THE FUTURE OF ISLAM AND HUMANITY:
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

SESSION ABSTRACTS

THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF ISLAMIC AND MUSLIM STUDIES (AAIMS)
CONFERENCE PROGRAM, 14 - 16 SEPTEMBER 2021, ONLINE VIA ZOOM
| 6:00pm - 7:30pm | **Public Event (Keynote Presentation)**  
“The Cov
enants of the Prophet Muhammad” | **Chair:** A/Prof Halim Rane, Griffith University  
**Keynote Speaker:**  
Prof Ibrahim Zein, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar  
**Synopsis:** The provenance of these mysterious documents has been an enigma and questions have been raised about their authenticity and textual accuracy. There exists numerous copies of the covenants of the Prophet Muhammad in monasteries and patriarchates which were once under the rule of Islam, as well as in public libraries. Despite receiving only elusive mention in the Islamic sources, we nevertheless find that the Islamic tradition and non-Muslim historical sources agree that the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims issued documents of protection to the various faith communities which they encountered. This shared historical memory is most certainly based on historical fact, which leads us to ask: Where are these original documents today? Could it be that the copies of these documents which have been preserved in Christian, Jewish, Magi, and Samaritan sources are faithful replicas of the original documents, or at the very least in spirit? If so then this would categorically demonstrate that the early Muslims sought to build positive relations with people of other faiths, with the intent of peaceful coexistence.

**Zoom Registration Link:** [https://charlessturt.zoom.us/j/66680238821](https://charlessturt.zoom.us/j/66680238821)
### Session 1A: Muslims in Australia

**Chair:** A/Prof Halim Rane, Griffith University  

**“Muslim Youth in the West: Personal, Social and Religious Issues Muslim Youth Face in the Modern World”**  
A/Prof Mehmet Ozalp, Charles Sturt University

Abstract: The way Muslim communities evolve and integrate within western societies is seen as a vital aspect of social cohesion in multifaith and multicultural societies. A key aspect of this integration is the state of the Muslim youth in Western societies, issues they face and the nature of solutions to those issues posed by those in position of responsibility. We have conducted research with semi-structured interviews with 25 youth leaders in Australia and collected 250 online surveys completed by Muslim youth from around Australia. This presentation outlines the findings of this research under seven headings – identity (belonging, identity formation, voice), being a young Muslim in the modern world (religious practice and understanding), generational gap (cultural gap, gender gap, leadership gap), social issues (discrimination, drugs and alcohol, homelessness, mental health and unemployment), structural issues (government, Islamophobia, media, education system), young Australian Muslim women.

**“Belief, Practice and Belonging: A Comparative Analysis of Australian converts to Islam and Born Muslims”**  
Paul Mitchell, Griffith University

Abstract: Throughout the post-9/11 period, the phenomenon of conversion to Islam in Western nations has garnered significant attention. Much of this attention has focused on the purported susceptibility of converts to extremism and radicalisation and suggestions of their overrepresentation among Western jihadists. Despite repeated assertions of the apparent security threat posed by converts compared to their born Muslim counterparts, little academic research has sought to understand the differences and commonalities between these two groups. This paper, based upon data collected in an online, national survey of Muslim Australians, provides a comparative analysis of converts to Islam and born Muslims in relation to Islamic identity and interpretation, perspectives on key theological issues and questions of social connection and belonging. Through addressing this key gap in the existing scholarship, it is hoped that this research will provide a more in-depth understanding of convert beliefs and identities in relation to those raised within the faith, while encouraging further study in this field.
"Islamic Community Processes: Women’s Experiences of Family Dispute"

*Dr Ghena Krayem and Balawyn Jones, University of Sydney*

Abstract: The paper presents key findings from an ARC Discovery project on ‘Australian Islamic Community Processes’ led by Farrah Ahmed and Ghena Krayem. The project focused on women’s experiences of family disputes based on interviews conducted in Sydney and Melbourne between 2016-2020. The paper provides an overview of Islamic divorce processes before presenting the key findings with respect to women’s reasons for engaging with, and experiences participating in, Islamic divorce processes. Lastly, the paper shares the project’s key recommendations for improving Islamic divorce processes based on women’s experiences. The findings of the project contribute to the literature on Islam and Muslims in Australia and Islamic thought and practice in the field of family disputes.

“Contesting institutional norms: Muslim women advocates doing justice from the bottom-up”

*Faiza El-Higzi, University of Queensland*

Abstract: This paper focuses on Muslim women as proponents of legislative reform in Islamic family law in post-colonial Malaysia. It examines the various advocacy strategies that have evolved in post-colonial Malaysia to improve Muslim women’s access to their rights under existing legislation. Islamic family law in this context regulates family relations in marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance, and privileges the male in family relations. The paper shows that a range of advocacy measures, both political and procedural in nature have occurred. That Muslim women working at proximity to state Islamic institutions achieve progressive ends working through Islam and Islamic institutions to advance women’s standing in the law. Advocacy within Islam, the paper argues is not a deviation from progressive politics, but a necessary part of post-colonial Malaysia political agenda, and a required strategy. This contention is put forward in three arguments. First, that Muslim women working through the Islamic bureaucracy to promote procedural justice reform can be viewed as promoting a progressive gender justice agenda because they centre women’s struggles to access justice. Second they seek to apprehend the erosion of existing rights by enforcing gender reforms that have been allowed to slip in practice and third they contribute to improving implementation of justice, utilising formal institutional rules in the implementation of Family Law provisions and normalising expectations of gender justice outcomes. This argument draws from multi-sited study undertaken in Malaysia with a range of relevant stakeholders ranging from government administration agencies, Syariah courtroom judges and Syariah law academics to build an account of institutional change that allows us to see how Muslim women as gender advocates contest the Islamic bureaucracy’s approach to justice, family and gender, creating niche spaces for the progression of incremental change. The focus on institutions and actors contributes to our understanding of Muslim women’s political agency and gender advocacy in hegemonic settings. It also provides insights into the ways that Islamic gender advocacy, sits within the broader landscape of global feminist politics.

