

The Madrasah and the Modern Academy

Convergences, Departures and Possibilities for Collaboration

**MARKFIELD
INSTITUTE**
OF HIGHER EDUCATION



Markfield
Centre for
Contemporary
Islam



Welcome

I am delighted to welcome you to this conference, organised by the Markfield Institute of Higher Education and the University of Johannesburg. The sites in which discourses pertaining to Islam are produced remains a significant area of study. We hope that the numerous high quality academic papers that are to be presented, and the subsequent publications that will ensue, can help develop critical conversations regarding the teaching of Islam further. Both Markfield and the University of Johannesburg are invested in developing erudite and informed scholarship regarding Islam in the contemporary world, and we hope to develop further collaborative activities in the future, God willing.



Dr Zahid Parvez, Rector of the Markfield Institute (MIHE)

The Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) are delighted to present to you a three-day online conference on teaching Islam in the Madrasah and the Modern Academy.

In contemporary times, there has been an increased interest in the study of Islam. Two sites of investigation centre around the study and teaching of Islam in traditional seminaries (Madrasah) and the focus on Islam in Universities and institutes of Higher Education (Modern Academies). The relationship between these two spheres has occasionally been characterised by a mutual mistrust. However, due to an increasing number of Madrasah graduates entering the academy, as well as more critical developments within Islamic studies, discourses have emerged allowing a more nuanced dialogue between the differing modes of education.

This conference seeks to explore the convergences, points of departure, and possibilities for collaboration in the teaching of Islam. Further, the conference seeks to explore the curriculums, pedagogies, and purposes of the respected approaches employed within the Madrasah and University setting. Through sharing and developing this discourse, we hope to develop and improve the knowledge being produced regarding Islam in the various sites it is currently situated. From this, we hope to see the development of synergies, collaborations and future research emerge.



Dr Shahid Mathee
University of Johannesburg



Dr Haroon Bashir
Markfield Institute of Higher Education

Day 1: Tuesday 14th December



Keynote Address I

Prof Abdul Kader Tayob
(University of Cape Town, SA)

Negotiating Intellectual Traditions: Ethical Questions for the Study of Islam.

Prof Abdulkader Tayob holds the chair in Islam, African Publics and Religious Values at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He has published on Islam in South Africa, modern Islamic Thought and Islam and the History of Religions. He has led a number of research initiatives and projects, and convened numerous workshops and conferences. He completed a PhD (1989) at Temple University (Department of Religion, Philadelphia, USA) with a dissertation entitled: Islamic Historiography: The Case of al-Ṭabari's Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa 'l-mulūk on the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Professor Tayob's is also completing research on Religion Education in South Africa. This project proceeds from the observation that the teaching of religion occupies a prominent but contested place in modern society. It pervades popular culture, dominates religious practices, and is contested in school curriculums. Using a variety of innovative methodologies and theoretical vantage points, Prof Tayob is mapping the teaching of religion in Southern African liberation narratives, in schools, and in the life trajectories of teachers and educators.

Panel 1: Pedagogy and Praxis

Chair: Safiyyah Surtee (UJ)

Speaker: Ricky Bains (MIHE, UK)

Title: Dar al-'Ulums and Higher Education Institutes: Student Motivation and Navigating Criticality in a Collaborative Partnership

Abstract: Graduates of the traditional *Ālimiyyah* program delivered in the UK have typically found the lack of accreditation for their courses limiting. Students who graduate from a *dars-e-nizami* are left with very narrow options when progressing on to university higher education or the workplace. Attempts at accreditation of the *dars-e-nizami* have failed, and options for validated Islamic Studies degrees are usually available from 'hybrid institutions'. This paper will present empirical qualitative data gathered from students who are part of an alternative model achieved through a partnership between a *Dār al-'Ulūm* and validated Higher Education Institute. This model also circumvents concerns around whether a 'confessional/theological' or 'religious studies' approaches is one that should be encouraged. A focus group comprising 10 students from the very first cohort who are studying the *dars-e-nizami* alongside a BA in Islamic Studies with Arabic was conducted. The 'student voice' has largely been missing from discourse on British *Dār al-'Ulūms*, this primary data provides an insight into three broad themes concerning student experiences and beliefs namely; student motivation, navigating faith and criticality, and beliefs about the processes of teaching and learning.

