Islam and the Study of Religion

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The study of Islam cuts across so many disciplines -- Anthropology, Asian/Near Eastern/Middle Eastern (i.e. regional) Studies, Gender Studies, History, Literary Studies, Political Science - that we often forget that it is, in fact, a religion. Locating the study of Islam on the map of religious studies is the goal of this workshop. The challenge of integrating the study of Islam more fully into the study of religion offers the possibility of shedding significant light on both our understanding of Islam and the meaning of religion. What are the distinguishing features of the study of Islam within religious studies as opposed to other fields in which Islam is studied? How does the study of Islam differ from the study of other religions?

The workshop will consider the state of the study of Islam as a religion through four presentations that will help us to think about these and other questions. For speakers, we intend to draw largely upon a new generation of scholars who figure prominently in the growing scholarly concern for the study of Islam as a religion and who will therefore be able to offer us the latest thinking on the topic. These presentations will take up the following dimensions of religiosity in Islam: ritual, exegesis, the nature and role of religious leadership, and popular religiosity.

The workshop will focus not only on the insights about Islam as a religion to be gleaned from these four areas, but also on the ways we think about these areas of religiosity in Islam. The study of Islam is shaped by public and private concerns, objective and subjective points of view. Reflection on the concerns that scholars of Islam (Muslim or non-Muslim, male or female, etc.) bring to their research and teaching will serve to clarify our understanding of the study of Islam as a religion by disentangling it from the various pressures and predispositions that can color and constrain it. A related point of reflection will be the challenge of presenting Islam to audiences which are themselves diverse in their attitudes and dispositions towards religion and Islam. What role does the existence of a relatively new but increasingly visible Muslim diaspora in this and other countries play for the study or religion?

The event is designed to benefit especially students of Islam but also a cross-section of scholars interested in religion and/or Islam. Given the fact that the study of Islam has yet to claim full membership in the academy of religious
studies, the topic of the workshop bears considerable significance for future study of Islam.

8:30-9:00am
Gathering (coffee/tea and pastries)

9:15-9:30
**Opening remarks**
Paul Heck, Princeton University

9:30-10:45
**Ritual in Islam**
Marion Katz, New York University, "The study of Islamic ritual: Diagnosing the Problem."

10:45-12:00pm
**Exegesis in Islam**
Walid Saleh, University of Toronto, "The Agonies of Grammar: Exegesis and the Qurâ€™an."

12:00-2:15 Lunch break

2:30-3:45
**Popular Religiosity in Islam**

3:45-5:00
**Religious Authority in Islam**
Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Brown University, "Consensus and Religious Authority in Modern Islam: The Discourses of the â€˜Ulama."