Zoom Registration Link: [https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcsdu-pqj4sGNUwBGKgQNxLigD0edVxBTni](https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcsdu-pqj4sGNUwBGKgQNxLigD0edVxBTni)
### Session 1B: Islam and Political Identity (9:30am - 11:30am)

**Chair:** A/Prof Karima Laachir, Australian National University  
*“Salafi Political Identity and Local Contexts”*  
*Phillip Etches, Australian National University*

Abstract: Ongoing research suggests that scholars can more clearly anticipate Salafi political participation by complementing existing classifications of Salafis with an awareness of Salafi cases’ political identity and local context. Wiktorowicz’s typology situates Salafis into clear categories, and purportedly indicates whether and how they will contest the political order in their local setting. But that typology’s theoretical, evidentiary, and conceptual issues raise questions of whether Salafis’ political behaviours and identity are more responsive to Salafi ideas, or the pressures of their local setting. With a basis in social movement theory and identity politics, the paper indicates that three apparent Salafi cases in Tripoli, Lebanon—Da’i al-Shahhal, Salim al-Rafe’i, and Ziad ‘Allouki—appeared preponderantly responsive in their rhetoric to pressures upon the Sunni community, and their place in it. Preliminarily, those findings suggest that scholars can more specifically anticipate Salafi political participation by comparing the potential sources of Salafis’ political identity to pressures in their local context, and situate understandings of Salafi political participation more clearly in the literature concerning Muslim social and political participation.

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**“Embracing Locality for Creating Harmony in Indonesia: Negotiating Islamic Identity and Nationality Among the Muslim Acehnese”**  
*Muhammad Johan Nasrul Huda, Western Sydney University*

Abstract: Achene’s Islamic identity is a form of local identity negotiation related to the national identity of Indonesia. Indonesia is considered an unfinished nation due to the national concept of Indonesia has not yet accepted by Achene’s Muslim. The increasing democracy has supported freedom of religious expression to Achene to implement Islamic law in local government. By using the phenomenology approach, this research addressed questions: how negotiation is conducted by Acehnese Muslims, and what is the meaning of Islamic identity in Aceh. The data collected in this research used a semi-structured interview with 6 former members of Achene’s Independence Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/GAM). The result shows that former members of GAM use dual identity strategy to negotiate their Islamic identity to the national identity of Indonesia. This model assumed that group boundaries between groups are perceived as impermeable and the cognitive structure of group members is relatively stable. Thus, all aspects of Acehnese need to be accommodated in national identity for achieving peace and harmony. As a result, the Indonesian national identity is an open collective imagination about the nation accommodating Acehnese’s identity such as recognizing Islamic romance, forming political parties locally, inserting Islamic law in Acehnese’s government. The implication of dual identity is a redefinition of a national identity that is more likely to a dynamic process in managing diversity in the unity of the Indonesian nation. In addition, the research will contribute to extend the previous research on social identity negotiation from non-western context.
“Questioning the Moderation Dichotomy: Understanding Hamas’s Continuing Moderation”

Dr Martin Kear, University of Sydney

Abstract: Within the extensive literature on political moderation the impetus for opposition movements to moderate their political behaviour is depicted as being driven by either inclusion into or exclusion from institutional and electoral politics. The result being that two analytical camps have developed that treat the drivers and vagaries of moderation in distinctive fashions. While each camp produces cogent and nuanced analyses, the lack of any analytical consensus further complicates our understanding of the moderation process overall. However, this paper seeks to challenge the utility of this analytical dichotomy. Using the behavioural shifts of the Islamist movement Hamas post-2004 as its case study, this study demonstrates that between 2004 – 2006 inclusion was the dominant force driving Hamas’s gradual moderation. This led to Hamas engaging in less ideologically risky political activities like forming a political party, publishing an election manifesto, and contesting elections. However, after Hamas’s surprise election victory in 2006, political exclusion became the dominant force driving Hamas’s moderation, with Israel imposing a siege on Gaza designed to exorcise Hamas from Palestinian politics. This led to Hamas engaging in more ideologically risky political activities, like refining its refusal to recognise the Israeli state, re-thinking its opposition to the two-state solution, and modulating its armed resistance to Israeli occupation. The paper’s central premise is that concentrating solely on examining the structural causal mechanisms of moderation exhibited by inclusion or exclusion does not adequately capture the full ambit of the moderation process. Therefore, any causal framework of moderation needs to focus more on a group’s own active agency by placing greater emphasis on understanding the ramifications of changes in the group’s political environment, how it responds to those changes, and how it justifies those responses to its constituencies.

Zoom Registration Link: https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlscu2ppjMsGNHEOswoYNRoM9zlzIaUFI-ul
**Session 2A: Maqasid, Ethics and Law**  
(12:00pm-1:30pm)

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| “A ‘Traditional’ Turn: Shatibi’s Maqasid in Early-Modern Maliki Legal Theory”  
David Drennan, Charles Sturt University |

Abstract: This paper focuses on tracing and analysing the recension of Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi’s (d. 1388) maqasid approach, as taught and explained by traditional scholars in early-modern Mauritania. It does this in order to fill a major gap in the historical transmission and reception of Shatibi’s works, as well as in response to the much more widely-known modernist trend in maqasid thought, which became prominent after Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) encouraged his students to read Shatibi’s Muwafaqat and produce a printed edition of it. This approach influenced a generation of intellectuals across the Muslim world and has become the de-facto standard narrative in Islamic studies discourse today. However, this ignores a corpus of existing work in the Muslim ‘west’ which shows Shatibi was known and part of a living tradition within Islamic legal theory. He was not ‘forgotten’ and in need of revival.

