

Workshop Report:

Producing Islam(s) in Canada

September 14-15, 2017

Centre for the Study of Islam at Carleton University

Purpose and context:

- Jennifer Selby, Melanie Adrian and Amélie Barras designed the workshop to focus on a shared conversation of case studies (and not traditional presented papers) to de-emphasize current methodological, theoretical, and disciplinary divisions in the study of Islam and Muslims in Canada, divisions such as the insider/outsider question (and ways in which these positions impact work and responses to it), racialization, potential contributions to securitization discourses, the over-solicitation of some communities. The format also allowed for more exploratory and shared conversation.

- These case studies were:
 - *Methodological and subject foci based on a pre-compiled bibliography on Islam(s) in Canada:* We built upon an already created 25-page chronologically organized document by discussing general trends in relation to our identified challenge areas.
 - *2015 debates on the niqab in Canadian citizenship ceremonies:* Zunera Ishaq won a decision in October 2015 to wear her niqab in a citizenship ceremony. Her request became a significant policy issue during the 2015 federal election. The former PM's popularity rose briefly following his characterization of the garment as "anti-woman." The 2012 N.S. case and Bills 94 and 60 in QC also shaped this debate.
 - *2014-2017 depictions of Muslim men as related to Canadian foreign fighters with Daesh:* The war in Syria has been a game changer on several fronts, including the number of Canadians who have traveled to fight and the way social media and other media outlets have publicized their actions. Twenty-one men are estimated to have died in the conflict; approximately 180 are still there, and 60 have returned to Canada. Despite these low numbers, the spectre of terrorism has had significant pejorative affects for racialized, visibly Muslim men. We considered gendered discourses related to young Canadian Muslim men.
 - *2007-2017 narratives about requests for accommodation at Quebecois sugar shacks (cabane à sucre, or shacks supporting the tapping of maple trees for syrup):* In Quebec, sugar shack visits are a ubiquitous spring outing. Owners of these maple syrup-focused businesses are occasionally asked to adapt their "French-Canadian" menu items to accommodate dietary requirements, including for some Muslims who avoid pork. Academic, policy, and media narratives have focused on controversial accommodation requests at sugar shacks (e.g. Bouchard and Taylor, 2008; Barras, 2016), but have overlooked how most of these transactions between owners and clients have occurred without fuss. We considered different imaginative strategies crafted around food and prayer space requests.

- Each case study was prepared and circulated one month prior to our meeting; with assistance from one of our graduate students, we also included an overview of the research and legal and policy-related propositions, as well as key questions related to both the case and some guiding challenge questions. Upon receiving the case study packages, attendees reflected upon the approach(es) they would take considering their work and positionalities. Participants thus brought their own processes and scholarship to bear, as well as the theoretical inquiries.
- At the workshop, we moderated 2-hour, small-group discussions for each case study (cases 1-3 on Day1, and case 4 on Day 2), and facilitated a short wrap-up discussion led by a pre-identified workshop participant at the end of each case session.
- A roundtable meeting on day two with government policy makers, journalists, and community members (one of our primary rationales for holding the workshop in Ottawa), which allowed us to showcase the conversations that took place at the workshop and receive some feedback.

Attendance:

Melanie Adrian, Carleton University
Sadaf Ahmed, University of Toronto
Zaheeda Alibhai, University of Ottawa
Amarnath Amarasingam, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Religion and Terrorism
Schirin Amir-Moazami, Free University, Berlin
Natasha Bakht, University of Ottawa
Amélie Barras, York University
Lori G. Beaman, University of Ottawa
Rachel Brown, University of Evansville
Katherine Bullock, University of Toronto & the Tessellate Institute
Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa
Parin Dossa, Simon Fraser University
Anver Emon, University of Toronto
Paul Eid, Université du Québec à Montréal
Cory Funk, Memorial University of Newfoundland
Roshan Arah Jahangeer, York University
Karim H. Karim, Carleton University
Abdie Kazemipur, University of Calgary
Jennifer A. Selby, Memorial University of Newfoundland
Meena Sharify-Funk, Wilfrid Laurier University
Hicham Tiflati, Université du Québec à Montréal
Jasmin Zine, Wilfrid Laurier University

Carleton Journalism and Communication Assistants

Salma Mahgoub
Jordan Omstead
Lauren Sproule

Amount awarded: \$3000

Deliverables:

- Networking and research relationships established, particularly for junior scholars.
- All attending participants recorded short bios with our three hired Carleton School of Journalism and Communication students. These were then edited and shared on our website: <http://www.mun.ca/relstudies/more/producingislams/participants.php>
- Drawing on contributions from many of our workshop participants, we compiled a bibliography of academic work on Islam and Muslims in Canada, which continues to be updated: <http://www.mun.ca/relstudies/more/producingislams/biblio.php>
- We mentored and supervised three hired Carleton School of Journalism and Communication students as they wrote and produced podcasts based on three of our case studies for the workshop. They have all been “launched” on this website: <http://www.mun.ca/relstudies/more/producingislams/podcasts.php>
- We have received 20 abstracts for chapters to make up an edited volume tentatively titled, *Producing Islam(s) in Canada: On Knowledge Production, Positionality and Politics*, to be edited by the three of us. We also intend to include 3 interviews with other scholars on knowledge production on Islam in Canada. The University of Toronto Press has expressed preliminary interest in reviewing the volume. We intend to submit a book proposal in February 2018.