography research methods. Her research focuses on Islam in end-of-life care and other aspects of medical anthropology in Muslim communities, as well as how the uses of smartphone applications help Muslims practice their faith. She is the author of *Islam, Development, and Urban Women’s Reproductive Practices.*

John N. Paden
Robinson Professor of International Studies
Dr. 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 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 Life

“This program’s interdisciplinary nature was exactly what I was looking for in a graduate program because I wanted a strong foundation in Middle East and Islamic Studies rather than in a specific discipline’s approach to these fields. This is what makes Mason’s Middle East and Islamic Studies degree program unique and I can say that it has lived up to all of my expectations.”

—Zahra Abbassi, MEIS Class of 2015

“I am fortunate to be part of George Mason University’s cutting-edge MEIS MA program. The program combines its proximity to Washington, D.C., with outstanding faculty in political Islam, history, religion, and political science.”

—Emily Smith, MEIS Class of 2014

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

—Raouia Briki, MEIS Class of 2015
Center Lecture Series

The Center for Global Islamic Studies regularly hosts guest lectures by leading scholars and intellectuals who bring diverse perspectives to the discussions of global Islam across a range of disciplines. These events contribute to the intellectual life of the center, George Mason University, and the local community. Recorded lectures and full details can be found on the center’s website at islamicstudies.gmu.edu.

Some memorable lectures have included
“Indonesian Islam: A History in the Making”
Michael Laffan, Princeton University

“Kinsfolk of the Prophet in Muslim Societies: A Study of Sayyids and Sharifs”
Kazuo Morimoto, University of Tokyo

“Confucian-Islamic Dialogue”
Seyyed Hossein Nasr, George Washington University
Tu Weiming, Harvard University

“Piety and Pleasure: Youth Negotiations of Leisure and Morality in South Beirut”
Lara Deeb, Scripps College

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 are as short as a week or as long as a semester.
“Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters”
Omid Safi, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

“The Common Word Initiative: Prospects for Interfaith Conversations”
Joseph Lumbard, Brandeis University

“Abiding Stereotypes about the Prophet Muhammad in the Medieval and Modern West”
Jonathan Brown, Georgetown University

“The World of Persian Literary Humanism”
Hamid Dabashi, Columbia University

“Mapping Jihad and Martyrdom: Contested Narratives of Dissent”
Asma Afsaruddin, Indiana University–Bloomington

“The Arab Uprisings, Islam, and Equal Citizenship: Current Debates”
Jasser Auda, Center of Islamic Legislation and Ethics, Qatar Foundation

“Islamic Ethics and Decolonialization”
Farid Esack, University of Johannesburg

“Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean”
Nile Green, University of California–Los Angeles

“The Emergence of a Muslim Community in Germany: Between Ascription and Self-Identification”
Riem Spielhaus, University of Copenhagen
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.

In pursuit of its core research mission, the center has sponsored and hosted several specialized and intensive workshops, bringing together distinguished international scholars with the center’s faculty and graduate students. These sessions provide for intellectual exchanges on a smaller and more focused basis than can be achieved at larger conference venues. More details on these different conferences can be found on the center’s website.

“Religion and foreign Policy: A Transatlantic Dialogue”
In partnership with the Brookings Institute and City University–London

“Islam, Mobilization, and Social Change: Historical and Comparative Perspectives”
The Ali Vural Ak Center’s first annual conference
“Contemplating the Qur’an”
In partnership with Howard University’s School of Divinity, Georgetown University, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought

“Islam in Africa: Trends and Policy Implications”
In partnership with the Center for Strategic and International Studies

“Our Shared Past in the Mediterranean”
In partnership with the British Council and the Social Science Research Council

“Teaching the Middle East after the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions: Beyond Orientalism, Neoliberalism, and Islamophobia”
In partnership with the Middle East Studies Program and the Arab Studies Institute

“Beyond Golden Age and Decline: The Legacies of Muslim Societies in Global Modernity, 1300-1900”
In partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities

“New Approaches to Qur’an and Exegesis”
The Ali Vural Ak Center’s Inaugural Conference

“U.S. Relations with the Muslim World: One Year after Cairo”
In partnership with the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, the USIP Muslim World Initiative, and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Research

At the heart of the center’s work are 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 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.

Beyond Golden Age and Decline

With a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the center convened a major conference titled “Beyond Golden Age and Decline: The Legacies of Muslim Societies in Global Modernity, 1300–1900,” hosting 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. A website was developed out of the conference (www.muslimmodernities.org) as a space to provide information about participating scholars, paper presentations, and online access to video recordings of the conference's presentations.

