

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
SPRING 2008 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

MUSLIM MODERNITIES

<https://workspace.ssrc.org/dpdf/muslimmodernities>

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**Crown Plaza Hotel St Louis Downtown, Conference Room #304
Wednesday May 28- Sunday June 1, 2008**

This is the first of two workshops designed to help students prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals in their chosen field. The two goals of the first workshop are 1) to map the research field with respect to contributing disciplines, methods, sources, and area knowledge; and 2) to help prepare fellows for their pre-dissertation summer research. (The goal of the second workshop will be to focus on the mechanics and methods of writing a dissertation proposal). The two goals stand in close relation to each other: through a sustained and structured discussion of student proposals and their component parts, we hope to contribute to the mapping of the research field itself.

The field of “Muslim Modernities” refers to the interdisciplinary body of work that has emerged over the past generation to examine how various Islamic heritages are extruded, redefined, or invented through modern processes. Increasingly, the study of Muslim communities has contributed to a re-thinking of the West’s monopolistic claims to modernity. Instead of measuring modernization as the adoption of Western institutions and norms, these studies have explored the development of alternative forms of modernity. These alternative forms are modern in three potentially distinct ways: their proponents claim that they are modern; they are recent, not found in “tradition,” though sometimes imposed retroactively on tradition; and they exhibit characteristics frequently associated with Western modernity, such as universalism, rationalization, and reflexivity. The study of Muslim modernities provides a counterpoint to analyses that view contemporary Muslim societies through the prism of premodern recrudescences.

Our workshop participants form a wonderfully diverse, though necessarily incomplete, representation of the multiple disciplinary homes and geographic foci within the field of Muslim modernities, including departments throughout the humanities and social sciences and field research spanning approximately 18 time zones. The juxtaposition of these different approaches during our workshop is intended to provide outsiders’ perspectives on each student’s particular topic. At the same time, we have tried to cluster students into groups of four that share a thematic concern (we apologize that some of these clusters are more natural fits than others), for more intensive break-out discussions.

The primary goal of this workshop is assistance in the preparation of dissertation proposals. Just as important, perhaps, is the additional goal of creating long-term collegial relationships that will deepen our individual and collective understanding of Muslim modernities.

Workshop Readings and Resources

Research Field resources will be placed on the relevant Workspace websites. Students will receive separate explanations and detailed instructions about the access and use of the DPDF digital platform.

Workshop Assignments

- **Assignment #1 of 4. Due May 28, 2008: Readings**

Please read the Waldman essay and two books before we meet at our first session:

1. Waldman essay.
2. One book on modernity.
3. One book on Muslim modernities.

- **Assignment #2 of 4. Due on DPDF Workspace site, May 28, 2008: Reading notes**

For each book, please write approximately two-three pages of reading notes (single-spaced) for each book. Reading notes are a way of making sure that you have read a work carefully enough, that you have extracted the main points, and that you will be able to refresh your memory of these points at some point in the future when you will scarcely remember ever having read the book. Reading notes should include (a) the full bibliographic citation of the work, so that you won't have to track this down again later; (b) the main points of the reading, including summaries of each chapter; (c) definitions of major concepts and examples of their use in the text, (d) significant quotations and items that you find interesting; and (e) your reactions/questions/critiques, which should be set aside from the descriptive notes via brackets, bold lettering, or some other technique, so that you will not confuse them with the author's points. Be sure to give page references for every quotation and paraphrase, so that your notes will serve as a personalized index to the work and you will be able to locate these passages in the future. Get in the habit of taking the time after you read anything in your scholarly career to stop and write reading notes. You will read more than you can remember, and reading without remembering is not an efficient use of your precious time.

Please post your reading notes to the Muslim Modernities portion of the SSRC workspace website, so that your colleagues may learn from your readings.

- **Assignment #3 of 4. Due on DPDF Workspace site, May 28, 2008: Research statement**

Please write a 5-8 page research statement that will serve as the starting point for discussions. You already have written much of what should be included in this statement, but we would like you to focus it in the following way. We recommend that you read over the field statement posted on the DPDF website (www.ssrc.org/programs/dpdf). Please create an individual folder in the Muslim Modernities workspace under the heading Fellow Folders, and post this statement and your reading notes in your folder.