This paper traces the transmission of Shatibi’s conceptualisation of maqasid through his student, Ibn ‘Asim (d. 1426), and onwards into early-Modern Mauritania. It substantiates that Shatibi’s Muwafaqat was known and discussed, in writing, from 1794 at the very latest, and shows that his approach to maqasid was clearly delineated and subsumed within mainstream Maliki usul al-fiqh, not treated as a separate discipline, as simple utilitarianism, or as a way with which to jettison the transmitted body of juristic thought and substantive law in favour of alternative norms, as has often been suggested in today’s discourse surrounding maqasid and maslaha. It does this through tracing discussion of Shatibi in mainstream Maliki usul al-fiqh texts, specifically the works of Ma’ al-Aynayn ibn Muhammad al-Fadil (d. 1910), and Muhammad Yahya al-Walati (d. 1912), who both wrote abridgements of Muwafaqat, alongside commentaries, though were not connected to the more widely-known reform efforts of Muhammad ‘Abduh and his followers.

“Analysing Genre of Islamic Philosophical Akhlaq (Ethics) in the Light of ‘Adududdin al-Jī’s Epistle and its Commentary by Tashkoprizade”  
Dr Hakan Çoruh, Charles Sturt University

Abstract: Akhlaq (Islamic ethics) is a significant inter-disciplinary area discussed among the multiple Islamic disciplines. While various Islamic literature includes akhlaq under practical philosophy, akhlaq is connected with other Islamic disciplines such as kalam (Systematic Theology), fiqī (Islamic jurisprudence) and taṣawwuf (Sufism). Muslim theologians examined if can we determine what is good and evil by human intellect without divine guidance? Muslim jurists also indicate juristic (fiqhi) and ethical (akhlāqi) aspects of religious rulings and discuss many ethical issues such as animal
ethics, domestic economy, bioethics etc. under Islamic jurisprudence. Even many jurists considered akhlaq as a practical field under fiqh discipline. Taṣawwuf also deals with virtues and vices and human soul’s perfection via purification and good deeds. Some scholars such as Ghazali placed akhlaq under fiqh and taṣawwuf, describing both akhlaq and taṣawwuf as inner fiqh (al-fiqh al-wijdānī al-fiqh al-bāṭinī).

Adopting Greek philosophy and ethics, Muslim ethicists like Ibn Miskawayh developed philosophical akhlaq (virtue ethics), discussing on faculties of the soul and virtues and vices by harmonising virtue ethics with Qur’anic and Prophetic ethics. In addition, ‘Adududdin al-Ijī’s ethics treatise provides essence and primary principles of philosophical akhlaq in a concise manner and was very influential study text for centuries though not much study has been done on it. Therefore, this article first will analyse various aspects of religious akhlaq among major Islamic disciplines, particularly investigating traces of ethics within Islamic law (fiqh) and relationship between akhlaq and law. Then it will focus on philosophical akhlaq in Islamic tradition, with special reference to ‘Adududdin al-Ijī’s Akhlaq ‘Adudiyya (Risalat al-Akhlaq) and its commentary by Tashkoprizade. The framework of Islamic philosophical ethics will be examined by a comparative analysis of Muslim ethicists Ibn Miskawayh, Tūsī, Al-Ijī and Tashkoprizade respectively. Finally, it will discuss what can “Islamic ethics” contribute to the common good, societal challenges, and interfaith collaborations.

“The Role of Islamic Privacy Laws on Hudud Laws in Sharia”
Souha Korbatieh, Monash University

Abstract: The concept of satr or ‘covering up’ under sharia represents the principle of privacy and personal space based on the most authoritative of Islamic texts. However, the principle which is often referred to as a right under sharia has not seen any significant development to cater for the increased technological developments of the modern age, such as CCTV, DNA testing and data infringements. As a developing concept under sharia particularly in the modern world with the impact of modern technology such as CCTV, DNA testing and data infringements, the sharia notion of privacy will be examined along with suggestions for its reform and modern applicability.

Beyond the general notion under sharia, privacy is an evidentiary limitation to hudud crimes that exist within classical Islamic fiqh that is underutilised or even ignored in practice by Muslim states as a legitimate limitation upon hudud, particularly the hadd of adultery. Given the rise of modern Muslim states that have implemented sharia-based penal codes and the resulting injustice documented towards women and poorer classes, there is an urgent need for these states to use legitimate Islamic jurisprudential methods to limit the use of these extreme punishments. This study is an essential contribution to define privacy under sharia and investigate its significance as an established hudud evidentiary limitation particularly for adultery cases.
Session 2B: Muslim Political Issues and Thought
(12:00pm-1:30pm)

Chair: Dr Alam Saleh


Behzad Zerehdaran (University of Melbourne)

Abstract: The history of agnosticism in the Islamic world can be traced back to the early days of the inception of Muslim societies. Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (724 -752), Jābir bin Ḥayyān (721-813), Abū Bakr Muḥammad bin Zakarīā al-Rāzī (854-925), Abū ʿAlāʾ al-Muʿarrī (973-1057), and Ūmar Khayyām(1047-1131) are among the prominent philosophers, scientists, and poets in the middle ages who broke from the Islamic orthodoxy and propelled the discourse of agnosticism. Despite struggling with censorship, operation, and intolerance, the critique of the divine survived as a marginal yet influential discourse in the intellectual history of Muslim societies. In modern Iran, one of the historical episodes in which agnostic thought played a pivotal role in the intellectual debates was the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. More than marking a political revolution, the proclamation of the Constitutional Decree by Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh signified an ontological revolution in Iranian thought. It turned subjects to citizens, scattered communities to a united nation, absolutism to constitutionalism, and duty bearers to rights holders. If we take the Wittgensteinian notion that ‘the limits of my language mean the limits of my world’ seriously, a shift in language might be an indicator of a paradigm shift. Even a cursory glance at the political literature of the mid-Qājār era gives us a plethora of instances of emerging new horizons. One of the most controversial themes of critique was the realm of the divine. Writings of Malkūm Khān, Akhūndzādih, Jalāl al-Dīn Mīrzā, Āghā Khān Kirmanī, Tālibuf, and Marāghihī contained an implicit or explicit critique of Islam, Prophethood, Shariʿa, clergies, and even the notion of anthropomorphic, personal god. This paper studies the re-emergence of agnosticism in Iranian thought in the mid and late 19th century. The significance of this study stems from the fact that the contemporary Islamic reform movement was focused on answering the problems that were posed by agnosticism. Understanding the agnostic discourse clarifies the context in which Islamic reformism thrived.

