Course Description:
NISIS Spring School 2020

Admission

Title	Contesting Authority: Knowledge, Power and Expressions of Selfhood
Academic year	2019-2020
Location	Online
EC	3-5
Level	600
Language	English
Keynote Speakers	Marjo Buitelaar Suad Joseph Hilary Kalmbach Siobhan Lambert Arshad Muradin Muhammad Qasim Zaman
Hosted by	University of Catania

requirements

PhD candidates and research master students active in the field of Islamic Studies may apply for admission via www.nisis.nl. The registration deadline is 25 December 2019.

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 www.nisis.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 3 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 2 EC:

- write an essay in which you elaborate on your presentation and include feedback and
  insights gained during the Spring School (requirements can be found below).

***As a **discussant** during the Spring School, you are required to:

- carefully study the readings as prescribed by the keynote speakers in advance;
- prepare questions for discussion in advance in which you relate the topic of the
  presentation to the prescribed readings;
- pose the first question about the presentation;
- actively participate in and contribute to the discussion.

Theme

The ENIS Spring School 2020 addresses two closely interrelated aspects of Islam in the digital age. Firstly, how (past and contemporary) technological revolutions have informed the performance of selfhood (including gender), the modes of engagement with society, and the political consequences of shifting boundaries between public and private spheres. Secondly, it addresses the construction and transformation of religious authority and religious knowledge production, and concomitant questions of legitimacy, power and discipline, under changing circumstances.

Presently there is a mushrooming of YouTube channels presenting testimonials and life accounts, Facebook pages providing space for minority groups (e.g. homosexuals or ex-Muslims) that publicise previous hidden aspects of identity, as well as blogs and homemade videos communicating everyday life events or short clips showing artistic performance in an affordable non-celebrity style sharing them with a wide audience. Quite often they contain an (implicit) political statement about the societies in which the expressions are uttered, not only in the message but also in the mere fact of the utterance.

(Young) people in the Muslim world, like elsewhere, share more and more aspects of self, including more intimate and previously hidden ones, or experiences with 'illegality'. These new digital forms of self-expression also entail a claim to space for individualised selfhood. Out of sight of different regimes of surveillance, forms of marginality, secret lives and intimate experiences take on a more public form. With that it questions dominant forms of authority, whether parental, communal, religious or political. The Muslim / Arab world is usually characterised as stressing communal or relational forms of identities and putting less emphasis on individualised selfhood in comparison to the West. The Arab Uprisings first seemed to overturn some deeply rooted forms of authority, including with respect to political power, but now long-established authoritarian forms

of power with their different nuances appear to be square back. Yet several observers notice a 'silent revolution' taking place on an individual level, asserting individual selfhood and rights. Do these new forms of self-narratives and artistic performances offer us insight into the development of new forms of selfhood? What are the most important characteristics and expressive forms of these newforms of selfhood? What are the potential political consequences of new forms of selfunderstanding and expression?

Issues of selfhood and artistic performance are closely linked to questions of legitimacy, power and discipline. Muslims have held varying, sometimes conflicting, views on the extent to which knowledge and authority are exclusive of a single figure, a masculine 'professional' group, or distributed in society, how knowledge should be transmitted and controlled, and the literary forms that it should take, and how it should be reproduced. The widely held assumption that in the pre-digital era Islamic reasoning was a collective matter of established scholars and theology-centred argumentation lacks historical pedigree. The individual as a political subject emerged centuries before the dawn of digital technology. This also questions the assumption that religious authority was uncontested, only to be challenged very recently by the same technological innovations. Questioning 'established' religious authorities and addressing new audiences is as old as Islam. The invention of paper, the rise of literacy and the emergence of 'calligraphic states', and not least the spread of print technology have had profound influence on authority and knowledge production, but also generated new expressions of selfhood. Digitisation has intensified this process in an unprecedented way, resulting in the rise of new intellectuals, the feminisation of contestation, the 'democratisation' of knowledge production, the emergence of new audiences and discursive communities, the relocation, subjectivation, and fragmentation of authority, but also in new forms of community building, online and offline. Finally, digitisation also prompted 'established' religious authorities to reflect upon these newly arising challenges and how to effectively cope with them.

The organisers of the MIDA/ENIS Spring School 2020 invite researchers to reflect on these issues from the perspective of their own research and present their work. In order to enhance historical comparison and analytical depth, we very explicitly call not only on researchers working on contemporary issues, but also those who deal with Islam in the past.

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
- 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.

Time Table

The Spring School will take place online from 22 to 26 June 2020.
Please make sure to be informed about program details and updates via e-mail.

Mode of instruction

- Lecture
- Workshops
- Research

Course load

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

For 3 EC:
Lectures during the school: 40 hours
Reading prescribed literature: 14 hours
Preparation presentation: 27 hours
Preparation discussant: 3 hours

For an additional 2 EC:
Essay: 56 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 essay to conclude the Spring School, is to get your presentation on paper, process the feedback you received from senior scholars and the other participants and to include

new insights from the keynote lectures and literature. To this purpose, you can follow these instructions:

A. Turn your presentation into an essay (including correct bibliographical references – please use one citation style throughout your essay - and footnotes).

B. Reflect on the feedback you received during the Q&A session following your presentation.

C. Process new insights gained during the Spring School in your essay, most concretely how the key note lecture(s) shed new light on and/or have been helpful for your own research.

In total, the length of your essay should be **between 3000 to 4000 words** (including footnotes and/or intext citations).

Reading list

Please consult the program booklet for the latest updates.

Application

You can apply for participation in the NISIS Spring School as soon as a call for application has been opened. This will be announced on the NISIS website (www.nisis.nl). The registration deadline is 25 December 2019. Please note that the number of available places is restricted.

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Website

www.nisis.nl