Speaker: Fatima Khan (Cardiff University, UK)

Title: The Madrasah and the Modern Academy: Accessibility of Religious Education

Abstract: Since the establishment of (probably) the first Islamic seminary in Britain in 1975, such seminaries, or *darul ulooms*, have become cornerstones for many British Muslim communities. And whilst *darul ulooms* have attracted much political, social, and academic interest, the conversation often overlooks, let alone interacts with Muslims with disabilities. Research exploring the experiences of Muslims with visual impairments in terms of accessing religious education suggests that the mosques in the UK are not yet equipped with tools to provide a basic religious education to children and adults with visual impairments. There also seems to be a great lack of accessible Islamic texts for Muslims with visual impairments, especially in braille. This not only isolates such individuals from religious gatherings and institutes, but also places many obstacles in their path of gaining religious education. This isolating experience transcends into social interaction of Muslims with visual impairments within the Muslim community. Experiences of Muslims with disabilities studying Islam in *Madrasas* or the Modern Academy is a potential area of research that is yet to be explored. This presentation aims to begin a conversation about the challenges faced by Muslims with disabilities when accessing religious education and exploring practical steps towards making religious education accessible.

Speaker: Faizal Ahmad Manjoo (MIHE, UK)

Title: A pedagogical paradigm shift for Darul Uloom: From subject-centred approaches to a learner-centred approach

Abstract: Darul ‘Ulūms played a seminal role in the preservation of *dīn* in the Indian subcontinent during the colonial era. The *Darse Nizāmi* was the driving force to achieve this due to the seminal books written by classical scholars. These books reflected fundamental Islamic principles which helped preserved an Islamic civilisational ethos in various fields. The books were taught in line with the commentaries written within a historical context. Students were expected to complete these books by limiting the understanding of these principles within a classical teaching. It was a race to ensure the books are taught cover to cover, especially in the last two years of the programme, which is often very intensive. This approach, known as the subject-centred approach, assumes that students will grasp the subject if they complete books. In reality, many seminary graduates complete the books and yet they find it extremely difficult to contextualise these works in a modern context. This has caused a civilisational vacuity in which seminary graduates struggle to engage with contemporary discourses. This paper suggests that one way to solve this issue is to shift partially towards the learner-centred approach, which aims at equipping students with appropriate contextualising skills in order to identify and apply the principles within the disciplines. By means of these skills, students can apply the principles in a more modern context rather than just focusing on classical understandings. This paper proposes a blended approach to help seminary graduates from Darul ‘Ulūms to focus on developing practical skills in applying principles rather than learning the subjects as per classical pedagogical styles. The hypothesis is that a learning-centred pedagogical approach will focus more on individual development rather than a focus on completing the syllabus.

Panel 2: Navigating Traditions

Chair: Haroon Bashir (MIHE)

Speaker: Yasir Qadhi (Islamic Seminary of America, USA)

Title: Traversing Traditions: From Medina to Yale

Abstract: It might appear to some that studying Islam from a faith-based seminary perspective is so totally different from the academic study of Islam that there is little common ground between the two. The questions asked, the methodology used, the trust given to various sources, and other epistemological issues are indeed strikingly different from one another. The fact that seminary students and academics of Islam rarely intermingle or share joint conferences, despite sharing the same passions and subject matter, might reinforce this stereotype. However, this paper argues, based on the personal experiences of the author, that each of the two worlds has a lot to benefit from the other, and that perhaps a combination of some aspects of both paradigms would produce higher levels of scholarship. As well, each of the two paradigms has its strengths and weaknesses, and it is helpful for those in one paradigm to be cognizant of the pros and cons of their own, and of the other. Finally, the paper suggests practical steps in how to build bridges between these two seemingly separate worlds.

Speaker: Jawad Qureshi (Zaytuna College, USA)

Title: Islamic Studies as a Practice: Between the Madrasa and the University

Abstract: This paper contributes to discussions on questions of method involved in Islamic Studies and builds on the work of Talal Asad and Alasdair MacIntyre in conceiving of Islam as a discursive tradition. My argument is that the mode of studying the Islamic sciences as carried out in the madrasas and traditional study circles represents a distinct practice. The conception of practice that I draw on explicitly is that of MacIntyre from his *After Virtue*, and using the writings of Asad I explore some of the dimensions of this practice, focusing on embodiment and the sense of self that is cultivated thereby. In the second half of the paper, I turn to the Modern Academic study of religion, Islam in particular. While scholarship has characterized the Orientalist enterprise in a variety of ways, in this paper I argue that Orientalism, like the practice of Islam in the madrasas, too is a practice. As a practice, the Modern Academic study of Islam has distinct forms of embodiment and senses of self that it seeks to cultivate vis-à-vis its object of study. Thinking along with MacIntyre, I explore distinct ways in which the modern academic study of Islam presents a challenge to (and is challenged by) the practice of Islam in the madrasas.

