

# **Sectarianism, Identity, and Conflict in Islamic Contexts: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives**

*George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA  
April 15-17, 2016*

## **Conference Program**

In light of the various sectarian conflicts that have emerged or intensified in recent years, this conference aims to interrogate the meaning of “sectarianism” in an Islamic context and to understand its real and imagined role in social and political conflicts in the Islamic world. It seeks to examine this issue in both historical and contemporary contexts, as well as to explore the intersection of sectarian rhetoric with real political, social and economic factors that contribute to conflict in various parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

*Sponsored by  
The Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies,  
The Middle East and Islamic Studies Program, and  
The Arab Studies Institute*

**Friday April 15 – Merten Hall**

**6:00-7:00pm** Reception in Merten Hall Room 1202

**7:00-8:00pm** Dinner in Merten Hall Room 1201

**8:00-9:00pm**

**Keynote: Ussama Makdisi (Rice University)**

*“The Invention of Sectarianism in the Modern Middle East”*

**Saturday April 16 – Merten Hall Room 1201**

**9:00-10:45am**

**Panel I: Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Sectarianism**

**Mark Farha (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)**

*“Double Denial and the Exploitation of Sectarianism in the Middle East: Sources, Symptoms, and Solutions”*

**Sumaiya Hamdani (George Mason University)**

*“The Self, the Sect, and the State: Religious Difference Within Islam”*

**Tariq al-Jamil (Swarthmore College)**

*“Sectarianism, Pre-Modern Islamic History and the Bequest of Orientalism”*

**Jeffrey Kenney (DePauw University)**

*“Sectarian Politics and Weak States in the Middle East: The Return of the Kharijites in Egypt”*

**10:45-11:00am** Coffee Break

**11:00am-12:30pm**

**Panel II: Sectarian Issues in the Contemporary Middle East**

**Alex Henley (Georgetown University)**

*“Lebanon’s Powerful Religious Leaders: What Do They Tell Us About Sectarianism?”*

**Abdulaziz Sachedina (George Mason University)**

*“A’zamiyya and Najaf: Sunni-Shi’a Cooperation in Rebuilding Iraq”*

**Joas Wagemakers (Utrecht University)**

*“Anti-Shi’ism Without Shi’ites: Salafi Sectarianism in Jordan”*

**12:30-1:30pm** *Lunch Break*

**1:30-3:00pm**

**Panel III: Sectarianism & the Shi'ite Minority in Saudi Arabia**

**Natana Delong-Bas (Boston College)**

*"Between Conflict and Coexistence: Saudi Shi'a as Subjects, Objects, and Agents in Wasatiyya and Wataniyya"*

**Andrew Hammond (Oxford University)**

*"Saudi Arabia, Sectarianism, and 'Ideological Security'"*

**Toby Matthiessen (Oxford University)**

*"Who Profits from Sectarianism in Saudi Arabia?"*

**3:00-3:15pm** *Coffee Break*

**3:15-6:00pm**

**Panel IV: Conflict, Sectarianism, and ISIS in Iraq and Syria:  
Causes and Prospects**

**Bassam Haddad (George Mason University)**

*"The Rise, Expansion, and Limits of the ISIS Phenomenon in Iraq & Syria"*

**Mouin Rabbani (Arab Studies Institute)**

*"Understanding the ISIS Phenomenon: A Research and Policy Agenda"*

**Fanar Haddad (National University of Singapore)**

*"The Impact of ISIS on Sectarian Relations and Nationalism in Iraq"*

**Christopher Anzalone (McGill University)**

*"In the Shadow of the 'State': Modern Conflicts and the Mobilizing and Contesting of Sacred History"*

**Ali Sada (Innovative Communication and Strategies)**

*"The Roots of ISIS Media Narratives"*

**Nir Rosen (Humanitarian Dialogue Center)**

*"A Look at the New Age of Sectarianism in Iraq and Syria, 2003-2016"*

**Sunday April 17 – Merten Hall Room 1201**

**9:00-10:30am**

**Panel V: Sectarian Rhetoric and Politics in Africa, Indonesia, and Yemen**

**Mara Leichtman (Michigan State University)**

*"Reflections on Sectarianism and Shi'i Identity in Senegal and West Africa"*

**Diana Coleman (Arizona State University)**

*"Archipelagic Anxieties: Sectarian Tensions in Indonesia"*

**Charles Schmitz (Towson University)**

*"Zaydi Wahhabis and Other Yemen Anomalies"*

**10:30-10:45am** *Coffee Break*

**10:45am-12:15pm**

**Closing Roundtable**

## **Speaker Bios**

### **Christopher Anzalone (McGill University)**

Christopher Anzalone is a PhD candidate (ABD) in the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. His dissertation research focuses on how the social movement and organizational dynamics, ideology, and political and economic goals affect the utilization of different forms of violence carried out by non-state militant organizations as well as the strategic and symbolic dimensions of this violence and how it impacts and is impacted by organizational structure, cohesion, and culture. During the 2016-2017 academic year he will be a Predoctoral Research Fellow with the International Security Program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at The John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