“Authoritarian Religious Populists in Power and Emerging Digital Technologies: The Cases of Turkey, Pakistan and India”

Prof Ihsan Yilmaz, Deakin University and Assoc Prof Raja Ali Saleem, Forman Christian College, Pakistan

Abstract: India, Turkey, and Pakistan are all democracies that have recently taken a turn towards authoritarianism. As compared to Turkey and Pakistan, India has a much better track record of respecting civil and political rights of its people, but, under Prime Minister Modi, it has emerged as one of the worst examples of digital authoritarianism. For instance, India has been the world leader in internet shutdowns during the last three years (2018, 2019, & 2020). In each of these three countries, there is also a rise in the role of majority religion in politics and governance. This paper will compare internet governance in these three countries at four levels (full network level, sub-network level, proxies level, and user level) which will allow a more rigorous comparative analysis of different types of restrictions. Literature review has shown...
that differences in digital authoritarianism can be explained by the type of authoritarian regime and by each country’s history of the development of information and communication technologies. The question this paper intends to answer is whether differences in India, Turkey and Pakistan can be explained by the above-mentioned theories or does religion also play a role. Religion’s role in digital authoritarianism can be ascertained, among other things, by looking for religious justifications of internet curbs by the government, role of religious leaders in laws restricting digital freedom, additional restrictions to stop blasphemy, heresy, heterodoxy, and pornography, and more restrictions in areas where religious minorities live in large numbers.

“Rethinking Islamic Politics: God, Enlightenment and the Modern State”

Hamza Surbuland, University of Melbourne

Abstract: This work is a call to reform modern Islamic political thought. As a moral-legal project that should be premised on love of the Divine, Islamism undermines itself via its own authoritarian logic. I argue that a prime cause for the disappointments of modern Islamism is its failure to understand the concept, genealogy and implications of the modern state. Specifically, the simultaneous under-theorisation and assimilation of the modern state renders Islamic political philosophy inauthentic to the intellectual history of Muslim societies, and foreign to the spiritual message of the Quran. This thesis is therefore a study of the idea of the state, the meaning of law, and the production of normativity in our modernity, as well as in a pre-colonial Muslim past. I will argue that the dominating impulse of modern Islamism is at heart rooted in a complicity with an Enlightenment modernity. Only in understanding the ethic of premodern Islamic governance, which functioned on a core understanding of the human soul, can the moral project of Islamic politics be redeemed—an urgent task in a modernity disastrously premised on not the ethical and spiritual, but on the material, the economic, the political and the instrumental.

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Session 3A: Rereading Islamic Sources (Quran, Hadith and Sirah) (2:30pm-4:00pm)

Chair: Dr Hakan Coruh

“Revisiting the Homosexuality Narrative in Islam: The Revisionist Analysis of Colonialism, Quran and Hadith”

Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin, University of Queensland

Abstract: Following the legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Australia, an ongoing debate has resurfaced about the rights of homosexual Muslims. While the majority of Muslims hold that these two identities – Muslim and homosexual – are mutually exclusive and that it is illegal to practise homosexual acts, the recent Muslim revisionist movement seems to provide a more tolerant approach. Members of this movement argue that while the term liwat (anal intercourse) is mentioned in the Quran, this term is not inherently similar to the contemporary understanding of homosexuality based on love (mawaddah) and mutual understanding. This paper aims to demonstrate some of the challenges facing contemporary sexual ethics and its relationship to power (religious, patriarchal and neo-colonialist) by addressing relevant questions related to the pre-colonial and postcolonial legacies of current Muslim LGBTQ+ sexuality. It begins with an analysis of the arguments about whether homosexuality is a social construct (constructivism) or inherently inborn (essentialism), followed by the analysis of theoretical perspectives on homosexuality in the Hadith and Quran. Further, it presents all three such perspectives – the conservative, the centrist and the reformist opinions – by looking into theological debates and decrees on the permissibility and appropriateness of same-sex sexual desire and conduct. It offers a discussion of legal, historical, social and political genealogies of the Islamic legal tradition and the history of same-sex attraction amongst Muslims in the past and present. The paper then considers another approach to seeing a possible place for same-sex unions in Islam, based on the work of Jahangir and Abdullatif (2016; 2018). Ultimately, this paper contributes to a discourse that can enlighten both cis-hetero and sexually diverse, gender-variant Muslims in the hope of helping individuals to empower themselves as well as allowing them to negotiate around their religious, legal, political and social positions.

“Future of Sirah Genre: Reflection on the Fiqh al-Sirah Works”

Dr Suleyman Sertkaya, Charles Sturt University

Abstract: Prophet Muhammad is the central figure in Islam. This makes his life and biography the most critical source to understand and contextualise after the Qur’an. Systematically writing about his life and biography which is the main discourse for the sirah genre is timeless and always relevant. Thus, sirah has been a focal point for studies among Muslim and Western scholars alike for centuries. Extremely polar interpretations of sirah exist in the literature. Muslims primarily approach his life to take examples to replicate in every aspect of their lives and yet interpret differently depending on
their background and perception of the Prophet. On the contrary, non-Muslim scholarship, particularly from the medieval period up to the twentieth century, have completely different perceptions and it is overtly negative. Among Muslim scholars, the spectrum of their focus is also quite broad and to add to this, varying methodologies exist. Some deal with sīrah based merely on narrations received in a chronological order whereas some take certain events and themes as their guide. While some depict him as a supernatural entity emphasising diverse types of transcendental miracles, some reduce him down to a “far-sighted leader” like any other human being, completely disregarding the notion of prophethood and revelation. It is apparent that the spectrum of interpretation is quite broad and competing literature continues to be developed. In this juncture, one novel contribution is from contemporary Muslim scholars whose work is entitled Fiqh al-Sīrah. Taking the work of two prominent scholars into consideration, namely Muhammad al-Ghazali (d.1996) and Said Ramadan al-Buti’s (d.2013) Fiqh al-Sīrah, this paper examines their contribution to the sīrah writings in terms of methodology and approach. It argues that their contribution was ground-breaking and innovative, paving the way for new perspectives to read and interpret the sīrah in a contemporary world for a contemporary audience.