Speaker: Imran Suddahazai (MIHE, UK)

Title: The Madrasa and Markfield: Reflective Praxis and Differing Intellectual Traditions

Abstract:

The undertaken research reflects on the journeys and developments of traditional *Dar ul-Ulum* students within the academic setting of a Western university. Markfield has attracted over 1.500 students over the course of its existence, the vast majority of which have transitioned from *Alimiyyah* studies to MIHE’s various programmes.

The paper assesses the influences and consequences of exposing students from traditional seminary backgrounds to differing pedagogical models of teaching and assessment, and the responses of the students to these approaches. Through the adoption of critically reflective styles of ‘pedagogy’ and student-centred approaches, this paper considers student development through their engagement with differing academic criteria and environments. This includes personal reflections as well as student feedback that has been compiled to provide data for the paper. Further, the paper also reflects on the potential of transformational educational programmes from an Islamic perspective, and the role that the Markfield Institute has played in pioneering this field of study in Western Europe through the development of PhD, MA and BA programmes related specifically to Islamic Education.

Panel 3: Critical Reflections

Chair: Aber Kawas (UJ)

Speaker: Juliane Hammer (University of North Carolina, USA)

Title: “Community, Authority, and Critique: Muslim Feminist Scholars in Islamic Studies.

Abstract: In this paper, I build on some of my earlier work on normativity, Islamic studies, and gender studies to reflect on the particular experiences of Muslim feminist scholars in the North American academic system who focus their work not only in Islamic studies but also on questions of gender and sexuality. I am interested in exploring the complex politics of communal engagement, religious and scholarly authority, as well as directions and purposes of critique. I draw on the writings of Muslim women scholars, videos of public lectures, and conversations on these issues to sketch a picture of the ways in which self-identified Muslim feminist scholars, some very prominent and others less well-known, navigate the purposes of their research and publications, their relationships with Muslim communities, scholarly networks, and academic institutions. I am interested in strategies to advance nuanced and responsible critiques of gender and sexual norms and practices in Muslim contexts as well as exclusionary racist, sexist, and classist hierarchies in the academy and the larger society. I recognize Rochelle Terman’s notion of the “double bind” but expand this notion beyond a binary construction of feeding imperialist and racist notions of Muslims and Islam through critical work on Muslim gender and sexual practices and norms. In each of the three sections of the paper, on community, authority, and critique, I first provide specific examples, then develop an analysis around them, to finally identify strategies that Muslim feminist scholars have employed to address the tensions and challenges they have faced.

Speaker: Arun Rasiah (California State University, USA)

Title: From Area Studies to Ethnic Studies: Pedagogical Approaches to the Study of Muslims in the Americas.

Abstract: Courses on Muslims in the Americas present an opportunity to shift the paradigm from the neo-Orientalism of area studies to the “decolonizing” perspective of ethnic studies. The latter approach dismisses the notion of the political, intellectual and social history of Muslim communities as artefacts or objects in the political economy of knowledge production, and instead centers processes of knowledge formation from the point of view of Muslims themselves. In this sense Muslims engaged in Islamic studies at madaris and universities are viewed as subjects immersed to varying degrees in a discursive tradition, one which they continue and transform. Ethnic Studies itself emerged from social movements in the United States in 1969 and remains anchored in communities of color seeking access to the university and inclusion in its curriculum. The interdisciplinary field’s transnational turn in the 1990s, in conjunction with the growth of Muslim immigrant and convert communities initially led to a focus on African American, Arab American, and South Asian Muslims in particular. Thereafter, the post-9/11 atmosphere impelled scholars to examine racialization, surveillance and targeting of Muslims. This came as a political intervention at the moment of empire’s expansion and also shaped the identities and resistance of Muslim students and faculty in the university. The framework of decolonizing knowledge permits student and scholar to trace how global ideas circulate and are transformed in new social contexts. By drawing attention to the imperial designs of area studies and the university more broadly, studies of Muslim communities through the lens of ethnic studies highlight an alternative model of knowledge from its sources, one that is embodied, collective, grounded and activist, reflecting changes to the landscape of higher education.