### **Diana Coleman (Arizona State University)**

Diana Murtaugh Coleman is a doctoral candidate in Religious Studies at Arizona State University. As a Luce Fellow, Diana first traveled to Indonesia in 2009 where she conducted research on contemporary anti-Jewish conspiracy tracts, and has returned to Southeast Asia for three two-month stints of fieldwork in her role as a graduate research assistant for the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict. A Doctoral Candidate in the Islam in Global Context track, her dissertation research juxtaposes the ways in which prisoners and guards at Guantánamo Bay Prison understood their experiences at the prison in religious/spiritual/theological terms using framing metaphors of ummah, al-barzakh, pilgrimage, and dreams with Guantánamo serving as a prism to refract 21st century issues of identity, belonging, extrajudicial spaces, torture, and the militarization of U.S. culture and securitization globally.

### **Natana DeLong-Bas (Boston College)**

Natana J. DeLong-Bas is Assistant Professor of the Practice in the Theology Department at Boston College. Professor DeLong-Bas' research interests include modern and contemporary Islamic thought and practice (18<sup>th</sup> century through the present with special attention to Wahhabism, Salafism, and Jihadism); Islamic-Christian relations; Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf countries; women and gender in the Islamic world; terrorism and extremism (Islam and Christianity); Islamic law; and religion and sustainability (Islam and Christianity). She is currently writing two book manuscripts, *Jihad for Islam: The Struggle for the Future of Saudi Arabia* (under contract with Oxford University Press) and *Scholars, Stateswomen, Saints, and Seductresses: Restoring Women to Islamic History*, and is ongoing Deputy Editor for Oxford Islamic Studies Online, the world's largest online database on Islam and the Islamic world.

### **Mark Farha (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies)**

Mark Farha (PhD Harvard, 2007) was an Assistant Professor of Government at the School of Foreign Service in Doha, Qatar. In 2013, he was awarded a senior associate fellowship at St. Anthony's College, Oxford. His publications include: "Historical Legacy and Political Implications of State and Sectarian Schools in Lebanon" in *Rethinking Education for Social Cohesion*, ed. by Maha Shuayb, (London, 2012); "The Arab Revolts: Local, Regional and Global Catalysts and Consequences." in *Conceptualizing the Arab Uprisings: Origins, Experiences and Trajectories*, edited by Michael Hudson & Fahad al Sumait, (London: Rowen and Littlefield, 2014); "Stumbling Blocks to the Secularization of Personal Status Laws in the Lebanese Republic (1926-2012)." *Arab Law Quarterly*, vol.29, Jan. 2015:1-25. "Secularism in a Sectarian Society: The divisive drafting of the Lebanese Constitution of 1926" in *Constitution Writing, Religion and Democracy*, ed. Bali and Lerner, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming. He is currently editing a book manuscript entitled *Secularism under Siege in Lebanon: Global and Regional Dimensions of a Malaise*. Most recently, he was awarded a major NPRP research grant by Qatar Foundation to find possible remedies for the "Emerging Sectarian Faultlines After the Arab Spring."

### **Bassam Haddad (George Mason University)**

Bassam Haddad is Director of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Program and teaches in the School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs at George Mason University, and is Visiting Professor at Georgetown University. He is the author of *Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience* (Stanford University Press, 2011). Bassam recently published "The Political Economy of Syria: Realities and Challenges," in *Middle East Policy* and is currently editing a volume on *Teaching the Middle East After the Arab Uprisings*, a book manuscript on pedagogical and theoretical approaches. He serves as Founding Editor of the *Arab Studies Journal* and is co-producer/director of the award-winning documentary film *About Baghdad*, and director of a critically acclaimed film series on *Arabs and Terrorism*, based on extensive field research and interviews. More recently, he directed a film on Arab/Muslim immigrants in Europe, titled *The "Other" Threat*. Bassam also serves on the Editorial Committee of *Middle East Report* and is Co-Founder/Editor of *Jadaliyya* Ezine. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at Stanford's *Program for Good Governance and Political Reform in the Arab World*. Bassam is the Executive Director of the Arab Studies Institute, an umbrella for four organizations dealing with knowledge production on the Middle East.