“Atb ‘Umar’s Interpretation of the Qur’ānic Verse ‘Fight them until Fitnah is no more’ and its Relevance to Modern Day Muslims”

Mursal Farman, Australian Catholic University

Abstract: The main focus of this study is to bring the Qur’ānic verse (2: 193) under discussion and specifically the interpretation of a popular Islamic term fitnah in it that not only changes the verse’s meaning, but overall the purpose of dīn (religion). There are multiple meanings of fitnah, the term used in verse (2: 193), available in the early exegetical literature but majority exegetes have adopted its meanings as ‘polytheism (shirk) or disbelief (kufr) which resulted in numerous complications and shall duly be examined in this study. Next the interpretation of fitnah as ‘religious persecution’ shall be discussed in detail by a famous companion of the Prophet, ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar that he offered in the days of civil unrest (fitan wars). It is this specific interpretation that forms the focus of this research. The heart of the argument lies in the interpretation of fitnah as ‘religious coercion’ rather than polytheism (shirk) or disbelief (kufr) that has many positive aspects. First, the said interpretation does not lead to any complications or contradictions. Second, by adopting this, the verse (2: 193) does not lose its relevance and remains as relevant to the contemporary times as it was in the yester years. Third, on the part of Islam this commentary enhances in the virtuality of peace and refutation of religious extremism.

Zoom Registration Link: https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMvc-qhrTguHdFOTABVejq9en3hoU9uwxJ5
Session 3B: Islamophobia
(2:30pm-4:00pm)

Chair: Dr Joshua Roose, Deakin University

“‘Just Be Comfortable with Yourself and Move on with Your Life’: Australian Muslim Women’s Arguments against the French Burkini Ban”

Dr Jennifer E. Cheng, Western Sydney University

Abstract: In 2016, several cities in France banned the wearing of ‘burkinis’, a full body swimsuit with head covering, on their beaches. The mayors declared that clothing is prohibited which does not respect secular principles and manifests adherence to a religion at a time when France is a target of terrorist attacks. The implication was that Muslim women who wore burkinis did not respect French secular values and even had terrorist motives.

This paper explores the counter-discourse of ten Australian Muslim women who discuss the ban. As members of an informal swimming club, the ‘Swim Sisters’, and wearers of the burkini, the women are well placed to comment on the ban. Findings show that the women strongly embodied liberal-democratic values and supported the principle of ‘live and let live’. The women critiqued the idea of marginalising a minority group in order to make the majority group feel comfortable and did not believe wearing a burkini contradicts secular values.

The paper will discuss how the women adopt liberal-democratic values in their discourses and actions, contrasting with the French mayors who believe they embody such values, but impose discriminatory and illiberal laws arbitrarily.

“Gendered Islamophobia in Australia: Minimisation and Distortion of Hate Crime against Muslim Women in Public and Official Discourse”

Salah Alrabie and Dr Mark Briskey, Murdoch University

Abstract: Islamophobia is prejudice anti-Muslim racism that targets expressions of Muslimness and Islam. Since Islamophobia term has surfaced in 1980s, it has acquired nature in academic and political terms and has been revised multiple times and discussed profusely since then. Western governments seem hesitant to adopt an Islamophobia definition as according to them, it may cripple counter-terrorism efforts and impinges on free speech. That, in turn, has led to an increased wave of Islamophobic attacks on Muslim communities in the West to cover a range of harassments of verbal and physical nature both offline and online with the 2019 terrorist act of Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand sounding the alarm on the seriousness of Islamophobia.

Much of the Islamophobia in Australia, as in other places in the world, is directed against Muslim women. There are some clear reasons upon reflection such as sexism, in many societies—arguably including Australia—there remains a general kind of sexism concerning the proper role and abilities of women. This sexism combines with prejudice of religious affiliations as well as racism and hatred towards immigrants and refugees has led to the birth of specific intersectionality.
of religion, race, and gendered Islamophobia targeting Muslim women. As undocumented and underreported crime can only sustain it. This research aims to analyze the issue especially when not only has there been neglect of the issue; there is in fact, exceptional resistance to define, document and tackle it.

“Muslims’ Visibility as an anti-Islamophobia Strategy by Victorian Muslim Community Organisations”

Sara Cheikh Husain, Deakin University

Abstract: Within a securitized context, Muslims’ visibility in the West is problematized and essentialized in juxtaposition to a dominant White majority. The perceived hyper-visibility of Muslims leads to explicit and implicit expressions of Islamophobia ranging from verbal and physical anti-Muslim harassments, legislative bans on expressions of Muslims’ religiosity, and terrorist activities to cripple the ‘cultural replacement’ of whiteness by migrant Muslims. This paper offers new insights into the growing body of scholarship attentive to the politics of Muslims’ visibility and a related rise in Islamophobic attitudes. It recognizes Muslims’ agentic capacity to reclaim and shape the narrative on Muslims’ representation through utilizing the same conduits contributing to their subjugation. Through an agency-structure framework, this paper analyses 25 interviews with representatives of Australian Muslim community organizations MCOs in Victoria to examine how MCOs’ agency is linked to Islamophobia’s structural rules. This paper argues that MCOs pragmatically craft transformative anti-Islamophobia strategies in the context of current discursive and structural drivers of Islamophobia. The findings reported in this paper show how MCOs utilize the perceived hypervisibility and political identity of Muslimness to form micro-proactive and nominal socio-political engagements to cripple Islamophobia’s negative assumptions. In doing so, the paper aims to contribute to shaping future conscious anti-Islamophobia strategies at the level of the community.

