



Course description: NISIS Spring School 2017

Theme	“Islam, the body and the self”
Academic year	2016-2017
Location	Sarajevo
EC	5
Level	600
Language	English
Keynote speakers	To be announced
Hosted by	Faculty of Islamic Studies, Sarajevo University

Admission requirements

PhD candidates and research master students active in the field of Islamic Studies may apply for admission and should contact NISIS at nisis@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

[NISIS junior members](#) qualify automatically, but due to the limited number of participants, also need to apply for participation for the NISIS Spring School via nisis@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

Description

The NISIS Spring School is usually organised in cooperation with several foreign research institutions and preferably takes place where these sister institutions are based. The programme consists of lectures by keynote speakers in the morning and parallel workshops in the afternoon. In the workshops, a selection of international PhD candidates and research master students present their research in relation to the general theme of the Spring School and act as discussants.

Participants (PhD candidates and research master students) are required to:

For 2 EC:

- read the prescribed literature in advance;
- give a presentation (15 minutes) in one of the afternoon workshops and act as **discussant*** for the presentations of one of the other participants.

For an additional 3 EC:

- write a paper in which own research is related to the theme of the Spring School (requirements can be found below).

*As a **discussant** during the NISIS Spring School, you are required to pose questions for discussion and to actively participate in and contribute to the discussion. NISIS aims at assigning the participants to the different (thematic/geographical) sessions in accordance with their respective field of study within Islamic Studies.

Theme : Islam, the body and the self

Religion is not exclusively about textuality. We cannot study religion without taking into account the multiple dimensions of the body as an object of research in its own right. This is also the case with Islam. *The Body and the Self* is the theme of the NISIS/IISMM Spring School, to be held in Sarajevo, Bosnia in March 2017. The body is the oldest and probably most essential religious medium. Oral transmission is considered the most appropriate way of transmitting the word of God. Just as in any religious tradition at the heart of Islam is the body as the carrier of that tradition.

There are many normative references in theological and juridical sources to various aspects and features of the body. There is an intriguing paradox with respect to the position of the body in Islamic tradition. Although it is considered as the central carrier of tradition, the centrality of the body may also easily open up to idolatry. Iconography is an important emerging field in Islamic studies because it explores among other things the dynamics of the imagination of the human body in Islam in relation to its central religious tenets dealing with its representation. The growth of the modern media replete with images adds new dimensions to the study of iconography and the body.

Religious boundary making also works through the body. The body is the pivotal object of imagination and symbolism in interactions between the self and the other and between Muslims and non-Muslims. Processes of boundary making, othering, exclusion and physical extinction, but also reconciliation and dialogue, always take place through corporeal practices and interactions. Under conditions of war, bodily violence constitutes a compelling and extreme form of boundary making. It involves the use of the body to establish the parameters of otherness, taking the body apart to define the enemy within. But we can also think of more banal and everyday situations of boundary making in which the body plays a central role such as sport and the bodily culture that surrounds it.

And last but not least, the body is the single most important vessel for religious practice. Religion is performed through the body and reversely, stages in the lives of individuals such as birth, marriage and family formation, death and burial constitute important ritual moments in religious traditions. Religiosity is being shaped and re-shaped under changing circumstances through the process of embodiment. The body in Islam has a history in this respect. Ethical and moral improvement, the disciplining of the body for moral improvement, the formation and fashioning of the (Islamic) self is first and foremost accomplished, enabled, but also limited by our bodies. Rituals, acquiring and disseminating knowledge, and disciplinary practices, are accomplished through embodiment. And being in the world, self-understanding, the making of selfhood, and identity-making cannot be properly understood if we would ignore the crucial agency of the body.

We invite researchers explicitly working on the body, but also those not explicitly addressing the body to explore the relevance of the body and the self in their work.

Course objectives

- Enlarging and deepening the already existing knowledge of Islam and Muslim societies
- Providing insight and participation in the current academic debate
- Introducing the candidates to an international network of scholars in the field

No rights can be derived from this course description. Information may be subject to change.

- Creating an academic community in which research in the field of Islam and Muslim societies can be optimally pursued
- Mediating between a new generation of researchers and innovative disciplinary and interdisciplinary developments, theoretical and methodological initiatives and explorations in the field
- Training presentation, writing and reflection skills.

Timetable

The Spring School will take place from Monday 13 March – Friday 17 March 2017. Please make sure to be informed about programme details and updates via our website: www.nisis.nl

Mode of instruction

- Lecture
- Workshop
- Research

Course load

Total course load for the course is 56 + 84 hours.

For 2 EC

Lectures during the school: 27 hours

Preparation presentation: 27 hours

Preparation discussant: 2 hours

For an additional 3 EC

Paper: 84 hours

Assessment method

PhD candidates and research master students will be judged on the basis of:

- attendance and active participation at the keynote lectures and workshops
- presentation in a workshop and discussant for one of the presentations of others
- a paper afterwards in the form of a reflexive essay (see next section for requirements)

Paper requirements

The objective of the reflexive essay to conclude the Spring School, is to relate the theme of the Spring School as presented in the keynote lectures to your own research. To this purpose, you choose at least one keynote lecture and follow these instructions:

A. As a first step, you write a short introductory section. In the first subsection of the introduction you present the objectives, research question, and subject matter of your own research in max. 200 words. In the next subsection (max. 300-600 words) you explain to what purpose you have selected this/these key note lecture(s) from the Spring school to apply to your own research.

B. The next section of 1500 to 2000 words consists of a few paragraphs in which you answer for each of the key note lecture(s) the following questions:

- Which key theories, concepts and ideas are addressed?
- What are the main questions and problems that are addressed?
- What is the nature and content of the empirical data/sources that are analysed and how is (the analysis)of the data organised?

C. The next section of 1500 to 2000 words is dedicated to a two-step ‘what if’ exercise in creativity:

1. for each of the selected key note lecture(s) you ask yourself: If you were to apply the approach/ line of argument, etc. to your own research, what new questions would you ask of your data, what kind of data would you have to collect alternatively or additionally? If you were to adopt the approach, focus etc. of the lecture to develop an argument along similar lines on the basis your own material, what might that argument look like?
2. For each of the possibilities that you can come up with, you reflect on the pro’s and con’s and take stock of and explain which options are interesting and feasible to follow up on.

D. In the concluding section you take stock of how the theme of the Spring School, most concretely how the key note lecture(s) selected shed new light on and/or have been helpful for your own research.

In total, the length your essay should be **between 3500 to 5000 words**.

Application

You can apply for participation in the NISIS Spring School 2017 as soon as a call for application has been opened. This will be announced on the NISIS website (www.nisis.nl). Please note that the number of available places is restricted.

NISIS junior members qualify automatically, but due to the limited number of participants, also need to apply for participation for the NISIS Spring School via nisis@hum.leidenuniv.nl.

Website

www.nisis.nl