### **Fanar Haddad (National University of Singapore)**

Fanar Haddad is a Senior Research Fellow at the Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore. He previously lectured in modern Middle Eastern history at the University of Exeter and, most recently, at Queen

Mary, University of London. Prior to obtaining his PhD, Haddad was a Research Analyst at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office where he worked on North Africa. He has since published widely on issues relating to historic and contemporary Iraq. His main research topics are identity, historical memory, nationalism, communal conflict and minority politics. He is the author of *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity* (London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2011). His research at the MEI focuses on historical memory and narratives of state in the Middle East.

### **Sumaiya Hamdani (George Mason University)**

Dr. Hamdani is Associate Professor of History, and earned her Ph.D. from Princeton University in the field of Islamic history. Her book, *Between Revolution and State: the Construction of Fatimid Legitimacy* (I.B. Tauris 2006) examines the development of legal and historical literature by the Ismaili Shi'i Fatimid state. Her research has also included articles and reviews in the fields of Shi'i thought, Islamic history, and women in Islam. Her current research examines the construction of identity in Muslim minority communities in South Asia during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Dr. Hamdani has served on advisory boards of the Middle East Studies Association, the American Institute of Yemeni Studies, and the North American Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies, among others. She also founded and was director of the Islamic Studies program at George Mason University from 2003-2008.

### **Andrew Hammond (Oxford University)**

Andrew Hammond is a doctoral candidate at Oxford University and Middle East policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. He was former Reuters bureau chief in Riyadh and authored *The Islamic Utopia: The Illusion of Reform in Saudi Arabia*.

### **Alex Henley (Georgetown University)**

Alex Henley is a Post-Doctoral fellow at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. Henley is working on a book manuscript entitled *Religion and State in Lebanon: Religious Leadership, Sectarianism, and Civil War*. He teaches on topics related to religion and politics, with a special interest in the phenomenon of sectarianism in the Middle East. He completed his PhD at the University of Manchester, England. His dissertation explored the construction of a religious elite in modern Lebanon and compared the roles of the Sunni mufti and the Maronite patriarch in contesting sectarian identity production during the 1975–90 civil war. He holds degrees in Theology and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Durham, England.

### **Tariq al-Jamil (Swarthmore College)**

Tariq al-Jamil is Associate Professor of Religion at Swarthmore College. Professor al-Jamil is an expert on medieval Islamic social history and law, with a particular focus on Shi'ism. He has conducted research on Sunni-Shi'i relations and can address issues related to the academic study of Islam and the social history of Iraq, Iran, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. His published works and research interests include: Islam and inter-communal violence, pre-modern religious identity, religious dissimulation, the transmission of knowledge in Islam, and women in Islamic jurisprudence. Al-Jamil received his B.A. from Oberlin College, M.T.S. from Harvard University, and M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University.

### **Jeffrey Kenney (DePauw University)**

Jeffrey Kenney is Professor of Religious Studies at DePauw University. Jeff Kenney earned his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara. His research focuses on Islam in modern Egypt, with a special interest in Islamist movements, political violence and religion-state relations. His areas of teaching responsibility include comparative courses in the study of religion (such as Judaism-Christianity-Islam, Introduction to Religions, and Religion and Politics), as well as more specialized courses in the Islamic tradition (such as Classical Islam, Islam and Modernity, and Women in Islam).

### **Mara Leichtman (Michigan State University)**

Mara A. Leichtman is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Michigan State University. Her research highlights the interconnections among religion, migration, politics, and economic development, through examining Muslim institutions and the communities they serve. She is the author of *Shi'i Cosmopolitanisms in Africa: Lebanese Migration and Religious Conversion in Senegal*, which investigates the location of Shi'i Islam in national and international religious networks, the tension between Lebanese and Iranian religious authorities in West Africa, and the making of a vernacular Shi'i Islam in Senegal. Dr. Leichtman's second research project will examine Islamic humanitarianism in the Gulf directed to global economic development, in particular in Africa. She is also the co-editor (with Dorothea Schulz, University of Cologne) of a special journal issue of *City and Society* entitled "Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Movement, Identity, and Contemporary Reconfigurations." Currently she is collaborating on a multi-year and multi-country research project entitled "Religion and the Private Sphere: Religious Dynamics, Everyday Experiences and the Individual in West Africa," funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche. She is also collaborating with colleagues on an oral history project on Muslims in the Midwest.



### **Ussama Makdisi (Rice University)**

Ussama Makdisi is Professor of History and the first holder of the Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University. In 2012-2013, Makdisi was an invited Resident Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin). In April 2009, the Carnegie Corporation named Makdisi a 2009 Carnegie Scholar as part of its effort to promote original scholarship regarding Muslim societies and communities. He is the author of *Faith Misplaced: the Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations, 1820-2001* (Public Affairs, 2010). His previous books include *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Cornell University Press, 2008) and *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (University of California Press, 2000) co-editor of *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2006). Among his major articles are "Anti-Americanism in the Arab World: An Interpretation of Brief History" which appeared in the *Journal of American History* and "Ottoman Orientalism" and "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity" both of which appeared in the *American Historical Review*. He is now working on a manuscript on the origins of sectarianism in the modern Middle East to be published by the University of California Press.

