

The Religious Studies Program & the Arabic Program in the School of Languages and Cultures at Purdue University present...

“Secularism and the Religious Return among Palestinians in Chicago: An Ethnographic Reflection on the Politics of ‘Islam’ in the Current Moment”



Loren D. Lybarger
Ohio University

Thursday, September 29, 2016, 4:00pm

Anniversary Drawing Room

Purdue Memorial Union

Reception to follow

Abstract: Anti-Muslim racism has spiked during the current presidential campaign in the United States. Calls to ban Muslim immigrants have paralleled an increase in violent incidents directed at Muslims across the country. Teaching about Islam and Muslims in this political moment is, therefore, particularly urgent. In this lecture, Loren D. Lybarger, Associate Professor of Classics and World Religions at Ohio University (Athens), will discuss the need to complicate the prevailing public discourse about “Islam” by emphasizing the historical contingency and socio-cultural diversity of Muslim societies. Lybarger focuses specifically on secular-religious interactions in the Palestinian immigrant community in Chicago. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research, he shows how this interaction, which intersects as well with gender, class, and generation, generates diverging and unexpected understandings of Islam and national identity. This divergence raises fundamental questions about what “Islam” is and means in the context of one particular group’s historical experience. It is by raising such questions, Lybarger concludes, that scholars in Islamic Studies and its related areas of study can most effectively challenge the caricaturing of Muslims in public discourse.

This event is made possible by the INNOVATE 2.0 Arabic Speakers Grant, and is free and open to the public. All are welcome!

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