

JOHN M. WILLIS

CURRICULUM VITAE

- Education
 - Research and Publications
 - Academic Employment
 - Courses Taught
 - Grants and Fellowships
 - Conference Presentations
 - Service Activities
 - Languages
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EDUCATION

New York University
Ph.D. History/Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2007

Georgetown University
M.A. Arab Studies, 1997

University of Louisville
B.A. History, 1994

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Current Book Projects

Cosmopolitanism in Translation: Muhammad Iqbal in the Arab World

Meccan Variations: Islam and Politics in Other Spaces

Books

Unmaking North and South: Cartographies of the Yemeni Past, 1857-1934 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012/London: Hurst, 2012; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Reviewed in *American Historical Review*, *Anthropology Review Database*, *Arabian Humanities*, *Asian Affairs*, *Journal of Arabian Studies*, *Journal of the British-Yemeni Society*, *Nations and Nationalism*, and *Review of Middle East Studies*.

Articles and Book Chapters

“Burying Mohamed Ali Jauhar: The Life and Death of the Meccan Republic,” *Arabian Humanities*, Vol. 17 (2023) (forthcoming)

“The Salafi Imamate: Moral Reform and Anti-Imperialism in the Mutawakkilite Kingdom,” *Journal of Arabian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2018), 47-65.

“Governing the Living and the Dead: Mecca and the Emergence of the Saudi Biopolitical State,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 122, No. 2 (April 2017), 1-25.

“Azad’s Mecca: On the Limits of Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanism,” Roundtable on “The Indian Ocean and ‘Other’ Middle Easts,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 34 No. 3 (Winter 2014).

“Debating the Caliphate: Islam and Nation in the Work of Rashid Rida and Abul Kalam Azad,” *International History Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December 2010), 711-732.

“Making Yemen Indian: Rewriting the Boundaries of Imperial Arabia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (February 2009), 23-38.

“Leaving Only Question-Marks: Geographies of Rule in Modern Yemen,” in *Counter-Narratives: History, Contemporary Society, and Politics in Saudi Arabia and Yemen* eds. Robert Vitalis and Madawi al-Rasheed (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 119-150.

“Colonial Policing in Aden, 1937-1967,” *Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1997), 57-91. Reprinted in *Globalising British Policing*, ed. Georgina Sinclair (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

Book Reviews and Review Essays

Review: Ulrike Freitag, *A History of Jeddah: The Gate to Mecca in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (forthcoming).

Review Essay: “Sovereign Power and ‘Other Lives,’” a review of Wilson Chacko Jacob, *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020) in *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2022), 141-148.

Review: Daniel Foliard, *Dislocating the Orient: British Maps and the Making of the Middle East, 1854-1921* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017) in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (March 2020).

Review: Asher Orkaby, *Beyond the Arab Cold War: The International History of the Yemen Civil War, 1962-68* (OUP 2017) in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (November 2019).

Review: Helen Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis* (London: Saqi Books, 2017) in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Autumn 2018).

Review: Isa Blumi, *Chaos in Yemen: Societal Collapse and the New Authoritarianism* (New York: Routledge, 2011) in *Arabian Humanities* (online) No. 4 (Autumn 2014).

Review: Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013) in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (November 2013).

Review: Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849–1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (September 2013).

Review: “Learning the Language of Command: A Review of M. A. Ghanem *Yemen Aden Arabic* (Sanaa: Markaz al-‘Ubadī li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1999)” in *Yemen Update*, No. 45 (2003).

Review: Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), in *Arab Studies Journal* (Winter 2002/Spring 2003).

Commentary, Analysis, and Encyclopedia Entries

“Operation Decisive Storm and the Expanding Counter-Revolution,” *Middle East Report* blog, March 30, 2015. Republished in Sheila Carapico, ed. *Arabia Incognita: Dispatches from Yemen and the Gulf* (Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2016), 272-275.

“Life and Death in the Graves of Mecca and Medina,” *Middle East Report* blog, Oct. 31, 2014.