Zoom Registration Link: https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYudO6orDssE9W0qyQgAIIU0ASowdbVNNd0
### Session 1A: Islam-West Relations in Art and Popular Culture  
(9:30am-11:00am)

**Chair:** Assoc Prof Karima Laachir, Australian National University  

**“Sustaining Counter-Hegemonic Conceptions of Islam: A Study of Popular Dystopian Novels on the Invasion of the West”**  
**Susan de Groot Heupner,** Griffith University

Abstract: The perception that Islam is antithetical to peaceful coexistence remains prevalent across different segments of world society. Despite the hegemonic order of social plurality defining the liberal democracies of the West, the increasing Muslim (migrant) population is a prominent issue in the popular discourse of right populist parties. While the demographic prospect for Islam to have more followers than any other religion is a cause for concern among the right populists, it is an opportunity for islamist populists. Both opposing, yet mutually inclusive, identities sustain the perception that Islam is irreconcilable with liberal democracy. In exploring how patterns of Muslim migration are linked to counter-hegemonic conceptions of Islam, this study examines two popular dystopian novels that proclaim the invasion of the West. The novels, *Submission* (Michel Houellebecq) and *The Turner Diaries* (William Luther Pierce), are interesting materials for analysis precisely because each story revolves around a different dystopian subject. In *Submission*, the overrepresentation of Muslims in France leads to the democratic victory of an Islamist party, while *The Turner Diaries* depicts the extermination of the non-whites due to race war in the US. With reference to prevailing right and islamist populist discourse, the study identifies a dystopian continuity between different identifications that sustain the notion of the displaced other. These findings are useful for the understanding of the persistence of counter-hegemonic (illiberal) perceptions of Islam prevalent among both right and islamist populist identities.

**“Muslim Comics: Voices from the Margins”**  
**Dr Wajeehah Aayeshah,** University of Melbourne

Abstract: Muslim comic artists and developers have traditionally existed in the margins. Within the creative world of comics, there were a handful of recognisable Muslim names. However, this has been slowly changing. The past 5 years have seen a rise in Muslim authors and artists creating diverse representations. This paper explores the different types of Muslim comics.

It will showcase examples of Muslim indie comic makers from different parts of the world, who have used the power of social media to connect with their target audience. It will also include comics published within the well-recognised comic
There is a wide range of graphic stories created by Muslim artists. These comics cover real life, fantasy-based, and fictional story telling. Some of these comics focus on struggles of living an Islamic life within non-Muslim societies. Others focus on narratives of ordinary Muslims within Muslim countries. There are superhero fighting the super villains. There are also fictional everyday heroes standing against everyday enemies.

This paper will demonstrate the diverse representations within these comics and their creators, as it covers comics from Pakistan, Indonesia, Japan, Egypt, US, and UK., etc. Most of these comics have developed a niche market and are expressing their voices through the margins. Some of these are transitioning into the mainstream space, as their voices are heard. This paper argues that Muslim comics are providing representations through social media, and publication outlets, that are rarely present in the mainstream media. By offering a more nuanced and sometimes, quirky image of what it feels to be a Muslim, these comics are showcasing insights into contemporary Muslim communities. Simultaneously, they are creatively documenting and recording these experiences. Consequently, they are actively breaking harmful stereotypical depictions of Muslims and Islam, thereby doing a great service to their community.

“A Call to Connect: ‘Islamic’ Art in Australia and Aotearoa”

Dr Sam Bowker, Charles Sturt University
Prof Pedram Khosronejad, Western Sydney University

Abstract: The Iranzamin exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum (in Ultimo, Sydney from 19 March - 8 August 2021) and its related academic and public events, as well as the ‘Islamic Art in Australia’ edition of TAASA Review (Vol 29, Issue 3, September 2020) prove that there is desire and demand for engagement with ‘Islamic’ art within Australia and Aotearoa / New Zealand. Given that our contributions to this global field are shaped by our locations, resources and historical context, this presentation aims to introduce others to these specialist networks, with a view to enabling new collaborations, publications, exhibitions, and enhance supervisory or peer-review capacity for researchers within our region. This overview surveys the networks currently active in this famously ‘unwieldy field’ of diverse and ongoing research. We have considered how ‘Islamic’ arts (broadly speaking) are represented in cultural institutions, tertiary education, creative practice, and/or private collections in Australia and Aotearoa / New Zealand. Through this review, we ask: What expertise and capacities may be developed further through our shared interests?

Zoom Registration Link: https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pd-6rqqzTHNdImCdyjzo_rQdd-hQ_D1lm
Session 1B: Islam and Muslims in South-East Asia (9:30am-11:00am)

Chair: Dr Eva Nisa, Australian National University

“The Ijazah in Islamic Education in Singapore”
Fauzan A. Roslee, National University of Singapore

Abstract: Over the last two decades, much has been written about the Islamic schools or madrasahs in Singapore. An extensive body of literature has focussed on the curriculum, syllabus and pedagogy of full-time madrasahs, motivated by the Compulsory Education Act enacted in 2000, which aimed to streamline the educational experience across schools in Singapore. In recent years, however, the most recent scholarship on Islamic education in Singapore has looked into its propagators, primarily those who have pursued tertiary education at Islamic universities abroad before returning home to become religious teachers or asatizah. This paper seeks to expand on that trope and explore the transmission of Islamic knowledge through the traditional ijazah (authorisation or license) method that the asatizah have undertaken during their education abroad. The ijazah method, which has not been part of the mainstream educational pedagogy in Singapore’s madrasahs – mainly due to the scarcity of local Muslim scholarship and the lack of public awareness on the subject – have been concertedly initiated by a new generation of local asatizah not only in the transmission of Islamic knowledge exclusively, but in the study of Arabic calligraphy as well. Through interviews with asatizah from two local institutions that promote the ijazah method in their educational programs, this paper outlines the rationale behind the pursuit of the method in spite of the prevalence of modern pedagogies in dispensing Islamic education in Singapore. On top of that, the extension of the ijazah method to include the teaching of an art form also informs the practical deliberations made by the asatizah to expand its accessibility beyond the minority Muslim population in Singapore.