1. Begin with the broad research question that you are trying to understand.
2. Then tell all of us why you find this question important. You may talk about real-world importance, place it in the context of a research tradition, or talk about extending work done elsewhere to a new research site.
3. For most of the rest of the statement, we would like you to sketch out your “method” in a very broad sense. Among the questions you will want to address are: What sort of research activities will I carry out? Why these rather than another set? In what way does my research question push me in this methodological direction? Where will I work and why? What kinds of information do I expect to end up with? What will I learn from it? What difficulties might I face?
4. Please pose a question generally not on research proposals: What are the trade-offs in my chosen approach; what do I not learn very much about by approaching the topic in this way?
5. We would like you to consider whether there are a few works in your field that you find exemplary as guides to method, on how to approach studying your topic. (We mean examples of good empirical studies, not manuals!)

- **Assignment #4 of 4. Due May 29, 2008: Introductions**

On the afternoon of Thursday, May 29, each student will introduce another student’s research project in four minutes. We have paired you for introductions as follows, in hopes of generating interesting cross-talk:

Group A:	Pair 1. Abdelrahman/Yuskaev	Pair 2. Parkinson/Sounaye
Group B:	Pair 1. Behrouzan/Zavarella	Pair 2. Camden/Decker
Group C:	Pair 1. Cakir/Hakim	Pair 2. Gedacht/Ray

Please read your partner’s research statement (Assignment #3) in order to tell the group a few things about your partner’s research site(s), questions, and methods – plus one thing that you find particularly intriguing about your partner’s research project. (Feign enthusiasm if necessary.)

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL, Wednesday, May 28: Reading handouts / packets will be distributed at registration along with other materials.

Wednesday Evening: *Reception, 6-8 pm.*

Session 1: Introduction and Purpose of Workshops

(Thursday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM)

Plenary Session: Presentations by Program Director Peter Sahlins and the Research Directors

Session 2: What Everyone Should Know About Early Islam

(Thursday, 2:00 PM – 5 PM)

2 p.m.-3 p.m.: Introduction of research proposals by partners (see Assignment #4).

3 p.m.-5 p.m.: What everybody who studies contemporary Muslim societies needs to know about early Islam. This session will review the latest scholarship and debates on the emergence of Islam, the expansion of Muslim societies, the legal institutions that emerged to interpret Islamic rights and responsibilities, and the sources on which these interpretations are based. This overview is necessary not because this period determines 20th and 21st century outcomes, but because it forms an intellectual background that most Muslims today share and some of them wish to replicate.

Session 3: Modernities

(Friday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM)

9 a.m.-10:30 a.m.: Definitions of modernity. This session provides a broad framework for analyzing Muslim societies comparatively by examining the most influential theories of modernity from the 17th century to the present, especially the ways in which they define their own modernity through the construction of non-modern “others,” which are frequently Islamic. This session will also review scholarly debates about the relationship of these theories to European colonial and post-colonial interventions in Muslim societies.

10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.: Modernities in practice. Each student will take about four minutes to describe the relationship of “modernity/ies” to their research project, with a focus on two points: Do the people you are studying consider it important to be “modern” (based on your preliminary knowledge of them), and what might they mean by “modern”?

Session 4: Theory

(Friday, 2:00 PM – 5 PM)

2 p.m.-4 p.m., break-out into 3 groups of 4 people each (labeled Groups A-C in Assignment #4): What theorists will you be dealing with in your dissertation, and why them and not others?

4 p.m.-5 p.m., Committee of the Whole: Presentation and discussion of three proposals, one each from Groups A-C.

Session 5: Sampling

(Saturday, 9 AM – 12:00 PM)

9 a.m.-11 a.m., Groups A-C: How will you know whether the information that you collect during your field research is representative of the group(s) and process(es) that you wish to discuss in your dissertation?

11 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Committee of the Whole: Presentation and discussion of three more proposals.

Session 6: Documentation

(Saturday, 2:00 PM – 5 PM)

2 p.m.-4 p.m., Groups A-C: What documents will you need to collect during your field research, and how will you place each text in context?

4 p.m.-5 p.m., Committee of the Whole: Presentation and discussion of three more proposals.