Speaker: Rahmanara Chowdhury (MIHE, UK)

Title: The Madrasah and the Modern Academy: Reflections of a Muslim Female Academic

Abstract: As a lecturer in Islam and Pastoral Care at MIHE, yet having studied in predominantly mainstream universities, reflecting on the different pedagogical approaches across this trajectory has been a steep learning curve. Present day discourses focus on wholly discounting systems other than its own, without considering the greater nuances each has to offer. Due to apparent weaknesses, entire systems of pedagogy are dismissed without truly considering the depth of what they may hold. This has resulted in a disregard of cultures between traditional madrasah institutes and modern academia, whether faith based or secular. Such internal division within Muslim communities further facilitates the opportunity for external criticism, superimposed onto Muslim communities. Within this paper I will present personal reflections of these challenges based upon some of my experiences through various institutions, culminating in my current role. These will be anecdotal yet candid in nature and will traverse my own journey across numerous mainstream universities, through study at an English medium traditional adult Madrasah, through to MIHE. Potential areas for development and collaboration across the Madrasah and Modern Academy will be put forward, particularly within the context of pastoral care and counselling.

Day 2: Wednesday 15th December

Panel 4: Curriculum Development

Chair: Ameena Blake (MIHE)

Speaker: Heydar Shadi (Institute for Humanities and Islamic Sciences, Hamburg, Germany)

Title: Plato in Qom. On *Muqaddamat* as liberal Arts in Shia Madrasa Curriculum

Abstract: In the Iranian Shia theological seminaries (madrasa, *hawza*), students start their education with (Arabic) grammar, rhetoric, and logic. These courses are called *muqaddamat* (introductions). They are introductions to the advanced courses that are mainly on *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *usul al-fiqh* (methodology of jurisprudence), and kalam (theology). This is what the author personally experienced in the 90s when he entered the Tabriz and then Qom Seminaries. Later, when I pursued my studies in philosophy at Tehran University and Erfurt University (Germany), I came across to the term “liberal arts” and experienced an aha moment remembering the curriculum in madrasas and discovering the common root of the curriculum in Qom and liberal arts. This common educational culture in orient and occident that goes back to the ancient Greek paideia and Plato’s Academy constitute from seven arts and are categorized as trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). After a brief introduction to the history of this common educational culture, this paper will have a close look at the current state of muqaddamat/trivium in Shia-Islamic Seminaries/madrasas. At the end, there will be reminding of the forgotten ultimate goal of education in ancient Greek and Islamic cultures, which was, the author argues, beyond ‘educating of good citizens’ and aimed preparation of humans for escaping Plato’s cave and achieving eudaimonia or *al-hayat al-tayyiba*.

Speaker: Mujeeb Ahmad (International Islamic University, Pakistan)

Title: Contemporary Curriculum Developments in Madrasah: A Case Study of the Barelwis Madāris

Abstract: The Barelwis are in a resounding majority in Pakistan. Their religiosity is commonly known; however, their historical and cultural identity is also associated with temporal and religious education. The network of *madāris* along with libraries were established for the education of male and female adults and children at grass-root level. The main purpose was to educate them in both religious and temporal education under one roof. The students are also offered vocational education, some language courses along with traditional syllabus of the *Dars-i-Nizāmī*. The Barelwis have much interest and concern about faith-oriented education to be given in their institutions that they had also developed detailed terms, conditions, and duties for the teachers, administrative and supporting staff.

Tanzīm ul Madāris (Ahl-i-Sunnat) Pakistan is the largest regulatory body of these *madāris*. Besides Minhājul Quran University, Dar-ul-Madina International University and Al-Karam International Institute are main institutions of higher studies, developed through *madrasah* system. They are supposed to be opened for all persons of either gender and of any religion, race, creed or class and for all types of knowledge and technologies through virtual, distance learning or online teaching methods along with conventional one. In this paper, an attempt will be made to highlight the educational system of the Barelwi *madāris*, focusing on these three institutions of higher studies and their impact and influence on the Pakistani Society with the help of analytical and empirical methods.