“Indonesia Hajj Funds Management Agency Law: Paradoxical Provisions”
Muhammad Hafidz Lidinillah, Western Sydney University

Abstract: In Indonesia, to make the pilgrimage, the would-be pilgrims are required to be able in financial which is pooled by the new entity, the Hajj Fund Management Agency (BPKH-the government body). After the payment has been made, the pilgrims should wait 11 to 40 years to make a pilgrimage due to the limitation quota decided by the Saudi Arabia government. The collected funds are now managed by the Hajj Funds Management Agency (BPKH) which is formally regulated by Law no 34 of 2014 on Hajj Funds Management. This was proposed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), which has been the regulator, operator and evaluator of the hajj administration for decades. This paper aims to examine conflicts and inconsistencies in the Law regarding BPKH’s role and powers which have impact pilgrims interest in terms of efficiency and fairness of the funds. Such as there is a question of the relation between the BPKH and pilgrims. Under Islamic law, the relationship is governed by a wakalah contract (aqad) in which the BPKH acts as an investment agent for pilgrims. However, the wakalah is not referred to consistently in the laws regulating the BPKH. This has resulted in legal ambiguity and dispute over the BPKH’s allocation of investment funds, especially when pilgrims disagree with allocation decisions – a problem that is only compounded by the fact that no dispute resolution mechanism has been...
enshrined in law. Moreover, the BPKH has formally designated a non-profit corporation that is owned by and answerable to the state. However, its intended goal on inception was to prudently maximise returns on potential pilgrims’ deposits to help fund their hajj expenses. In effect, the BPKH is a non-profit corporation that is functionally supposed to maximise profit, albeit not for its sole shareholder (the government), but for people with whom it has wakalah contracts. This gives rise to a key ambiguity: as a non-profit corporation, is the BPKH legally obligated to seek to maximise returns for potential pilgrims.

“Cultivating possibilities from impossibilities: the future Indonesian Umrah pilgrimage in the era of commodified religiosity”
Subkhani Kusuma Dewi, Western Sydney University

Abstract: The suspended Umra pilgrimage to Mecca in March 2020 following the COVID-19 outbreak has had a massive economic and social impact on Saudi Arabia, echoing throughout the Muslim world (Memish et al., 2020). The loss is even more significant in the travel industry as both greater pilgrimages in Islam (umrah and Hajj) have generated major income (Raj&Bozonelos, 2020). The current situation reminded those who differentiate pilgrimage from tourism (Palmer, Begley&Coe, 2012) and those who alert this tourism market from the bigger portion of the commodification of pilgrimages by reconsidering the spiritual attainment of this other-worldly journey (Kitiarsa, 2008; McLoughin in Mols&Buitelaar, 2015; Seise 2019).

Following the latest argument, I will elaborate on the specific aspects of religious pilgrimage on Umrah’s journey to Mecca, which has been a new mechanism of Indonesian pilgrimages to Mecca. As the Muslim community in this country has contributed to the second largest pilgrims (in 2019), I will explore my ethnographic study of such pilgrimage run through a Sufi perspective by a traditional pesantren in Java. The thorough information has generated from the study reveals that this small travel agency purposes its operation to prioritise the worship of the pilgrimage and counters the commodified pilgrimage practice. As the subject of this research underscores spiritual and ethical gain, I will present the data of study using five aspects of spiritual enhancement proposed by Weller in Kitiarsa (2008). This research considers the spiritual and ethical traits a significant factor that can challenge the disappointment of the ambitious project of the tourism market experienced during the current uncertain crisis. In addition to a minimal study of Umrah pilgrimage in Indonesia, my interest in this category will enrich the anthropological study of Umrah and broaden the global object study of Indonesian pilgrimages.
### Responses to Financial Crises in the Muslim World

**Chair:** Dr Mhamed Biygautane, University of Melbourne

#### “Resilience of Islamic Equity Markets in Turbulent Times”

**Dr Maria Jahromi, Australian National University**

**Abstract:** How resilient are Islamic equity markets in turbulent times such as financial crises and periods of financial distress? This empirical study employs a dataset of Islamic and conventional equity indices in six countries to examine whether the unique characteristics of Islamic financial assets can provide some protection during turbulent times. Islamic finance practices socially responsible investment with an emphasis on ethics and requires compliance with Islamic law (Shari‘ah). This law prohibits interest or usury (riba); transactions involving unnecessary uncertainty or a deliberate lack of transparency (gharar); hoarding; gambling and speculation. Instead, there is an emphasis on profit-and-loss sharing and other financial arrangements based on partnership or leasing principles to avoid explicit interest rates. In practice, Islamic equity indices apply business screens and financial ratio screens to exclude certain ‘unethical’ sectors and firms that derive significant income from interest, or that incur a large amount of leverage.

The empirical analysis suggests that the impact of a crisis on Islamic equity markets can be up to 79% lower than on conventional equity markets during most financial crises and periods of financial distress due to lower leverage, a more conservative approach to risk management and an emphasis on ethics. Results are stronger during early stages of financial crises and for countries that are more directly affected by a crisis. These findings also hold during the early stages of a public health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Islamic equity markets are therefore relatively more stable during turbulent times related to financial crises and financial distress. However, there is also some evidence that Islamic assets can be more sensitive to asset bubbles.