### **Toby Matthiesen (Oxford University)**

Toby Matthiesen is a Senior Research Fellow at University of Oxford. Matthiesen gained his doctorate from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 2011. His thesis won the 2012 APSA (American Political Science Association) Aaron Wildavsky Award for the Best Dissertation on Religion and Politics. Matthiesen is currently a Senior Research Fellow in the International Relations of the Middle East at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. He is the author of *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring That Wasn't* (Stanford University Press, 2013), and *The Other Saudis: Shiism, Dissent and Sectarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

### **Mouin Rabbani (Arab Studies Institute)**

Mouin Rabbani is a Dutch-Palestinian Middle East analyst specializing in the Arab-Israeli conflict and Palestinian affairs. Rabbani is based in Amman, Jordan and was a Senior Analyst for the International Crisis Group, the Palestine Director of the *Palestine American Research Center*, a Project Director for the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, and a volunteer and General Editor for Al Haq. Rabbani is currently a senior fellow at the Institute for Palestine Studies, a co-editor of *Jadaliyya*, and a Contributing Editor to the Middle East Report. Previously he worked as Palestine Director of the Palestinian American Research Center, and before that as project director for the Association of Netherlands Municipalities in a project to establish the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities. His

writings have appeared in the Journal of Palestine Studies, Middle East International, Middle East Report, Third World Quarterly, The Nation, and other publications.

### **Nir Rosen (Humanitarian Dialogue Center)**

Nir Rosen is a special adviser on Syria with the Humanitarian Dialogue Center. Rosen has been writing and consulting on humanitarian and political issues in the Middle East since 2003. Between 2003 and 2011, he spent most of his time in Iraq, and since 2011, he has spent most of his time in Syria. Nir has also worked in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Yemen, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the former Yugoslavia, Mexico and elsewhere. He has authored two books: *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq* (Free Press, 2006), a study of the first two or years of the US war in Iraq; and *Aftermath: Following the Bloodshed of America's Wars in the Muslim World* (Nation Books, 2010), on sectarianism, civil war, refugees occupation, resistance and counterinsurgency from Iraq to Lebanon and Afghanistan. Nir has also worked on several documentary films about Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, and filmed two documentaries in Iraq. In addition to being a writer, he has worked as a humanitarian consultant for the past six years, including for the humanitarian advocacy organization Refugees International in Iraq, for Human Rights Watch in Yemen, for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Iraq, and for the International Crisis Group on Syria.

### **Abdulaziz Sachedina (George Mason University)**

Abdulaziz Sachedina is Professor and IIIT Chair in Islamic Studies at George Mason University. Dr. Sachedina, who has studied in India, Iraq, Iran, and Canada, obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. He has been conducting research and writing in the field of Islamic Law, Ethics, and Theology (Sunni and Shiite) for more than two decades. In the last ten years he has concentrated on social and political ethics, including Interfaith and Intrafaith Relations, Islamic Biomedical Ethics and Islam and Human Rights. Dr. Sachedina's publications include: *Islamic Messianism* (State University of New York, 1980); *Human Rights and the Conflicts of Culture*, co-authored (University of South Carolina, 1988); *The Just Ruler in Shiite Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1988); *The Prolegomena to the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 1998), *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (Oxford University Press, 2002); *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Theory and Application* (Oxford University Press, February 2009); *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights* (Oxford University Press, September 2009), in addition to numerous articles in academic journals.

### **Charles Schmitz (Towson University)**

Charles Schmitz is Professor of Geography at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland where he has taught since 1999. Dr. Schmitz is a specialist on the Middle East and Yemen. He began his academic career as a

Fulbright Scholar and American Institute for Yemeni Studies Fellow in Yemen in the early 1990s. Dr. Schmitz's current research interests include the political economy of development in Yemen, international law and the counter terror policy, international governance and failing states, and the sociology of contemporary Yemeni society.

### **Joas Wagemakers (Utrecht University)**

Joas Wagemakers is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University. He specializes in the intellectual history of modern Islam, with a focus on political thinking among Islamists. His research has concentrated on Salafism and particularly Salafi ideology; the Muslim Brotherhood; citizenship, women's rights and Shiites' rights in Saudi Arabia; and Hamas. Geographically, his interests lie mostly in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian territories, although he also spends time reading international Jihadi-Salafi discourse. Wagemakers is currently working on a post-doctoral project on Islamic activism in Jordan, which focuses on the intellectual history of quietist Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood in that country.

