Please join the Islamic Studies Program on **Wednesday, September 12th at 5:30 pm** in the IMU’s **State Room West** for the Program’s annual fall reception. Light refreshments will be served. Professor Gordon D. Newby, Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Emory University, will be speaking.

### Near Eastern Apocalypticism and the Rise of Islam

**Professor Gordon D. Newby**

Islam began in an age in which many thought that the end of the world was near. From well before the birth of Muhammad in 570 C.E. through the beginnings of Islam in 610 C.E. to 628 C.E., the Roman (Byzantine) and Persian (Sassanian) empires waged inconclusive but devastating wars throughout the Eastern Mediterranean world. All of Arabia was caught up in the conflict as Arabs were camel cavalry for both sides and were subjects of imperial ideologies and religious proselytization. The international trade that had brought wealth to the tribes and towns along Arabia’s trade routes was in shambles, and many expected that those terrible events presaged the end of the world. It is little wonder that apocalyptic writing was one of the most popular genres of this age. In this talk, Prof. Newby will survey apocalyptic ideas in the East Mediterranean from Bar Kochba and the Jewish-Roman wars to Yûsuf Dhû-Nuwâs, the last Jewish king in Arabia before the rise of Islam. The bookend figures, Bar Kochba and Yûsuf Dhû-Nuwâs, were failed messianic figures who came to be understood as pre-figuring the “real” messianic figure, who would usher in the end-time. This failure of messianism heightens and intensifies the anticipation of a messiah-figure, which helps shape the reception of the Islamic message. He will then explore how the Qur’an recasts late antique apocalyptic arguments as part of Islam’s dual message of apocalyptic urgency and anxiety-reducing certainty.