**Muslim Journeys Bookshelf**

The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies and Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media collaborated to design and develop website content in support of the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Bookshelf under the auspices of its Bridging Cultures program. The Muslim Journeys Bookshelf is a set of more than 25 books and documentaries that have been selected for distribution to 1,000 public libraries, academic libraries, and state humanities councils 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 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
The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies, with a grant the Our Shared Past initiative from the British Council and the Social Science Research Council, 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 now available to secondary teachers school throughout the United States and worldwide.

Arab Scholars Project
With generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the center is partnering with the Arab Studies Institute to undertake a broad range of activities designed to enhance the profile and public role of scholars in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. Achieving an enhanced relationship between social science scholarship, legal scholarship, transparency, and citizen empowerment in the Arab world, the Arab Scholars Project will reduce the barriers that previously separated knowledge producers from citizenry and the broader public sphere. As the political and civic landscape of the Arab world is reconfigured, this project aims to ensure that social scientists in the region are visible, valued, and well-positioned to take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to have a positive impact on the future of their societies by providing ideas, knowledge, and
critiques that inform decision-making, policy, and public debate at various levels of society. There are three main thematic strands to the project’s work: legal scholarship and civil society; exploring and transcending religion and secularity in public life; and the political economy of development and inclusion in the new Middle East.

A 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, 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 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 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 which will be published by HarperCollins.

Codifying the Qur’an: Establishing the Earliest Documentary Evidence
This project aims to collect, classify, and digitize the earliest Qur’an manuscripts from the beginning of Islam through the 10th century CE. As a text of scholarly research, the Qur’an has been studied for more than a millennium within the prolific Muslim scholarship from the perspective of various disciplines. In Europe, the interest in the Qur’an dates to the second half of the 19th century and was inspired by the field of Biblical criticism. Contemporary research, since the 1950s, has been interested in establishing the historicity, historical development, and origins of the Qur’anic text. Documentary evidence is sparse, scattered, hardly accessible, unclassified,
and therefore understudied. The earliest Qur’an in a book form dates no earlier than the late eighth century. The digital state of the Qur’an manuscripts echoes the problems in the physical reality: materials are scattered, disorganized, unverified, and unreliable. This project intends to eliminate the most basic difficulty in the field: making the earliest documentary source material (ca. 7th–10th centuries) available to scholars around the globe. The material will be collected from a wide variety of institutions, private collections, archives, and libraries in a number of countries. The raw data will in turn be recorded, classified, annotated, digitized, and finally transformed into a fully searchable database.

Ottoman Texts Digital Library
The purpose of the project is to establish the world’s largest digital library of Ottoman texts. Despite the recent upsurge of research and publications in Ottoman studies, it is still one of the least explored fields in modern historiography, especially when compared with the vast resources preserved from the Ottoman period. Reasonable estimates show that about half a million manuscripts and 150 million documents were preserved in Ottoman libraries and archives alone, excluding the voluminous collections held in outside institutions. Only a fraction of these texts and documents have been published in modern editions, of which the majority are simple transliterations into Latin script without critical editing and textual analysis. This poverty of authoritative editions of Ottoman texts has been the single most important factor that dissuades scholars from engaging in comprehensive studies to tackle significant historical questions. Even the edited material in published form is often very difficult to access for an average scholar because these texts are published in limited numbers, are expensive, circulate very little, and, in most cases, are only housed in
major research libraries. In response to this need, the project will start an initiative to form a digital library of texts and documents. While these individual texts will be published online in standard book form, collectively they will form a fully searchable database endowed with tools to perform diverse inquiries. It also aims to establish a universal standard of editing Ottoman texts, for there has been a variety of methods used for transliteration by individual scholars and institutions.

**New Boundaries of Islamic Knowledge**

This research area comprises several interrelated projects dealing with contemporary transformations in the intellectual landscape and legal scholarship in the Muslim world. Some of its specific outputs include an anthology of primary source texts by reformist religious scholars across the Muslim world—a text designed to serve as an introduction and overview of the latest developments in Islamic thought. This project is also working to cultivate a transatlantic dialogue between Muslim intellectuals in Europe and North America so as to enable cross-fertilization and collaboration as they work to contextualize the Islamic tradition vis-à-vis practical issues and questions faced by Muslims living in the West—including, for example, gender roles, citizenship, and pluralism.
**Visiting Scholars**

The center welcomes visiting scholars from all academic disciplines 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.