“Writing the History of the Arabian Peninsula or How to Narrate the Past of a (Non)Place,” *Jadaliyya* Roundtable on Theorizing the Arabian Peninsula, April 22, 2013: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11324/theorizing-the-arabian-peninsula-roundtable_writin

“Yemen” in *The Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (New York: MTM/Routledge, 2008).

“Yemen: Saleh move opens political space,” *Oxford Analytica Daily Briefs*, Sep. 19, 2005.

“Yemen: War on terror creates tensions,” *Oxford Analytica Daily Briefs*, Oct. 6, 2004.

“Yemen: Government committed to economic reforms,” *Oxford Analytica Daily Briefs*, April 12, 2004.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

University of Colorado, History Department

Associate Professor with tenure, 2014 - present

Assistant Professor, 2007- 2014

Instructor, 2005-2007

New York University, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Adjunct Assistant Professor, 2004-2005

New York University, Morse Academic Plan

Preceptor, 2000-2001

New York University, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Teaching Assistant, Fall 1998

Georgetown University, History Department

Teaching Assistant, Fall 1995

COURSES TAUGHT

Undergraduate

Hist. 1308: Introduction to Middle Eastern History

Hist. 1800: The Global History of Anti-colonial Thought

Hist. 3110: Honors Seminar

Hist. 3328: Seminar in Middle Eastern History

Hist. 4328: The Modern Middle East, 1600-present

Hist. 4329: Islam in the Modern World: Revivalism, Modernism, and Fundamentalism, 1800-2001

Hist. 4359: The Global History of Modern Arabia

Hist. 4368: History and Society of Modern Arabia, 1800-2001

Graduate

Hist. 5000: Historical Methods

Hist. 5328: The Modern Middle East, 1600-present

Hist. 6019: Readings in World History (The Middle East in the Long 19th Century)

Hist. 6800: Readings in Global History (The Global History of Anticolonial Thought)

Hist. 7800: Seminar in Global History

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

CU Boulder, College of Arts and Sciences

College Scholar Award, Spring 2023

CU Boulder, College of Arts and Sciences
Dean's Fund for Excellence award, 2017

CU Boulder
Kayden Research Award, 2017

CU Boulder, Center for Humanities and the Arts
Research Fellowship, 2015-2016

National Humanities Center
Residential Fellowship, 2014-2015

Gerda Henkel Stiftung
Program in Islam, the Modern Nation State, and Transnational Movements
Research grant, 2011

CU Boulder,
Dean's Fund for Excellence grant, 2011

CU Boulder, GCAH
Research/Creative work grant, 2010

CU Boulder, College of Arts and Sciences
Eugene M. Kayden Research Grant, 2008

CU Boulder Vice Chancellor for Research
Innovative Seed Grant
Co-investigator for "Transnational Discourses of the Global Islamic Community," 2007

CU Boulder, Center for Asian Studies
Course Development Grant, 2006

CU Boulder, Center for Asian Studies
Speaker/Event grant, 2006

NYU, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Dean's Dissertation Fellowship, 2004

FLAS Scholarship, 2004

NYU, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Travel Grant, 2003

American Institute of Yemeni Studies
Dissertation Fellowships, 2002

NYU, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
Travel Grant, 2002

Fulbright, IIE Fellowship
Yemen, 2001

American Institute of Yemeni Studies
Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, 1999

Social Science Research Council
Program on the Near and Middle East Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, 1999

NYU, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Travel Grant, 1998

NYU, Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
Bailey Winder Travel Grant, 1998

NYU, Henry J. MacCracken Fellowship
1997-1999, 2000-2001, 2003-2004

Center for Arabic Study Abroad Fellowship
1996

Georgetown University, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies
A.J. Howar Memorial Scholarship in Arab Studies, 1995

Georgetown University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Scholarship, 1994

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Plenary Discussion, “The Past, Present, and Future of Indian Ocean Studies,” Harvard Graduate Conference on International and Global History, April 30, 2022 (invited).