Session 7: Politics

(Sunday, 9 AM – 12:30 PM)

9 a.m.-11 a.m., Groups A-C: How will you navigate the inevitable political pressures in the field – both the fieldsite(s) and your disciplinary field(s)?

11 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Committee of the Whole: Presentation and discussion of final three proposals.

12:00 p.m. -12:30 p.m. Final thoughts on the workshop process; suggestions for the fall workshop.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
FALL 2008 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

MUSLIM MODERNITIES
<https://workspace.ssrc.org/dpdf/>

Research Director: Charles Kurzman kurzman@unc.edu
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**Hilton Milwaukee City Center
Milwaukee, WI
Thursday, September 11 – Sunday, September 15**

This is the second of two annual DPDF workshops designed to help graduate student fellows prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals in their chosen field. The two goals of the second workshop are 1) to help fellows synthesize their summer research; and 2) to draft proposals for dissertation funding. The fall workshop focuses on the mechanics and the philosophy of proposal writing. The workshop also aims to challenge fellows to reflect on their summer research in ways that link meaningfully to their research field. In this, the goals of the fall workshop are closely related to the project of mapping a research field that was started during the spring workshop in St Louis, MI.

Fellows will come out of the second workshop with supportive networks, consisting of both mentors and cohorts of new scholars carrying out research in their fields, as well as intellectually mature dissertation proposals.

The fellows were selected in part for the ambitious nature of the projects that they described in their fellowship applications last winter, and we have high hopes that the dissertations that they produce will bridge fields and advance scholarly debates about Islam and modernity/ies. To this end, our sessions will include discussions and feedback from the perspective of multiple disciplines, so that the fellows' projects will ultimately speak to as many scholarly audiences as possible. At the same time, our sessions will push fellows to narrow their research focus to a single over-arching research question, so that the projects remain feasible and succinct.

Workshop Readings and Resources

If any fellow would like to post readings or other resources on our Workspace website, please feel free to do so. We have resisted the temptation to assign any new readings for the fall workshop, though we encourage fellows to re-read the papers by Michael Watts and Adam Przeworski/Frank Salomon that are posted in the "Proposal Writing Resources" folder of the "Documents" section of the DPDF Workspace (<https://workspace.ssrc.org/dpdf/>), plus the list by Edward Dimendberg entitled "Thirty Ways to Flourish Graduate School," which is posted in the "Pointed Advice" folder.

Workshop Assignments

You have three assignments prior to our fall workshop:

1. Small-group-mate preferences. Our sessions will once again split their time between full-group discussions and small-group discussions with four fellows each. This time around, we will try to accommodate your preferences for the fellows in your small groups. On September 5, 2008, please e-mail Charles Kurzman <kurzman@unc.edu> with your preferences, ranked from most-preferred to least-preferred. I will keep this information private and try to maximize the assignment of top preferences. If your list is shorter than 11 names, I will assume that you have no preference among the remaining fellows. The small-group lists will be distributed by e-mail and posted on our DPDF Workspace on September 8, 2008.
2. Write a draft of your dissertation proposal. This draft *must* contain at least partial attempts at the following elements, each with its own section heading. If you want to get creative with the structure of your proposal, do so in later drafts. There is no minimum or maximum page length – the length of the document will depend on how far along you are with your project and what the expectations are for dissertation proposals in your department. This assignment is to be uploaded to your student folder in the Muslim Modernities section of the DPDF Workspace on September 8, 2008, so that the rest of us will have time to read them on September 9 and 10.
 1. Title. Be snappy and descriptive.
 2. Abstract (maximum 500 words). Put your best effort into this section. It should summarize the importance of your project (relative to the literatures you plan to address), the contribution that you plan to make, the methods that you propose to use, and the sorts of evidence that you expect to find. In short, this section is your primary chance to define your project to your dissertation committee and funding reviewers. We will “workshop” these paragraphs three times at our meeting in Milwaukee: once with the research directors, once with your small group, and once with the group as a whole (not necessarily in that order).
 3. Literature review. Tell us what literatures you plan to address, and how these literatures have generated puzzles or problems that your project plans to engage. Keep in mind that some or all of your anonymous reviewers for fellowships or publications are likely to be people you mention in this literature review, so pay attention to your tone: be polite, enthusiastic, and whatever the opposite of dismissive is.
 4. Methods. How exactly do you plan to carry out the study? Include as much detail as possible to convince us that the project is do-able, drawing on your preliminary research experiences, including this summer’s fellowship period.
 5. Preliminary findings. You already know a lot about your research topic. Tell us what you have found in your “preliminary research” (that is, your entire life up to this point) and what sort of further evidence these hypotheses or speculations lead you to expect during your dissertation research.
 6. Time-table. Time-tables for dissertation research and writing (as for any research and writing) are almost always fictional, but they will be judged for their plausibility.
 7. Budget. Another necessary fiction. Aim for something in the range of \$20,000, which is the current SSRC dissertation fellowship amount.
 8. Bibliography. Use the bibliographic norms of your home discipline. Whatever these norms may be, it always looks nice to have a separate section at the start of the