Speaker: Fakhr Bilal (Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan)

Title: Experimenting with Religion: Curriculum Development in Deobandi Madaris of Pakistan

Abstract: Islamic education is usually based on traditional educational systems. The significance of this Islamic knowledge is judged and measured by the knowledge which is transmitted to students in religious seminaries and colleges called madrasas. The core focus of this Islamic education is to train the student’s practical understanding of religion which they can later on practice in their lives and transfer that learning of madrasa life to further generations of students. Deobandi madaris in Pakistan, since the partition in 1947, are imparting religious education and preparing students for serving Islam and Islamic education. The madrasas taught *Dars-i-Nizami* after arriving in the new state of Pakistan. The emphasis of Deobandi tradition in *Dars-i-Nizami* was on *manqulat* “transmitted” knowledge and in favour of *Hadith* to be the popular teaching which was adopted in major migrated madrasas in different cities and localities of Pakistan. This paper/research will explain how successive regimes in Pakistan posed threats to the existence of madrasas and Islamic education system while attempting to reform madrasa curriculum.

Panel 5: New Directions

Chair: Aaishah Lombard (UJ)

Speaker: Shahid Mathee (UJ, SA)

Title: A journey of learning: from Al-Azhar to the University of Cape Town

Abstract: At al-Azhar one of the Muslim world’s oldest centers of Higher Islamic learning, I received my training in Islamic law/Muslim law making, *kalam*, *tafsir*, Hadith, Rhetoric and *Balaghah*, syntax & morphology, and history. At the University of Cape Town (UCT), I pursued postgraduate studies in the Study of Religion. On completing, I took up a lecturer post in the Study of Religion at the University of Johannesburg. In this paper, I share my journey and learning experiences in the *madrasah* and the modern Western academy. I “exhibit” my training in *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* (Islamic law was my major) at Al-Azhar’s Faculty of Islamic law highlighting the *dirasah nassiyah* (textual study) and *dirasah mawdu’iyyah* (thematic study) approach of the *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* curriculum. A particular point I make about this curriculum pertains to inclusion and exclusion of the works of the rich Muslim intellectual-religious tradition and a comment on the implications. The paper then reflects on the curriculum and method of the Study of Islam at UCT as I experienced it. Here too inclusion and exclusion will be focus though more on approach. Related to the inclusion-exclusion question in the context of an Islamic methodology in history, I allude briefly to the imperativeness of Muslim history/historiography for the Study of Islam in both the *madrasah* and the modern academy. While the paper is largely descriptive it will have an inkling of a prescriptive character.

Speaker: Shabeer Techoli (Kannur University, India)

Title: Integrating tradition and modernity: A study on Kerala model of combined education

Abstract: Kerala Muslims are unique among their co-religionists in India in fashioning a system of education to attend both religious as well as regular school education at the same time. A combined education system is a unique educational experiment initiated in Kerala from the 1980s. Unlike the existing traditional religious institutions, the combined education system was an attempt to integrate both traditional religious and modern secular knowledge.

This study is a part of ongoing research on Integration of traditional and modern education among Kerala Muslims with an anthropological perspective. The data was collected from graduates of various traditional Islamic colleges in Kerala where Integrated Islamic education is provided. The study explored the discursive characteristics of traditional Islamic education, the philosophical concepts and objective of the combined education, strength and weakness of such an educational model and the after effect of combined education system from the views of alumnae of such integrated Islamic institutes in Kerala.

Participants were 290 males and 65 female graduates who successfully completed their combined education through the integrated curriculum from various traditional Islamic colleges. The result of study the shows that the introduction of a combined education has rapidly progressed and was widely accepted among the Muslims of Kerala. This mode of education has paved the way to social and educational empowerment of traditional Muslim community in Kerala where the learning of secular education and girl’s education were discouraged for various historical reasons.

Speaker: Javed Akhatar (Jamia Millia Islamia, India)

Title: Navigating Trajectories of the Study and Teaching of Islam in the Madrasa and the Modern Academy (A Case Study of the Two Indian Institutions)

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore the convergences, points of departure, and possibilities for collaboration in the teaching of Islam. For this, I have involved an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of the two Indian institutions, *Jamia Islamia Sanabil* (the madrasa) located in Delhi, north India and *School of Arabic & Islamic Studies* (the modern academy) located in Chennai, south India. This case study will focus particularly the trajectories of the study and teaching Islam in the said madrasa and modern academy. Doing so, the paper will engage in seeking the answers of the following three research questions: 1) What syllabus is employed around the study and teaching Islam in the two sites of Muslim education centre? 2) What are the points where the said institutions diverge from each other and converge on the syllabus? 3) Are there any possibilities for collaboration in the curriculum and pedagogy in the two setting?