Roundtable on *For God or Empire*, Canadian Historical Association annual conference (virtual), Aug. 4, 2021.

Roundtable on *Archive Wars*, MESA annual conference (virtual), Oct. 8, 2020.

“All is a Constant Mobility: Muhammad Iqbal’s Geography of the Middle East,” MESA annual conference, New Orleans, Nov. 16, 2019.

“Cosmopolitanism in Translation: Zubayri in Pakistan,” MESA annual conference, San Antonio, Nov. 17, 2018

“Translating Transcultural Asia: Tagore and Iqbal in Arabic,” CAS Annual Symposium on Transcultural Asia, March 9, 2016.

“Exile and the Ethics of Translation: Muhammad al-Zubayri and the Promise of Pakistan,” New Directions in Arabian Peninsula Studies, Yale, April 29-30, 2016.

“Burying Muhammad Ali Jauhar: The Life and Death of the Meccan Republic,” MESA annual conference, Denver, Nov. 22, 2015.

“Governing the Living and the Dead: Mecca and the Biopolitical Origins of the Saudi State,” Duke Anthropology Dept. workshop, “The Many Histories of the Present,” April 17-19, 2015.

“The Government of Life and Death: Mecca and the Origins of the Saudi State,” keynote address, NCSU Graduate Student History Conference, March 28, 2015.

“After the Caliphate: Mecca and the Geography of Crisis and Hope,” UNC-Chapel Hill, Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations, Feb. 9, 2015 (invited talk).

“Studying the Persian Gulf: Beyond State and Security,” (roundtable discussion), MESA annual conference, Washington D.C.. Nov. 23, 2014.

“Life in Mecca’s Graves: South Asian Pilgrims and the Saudi Biopolitical State,” Rutgers, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Feb. 24, 2014 (invited lecture).

“Yemen in the (Anti) Imperial Indian Ocean: Toward a Spatial History of Modern Arabia,” UCLA, Center for Near Eastern Studies, Oct. 22, 2013 (invited lecture).

“Hearing Prayers in the Grave: The Lives of the Dead and the Sa’udi Biopolitical State,” MESA annual conference, New Orleans, Oct. 13, 2013.

“Mending Scattered Hearts: The Companions’ Graves and the Interwar Movement for Islamic Unity,” MESA annual conference, Denver, Nov. 18, 2012.

“Contested Universalisms: Indian Pilgrims and the Inter-War Hajj,” MESA annual conference, Washington, D.C., Dec. 2011.

“The Salafi Imamate: Imam Yahya and the Project for Islamic Unity,” A Century After Da‘an: A Workshop on Yemeni History and Society, Princeton University, Oct. 15, 2011.

“Between Empire and Anti-Empire: Indian Muslims and the Hajj in the Interwar Period,” Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, Oct. 15, 2010.

“Debating the Caliphate: Nationalist and Universalist Discourses in the Indian Ocean,” Connecting Histories across the Indian Ocean: Religion, Politics and Popular Culture, Goa, Nov. 19-21, 2009.

“Making Yemen Indian: Rewriting the Boundaries of Imperial Arabia,” CAS luncheon series, Feb. 18, 2009.

“Nationalism, Race, and the Caliphate Idea in India and the Middle East,” Transnational Discourses of Islamic Community, University of Colorado, Oct. 24, 2008.

“Making Yemen Indian: Rewriting the Boundaries of Imperial Arabia,” MESA annual conference, Montreal, Nov. 2007.

“The Politics of Ta‘asmala: The Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen and its Ottoman Legacy,” The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Era (1600 c.-1900 c.), University of Minnesota, Oct. 7-8, 2005 (invited lecture).

“The Making and Unmaking of the Yemeni Borderlands, 1918-1934,” AHA annual conference, Washington, D.C., Jan. 2004.

“Tribe and the Specter of Indeterminacy, Aden 1850-1915,” Centre Française d’Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales, Sanaa, Yemen, Feb. 2003. Also presented at the Muntada al-Nilayn al-Thaqafiyya, Sanaa, Yemen, Feb. 2003 and at the MESA annual conference, Washington, D.C. 2002.

