

**Proposal to Change Program Title of the
Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Program
to the
Islamic Studies Program**

Islamic Studies has a long history at Indiana University (IU). Since the 1960s, departments such as History, Political Science, Sociology, Religious Studies, and Near Eastern Languages Cultures (NELC), as well as schools such as Education, Law, Journalism, and SPEA have focused on aspects of the Muslim world and have produced a large number of important scholars working on the area. Since 1980, the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (MEIS) program has worked as a public outreach branch of the College's general effort to create appreciation and understanding for the many diverse cultural traditions that comprise the Muslim world.

In 2007, the College of Arts and Sciences (College) at Indiana University established MEIS as an independent unit with the goal of assembling the elements necessary for IU to successfully apply for Title VI funding from the US Department of Education and thus become a National Resource Center (NRC) for the study of the Middle East and Muslim world.

Following a year-long evaluation of IU's present and potential capabilities to successfully apply for Title VI funding, and in consultation with the MEIS Executive Advising Committee (EAC) and Affiliated Faculty, it is the Director's view, given the present and potential resources available at IU Bloomington, that the focus of the initiative shift to focus more exclusively on developing Islamic Studies. At the 10/28/08 meeting of the EAC, the Director offered the below proposal to emphasize the new focus. This proposal was unanimously approved at that Meeting. (The approved draft was amended on 11/07/08 to conform to changes recommended by the EAC).

Proposal:

It is proposed that the program modify its title to the Islamic Studies Program to facilitate a change of focus that emphasizes the diverse resources in the study of Islam and the Muslim world in the College of Arts and Sciences and at IUB in general. All aspects of the previous MEIS program will remain in effect, including its budget requests and management structure. Thus, this proposal does not constitute a new program but simply a change in title that indicates a wider and more inclusive focus.

The mission of the Islamic Studies Program is to promote a better understanding of the Muslim world as a historical, cultural, literary, political, religious, and economic entity and to highlight the many and diverse Muslim and non-Muslim traditions and societies that have developed within it over the last 1300 years; to bring scholars in the Western Academy together with scholars from all areas of the Muslim world; and to promote a free and open exchange of views. The central purpose of the Islamic Studies Program is

thus to foster a scholarly atmosphere of open discourse on Islam and the Muslim world that is not concerned with ideological, confessional, or disciplinary boundaries.

It is also the mission of the Islamic Studies Program to develop a broad range of curricular programs on the IUB campus that brings the expertise of its scholars to a wider community of students at both the undergraduate and graduate level, and to create opportunities through outreach for the public to interact with scholars and peoples from the Muslim world in wide-ranging and open forums.

Rationale

Currently, IUB has over 60 scholars in six schools and over 15 departments that have research and teaching interests in some aspect of the Muslim world. Units such as NELC, Central Eurasian Studies (CEUS), African and African American Studies (AAAS), East Asian Studies (EAS), and American Studies each cover the geographic breadth of the Muslim world. Scholars in the College who work in disciplinary units do so in various levels of cooperation with these area studies departments, yet there has been little coordination across departments in the College or between the College and other schools on the IUB campus. The goal of the Islamic Studies Program is to serve as a bridge that will allow collaboration and cooperation among IU's community of scholars and to share resources for the promotion of research on and understanding of the Muslim world. Such a program would be one of the largest and most diverse Islamic Studies initiatives in the world and would mark the College and IUB as a leader in the field.

Mapping the Boundaries of Islamic Studies

“Islamic Studies” is defined broadly to include all aspects of material and cultural production within the Muslim world (what Marshall Hodgson referred to as “Islamicate Society”). It includes the study of the diverse religious, literary, historical, political, cultural, and economic artifacts produced by Muslims and non-Muslims in various places at various times. The aim of the Islamic Studies Program is to promote a holistic approach to, and to facilitate a common conversation about, the Muslim world and the different traditions that have and continue to develop within it.

Islamic Studies Program Initiatives and Goals

Because IU already possesses extensive resources for the study of the Muslim world, the primary goal of the Islamic Studies Program is to coordinate these resources and to create opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration in the areas of research, curricular development, and outreach. We also hope to draw on the talents of colleagues at other campuses in the IU system as well as through collaboration with members of the CIC.

