

Challenging (European) Modernity: Islam in Context
University of Durham
August 19-20, 2015

Keynote speakers: Marco Cinnirella (Royal Holloway University of London)
Amina Wadud (Virginia Commonwealth University)
Submission Deadline: June 17th 2015.

Since the turn of the late-19th century, Europe gave rise to a range of cultural, socio-political, and socioeconomic projects seeking to restructure society after the concept of a modern Europe. Some of these projects were predominantly advanced through subordinating traditions, cultures, and identities and have an inherently Eurocentric outlook. The historical experience evokes responses. Traditions, cultures, and identities have responded to fit the hegemonic conception of European modernity. This response has challenged European modernity as a concept, social entity and ideological force. Critics have problematized the unilinear view of historical progress in the discourse of Enlightenment modernity and its homogenizing universalism. Out of these critical engagements, have emerged counter discourses such as “indigenous modernities”, “multiple modernities”, and “alternative modernities”. These critiques have opened up new possibilities for research and engagement.

The relationship between Muslims and European society feels the effects in many ways and in many different instances. Muslims have engaged with European Modernity in a variety of ways and from a variety of perspectives. What role is there for Muslims within a minority context both as agents in charge of their own destiny, or as demanders of social justice, and recognition and representation in time, place, and public space? Is there space for and actions of solidarity transcending boundaries, either geographic or socio-cultural? To what extent can Muslims engage with non-Muslims and state authorities, whether as minorities in non-Muslim territories or in countries with a Muslim majority? Are there limits for Muslims in its ability to practice their faith in a European Setting? Are their boundaries within the secular state? What texts or figures are to be considered authoritative when approaching these questions? Is there one locus or multiple loci for a legitimate engagement, either within European modernity or with that modernity as a concept? Although the focus of the public discourse remains on the headlines, this conference aims to engage on a much deeper level the relationship between Muslims or Islam and Europe today.

The overall mission is for this conference to bring together academic minds from a variety of fields all connected by an interest in understanding the role of Islam or Muslims within the dynamics of contemporary Europe. The conference will explore research from a wide variety of fields and will educate researchers across disciplines and facilitate future cross-pollination in this area.

Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Religion, secularism, and democracy
- Religious vs. State authority
- Modern nation-building and its discontents
- Post colonialism, indigeneity, and de-coloniality

- Effects of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism
- Institution-building and citizenship
- Geopolitics, power, and economic interests
- Globalization and socio-economic development
- Islamophobia in the “War on Terror” era
- Radical pedagogies in interrogating Islamophobia/orientalism
- Orientalism and Occidentalism
- Islam and Muslims in the news and as journalists, authority of public perception and reproducible images
- Orientalization of diasporic identities in popular culture
- Cross-cultural issues
- Identity politics and intersectionality
- Subjectivity, theories of the self, and narrative identities
- Race and gender
- Narrative resistance

The above list is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Individual papers will be combined to form a thematic but multi-layered approach to the relationship between Islam, Muslims and (European modernity). Contributions can take the form of papers or posters. Please send abstracts (300-500 words for papers), along with a short bio of author(s), to laurens.de-rooij@durham.ac.uk or law.ilm@durham.ac.uk by June 17th 2015. Decisions on selected proposals will be sent out by June 30th 2015 at the latest.

ILM is pleased to announce availability of funds to post-graduate students for participating in the conference. To be eligible students must demonstrate the need for financial support in up to 500-words is a separate document to be submitted simultaneously with their abstract. Applications will be judged by the convenor and awards will be announced together with abstract acceptance.

The plan is for a selection of papers presented at the conference to be published in a peer-reviewed, edited volume or journal edition. Each chapter will be subject to a peer review process and must not have been published, accepted for publication, or presently under consideration for publication elsewhere. Guidelines for preparing the final chapter will be sent upon acceptance notification. Should you have any questions or require more information, please contact us via email to either laurens.de-rooij@durham.ac.uk or law.ilm@durham.ac.uk.