#### “The Fiscal Transformations of Egypt and Tunisia Post the Arab Spring”

**Dr Anas Iqtait, Australian National University**

**Abstract:** This paper surveys post Arab-Spring fiscal transformations of Egypt and Tunisia. First, the paper discusses domestic and regional key macroeconomic and fiscal developments over the past 25 years. It displays available data issued by government and international institutions of economic and fiscal indicators, and advances an up-to-date macro level economic assessment model for these countries. Second, the paper reviews fiscal and economic reforms post the Arab Spring. It interrogates the effects of IMF designed and advised structural reform programs on public revenues, public expenditures, and selected macro-economic indicators. Third, the paper compares post Arab Spring fiscal transformations.
in Egypt and Tunisia. It argues that Egyptian fiscal reforms have been primarily externally driven and targeted at minimizing budgetary commitments while expanding the tax base through indirect taxation and introducing and reforming public fees structures. In comparison, Tunisia’s reforms have been more responsive to internal pressures, but high public debt levels and domestic and regional instability have constrained the state’s ability to undertake public reform programs. The paper concludes by comparing the effects of internal political stability, represented by regime continuity, on the implementation and success of the fiscal transformations of Egypt and Tunisia since 2011.

“Energy transitions, fiscal pressure, and subsidy reform in the Gulf”

Dr. Jessie Moritz, Australian National University

Abstract: Global oil markets are shifting, driven by the increasing availability of shale oil in North America and demand shocks caused by the pandemic as well as longer-term transitions to renewable energy. For the oil and gas-rich states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a future of lower oil prices is not simply a fiscal issue but also one of regime resilience; they have traditionally relied on a ‘rentier’ social contract, predicated on an exchange of political loyalty for wealth distributions. The 2014 and 2020 oil price falls thus underscored the urgency of reducing regime dependence on these commodities, even as ongoing unrest in Iraq, Sudan, and Libya demonstrates the vulnerability of oil-dependent states that fail to placate restive populations. How will these rentier states balance a fiscal need to reduce spending with their traditional reliance on material transfers to maintain political quiescence? This presentation focuses on subsidy reform, evaluating how GCC states have attempted to reduce subsidies on electricity, fuel and basic commodities. Previously, subsidy reform proved a major obstacle to successful diversification. However, the paper discusses recent governance reform, the empowerment of new agencies with a clear mandate for economic diversification, as well as increasing citizen awareness of changing oil markets, which, the paper argues, have substantially impacted attitudes to subsidy reform and, by extension, the rentier social contract. Reforms are tentative, and often withdrawn in the face of social pressure, however the paper finds a clear trend towards fiscal reform that suggests these states are more committed to diversification than during earlier attempts. The paper also explores societal campaigns that emerged in response to subsidy reform that highlight the continued potential for political mobilization and bring into question the adaptability of the ‘rentier’ social contract to a low oil price future.

Zoom Registration Link: https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpfuuurT0uGNJRRK5wkcye2Am0iHTiBM1b
Islam and its Others in Contemporary Iran
(2:00pm-3:30pm)

Chair: Prof Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University

“The Instrumental Use of Ethnicity in Contemporary Iran”
Dr James Barry, Deakin University

Abstract: While Ayatollah Khomeini discouraged ethnic politics in the early years of the Islamic Republic, the practice of appealing to the “ethnic” vote has been a consistent feature of elections since the 1990s. In the 2021 Presidential Election, several candidates promoted their own “ethnic” credentials in seeking votes from non-Persian speaking communities. The eventual winner, Ebrahim Raisi, specifically sought endorsement from sectarian leaders, such as the prominent Sunni Baluch cleric Maulana Abdol-Hamid Esma’il-zahi. This paper will look specifically at the 2021 election and the use of ethnic and sect minority communities to legitimise presidential campaigns, as well as the persistence of ethnic and sectarian factions in the Majles in spite of the Supreme Leader’s explicit forbidding of the practice. The paper will also comment on the problematics of equating language with ethnicity in Iran, and the way that recent economic and environmental disasters have been framed in ethnic terms.

“Securitising the Other, Securing the Self: Iran, Friends and Foes amidst Regional Rivalry”
Dr Alam Saleh, Australian National University

Abstract: The growing ethno-sectarian conflicts in the Middle East have been particularly affecting transnational societal minorities in the region. Amidst regional rivalry, with profoundly sectarianised rhetoric, regional actors have instrumentally employed such identity groups, be it religious, sectarian and/or ethnic, to advance their political ends. Such identity-based conflicts, characterised by the so-called Shi’a-Sunnī division, have been profoundly informed by the geopolitical changes in the region. Iran’s growing power, its religious discourses and its interventionist approach towards the region has led to the securitisation of Iran by its regional rivals. This is particularly important since Iran is a multi-ethno-religious country. This have further complexified the situation of such identity groups in Iran and those affiliated to Iran abroad. Tehran has always been struggling to maintain a coherent political identity discourse to address such complexities. As such, this study explores Tehran’s political identity discourses, linking this to wider regional dynamics.

“Faith on the Threshold: Afghan Migration to the Islamic Republic of Iran”
Dr Elisabeth Yarbakhsh, Australian National University

Abstract: The short and bitter history of migrant illegality in Iran can be traced back to March 2001, when Iranian government officials announced that the ‘open door’ between Iran and Afghanistan was ‘sealed shut’. This marked the culmination (and official confirmation) of a gradual but relentless shift to the way in which Afghan migrants and refugees were discursively located within the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the newly established Islamic regime in Tehran welcomed Afghan refugees as mohajerin, thereby reinforcing its
own Islamic credentials and forcefully upholding the pan-Islamic vision of the Khomeini government. In turn, many Afghan migrants to the Islamic Republic enthusiastically adopted the religious practices and sensibilities of the revolution. Today, however, the movement of Afghans into Iran and their continuing presence within the country, is increasingly conflated with a range of national security and epidemiological risks. The narrative of a borderless Islam has given way to new constructions of ethno-nationalism, in which Afghan refugees are identified as inherently Other and literally or metaphorically pushed to the margins.

Zoom Registration Link: https://anu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIofuqvpjosE90sDrPt1razMLVkFLC_bBuw