Some of the center’s Visiting Scholars have included

**Ahmet Selami Çaliskan**
While with the center, Mr. Çaliskan was completing a PhD in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences at Marmara University. His research focuses on the theological and philosophical contributions to the Scientific Revolution, and his time at the center was spent researching for his project on the relationship between medieval Islamic philosophy and scientific-technological innovations.

**Burhanettin Duran**
Dr. Duran is the chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at İstanbul Şehir University. His research focuses primarily on the history of Turkish-Islamic political thought, Islamism, and Turkish foreign policy. His time at the center was spent conducting research for his project, “The Idea of the West in Turkey.”

**Iqbal Unus**
Dr. Unus is based at the International Institute of Islamic Thought, where he serves as an advisor for IIIT’s instructional branch, the Fairfax Institute. While at the center, he conducted research for his book project on Muslim leadership in America between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s. He is the author of “Governance and Leadership in Muslim Community Organizations” in Muslims’ Place in the American Public Square: Hope, Fears, and Aspirations (2004).

**Sarah Waheed**
Dr. Waheed is a historian of modern South Asia whose research focuses on colonialism, nationalism, and Islam in South Asia. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the center and held George Mason University’s South Asia Initiative teaching appointment from 2011–12. Her time at the center was spent researching for a number of projects, including “Pan-Muslim Transnationalism: Travels and Thought of Leopold Weiss-Muhammad Asad.”

**Ramazan Yelken**
Dr. Yelken is an associate professor of sociology at Selçuk University in Konya, Turkey. During his time at the center, he continued research for his project, “Civil Society in the Islamic World.” He is the author of Tarih Sosyolojisi (The Sociology of History) (2008).
Doctoral Students

Susan Douglass (History)
Her research concerns mass educational systems in post colonial Egypt, India, and Britain from 1950 to 1970 and the study of textbooks in those nations to teach world history and geography.

Ger FitzGerald (Political Science)
His dissertation focuses on the changing patterns of intermediation between Western European states and ethno-religious minorities over time and across cases. His dissertation addresses the puzzle of why European states have departed from their entrenched and path-dependent institutional frameworks—especially in terms of how states have engaged with Muslim minority groups in recent years.

Ayah Ibrahim (Political Science)
Her dissertation examines the factors that have shaped the growth and development of several major Muslim organizations in the United States.

Ozden Ocak (Cultural Studies)
Her dissertation focuses on France’s Ministry of Immigration and National Identity, which makes an important claim that there is an intimate link between immigration and national identity. Her project aims to explore the material and epistemological conditions that make such a claim possible.

Raja M. Ali Saleem (Public Policy)
His dissertation is focused on explaining state Islamization in the Muslim-majority countries. His working hypothesis is that religious nationalism is a necessary condition for state Islamization, using Pakistan and Turkey as two case studies.
About George Mason University

George Mason University, originally founded a branch campus of the University of Virginia, was given institutional independence in 1972 and joined the ranks of Virginia’s system of colleges and universities. Since then, Mason has grown to become Virginia’s largest public university with more than 33,000 students from all 50 states and 130 countries. Mason is known for its innovative and entrepreneurial mission and offers graduate and undergraduate programs across a distributed campus with locations in Fairfax, Arlington, Prince William, and Loudoun counties.

Situated near the nation’s capital, in one of the most diverse metropolitan regions in the country, Mason continues to educate a new generation of students in the new century capable of shaping a global community with vision, education, and clarity.
Center Directors

Peter Mandaville
Professor of Government and Politics
School of Policy, Government and International Affairs

Huseyin Yilmaz
Assistant Professor
Department of History and Art History

Core Faculty

Maria Dakake
Associate Professor
Chair, Department of Religious Studies

Bassam Haddad
Associate Professor
School of Policy, Government and International Affairs
Director, Middle East Studies

Sumaiya Hamdani
Associate Professor
Department of History and Art History

Eric McGlinchey
Associate Professor
School of Policy, Government and International Affairs

Abdulaziz Sachedina
IIIT Chair in Islamic Studies
Department of Religious Studies

Staff and Associates

Ann Birkelbach, Assistant Director

Susan Douglass, Senior Research Associate

Ezzat Shehadeh, Program Coordinator

Ann Cheetham, Fiscal and Budget Specialist

Veliye Ay, Center Turkish Lecturer

Contact Information

Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies
at George Mason University

4087 University Drive, Suite 3200
Fairfax, VA 22030

Phone: 703-993-5400
Fax: 703-993-5410
Email: avacgis@gmu.edu
Web: islamicstudies.gmu.edu