For this, I have divided the paper into three parts, while each part deals with a different set of research question. I examine two institutions in particular, despite differences in their social class, geography, and access to technology. Both the institutions share an Islamic vocabulary and worldview that have much in common. This comparative focus necessarily broadens our understanding regarding the syllabus, increased interests and access of students and scholars to the study and teaching of Islam.

Panel 6: Trajectories

Chair: Madiha Khan (MIHE)

Speaker: Nassef Adiong (University of the Philippines Diliman, Philippines)

Title: Madrasah Education in the Philippines

Abstract: The Philippine government’s response to ensure inclusive education for all learners was the institutionalization of madrasah education among Filipino Muslim learners. The Bangsamoro regional government was granted more authority to supervise Muslim religious schools, approve textbooks, and establish curricula as part of its mandate. The aim is to develop an educational system that is suited to the needs of Muslims learners in the Philippines. The implementation of Madrasah education in the Philippines is seen as a strike to achieving inclusive society while guided by quality Islamic education. Ways of learning in Muslim setting and their integration to the Filipino society are gradual steps implemented by the national and local government units. These actual recognitions are aimed to improve discourse on Madrasah and further elicit its significance by showcasing a number of notable degree-granting academic units in the Bangsamoro community. The study reviewed both national and regional policies contributing significant inputs on: 1. Establishment, Registration and Accreditation 2. Curriculum and Competency Standard 3. Learning Assessment and Certification/ Examination 4. Teacher Quality and Management (eligibility such as qualification and competency, recruitment and hiring, deployment, salary, teacher professional development, performance management and assessment) 5. Learning Resources 6. Government Subsidy and Support to Madrasah 7. Program Management or Madrasah Management that includes (a) fund source, allocation, and utilization, (b) financial management, (c) advocacy and partnership management, and (d) governance arrangements and structures 8. Data Management, Policy and Planning 9. Madrasah Monitoring and Evaluation.

Speaker: Abouzar Ghahsareh (Yasouj University, Iran)

Title: Teaching Islam through “public courses” in Iranian universities

Abstract: Iran is an Islamic country and according to the constitution has an official religion (i.e. Shiite Islam). In Iran, religion and politics are intertwined, and the political system of the Islamic Republic, which was formed after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, is a theocratic system. In the years since the victory of the 1979 revolution, the ruling political system has tried in various ways to promote, propagate and educate its official ideology (i.e., Shiite Islam). One of the methods used in this regard has been to consider Islamic courses in universities. These courses are general, students in all academic disciplines are required to take these courses, and for this reason, these courses are referred to as “public courses”. These courses “have been offered with the general aim of developing students’ general information and knowledge and growing their cultural insights, based on Islamic culture, knowledge and beliefs, and to get acquainted with logic and scientific methods”. According to the program, these courses are mandatory for all students of universities and higher education institutions in all academic disciplines. The revision of these courses has been done several times and in a limited way.

The present study tries to examine the content and quality of “public courses” in Iranian universities, and also to evaluate the results and impact of these courses, and in fact the success and failure of this method, in transmitting Islamic concepts and teachings to university students. This evaluation is based on the findings of previous researches in this field and available data. The present study will also try to discuss the different views and arguments for and against the introduction of public courses in Iranian universities.

Speaker: Ashraf Dockrat (UJ, SA)

Title: Towards understanding the history and future prospects of the Darul Ulum tradition in South Africa

Abstract: In 1975 the first Darul Ulum was established in South Africa. Here traditional scholars were trained to serve the religious community of the country. Ever since, the number of these traditional institutions have mushroomed. They have commonalities and are divergent in some ways. Each has its own catchment area and ideology and as such represent the diversity present in the South African Muslim community. This paper will explore the history and ideological congruences and diversions of the various Darul Ulums in South Africa. It will also explore possible trajectories and adaptations in relation to the ever-changing needs of the dynamic South African Muslim community. By means of a survey of the current providers and their founding aims the study will engage and speculate on the future directions that these institutions may take. The strategies that they employ to remain loyal to their worldview and yet transform to provide relevant education will be examined.