Research

Publishing: As stated above, IUB already possesses enormous strengths in the study of the Muslim world, especially in its various regional manifestations. Creating

opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary research that brings scholars looking at different areas of the Muslim world together is the primary aim of the program. The Islamic Studies Program plans to reintroduce the *International Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies (IIAIS)* that will attract scholars from around the world and will promote a diversity of views on the Muslim tradition. The *IIAIS* was established at IU in the 1980s and ceased publication in 2001. In conjunction with the journal, the Islamic Studies Program will also develop a critical translation series that will utilize the talents of the top scholars of Islamicate societies and will produce accurate and well designed translations of important classical and modern Islamic texts.

Conferences, Colloquia, and Lectures: the Islamic Studies Program will also hold a yearly conference that focuses on the study of Islamic Studies at IUB that will invite scholars from across campus (professors, visiting scholars, and graduate students) to share their research and to get valuable feedback from multiple disciplinary perspectives. It is also hoped that the Islamic Studies Program can develop research funding sources that will promote travel for national and international conferences and research in the Muslim world. Beginning in April, 2009 the Islamic Studies Program will also begin holding a Brown Bag Lecture Series that will provide graduate students with opportunities to share their research with other students and faculty. This will be an important opportunity for students to gain valuable feedback on their projects and for faculty to have greater exposure to the range of research activities that students (the next generation of the field) are pursuing. MEIS had already begun a Program Lecture Series that has brought top scholars in their respective areas of Islamic Studies to campus. This program will continue under the Islamic Studies Program with the purpose of presenting cutting edge research to students, faculty, and members of the Bloomington community.

Research and Global Reach: In addition to the need for technological training, academic institutions in the Muslim world continue to express an interest in faculty exchanges and research opportunities in the social sciences and humanities. These areas of academic research are in an early stage of development and as the peoples of the Muslim world work to develop the infrastructures and other accoutrements of well developed economic systems within a globalizing environment they also have the desire to utilize academic approaches to a range of issues that Western academic institutions take for granted. Academic institutions in the Muslim world realize that technology brings opportunities and challenges that require new ways of thinking and for adapting traditions of practice and thought so that they can enjoy all of the fruits of economic and technological development. The Islamic Studies Program realizes the need within the Muslim world for academic training and research in the social sciences and humanities and proposes to offer opportunities for scholars, researchers, and students to learn and apply these approaches to the issues, problems, and possibilities that Muslims view as important. This will include research in:

The Grammar, Lexicography, Morphology, Dialectology, and Syntax of Classical Islamic Languages

Translation Theories and Methods

Language Pedagogy and Teacher Training

Islamic Banking and Economic Theory
Islamic and Secular Legal Systems
The Anthropology of Muslim Societies
Comparative Approaches to Muslim Cultures and Traditions
Historiography of Muslim Societies and Traditions
Literary Theories as Applied to Arabic/Islamic Literature
Social and Economic Theories as Applied to Muslim Societies and Traditions
Secularization and Islamic Thought
Democratization and Political Thought within the Muslim World
Civil Society Formation and the Role of Education
Globalization and its Impact on Muslim Societies
Intellectual and Religious Trends in Islamic History

Language and Pedagogical Studies: Arabic has long been the central intellectual language of the Muslim world, and in many areas of Muslim thought this continues to be the case. Other languages, especially Persian, Turkish, Indonesian, Urdu, and the many languages of Africa and Central Asia are also important for a broad-based and comparative examination of the Muslim world. The Islamic Studies Program does not propose to undertake the teaching of any Islamic language to students at IUB, but to further research opportunities for those interested in grammar, lexicography, syntax, dialectology, and morphology of various Islamic languages. Scholars and students only have access to the Muslim world, especially its intellectual, literary, and historical products if they have a sophisticated and well developed understanding of Arabic in conjunction with other local and regional languages. The advance study of Arabic *and* other local and regional languages is thus essential to any attempt to study the broader Muslim tradition. The Islamic Studies Program will seek to promote the study of Arabic in conjunction with other Islamic languages through its ALLTA initiative (see below), as well as through holding public fora on research utilizing multiple language resources and by raising funds for language training.

Outreach

MEIS currently runs a number of outreach activities and these will be continued through the Islamic Studies Program.