- bibliography listing the archives or other primary resources that you have consulted, or the interviews that you have conducted (with dates and a brief identification -- vague enough to protect confidentiality, if necessary). This lends credibility to your proposal, gives you credit for the work that you have done, and serves as an easy reference guide for readers who may get lost in detailed footnotes.
9. Chapter outline. List your tentative dissertation chapter titles, with a paragraph describing each one.

 3. On September 9 and 10, 2008, read everybody's abstracts and your small-group-mates' complete draft proposals. If you wish to provide polite and constructive written feedback, it will no doubt be appreciated, but all that is required are notes for your own use during discussion.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL, Wednesday, September 10th: Registration packets will be distributed at check in.

Thursday, September 11th

Session 1: Panel – The Dissertation Proposal: Strategies and Funding Sources
(Thursday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

- Welcome and Introductions
- Dissertation Funder Presentations

Sessions 2-7: Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday

Each of these sessions will be divided into:

1. Thematic discussion with the whole group (roughly 45 minutes)
2. Full-group discussion of a single proposal (30 minutes each for two students)
3. Break (15 minutes)
4. Small-group discussions (60 minutes), simultaneous with research directors' discussion with a single student (30 minutes each for two students).

The order of each student's turn will be selected randomly at the start of our first meeting. As in the spring workshop, students will not present their own work – sessions will start right in with questions, comments, and suggestions by other students.

Session 2:
(Thursday, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

Thematic discussion: Summer surprises. In a humorously self-deprecating sentence or two, tell us what you found this summer that undermined your expectations from the spring.
Full-group discussion of proposals 1 and 2.
Small-group discussions of proposals 3, 4, and 5.

Faculty-director discussion with proposals 1 and 2.

Session 3:

(Friday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

Thematic discussion: Literature reviews. How will you pick which literatures to engage with, and which scholars to take on? Hint #1: Take on “bridge” issues that contrast different literatures and disciplines. Hint #2: It looks tacky to pick on academic subalterns.

Full-group discussion of proposals 3 and 4.

Small-group discussions of proposals 6, 7, and 8.

Faculty-director discussion with proposals 3 and 4.

Session 4:

(Friday, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

Thematic discussion: Methods/Timetables/Budgets. How much detail is necessary to generate a plausible account of your future research?

Full-group discussion of proposals 5 and 6.

Small-group discussions of proposals 9, 10, and 11.

Faculty-director discussion with proposals 5 and 6.

Session 5:

(Saturday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

Thematic discussion: Fieldwork techniques. We will briefly discuss two common fieldwork techniques: archival research and interview research.

Full-group discussion of proposals 7 and 8.

Small-group discussions of proposals 12, 1, and 2.

Faculty-director discussion with proposals 7 and 8.

Session 6:

(Saturday, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

Thematic discussion: Chapters. Please think about your dissertation as a book, ideally a book that you would be interested to read. How should it be organized?

Full-group discussion of proposals 9 and 10.

Small-group discussions of chapters.

Faculty-director discussion with proposals 9 and 10.

Session 7:

(Sunday, 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM)

Thematic discussion: Scheduling the day. How do you make time for your dissertation when you have so much e-mail to keep up with?

Full-group discussion of proposals 11 and 12.

Small-group discussions of scheduling.

Faculty-director discussion with proposals 11 and 12.

Final half-hour of full-group conversation on ways that we can stay in touch.