Panel 7: Prospects

Chair: Jameel Asani (UJ)

Speaker: Syed Asad Ali (MIHE, UK)

Title: Rise of Post-graduation Hadith Specialisation (*Takhasus fil-hadith*) courses in the UK and South Africa

Abstract: The traditional madrasah seminaries in the Indian subcontinent, UK, and South Africa are based on the traditional *darse-nizami* syllabus. Several studies have discussed the contents of the *darse-nizami* course. Although madrasah seminaries have the freedom to pick and choose what they want to teach, the main subjects and books of study are the same, the Qur’an exegesis, the six canonical hadith works, and the primary Hanafi *fiqh* literature. Madrasah seminaries in the Indian subcontinent, UK, and South Africa have offered post-graduate courses in Fiqh specialisation (*iftā*) for several decades. However, it is only recently that several madrasah seminaries have also began offering hadith specialisation courses (*takhasus fil-hadith*).

Although the *ifta* training has been offered in madrasahs for several decades, Western academic research has thus far ignored post-graduate studies that are offered in the madrasah seminaries. Hadith specialisation courses are a recent development in madrasahs and hence no attention has been given to them. This paper aims to analyse the short history of hadith specialisation course in the UK and South Africa and its origin in the Indian subcontinent, the content of study, and the significance of the hadith specialisation course in comparison to Western academic hadith studies.

Speaker: Haroon Sidat (Cardiff University, UK)

Title: Alternative Ways to Knowing

Abstract: With increasing numbers of madrasa graduates entering the academy, and the focus on Islam in the latter, one wonders if there can be a mutual coming together of the two. To my mind, there are three options, which I hope to explore. The first seeks to maintain borders between the two traditions. Building on the work of Jonathan Z Smith, Bruce Lincoln, and Russell T McCutcheon, Aaron W Hughes argues that academic Islamic studies has buckled under the weight of a normative and apologetic representation of Islam that is theological, an “Islamic Religious Studies”. The second option seeks to move away from boundaries to interconnections. Aware of the complicit nature of colonial knowledge, it seeks to imagine Islamic studies as a critical field of cross discursive dialogue with academics engaging in self-criticism. The third option views the disappearance between both traditions as a form of epistemological imperialism. This view resolves the problem of participation in the second solution above. My paper will engage will all three options based on my own experience as a madrasa graduate now in academia, and my own doctoral thesis which looked the formation and training of madrasa students in modern Britain, alongside an exploration of opportunities for mutual interaction and overcoming barriers to collaboration.

Speaker: Iffat Batool (International Islamic University, Pakistan)

Title: Pedagogy of Tafsir in the Academy

Abstract: The purpose of this research is to explore and highlight the pedagogical approaches and teaching modules adopted in the university setting, specifying it to the department of “Tafseer and Qur’anic Sciences” International Islamic University, Islamabad. Moreover, the paper intends to shed light on basic features of the department that provide it a particular and distinguished status at an international level. Furthermore, a general comparison of the university setting to that of Madrasah teaching modules are also the part of paper.

Day 3: Thursday 16th December

Panel 8: Critical Developments

Chair: Redhwan Karim (MIHE)

Speaker: Mieke Groenick (KU Leuven, Belgium)

Title: Border thinking on Islam

Abstract: The growing multicultural composition of Western societies has also engendered growing calls for a decolonization of the university curricula. In this particular movement, scholars have challenged the Eurocentric views that prevail within Western(ized) universities, and the lack of attention for alternative epistemological systems. The latter has been particularly salient when it comes to the teaching and study of Islam. Scholars of Islam in the West are often divided on how to apprehend the study of this tradition. The latter is mostly represented in conflicting terms between a Western historical/socio-scientific/critical academic and ‘outsiders’ approach, which is present at Western(ized) universities, and Islamic epistemology ‘from an insiders’ approach, which is often represented outside formal universities in private and traditional knowledge centers or madrasahs. This dual track is frequently at play among European Muslim students of higher Islamic expert studies, who tend to complement the academic knowledge they receive at the formal university with Islamic perspectives, gained in knowledge institutions often organized during weekends or in the evenings (Groeninck 2017).