Language Pedagogy Training: Language learning is the most important step in learning about and actively encountering the diverse cultures, traditions, and peoples of the Muslim world. Most languages spoken by Muslims are considered ‘less commonly taught’ and there is therefore an important need to provide training not only in these languages but also in *how* to teach these languages. Beginning in September 2008, MEIS in conjunction with the Department of Second language Studies (SLS) offered the first pedagogy workshop for teachers of the languages of the Muslim world.

The Islamic Studies Program will continue this important effort and will apply for federal funding to expand it to include web-based tutorials that teachers of the languages of the Muslim world in K-12 and post-secondary institutions can access. The first section of this

web-based pedagogy tutorial is currently in production and will deal with resolving problems of cultural and religious presuppositions between native and non-native students and teachers of Islamic languages. It will also focus on how to use different styles of cultural communication to teach students about the languages and the societies in which they are used.

Language Teaching: The most important outreach activity developed under MEIS is the Arabic Language Learning and Translation Annex (ALLTA) that focuses on developing on-line Arabic tutorials that will allow those interested in learning Arabic access to easy to use materials. There are three levels to ALLTA: Introductory Arabic Tutorials (Script, Writing, and Phonology), Advanced Arabic Tutorials (Grammar, Lexicography, Morphology, Dialectology, and Syntax with a particular focus on classical Arabic), and Arabic Translation Tutorials (for those with at least four years of Modern Standard Arabic that will provide them with guides to effective and accurate translations of modern and classical texts).

ALLTA is designed to provide materials to four potential groups of language students: 1) casual language learners who want to acquire introductory skills in Arabic due to interests in the Middle East of the Islamic Tradition; 2) current Arabic students at IU and other institutions who need additional tools and resources to support in-class language learning efforts; 3) scholars of Islam and the Muslim world who need specialized but rarely available resources and training in classical Arabic; and 4) scholars and professionals who need guidance in producing effective and accurate translations of modern Arabic texts.

We are currently completing the Introductory Arabic Tutorials, the first edition of which was posted in December of 2008. These tutorials are currently under revision and new materials are being added.

With the establishment of the Islamic Studies Program it is hoped that we can expand ALLTA into a new and broader effort that would include other Muslim languages. The new Islamic Languages Learning and Translation Annex (ILLTA) would include those languages that faculty affiliated to the program are willing and able to assist in developing. ALLTA will be folded into this wider effort and will serve as the template for other language and cultural tutorials.

Cultural Tutorials: As an outgrowth of the ALLTA translation effort, the Islamic Studies Program is developing on-line cultural tutorials that will focus on the diversity of Islamic thought and of Muslim cultures and societies. We are currently writing the first in a series of introductory tutorials to Islamic thought and practice that should be available in the spring of 2009. We will seek funding to expand the project so that we can hire graduate students to write short entries on a range of topics.

Cultural Training Workshops: In the post 911 world, many civic, business, and governmental groups need scholars who focus on Islam and the Muslim world to share their expertise. MEIS has already collaborated with the Center for Global Change on a

Human Resources workshop that focused on issues related to Muslims in the American workforce. The Islamic Studies Program will continue this endeavor and hopes to expand its efforts to draw funding from civic, corporate, and governmental organizations. The Islamic Studies Program plans to use faculty and graduate students to train various groups on general themes in Islamic history and thought as well as on the specific regions, histories, cultures, politics, languages, and economies of the Muslim world.

Public Fora: the Islamic Studies Program will also continue to host a range of public fora that will bring the knowledge of IU scholars to the service of the wider public. We will continue to participate in exchange programs and in cultural festivals that promote a better appreciation for the diversity of the Muslim world.

Governance

At the October 28 meeting of the EAC, bylaws for the governance of the Islamic Studies Program were proposed and will be reviewed for reconsideration at the February 2009 meeting of the committee. It is the goal of the governing structure to involve members from each overlapping Area Studies unit as well as to have a representative from the International Studies Program on the EAC. Portfolios for different regions and/or linguistic families will be created so that all areas of research on the Muslim world are represented on the committee.

Because the alumni of Indiana University are important to any successful effort such as this, the governance of the Islamic Studies Program will also involve an advisory committee composed of IU alumni who have specific interests in the development of Islamic Studies. These members will be appointed to serve on the advisory committee for specific terms and will be invited to campus each fall to review the program, meet faculty and students, and to provide feedback on the initiatives and activities the Islamic Studies Program plans to pursue in the following year.