“Recasting Tribe in South Yemen: Colonialism and the Moral Geography of the Imamate,” CASPIC Workshop, University of Chicago, May 4-6, 2001 and Second Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Florence, 2001.

“The Ambivalence of Nostalgia: The Orient and the Empire in Late Colonial Aden,” MESA annual conference, Chicago, 1998.

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

CU History Department

Director of Graduate Studies, History Dept, 2020-2022
Leader, History Teaching and Learning Project Working Group, 2019-2020
Working group, History Teaching and Learning Project, 2018-2019
Faculty advisor, History Club, Phi Alpha Theta, and *Colorado Historian*, 2018-2020
Executive Committee, 2017-18
Search committee for historian of Israel/Palestine, 2017-18
Chair, Executive Committee, 2016-2017
Faculty Advisor, Phi Alpha Theta, 2016-2017
Director of History Honors, 2012-2014
Search committee for historian of modern Judaism, 2012-2013
Executive Committee, 2010-2012
Library Committee, 2009-2010
Search committee for historian of imperial China, 2008-2009
Search committee for historian of Africa, 2007-2008
Graduate Studies Committee, 2005-2007

CU Campus

NEH Summer Stipend, reviewer
Honors Council, 2012-14
First Annual Symposium of the Center for Asian Studies: Asia on Edge, discussant for Juan Cole keynote address, March 3, 2012
Dept. of Asian Languages and Civilizations, Arabic teaching assessment (2012)
Center for Asian Studies, Student Affairs Committee, 2011-2013
Center for Asian Studies, Executive Board member/Event Committee, 2009-2010
Boulder Faculty Assembly, Library Committee, 2006-2009
Department of Asian Languages and Literature, search committees for Persian and Indonesian language instructors, 2006-2007

Discipline

Association for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, Dissertation Award Committee, 2021
Grant reviewer: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, 2021
Advisory Board member, *Middle East Studies Pedagogy Initiative*
Grant reviewer: Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds
“New Texts Out Now: *Unmaking North and South Cartographies of the Yemeni Past, 1857-1934*,” Interview with *Jadaliyya*, Jan. 30, 2013: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/9854/new-texts-out-now_john-m.-willis-unmaking-north-an
Manuscript reviewer for *The Arab Studies Journal*, *Arabian Humanities*, *British Journal of Middle East Studies*, Columbia University Press, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *The Historical Journal*, Hurst Publishers, *Islamic Africa*, *Middle East Report*, University of California Press

Community

“Understanding the Crisis in Yemen,” Invited talk, University of Denver, Feb. 25, 2019
“Crisis in Yemen,” Panel discussion, University of Denver, Oct. 30, 2018
Radio interview, “Conflict Persists in Yemen Following Saudi Ceasefire Announcement,” *Forum with Michael Krasny*, KQED San Francisco, April 23, 2015.
Panel Discussion, Boulder Public Library, “Current events in Egypt and Yemen: What do they portend for those countries and for the Middle East?” April 28, 2011.
Panel Discussion, CU, “The Revolution in Egypt: Causes and Consequences,” Feb. 16, 2011.
Boulder Daily Camera, interview, “CU-Boulder professor: Egyptian military tries to protect status quo,” Feb. 10, 2011.
Presentation, CU Program in International Affairs. “Taking Peace Studies Out of the Classroom: A Panel on the Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Efforts,” April 14, 2010.
Lecture, CU Asia Day. “A View from the Margins: Yemen in World History,” March 8, 2008.
Lecture on Arab History and culture for Arab literature reading group at the Boulder Public Library, Aug. 6, 2007.

Interview on the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006, "Community Focus" (KZYR, 97.7), Aug. 2, 2006.

LANGUAGES

Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian colloquial): full professional proficiency (speaking, reading, writing)

Urdu: professional proficiency (reading)

German: elementary proficiency (speaking, reading, writing)