By looking at (attempts towards) (in)formal imam education programs in Belgium and The Netherlands both in- and outside formal university, this paper suggests we might consider to approach the frequent challenges, debates, negotiation and translating efforts affiliated Islamic actors have to deal with in these dossiers, in terms of a decolonization of knowledge: a quest for multi-epistemic negotiation and border thinking, in favor of onto-epistemological pluri-versality (Maldonado-Torres 2004; Mignolo 2004; Kuokkanen 2007; Quijano 2007; Grosfoguel 2011; Sayyid 2014).

Speaker: Welmoet Boender (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Title: Surveying the scholarly production of Islamic university theology in Western Europe: reviewing the outcome and discussing some methodological choices

Abstract: An urgent issue raised by scholars, politicians, journalists and Muslim communities alike, is the fundamental question of what we understand by the study of Islamic theology within the European academic framework. As a contribution to this debate, I undertook a survey study of the academic knowledge production at Western European universities in the past decade, thus offering crucial building blocks.

In this paper, I will present the outcome of my survey of the academic knowledge production between 2010 and 2017 of scholars working in recently established university programs in Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, including some results from the UK. In my contribution, I will offer an overview of the results, providing a bird’s eye view of the knowledge production per country, university, language used, educational background of the scholar, and gender. A revealing list of themes with thirty topics emerges that blends epistemic and methodological approaches typical for so-called classical Islamic disciplines, like Qur’ân and hadîth studies, and those of (amongst others) religious pedagogy, social sciences, and historical-critical Islamic studies. This makes Islamic university theology in Western Europe into what Engelhardt calls a “hybrid discipline”. I will also explain my classification criteria, accounting on choices I made to manage the feasibility for a single observer, while being methodologically sound. My aim has been to look at the developments as objectively as possible. However, every classification involves choices. My classification takes into account the ‘classical’ Islamic disciplines, while also being open enough to show the specificities of the European context in which the scholars work.

Speaker: Mujadad Zaman (University of Tübingen, Germany)

Title: The ‘Problem of Imagination’ in the Modern University: The Presence and Consequences of Islamic Institutions of Learning

Abstract: The modern university stands as amongst the most successful of premodern institutions which continue to make their presence felt today. Such is its preponderance that we may speak of it as a ‘primary institution’ i.e. one whose values no longer passively reflect that of society but rather inform how society itself functions (Baker, 2014). Such is arguably the presence and puissance of modern education, as refined within the university, in the emerging Knowledge Economy. Yet despite such accolade the institution confronts an equally thwarting position, levied at its very foundations as a producer, transmitter, and disseminator of knowledge. Of these various critiques, derived from the academic literature, it is the contention of this paper that there exists a fundamental problem of the imagination which modern, secular, academia faces. This superintendent problem is manifest, as shall be argued, through the mediums of vertigo, depth perception and paralysis. In light of these developments, I argue that the traditional intellectual and spiritual inheritance of Islam, wrought in the conceptions of learning, pedagogy and ethics, offers an unprecedented opportunity to see how the vacuum left by the problem of imagination might be recovered by modern Muslim institutions of learning. Specifically, how such institutions may contend with as well as alleviate the philosophical and pedagogical challenges rising out of the modern university, will be key to our discourse.



Keynote Address II

Professor Masooda Bano
(University of Oxford)

‘Is there a role for Madrasa education in training imams in the 21 Century?’

Professor Masooda Bano’s primary area of interest rests in studying the role of ideas and beliefs in development processes and their evolution and change. Particular emphasis is on understanding the dynamic interplay between material and psycho-social incentives and the consequences of this for individual choices and collective development outcomes. Professor Bano builds large-scale comparative studies combining ethnographic and survey data. Professor Bano has recently completed a five-year major research project — Changing Structures of Islamic Authority and Consequences for Social Change - A Transnational Review — supported by a €1.4 million European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant. Building on her earlier work where she argues that in order for beliefs to persist they must have everyday relevance, the project studied how both old and new centres of Islamic authority are responding to changed expectations of Muslim youth in Muslim-majority countries as well as those living in the West. Key publications from the project include: The Revival of Islamic Rationalism: Logic, Metaphysics and Mysticism in Modern Muslim Societies (Cambridge University Press 2020) and Female Islamic Education Movements: The Re-Democratisation of Islamic Knowledge (Cambridge University Press 2017); and two edited volumes: Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change: Evolving Debates in Muslim Majority Countries. Vol. 1. (Edinburgh University Press 2018) and Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change: Evolving Debates in the West. Vol. 2. (Edinburgh University Press 2018).

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