

“What is Sufi Studies? Methodologies of Academic Study”
Summer Term Lectures, July 2018
Üsküdar University, Institute for Sufi Studies
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“What is Sufi Studies?” This is a series of presentations on methodology and theory, which asks students to reflect on critical questions relating to Sufism and the categories commonly used to describe it. It will address Orientalist approaches to Sufism, introduction to specialized reference works (encyclopedias), the history of research on Sufism, and critical reflection on terminology and ideological discourses on Sufism. It will illuminate the difference between approaches that are descriptive (academic) and prescriptive (normative authority), and it will discuss the difference between outsider and insider positions. It will interrogate the purpose of academic Sufi studies. It needs to be understood that it is not about becoming a Sufi – one doesn’t need a master’s degree to do that. So how does Sufi studies relate to religious studies and other fields?

Key terms: methodology and theory, Orientalism, categories and terminology, ideological discourses, outsider and insider, religious studies, history of research on Sufism

Basic readings

Ernst, Carl W. "What is Sufism?", Chapter 1 of *Sufism: An Introduction to Islamic Mysticism*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2010.

-----, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism." In *Teaching Islam*, ed. Brannon Wheeler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 108-23.

-----, “Sufism, Islam, and Globalization in the Contemporary World: Methodological Reflections on a Changing Field of Study.” In *Memoriam: The 4th Victor Danner Memorial Lecture*. Bloomington, IN: Department of Near Eastern Languages, 2009.

Recommended

DeWeese, Devin. "Preface." *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, by Mehmed Fuad Koprulu, translated by Gary Leiser. Routledge, 2012.

Ernst, Carl. “The *Dabistan* and Orientalist views of Sufism”

Karamustafa, Ahmet. *God’s Unruly Friends*.

-----, *Sufism: The Formative Period*

Knysh, Alexander. *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism*, Princeton 2017..

Green, Nile. *Sufism: A Global History*. Wiley Blackwell, 2012..

July 17, 18:00-21:00. Definitions, categories, key terms: where do the questions come from?

- Different approaches to religious studies: prescriptive and descriptive, insider and outsider (etic and emic)
- Theoretical terms and symbols found in social reality: mysticism, spirituality, religion, and the reference works needed for research
- How critical scholarship differs from the replication of authority

- “Sufism” and *tasawwuf*
- Three approaches to Sufi studies: “ethical and spiritual traditions with a family resemblance” (Ernst), “traditional Islam” (Green), “an ascetic-mystical movement trend within Islam “ (Knysh)
- Who gets to decide? Religion and the modern nation state

July 19, 18:00-21:00. Case study: identity and nonconformity

- Sulami and the formation of the concept of *tasawwuf*
- Malamatiyya “self-blame” and the problem of realizing ideals
- Qalandar nonconformism
- Otman Baba
- Sidebar: ethnographic studies of Sufism

July 21, 10:00-13:00. Case study: Political historiography

- Koprulu and the question of Turkish Sufism
- Shamanism as an Orientalist construct
- Regional appropriations of Sufism
- Anti-Sufi critiques – secular, fundamentalist, Orientalist
- Sufism and politics today
- Sidebar: institutional studies of Sufism

July 22, 10:00-13:00. Case study: Globalization and universalism

- Universalism and Orientalism
- Globalization and the marketplace of spirituality
- The Rumi phenomenon
- The Inayat Khan movements: Sufism without Islam
- Consumption of Sufi music: Coke Studio